

Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public
November 2004

**Program – Who's Living in our Streams & Lakes? The Fascination of Fish
(Combined meeting with Federation of Gloucester County Watersheds & the
South Jersey Land Trust)**

Thursday, Nov 11th at 7:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell

Program Coordinator- Bob Cassel 478-2496

What exactly is a minnow? Is there really a difference in mouth size between a large-mouth and a small-mouth bass? What's been documented about the fishes of our region and state, and what is yet to be discovered?

This program by Stockton University Professor and Vertebrate Zoologist, Rudolf Arndt, will acquaint you with the interesting fish species that are part of New Jersey's aquatic biodiversity, introduce you to their habitats, habits, and characteristics and, as fishermen already know, convince you that fishes are fascinating!

Field Trip – Avalon Sea Watch and Cape May Hawk Watch

Saturday November 6th, 8 AM to 2 PM

Trip Leader: Jeff Holt

Co-leader: Kris Mollenhauer

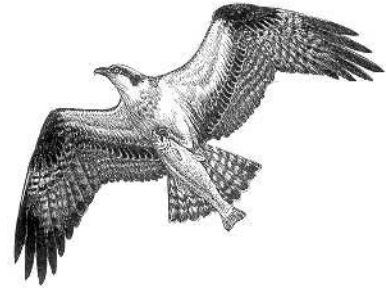


First stop will be the Avalon Sea Watch located at the extreme north end of the island. Annually, the Cape May Bird Observatory counts hundreds of thousands of Loons, Scoters, Cormorants, Mergansers and other waterfowl as they migrate south. With the help of naturalists from the CMBO, we'll learn to identify these birds as they stream past in huge flocks. From the Sea Watch, we'll drive to the

Hawk Watch at Cape May Point State Park. Late Oct./early November is always the best time of year for a possible rarity such as Swainson's Hawk or Golden Eagle.

Meet at 8:00 at the WAWA on Route 47 in Dennisville (located just north of Rt. 83). That's a good central place to meet, they have a big parking lot and may have at least port-o-johns. From the WAWA to Avalon Sea watch isn't more than 1/2 hour. Building in time at the WAWA for people to use the facilities, buy coffee, etc., we can figure on getting to the sea watch around 9ish. We'll plan on about 2 hours there, depending on weather and what's moving through. From there we'll head to the Hawk Watch, arriving noonish. A couple hours there and we'll head home at 2 or so.

Please bring binoculars, scopes if they have them, field guides if you have one, food/drink, etc. There are no concession stands at either Avalon or the Hawk Watch, although driving from Avalon to Cape May, we will pass some WAWA's. Bring warm clothes and watch the weather forecast. Wind can really howl at the Sea watch and it can get quite brisk there (as can the Hawk Watch).



Directions: Take Route 55 South to the end, it will turn into Route 47 at Port Elizabeth. Continue on straight on Route 47 (and use the Route 347 bypass - Route 347 merges back with Route 47 in Eldora.) After passing through North Dennis, you will pass Ludlum's Pond and then Johnson's Pond on the left. About a half mile past Johnson's Pond, WAWA will be on your left near the end of the curve, at the intersection of Route 47 and Main St in Dennisville.

Field Trip Report – A Day in the Pines (9/26/04) by Kris Mollenhauer



On a fine September day 25 members of the G.C.N.C. formed a convoy of cars to make a botanical tour of the Pine Barrens. We were fortunate to have Karl Anderson for our guide. Karl is very knowledgeable about plants and the local history. He has many delightful stories to tell about both. We drove from Whitesbog to Chatsworth to Hampton Furnace and onto Harrisonville Lake.

Although we did not see even a trace of the Jersey Devil, we did discover many other special residents. One of my personal favorites was a brilliant orange, thimble-like flower growing along the bogs, called Orange Milkwort. Another that grew there was the delicate white flower spike of the Nodding Lady's Tresses Orchid. This was a new acquaintance to me and I was surprised to meet it again two weeks later when I was backpacking in the mountains west of Williamsport, PA. When we told Karl Anderson that we had a Mexican visitor along who had never seen cranberries before, he took us to an abandoned bog. It was not flooded so we could wander around and snack on the fresh tart berries. The cranberry plants have Christmas colors: bright red berries with dark green foliage. Mixed in with the cranberries were patches of Sundews that sparkled with droplets of water. Later in the day we saw another carnivorous plant, the Pitcher Plant. Karl saved the best for last: our firework display was a cluster of striking deep blue Pine Barren Gentians growing alongside the roadway! Thanks Karl for an amazing day.

