



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

June 2006

****Note the time and location change for this meeting****

June Program - Picnic at Chestnut Branch Park (Mantua) - June 8th, 6:00 PM

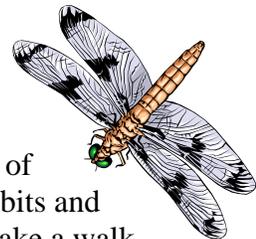


The June 8th meeting of the Gloucester County Nature Club will be our annual spring picnic. The picnic will be held at the Chestnut Branch Park in Mantua. Attendees should bring a food item to share, and their own utensils, plates, and cups to cut down on the waste of disposables. Bring your binoculars as well because after dinner we will take a walk through the varied habitats of the park looking for birds, wildflowers and other items of interest. As with all club functions, the picnic is open to the public so why not bring a friend? We hope you will join us for the picnic.

Directions: From the intersection of Route 45 (Broad Street) and Route 553Alt (Main Street) in Mantua, go south on Route 553Alt for 1.6 miles. The park entrance will be on the left. There is a large paved parking area. Meet under the pavilion.

Field Trip – Batsto Village and Backcountry
Saturday June 24th, 10:00 AM to about 3:00 PM

Leader: Karl Anderson



Meet at 10:00 AM in the parking lot of Batsto Village, at the southern edge of Wharton State Forest in Atlantic County. After looking at some of the exhibits and buildings of this partly-restored 19th-century iron-making village, we will take a walk into the backcountry for a look at some unusual plants (including grass pink and rose pogonia orchids) of turfcuts and fens along the Mechescatauxin Creek. We should also see a few birds, dragonflies, and perhaps a fence lizard or a swamp womper. The walk should be no more than about 1 1/2 miles round trip, mostly on sand roads and trails. Wet walking is optional. Dress to suit the weather, bring lunch and plenty of beverage, and have insect repellent. Phone 856-845-7075 for additional information.

Directions: Atlantic City Expressway to Exit 28 (Route 54 - Hammonton); north on Route 54 for about 2 miles to Route 542 (watch for signs in Hammonton, a few blocks north of the RR tracks); take Route 542 east (watch out for a jog on-and-off when you cross Route 30) to Batsto Village, which is well marked. The distance from Woodbury is about 50 miles. Travel time is a bit more than one hour.

ANNUAL PLANT SALE A SUCCESS!

We did it again! The plants were there, the people were there - and the rain held off! Once more the Annual Plant Sale was a great success - as a fund raiser for the club and as a convenient one stop shopping spot for plants for your garden.



Plant donations are always the key to the success of our sale. We were fortunate again this year to have them coming from two fronts. The nursery plants were generously donated for the second year by the folks at Dean's Evergreens in Monroeville. A “hearty thanks” to George, Brian and Bridget there from all of us. And thanks to Ron Kegel for the careful selection of those plants - to bring us native plants for easy care, plants to attract the birds and butterflies and some incredible showy beauties.

The other plants that make the sale such a hit are those donated by our members from their own gardens. Those of us who are gardeners know that one of the great joys of gardening is sharing what we grow. At the Plant Sale we get to share AND help raise some funds for the Club. Thanks to all who contributed.

Our Plant Sale takes lots of people for it to work. Thanks to Millie for the signs, to Ed and Kris our cashiers and to Karl and Valerie for help with plant identification.

It looked like everyone found at least a couple of things to fill those special spots in their gardens. Many of us found LOTS of plants to fill those spots. Good luck with them all. And remember, as you enjoy your gardens this growing season - keep an eye out for plants to share next year!

Conservation Corner by Loretta Dunne

“The Revenge of the Lawn” -- Title of short story by Richard Brautigan

It is time to rethink your lawn. The lawn as we know it requires pesticides, fertilizers, power tools, and hours of dedicated time. The U.S. Department of Energy’s Oak Ridge National Laboratory has reported that the lush, green lawns that homeowners work so hard to achieve are contributing to global warming. Energy use is not only embodied in the power tools being used on the lawn, but also on the production and shipping of fertilizers and pesticides.

Then there is the question of our over-taxed water table. Water is an issue in New Jersey, and, as more homes are built, the demands are going to become much worse. The Audubon Society reports, “Nearly 8 billion gallons of water are used daily in the U.S. for outdoor purposes, mostly landscaping.”

There is another compelling reason to reduce the size of your lawn. Wildlife is in desperate need of habitat. Just today, as I sat in my Woodbury home, I heard a bobwhite calling from my neighbor’s backyard.



Want one more incentive to change your lawn area? The rising energy costs that hit you every time you refill your car's gas tank will also dent your wallet every time you turn on your gas powered-mower.

Now is the time to get ahead of the curve and start to free yourself from the notion of the perfect lawn.

There are many steps you can take to turn your yard from a global warming contributor that sucks away your time and money to a lush environment that brings joy to you and benefits the environment. Probably, many of you have already started planting native plants to attract birds and butterflies to your yard. Consider water needs when you select bushes, perennials, trees, and grasses. Native plants and grasses usually are more drought resistant than ornamentals.

