

Gloucester County Nature Club

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

November 2000

REGULAR MEETING -Thurs., November 9, 2000 - 7:00 pm – EIRC Building, 606 Delsea Dr. in Washington Twp.

Bob Cassel, Program Coordinator, 478-2496

PROGRAM – “Thailand - A Distant Land of Natural Beauty”

Ed Nicholls was a perfectionist in photography as he employed his appreciation of the beauty of flowers in many parts of the world. His application to detail and accuracy will be evident this evening as we present a program from slides of his visit in Thailand some years ago. Here's a chance to enjoy and learn as we take a glimpse of the loveliness of this distant land. Ed served several terms as president of our club, and he is now 94! His nephew, Bernie Carlson, will project and our hope is that Ed can be with us as old and new friends welcome him back.

FIELD TRIP -Sunday, Nov. 12, 2000 - The Blue Hole, Monroe Twp. Gloucester Co. - 2 pm

Kris Mollenhauer, Field Trip Coordinator, 589-4387

Join us for a late autumn ramble to one of Gloucester County's legends: the “Blue Hole”. Situated one mile off Piney Hollow Rd in a heavily wooded area of Pine Barrens vegetation, the Blue Hole is a stone's throw from the Great Egg Harbor River. Legends abound about this circular pond (about 135 feet across) with sky blue water. Known in the past as the “Jersey Devil's bathtub”, the area was frequented by locals in the 1930's, who reportedly warned their children not to swim or go near the water, as it was thought that demons from below would pull their victims down.

One story says that the Blue Hole does not completely freeze over in winter due to hot springs coming up from deep in the earth. Another story has it that the Blue Hole is bottomless, as tested by some folks who paddled a boat to its middle and threw over a weighted line--that kept going--and going-- We invite you to discover the truth for yourself; if you plan on joining us, pick up a drivers map at the November Club meeting (above) and/or call Kris Mollenhauer to register for the trip.

“While men believe in the infinite, some ponds will be thought to be bottomless.”

--Henry David Thoreau

Upcoming Field Trip: Saturday December 16 : Christmas Bird Count

Mark your calendar for an exciting day in the southwestern part of our county, when the Gloucester County Nature Club joins people across the nation for the 101st annual nationwide Christmas Bird Count. Whether you are a seasoned birder, an amateur, or simply a person who enjoys spending the day outdoors in the company of others, you will enjoy helping with this historic research project. Call or write the recorder, Bob Cassel, 478-2496, 407 Heritage Rd, Sewell, NJ 08080 who will answer questions and find you a place on the team(s).

Environmental Info/Nature Notes - November, 2000

Gloria Caccia, Environmental Coordinator, 582-0980

Horseshoe Crabs Need Your Help, NOW!!

On October 12, US Department of Commerce Secretary Norman Mineta announced that plans are moving forward to protect horseshoe crabs in federal waters off the mouth of Delaware Bay. Federal managers are seeking public input on a formal proposal to designate a federal preserve in federal waters to provide additional protection for local horseshoe crabs stocks by prohibiting their harvest near a prime spawning area, the bay beaches of Delaware Bay. Secretary Mineta said "We are moving ahead with steps to create this sanctuary for horseshoe crabs as part of this administration's commitment to preserve the ocean's critical resources and manage our nation's fisheries sustainably. This proposed preserve at the mouth of Delaware Bay is home to a large concentration of crabs and is adjacent to a prime spawning area for these unique animals." On the same day, the Secretary also imposed a state-wide moratorium on fishing for the crabs in Virginia waters, in a continued effort to reduce overharvesting of the crabs throughout the Eastern seaboard. In light of the uncertainty over the future of the crab, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission determined all Atlantic states must be cautious in their harvest to assure the long-term viability of this species. Virginia alone, of the Atlantic states, has chosen not to implement a fishing quota to protect this important species.

Public input is important! Please take the time to send written comments saying how important you think it is to preserve the horseshoe crab and create an offshore preserve, to: Richard Shaefer, Office for Intergovernmental & Recreation Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, 8484 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Isabella Tiger Moth or . . . The Woolly Bear

The Isabella Tiger Moth is most often recognized in its famous caterpillar stage as the 1-2" long Woolly Bear, when they are active and furry dark brown to black with long stiff hairs with an orange/light brown middle band. The adult moth, with a wingspread of two inches, is much less interesting with a stocky body and two pairs of buffy, staw-colored rounded wings with small black spots.

The Woolly Bear overwinters as a larvae (caterpillar), resumes eating in the spring, then in April or May pupates into a cocoon for two weeks before emerging as an adult moth. The female moth lays up to 1,000 eggs on vegetation which the caterpillar can eat (a wide variety of plants, but especially Plantains). Red Maple is a favorite; they will also feed on clover, dandelion, grasses and other. These eggs hatch, pupate and adult moths emerge. *It is this second generation that overwinters as the Woolly Bear caterpillar.*

The Woolly Bear in the fall is searching for a place to overwinter that is protected from predators and sudden temperature changes: under leaves, loose bark or other protected places under logs, old boards, woodpiles and debris. They are often seen crossing roads and paths and can be picked up without harm to you or the caterpillar.