Soliciting Your Input on the Club Logo

As was mentioned at the last club meeting, we are looking into the possibility of changing and/or updating the current club logo, but we need your input. If anyone has any suggestions for a new logo or strong feelings about keeping the current logo, please let us know. If you are artistically inclined, this is your chance to shine! You may provide your suggestions as a hand drawn image, computer generated image, or even as a written description.

Conservation Corner - On the Fast Track to Sprawl? by Lorretta Dunne

Many of you may have heard of the fast-track bill. This legislation — put into effect this June — speeds up the permitting process for new construction in urban and suburban areas, and even some rural areas that are designated as town centers. In the many areas where this law applies, if the municipality does not respond to a permit request within the newly defined wait periods (reduced to a little over a month), the permit will automatically go into affect. In a time of budget shortfalls for many local governments, this means already overworked municipalities may never get a chance to consider the possible environmental or social impacts of a new development project.



By allowing developers to obtain permits faster, with less governmental oversight, this bill accelerates construction projects in places defined as growth areas. The new developments allowed because of this bill could increase sprawl and pollution in areas already suffering from unhealthy air and polluted waterways.

The State Planning Commission was developed to plan and control growth but they will have no input into this expedited system. What is even more shocking is that 43% of the remaining space in New Jersey has been defined as fast track areas, approximately 1.5 million acres. A coalition of forty NJ environmental groups have joined together to fight this rule. Their website is <http://www.savenj.net> If you have access, please visit this site and look at the suggested actions as well as the map of the state. A significant amount of land in Gloucester County is designated as part of the fast-track area. Let both your local officials and your state assembly members know that you support open space in New Jersey and request that they join in the opposition to Fast-Track.

A Message from the Executive Committee

I would like to welcome everyone back for this year. The Club has been extremely fortunate in the past couple of years and has attracted a number of good people who are helping to keep the Club active and moving forward. As you all know, the Club depends on volunteers to continue our activities and every member is welcome to participate in the workings of the Club whether it be by writing an article for the newsletter, leading a field trip, or helping with community events.

To help our members know where they can help, I'd like to take a few moments to summarize some of the discussions of our last executive committee meeting. Bob Cassel, our programs chair, presented his list of potential programs for the year. As usual, Bob has done a great job. We have the all of the programs for the fall set and have some exciting ideas for the spring such as possibly bringing back the Raptor Project. Our February meeting is typically a unique meeting involving some type of pot luck and a group activity. A couple of years ago, we conducted a craft night complete with a rather large desert table. We are still soliciting input for this February's meeting. If you have any suggestions for the February meeting our any other programs you would like to see, please let us know.

Kris Mollenhauer is our field trip chair. This year was a first and Kris made it a remarkable success. She organized a full committee of some of our talented members and came up with all

of our field trips for the year. They include some things such as biking/hiking on the Perkiomen River Trail last month and a winter tree walk with Karl Anderson. I'd also like to thank all of you that have lead and co-lead trips. Many would consider the field trips their favorite part of the Club and they could not exist without the efforts of all of you. If you'd like to participate on Kris's committee or lead a trip, please contact Kris.

We have three chairs of community events: Jackie Partridge, Elaine Dzeima, and Bonnie Dann. They deserve a round of applause for their hard work over the past year. They also have a good group that works with them to inform the public about the Nature Club and how to help the environment at a variety of events throughout the county. The ladies can always use more help and you're encouraged to contact one of them if you would like to help out. We also discussed additional ways to bring people to our table. We talked about selling some type of educational item that meets our conservation goals. Last year we sold the remainder of our "singing birds" at community events. We also discussed creating a couple of educational games to attract individuals to our table. One suggestion was a poster of birds and their corresponding bird calls.