If you still use pesticides, work to eliminate them. They are dangerous for wildlife, humans and our water supply. Any organic gardening book will offer you safer, healthier alternatives.



Over time, you can make your actual lawn area smaller, so that your **mowing needs are reduced**. Electric mowers are less polluting than gas mowers. There are new, lightweight push mowers that are perfect for small yards and are wonderfully quiet.

You can even use some of what was once a lawn to plant a meadow, a vegetable garden or an herb garden. The possibilities are endless as you consider how to make your private space a plus for the environment. For additional suggestions and guidelines for changing your yard, check your library for books and magazines. Also, here are a few online resources:

The Audubon Society's At Home Section http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/index.html

New Jersey Audubon's Back Yard Habitat page
<http://www.njaudubon.org/Education/BackyardHabitat/Index.html>

Backyard Care, <http://www.backyardbirdcare.org>, a site developed by the Wild Bird Feeding Industry in conjunction with a number of groups including American Bird Conservancy, American Birding Association and Nation Fish and Wildlife Foundation, describes six steps you can take to make your backyard a bird sanctuary.

Exciting Project – The Gloucester County Natural Areas Guide

In an effort to increase the appreciation and knowledge concerning the important natural areas of the county, the Nature Club plans to publish a guide to the natural areas of the county. It will include a description of the area, history, directions, maps, seasonal information and visitor guides for a number of important county natural sites.

We are doing this for a number of reasons. Foremost is to provide a guide for county residents who may not be aware of what our immediate environment has to offer. The second goal of this project is to provide more protection for these areas by documenting their existence and importance. Our plan is to elicit support from a number of county organizations so that this book

will really represent what is best about Gloucester County and our connection to the natural world.

Members of the Executive Committee will be doing much of the writing and editing of the book, but we are asking for your assistance. We need help in a variety of arenas – data on specific locations, pictures of sites, history of the sites, people to get tax maps of each site and assistance in outreach for funding, to name a few. You do not need to be an expert; any help will be welcome! If you want to get involved with this project, please contact Loretta Dunne. We have also placed some information and reporting forms on the GCNC website.

Other Nature Notes

Old Pine Farm Natural Lands Trust Walking Tour

Old Pine Farm Natural Lands Trust has scheduled a walk through the nature preserve on the banks of Big Timber Creek on Sunday, June 11, at 1 p.m. Get acquainted with who and what lives on the meadow, in the forest and in the wetlands as Michael Hogan, nature guide and photographer, takes you on a tour of the 32-acre land trust. Entrance to the land trust is at the end of Rankin Street off Good Intent Road in Blackwood Terrace, Deptford. For more information, call Joan Tracy at (856) 232-1109. Visit their website at www.bigtimbercreek.org

If you cannot attend this event, please visit at your convenience. The land trust is open every day from dawn to dusk.

Visit a Purple Martin Colony

Saturday, June 17, 2006

9 am – noon

Wild Birds Unlimited - Washington Township is sponsoring a field trip to visit a Purple Martin Colony in Millville on Saturday, June 17th. Attendees will meet Wildlife Biologist and Purple Martin Landlord Allen Jackson at his premier Purple Martin colony, and will learn about these cheerful birds who are totally dependent on humans for their housing needs. There will also be a nest check and nestlings will be banded if they are age-appropriate.

Attendees will leave Wild Birds Unlimited at 9 am sharp to be at the site by 10 am. For those who wish to meet the group at the Purple Martin colony in Millville, please call Wild Birds Unlimited for directions at 218-2973.

Wanted: Old Towels, Sheets, Washcloths & Hand Towels

A plea for old towels, sheets, hand towels, and washcloths has been made by a wildlife volunteer for Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge. She is foster caring for 24 baby ducks. Baby ducks need to have a bath twice a day and be thoroughly dry after each. They do 3 things: eat, sleep and poop! Keeping everything clean and dry uses a lot of towels, etc. If anyone has any supplies to donate, they will be greatly appreciated. Please drop off supplies at Wild Birds Unlimited – Washington Township. Supplies will be needed throughout June. Excess supplies will be directed to other foster caring efforts at Cedar Run. Questions? Please call Wild Birds Unlimited at 218-2973.

Wild Birds Unlimited offers an everyday 10% discount to GCNC members!

Wild Birds Unlimited has a discount agreement with the GCNC executive board and is pleased to offer GCNC members an everyday 10% discount on all purchases excluding optics and food or sale items. Sharon Oakes, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited, appreciates the many volunteer contributions made by GCNC members and hopes members can benefit from this discount. Members are requested to identify themselves as GCNC members before their sales are finalized. Questions? Please call Sharon at 218-2973.

Looking Ahead

Summer Field Trips:

Summer field trips will be announced soon in a special edition of the newsletter.

Club Notes:

- Congratulations to Carol Cassel, Karen Kravchuck, Kris Mollenhauer, and Brian Hayes on their re-election as trustees at last month's meeting.
- The June Executive Committee meeting will be held on June 4th at 7:00 PM at Deb Maka's house.
- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Deb Maka at deborahann@backpacker.com or call 863-0330.
- 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 6 Greenwood Drive, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15th of the preceding month.