



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public
November 2003

Program- Thursday, November 13th at 7:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell
For the Birds—Protecting Land in South Jersey: Preserving Oases along the Flyway

Program Coordinator- Bob Cassel 478-2496

Its 8:00 p.m. on an autumn night and a cold front is moving through the region. High above our neighborhoods the wings of hundreds of thousands of songbirds strain under the force of flight. The annual migrations of songbirds are a high stakes, life and death drama that has been played out for thousands of years and for countless millions of birds. Although we can't see nocturnal migration with our eyes, the fact that it is happening is being documented as we quietly sleep through the night.

Please join us for this informative program being presented by Dale Rosselet from the New Jersey Audubon Society. You will learn how songbirds accomplish their migratory feats and how they depend on the resources in New Jersey's habitats. The program will also cover the mechanics of migration and some of the most recent developments in studying nocturnal migration using weather surveillance radar and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to pinpoint the stopover habitats that these birds use.



This evening is the annual combined meeting of the Gloucester County Nature Club, the Federation of Gloucester County Watersheds, and the South Jersey Land Trust. Announcements by each group will be given between 7:00 and 7:30pm, to be followed by the program.

Field Trip- Saddler's (McArthur) Woods- Sunday, November 16th 1:00 PM

Field Trip Coordinator- Kris Mollenhauer 589-4387

Join us for a tour of Saddler's Woods (MacArthur Forest) with Maggie Downham. She is a member of the Newton Creek Watershed Association. Located in Haddon Township, Saddler's Woods is one of the last remaining old growth forests in the Eastern U.S with beech and oak trees over 200 years old. This ecosystem is part of an historic area as a stop on the Underground Railroad. MacArthur Forest holds a rare example of the type of forests that once existed from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River, before Europeans settled here. Today, almost no old growth forest remains, in fact less than 0.5% of the forest that remains in the Eastern U.S. can be classified as old growth. Come hear the history of this special place, why it was renamed and learn first hand about the concepts of Old Growth, Edge Effect and Invasive Species. **Trip leader: Kris Mollenhauer**

DRIVER'S DIRECTIONS: From Rt. 295 North take Rt.30 West. Turn RIGHT onto Cuthbert Blvd. Turn RIGHT at the first traffic light onto MacArthur Blvd. Go less than one block -turn left into the Rohr Library parking lot. Meet in the parking lot.



Three New Things found on the field trip to Supawna Meadows, Oct 18, 2003

By Kris Mollenhauer

One: A small bird rested on a tree limb, in clear view of the onlookers below and this is what he heard:

“It’s sitting on a branch, in the Y of that tree, the one with the red leaves over there.”

“Do you see him?”

“It looks like he’s cold, his feathers are all puffed up.”

“No wing bars, olive colored back, yellow underneath, dark eye with a white eyebrow”

“It must be a vireo. But which one?”

“Looks like a Philadelphia Vireo.”

“He’s migrating through. He probably flew all night and now he’s exhausted.”

“That’s a good bird.”

“They nest up in the Canadian woodlands and then spend mid-November through February in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras or Panama.”

“I’ve only seen one once before.”

“He’ll be following the local bands of Chickadees to help him locate food.”

“He eats insects and also consumes fruits like bayberries, rose hips and wild grapes.”

After giving everyone a great look, this tiny sized miracle flew off.

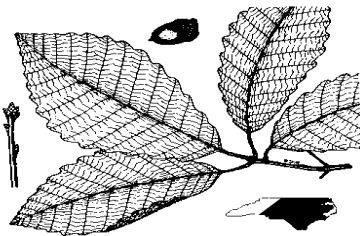
Two: Karl Anderson picked up an oak leaf and introduced us to the swamp chestnut oak. Swamp chestnut oak also is known as basket oak or cow oak. This tree is most abundant in the bottomlands of the Piedmont and Coastal Plain. Although it is widely found on the best, well-drained, loamy, first bottom ridges, it is found principally on well-drained, silty clay and loamy terraces and on alluvial sites in the bottomlands of both large and small streams.

Swamp chestnut oak leaves are roughly oval, 6 to 8 inches long; 3 to 5 inches wide. When new they usually are coated on the underside with thick silvery white fuzz. Leaf margins are coarsely toothed.

The acorn is 1 to 1 1/2 inches long, ovoid and 1/3 -covered by a thick cup that has rough, wedge-shaped scales. The bark is a very light gray; on the upper stems and limbs of old trees, it is broken into broad flakes or divided into strips.

The tree usually grows to 60 to 80 feet tall and to 2 to 3 feet in diameter. The trunk often is free of branches for 50 to 60 feet. Stout branches grow upward at sharp angles to form a round-topped crown.