We also discussed routine things such as the maintenance of our membership lists, early planning for Bird Quest to be held on May 7, 2005, and printing deadlines for our newsletter publication. We also discussed the future direction of our conservation efforts. We authorized Lorretta Dunn, our new conservation chair, to use her judgment to decide what items to bring to the general membership and submit for the newsletter. As a group, we did decide that we would prefer to focus on local issues. In addition to Loretta joining us for her first executive meeting, Bonnie Hart joined us and will now serve as our secretary. Thank you to both of them for joining the group!

The executive committee generally meets at 7 pm on the Sunday prior to the Nature Club meeting each month. The specific date and location can be found in the newsletter and all members are welcome to attend.

I look forward to seeing you all at our meeting and events.

Deb Maka
Vice President

Looking Ahead:

Programs-

December 9th – Purple Martins
January 13th – Habitat Management at Lakehurst Naval Air Station with John Joyce
February 10th – Non-standard monthly program (TBD)

Field Trips-

December 18th – Christmas Bird Count
January 15 – Shark River with Bob Duke
February 12 – Winter Tree ID Walk with Karl Anderson
March 19 – Scouting for Ducks with Dick Ebert

Club Notes:

- The November Executive Committee meeting will be November 7th at Barry Bengel's house.
- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Brian or Paula Hayes at pnbhayes@comcast.net 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 Barry Bengel at sharkeyes@comcast.net or 6 Greenwood Drive, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15th of the preceding month.

Also of Interest Locally:

For those that are not already aware, Scotland Run Park hosts a **Bird Walk** at 8AM on the first Saturday of the month in the Autumn and Winter, and on Tuesday nights at 6PM in the Spring and Summer. Bob Duke from the Nature Club and Park Naturalist Jill Taylor will be your leaders. The next Bird Walk at Scotland Run will be **Nov. 6th at 8AM**. For those of you that are not able to join us on the club trip to the Avalon Sea Watch that day, here's an interesting and fun local alternative!

The following press release has been included in the newsletter as a follow-up to last month's presentation on non-native invasive plant species:

For Immediate Release:
October 14, 2004
Contact: Peter Boger (609) 984-1795

DEP ANNOUNCES NEW INVASIVE SPECIES POLICY DIRECTIVE Will Prohibit Planting of Non-native Species on State Lands

(04/120) TRENTON - New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell today announced a new policy directive prohibiting the planting of non-native species on state lands. The initiative will help to reduce the spread of invasive species that choke out New Jersey's natural flora and threaten wetlands and waterways.

"State agencies need to lead by example and stop planting invasive species on lands that we manage," said Commissioner Campbell. "This is a small, but important step in our long-term struggle to address this significant threat to New Jersey's rich natural heritage."

Under the policy directive, Commissioner Campbell is ordering DEP employees and DEP consultants and contractors not to use invasive, nonindigenous plant species in planning and implementing plantings, landscaping and land management activities such as habitat restoration and reforestation on state lands and waters.

Included in the policy directive is an advisory list that will be periodically updated, which enumerates invasive plant species that have already been identified by the DEP as unsuitable for planting. The list to date includes 20 tree species, 40 shrub species, 15 vine species, 66 herb species, and 16 grass and sedge species.

The McGreevey Administration has been aware of and confronting the problem of invasive species for some time. In July 2003, the Final Report of the New Jersey Comparative Risk Project identified invasive species, including plants, insects and other organisms, as one of the top four environmental problems facing New Jersey. In 2004, Governor James E. McGreevey signed an executive order forming an Invasive Species Council charged with submitting an Invasive Species Management Plan for the state next year.

There are more than 1,200 nonindigenous plants in New Jersey that have been introduced accidentally or intentionally mostly from Europe and Asia. Because these tend to have few if any natural predators or parasites on this continent, they are aggressive competitors for space and nutrients in New Jersey's natural areas. Invasive species also threaten New Jersey's agricultural resources through lost production and marketability for agricultural products. Nationally, damage from invasive species costs is estimated at \$123 billion annually.

Invasive species often form dense stands or thickets that crowd out native vegetation. Harmful invasive species not only threaten plant biodiversity but also affect wildlife that depend on the displaced native species for food. Invasive species alter and potentially harm the structure, composition and function of natural ecosystems.

A report entitled An Overview of Nonindigenous Plant Species in New Jersey is available on the DEP's Web site at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/natural/heritage/InvasiveReport.pdf>.

A copy of the Commissioner's policy directive is available at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/commissioner/policy/index.html>.