Gloucester County Nature Club
Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

December 2005

Program – The History of the Christmas Bird Count (Note: Program Change)
Thursday, December 8th at 7:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell

Coordinator - Deborah Maka

When many of us think of Christmas, we think of traditions big and small which may go as far back as our childhood. The Christmas Bird Count is another tradition that has been a part of people's lives since 1900. The Christmas Bird Count was started by a newly-formed Audubon Society as an alternative to another Christmas tradition called a "side hunt" which challenged people to kill as many feathered and furry creatures as possible. Learn how Frank Chapman and his colleagues turned a gruesome holiday tradition into one of the longest environmental surveys in existence. Various speakers will explore the history of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, explain how the Count is conducted, and share some experiences of the Count.

Field Trip – Audubon Christmas Bird Count
Saturday December 17th, Dawn 'til Dusk

Coordinator: Ron Kegel

Looking for a holiday tradition that doesn't include going to the mall? The Christmas Bird Count may be for you. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count was started in 1900 and the Gloucester County Nature Club coordinates the Gloucester County count. Groups will divide up a 15 mile count circle and census all the birds seen. Many groups will begin or end their day searching for owls, and use the daylight hours to identify raptors, warblers, sparrows, great blue herons, and many other birds. We invite you to join us in this wonderful tradition by joining one of the groups. The starting and ending time for each group is decided by the team organizer(s); generally it is at least dawn to dusk but that will vary by team. The National Audubon Society requires a $5 fee of all participants that is used for administrative costs. If you'd like to join the Count, please call Deborah Maka at 856-863-0330.

Note: Just because a team starts and ends at a certain time…. Doesn't mean everyone on that team has to do the same. Some teams have participants who come for part of the day (morning or afternoon). Some team leaders prefer that participants stay the whole time. It really depends on the team; please check with the leaders for details.

Field Trip Report: Avalon Sea Watch and Cape May Hawk Watch (11/05/05) - by Kris Mollenhauer

We stood on the jetty watching long chains of Black Scoters approaching from the north, flying in single file, with their living chain twisting about as they came closer. Through our binoculars, we were looking for a flash of white to identify any White-winged Scoters among them. It was quiet at the Avalon Sea Watch that mild morning. The Gannets were flying low over the waves, sometimes their whole six foot wingspan would disappear behind the rolling surf. It was easy to spot the immature dark gannets from the mature white birds with the black wing tips. Several pairs of common loons passed by from north to south over our heads. Next stop was the Hawk Watch platform at Cape May. Although we did not have the northeast winds that cause a large migration of raptors, we did get to observe a Black-throated Green warbler who was hanging around us for almost an hour. A couple of Ospreys were hovering over the marsh looking for fish in the water below. What a beautiful day to be outside. The peak fall foliage made the ride a pleasure. Our field trip leader Jeff Holt even spotted a pair of Bald Eagles at East Creek Lake on the ride down.

Conservation Corner

Topic 1 - Fast Track Law is Not Dead! by Loretta Dunne

The Fast Track Bill is being re-written by Senator Steven Sweeney. Experts who are concerned about the state of our environment and the threats to New Jersey due to sprawl have indicated that the Fast Track Law is so flawed that it should be scrapped, rather than rewritten. It is time for us to stand up again and speak out against Fast Track. Contact the new governor-elect, Jon Corzine, and make your concerns clear. And, once again, take the initiative to write a letter to the editor, expressing your views. We were successful in speaking out against aggressive development in the past and we can be again.

Corzine can still be contacted at:
208 White Horse Pike, Suite 18
Barrington, NJ 08007
Phone: 856-757-5353

He can also still be reached via email at http://corzine.senate.gov/contact.cfm.

Write to the Gloucester County Times:
The Gloucester County Times
309 S. Broad Street
Woodbury, NJ 08906
gcletters@sjnewsco.com

Topic 2 - Birding in the Delaware Bayshore Area by Loretta Dunne

New Jersey Audubon plans to publish a number of guides to birding in New Jersey. The first, "New Jersey Birding & Wildlife Trails: Delaware Bayshore," describes trails in Salem, Cumberland and Cape May Counties. It is an attractive, spiral bound book, a perfect companion for exploring the southern counties. For each site along the trails, there are directions, a site description, highlights and details about the site through the seasons. Call 1-800-VISITNJ to receive your own free copy of this guide.

Other Nature Notes

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

Programs-

January 12 – John James Audubon
February 9 – Non-Traditional Meeting: Nature Photos & Potluck Dishes

Field Trips-

January 14 (Sat.) – Full Moon Walk at Alcyon Park (Kris Mollenhauer)
February 11 (Sat.) – Driving Trip to West Barnegat Bay Shore (Gale Cannon and Karl Anderson)

Club Notes:

- **IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Club dues are normally collected in September. If you have not yet paid your dues for this year, please do so immediately in order to remain on the newsletter mailing list.
- The December Executive Committee meeting will be on December 4th at Karen Kravchuck'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.

- We're still looking for a field trip coordinator and secretary. Due the resignation of Bob Cassel, we're also looking for a program coordinator. If anyone is interested in helping out the club, please email Deb Maka at deborahann@backpacker.com or call 863-0330.
- 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.