There is an old saying about the amount of orange (band) on the Woolly Bear and the severity of winter: the more black there is, the worse the winter will be. Actually, the amount of black relates to age: young caterpillars have more black than older caterpillars.

Woolly Bears curl into a ball when disturbed, presumably a defensive behavior. They are very "slippery" in this position and slide off your hand as if it were a surface of ice.

Economics and Conservation

Guess what industry supports an estimated 191,000 jobs, generates more than \$4 billion in earnings annually, results in more than \$5 billion in retail sales each year and has a total economic impact of more than \$25 billion? This is not the tally for big oil or telecommunications, but instead describes the economics of birding. Although it is difficult to pin down exact figures, the estimated \$25 billion impact of birding would place it somewhere in the mid-50's rank of Fortune 500 companies, along with UPS, Aetna, Allstate and GTE if birding was a corporation.

Birders can use economic data for conservation purposes in many ways. A topic that is always of interest to local government and business is tourism. Many towns and counties go out of their way to attract tourists to support local stores, gas stations, etc. A 1996 survey by the US Dept of Interior estimates that about 17.7 million Americans took trips for the primary purpose of watching birds. An additional 6 million traveled to watch other wildlife. Combined, these tourists spent more than \$9.4 billion on trip-related expenses.

Weekend festivals focusing on wildlife may last only a day or two but can result in large economic impacts at the local level. The Hummerbird Celebration in Rockport, Texas attracted 5,000 visitors in 1997 and had an economic impact of about \$1.4 million. And sometimes a rare bird can prove to be a real bonanza: a pair of yell-green vireos that nested in Texas created a stir because this species is typically found south of the border; birders flocked to the area and generated an estimated \$150,000 in local impact.

The same 1996 survey estimates that 52 million Americans feed birds, spending more than \$2.7 billion annually on seed/food and more than \$831 million on feeders, baths, boxes, etc. Binoculars and scopes run another \$635 million annually; magazines and books another \$296 million.

How can this information help? Only if YOU let local people know why you are there. When you are out birding, hiking, or looking at wildlife, let food stores, gas stations etc know why you are in their town. Share some of your sightings or talk about a great place to visit. Very often local people will respond with a story of their own. Some organizations have taken to providing their members with small cards that announce who they are and why they are there in the community. These cards will document your stop for the store manager and document that their community/county attracts dollars because of its natural treasures. ---*abstracted from Wildbird, August 2000; thanks to Club member Bill Connison*

The Ecology of Schoolyards

Schoolyards are usually paved or mowed, but except for the most urban, there are often little places along the edges where native vegetation thrives. In some places there are trees at the edge of the yards, and in other, small woodlots fringe them. Time has removed many of these woodlots, or put them behind fences. But in many there is an occasional tree, shrub, puddle and bit of native vegetation that can serve an important function for insects and birds.

Vertical structure, the number of layers present from the ground up, such as ground cover, herb layer, shrubs and trees, are usually limited on a schoolyard. Animals found on schoolyards are usually the very common birds that fly in to eat the small bits of garbage left about (such as Common Crows, Blue Jays, Grackles, gulls), those that can find some insects or worms following warm rains (Robins, Catbirds, Mockingbirds), or those that can eat grass seeds (Mourning Doves, Brown-headed Cowbirds, sparrows, Starlings). Where native vegetation grows along the edge of a schoolyard, other birds, some butterflies and other insects may survive. Tall trees at the edge of a schoolyard can also provide nesting places for some birds, and a few schoolyards may even have resident Great Horned Owls. For some reason they are remarkable tolerant of the yells and screams of children, and during daylight, sleep quite contentedly through the

baseball and soccer games of the older students, opening one eye occasionally when the noise is particularly loud or stops suddenly.

Schoolyard vegetation is usually directly under the control of the local school board, which means you can have an effect if you care to. Talk to teachers and explain the value of native vegetation to attract a variety of animals. Offer to plant some native species. Almost anyone can save some Common Milkweed seeds from one year to the next spring, and if planted in a moist area along the edge they will grow quite well, attracting Monarch butterflies and offering students the chance to experience first-hand the story of their annual migration to Mexico. You may even attract other butterflies or birds. This is an opportunity to take good notes on what animals have been attracted to the small plantings. Non-native garden flowers that are attractive to butterflies and birds include Coneflowers, Zinnias, Ivy Geraniums, Impatiens and Sunflowers.

Executive Committee Meeting: The Executive Committee Meeting will be held on Sunday, November 5th at 6:30 PM at the home of Gloria Caccia, 161 Brookfield Ave. Pitman NJ 08071.

Club News: The Nature Club is always looking for ideas for future programs and field trips. Please contact the program and/or field trip coordinators with your ideas. For information about the Gloucester County Nature Club, call:
Brian Hayes, President 468-9272 Mimi Glass, Membership Chair, 589-6435

Information for next month's newsletter should be sent, by the 20th of each month, to:
Erik Mollenhauer, 606 Delsea Dr. Sewell NJ 08080, 582-7000 X128