Swamp chestnut oak wood is hard, tough, very strong and heavy. Its other name, "basket oak," refers to the long, thin strips of wood that are split from this tree and used to make baskets. Swamp chestnut oak also is used for barrels, construction, flooring and tools and as white oak lumber. Its tendency to both warp and crack makes it very difficult to kiln-dry.



Three: Val Kelly pointed out a lovely little wildflower named purple gerardia. Most of the plant had gone to globe-shaped seed capsules but there were a few pink, bell-shaped flowers left on its 2-4 ft stalks. This flower is a member of the Snapdragon Family and it resembles a snapdragon.

Conservation

Keeping Cats Indoors- Why Your Cat Will Thank You

By Maria Keefe

Do you know where your cat is? Hopefully she's curled up safe and warm on your bed or your couch. Cats have become America's most common pet, but too often they are not kept strictly indoors. Many people believe that cats need to go outside to satisfy their craving for the outdoors. This couldn't be further from the truth. The house cat is a domesticated animal that can't fend for themselves when left outside. Many people let their cats out for periods of time but this is not healthy for the cat or for the surrounding wildlife.

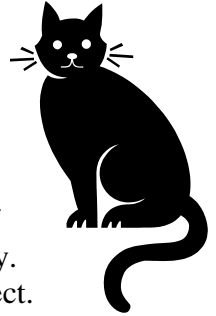
People believe that domestic cats do not hunt if they are well-fed by their owners. The house cat, although domesticated, still has the hunting instinct and will kill, regardless of whether it eats its prey. Domestic cats kill hundreds of millions of birds each year in the U.S. alone. Some owners believe that a cat who wears a bell will be heard by prey and will not be able to catch anything. However, cats use all of their skills of stealth to silently stalk and kill their prey; a bell will not protect the prey. Cats also can strangle or starve if their collar or bell is caught on a fence or other object.

Some people keep cats as "mouser" so they rid the property of unwanted rodents and pests. Although your rodent problem may be alleviated, rodents carry diseases which can be dangerous or even fatal to your cat. In fact, cats who roam the great outdoors can be exposed to a multitude of diseases. They include: rabies, feline distemper, Lyme's disease, cat-scratch disease, toxoplasmosis (which can be fatal to a human fetus if a pregnant woman is exposed), ringworm, ticks, etc. Cats can also be exposed to Feline Leukemia and Feline AIDS from other infected cats; both of the latter diseases are fatal.

Many cats are killed by cars, and sadly, many others are poisoned or trapped by neighbors who dislike cats visiting their yards. Some cats may just, "never come home" after meeting some unknown fate. Prominent veterinarian organizations and shelters are now urging pet owners to keep their cats indoors. Many shelters will not even accept a cat adoption application if the owner does not agree to keep the cat indoors.

Some people believe that spayed / neutered domesticated housecats can survive in a feral cat colony. Even if the cat is provided with food by humans, life in a feral colony ensures a cruel and certain death for domestic cats.

A house cat that doesn't go outdoors can expect a 15-20 year lifespan, but a cat who lives outside can expect a 3-5 year lifespan. The outdoor cat will also suffer harsh elements, hunger, disease or worse. If you can no longer care for your cat and can't find a safe permanent home for her, take the cat to a shelter. She has a better chance of finding a good home than surviving in the wild. It is important for all cats to be neutered or spayed. The indoor cat that is not spayed / neutered may try to get outside or may spray in your home. All cats should see a veterinarian regularly for shots and checkups. If your cat was previously an outdoor cat and you are making the decision to keep her indoors, you can train her to enjoy being in your home. You can keep a spray bottle that has been used for only water, so no chemical residue is in the container, to gently spray her to keep her away from the door. Additionally, you can place pennies in a can, and shake it when she goes near the door; it will startle her away from the door. Of course, purchasing toys which can be chased or pounced on, with or without catnip, will turn your home into a fun house for the cat.



For all of these reasons, keeping your cat indoors is healthier for your cat, your family and the surrounding wildlife. Your cat will be protected from many dangers, as you both watch the birds at the feeder, safely through your window. And you will enjoy a healthier cat for many years to come.

A Glorious Springtime Festival in October

by Bob Cassel

It is Sunday afternoon, October 12, with a brilliant azure dome above, and all of nature aflame, vines, bushes, and trees splashing in all directions, in attempts to out-perform earthbound annuals not yet laid low by frost. The major role player, indeed, is the sun itself, low in the southern hemisphere. It dabs its rays in exciting art patterns. The air too, is so fresh it seems to lend an electric quality to the scene.

The leader of the pack today is the orange-purple foliage of the mature sour gum tree. Not settling for second place, a spreading dogwood reaches for the sun amidst a forest of red oaks, only a few leaves of which are blending away from their summer emerald to a rusty hue.

Virginia creeper is cascading from the red cedar and dazzles the eye with yellow to orange and shades in between. On the lower level the red of salvia speaks out declaring it will not renounce its summer flame red until its dying when numbing frost arrives.

Seemingly, the birds are enthralled by the generous splashes of color everywhere as far as eye can see. Robins are fascinated by opportunities to dash from bush to bush, consuming dogwood, Virginia creeper, and sour gum berries with gusto. With the fountain bowls newly filled with fresh water; not only the robins but also the purple grackles splash about as if they had not showered all summer. Such delight! Like a child glorifying in a warm bath, all the while murmuring with pleasure.

In the meantime, the clerodendron is not a bit disappointed that robins reject its seeds as too hard, even if they are beautiful in their tuxedo black. A pair of white-throated sparrows newly arrived from New England, and a couple of resident chickadees dash about and flit in the nearby underbrush, waiting their turn at showering.

The robins return to drink of their bathwater. The red bellied woodpecker dares the blue jay to touch its 2:00 pm corn snack atop the old cherry tree stump.

While this drama is in progress, a newly discovered birder describes in little cries and squeaks her delight as she is entertained on this day. She seems to be in harmony, on the same wave length, and in tune with nature's production.

West Deptford Scenic Park Nature Trail to Become Dog Park?

West Deptford's River Winds development is heavy on active recreation opportunities- soccer, football, golf, tennis, etc. and short on passive recreation. However, the Nature Trail there features many birds and lots of solitude for those who visit, at least for now. There are plans in the works to fence an area the size of a football field immediately adjacent to the parking area and create a dog park. This is the area of brush where we regularly see warblers, orioles, and flycatchers when we go there on field trips, trainings for Bird Quest and Bird Quest itself. Many new birders have stepped off the Bird Quest bus on a cool May morning to see their first oriole, great crested flycatcher, or towhee. This is a great birding area in a park that doesn't offer the nature lover much else. This area is important to migrating birds for the food and shelter it provides in our rapidly changing county. Many of us in the club were shocked to hear of the township's

plans and want people in the area who visit the park to let the township administrator know we want to see that area left alone. The Nature Trail is protected under a conservation easement. Dogs are currently allowed on the Nature Trail and the area should be maintained so that dogs, birds, other wildlife, and people can enjoy this little piece of nature. If you agree, even if you don't live in West Deptford, please sign the letter below and send it to Gerald White. I would also encourage you to give copies of this letter to friends and family who may visit or live near the park.

Gerald White, Township Administrator
West Deptford Township
400 Crown Point Road
P.O. Box 89
Thorofare, New Jersey 08086

Mr. White;

I'd like to express my strong opposition to West Deptford Township's proposal to convert a section of the River Winds Nature Trail to be used as a dog park. Although the Township claims that no construction will take place for this project, the proposal would involve mowing a meadow approximately the size of a football field, installing fence around the areas, and installing water lines for fresh running water. This development alone could have strong negative effects on the wetland environment there.

The removal of a large area of meadow will impact the bird and animal species that use the meadow for nesting and hunting. I also have concerns that the presence of many unleashed dogs may create a strong impact on a fragile wetland area. Certainly, a dog park will discourage migratory birds from stopping over there as they do now.

Many individuals and groups use this trail for nature hikes, bird watching, and to educate children on the environment and wildlife. This trail is one of the few wild, open trails in this area that is open to the public and is unique in this way. I encourage you to recognize the value of this piece of property and to abandon your plans to create a dog park on this land.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Looking Ahead:

Programs-

- December 11th- Mt. Royal Archeology Dig
- March 11th- Pelagic Birding in the Mid-Atlantic Region

Field Trips-

- December 20th- Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count
- January 11th- Palmyra Cove Nature Center
- February- Visit club member's houses to enjoy birds at the feeders
- May 3rd – 5th Annual Bird Quest

Club Notes:

- Executive Meeting- October 5 at 7:00 pm at Karen Kravchuck's Home- 25 Barlow Avenue, Sewell- call Karen at 468-6536 for directions
- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Brian or Paula at pnbhayes@aol.com or call 468-9272.
- 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 Paula Hayes at pnbhayes@aol.com or 413 North Stockton Avenue; Wenonah, NJ 08090 by the 15th of each month.

Gloucester County Nature Club
c/o EIRC
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Sewell NJ 08080