



Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public.

December 2020

Programs

Monthly GCNC Programs are currently suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But stay tuned, as the situation is continually evolving.

Field Trip

Tranquility Trails Park
High Hill Road, Woolwich Township
Saturday December 12, 10:00am
Trip Leaders: Erik and Kris Mollenhauer

Come join us for a winter walk in one of Gloucester County's most recent parks. The one mile trail passes through old fields, lowland forest and you can get a view Raccoon Creek and the associated fresh water marshes. We will look at nature in winter, birds and trees.

The walk is limited to 10 participants, club members have priority. All participants must wear face masks and social distance.

The trail can be wet in places so wear appropriate footwear. Participants need to preregister.

Directions: From Interstate 295 Exit 13, follow Route 130 South for 3.1 miles. Turn left onto High Hill Road. Follow High Hill Road for 3.8 miles; park entrance will be on left.!

Masks are required for this trip and participants will be limited to allow for social distancing. Please register on the club's [Meetup page](#).

Gloucester County Christmas Bird Count

Hi folks. We are planning to conduct the Gloucester County Christmas Bird Count on **Saturday, December 19**. I've contacted the area leaders asking them if they are in favor of continuing while taking into consideration the CBC guidelines for Covid. Most said they are interested in proceeding. I am leaving it with each leader if they want assistance on the Count. Please contact them if you would like to participate.

Obviously caution would be foremost in our minds. Observing in safe pods is a necessity. Birding in vehicle you are comfortable and knowing the history of the people you are birding with is advised (i.e. family). Otherwise, separate vehicles and caravanning will be in order. Masks and social distancing will be a necessity too.

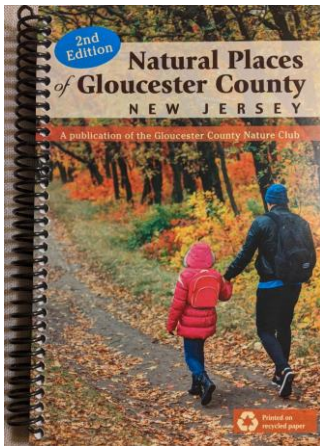


For example, Linda and I will be working Area 8 and anyone that joins us would have to follow along. Some leaders have said it would be fine to follow along, others are balking at having help, so please contact your leader and see what they are feeling. If a leader is not accepting assistance and you still want to go, let me know and I will try to hook you up with someone else.

This has been a trying year as we all know. It is making almost everything different, if not difficult. No harm in sitting this one out should you elect this option. Hopefully by next year things will be closer to normal. Here's hoping we can at least accomplish something this year. Let me know if you have questions. Thanks for your patience!

Ron Kegel, compiler

Natural Places of Gloucester County NJ - Second Edition now available!



It's here! Finally! And just in time for holiday gift giving! Our wildly popular **Natural Places of Gloucester County NJ** book is back as a 2nd Edition with a new fresh look, updated copy and new locations outdoors for you to get-out-and-go-to while staying distanced and safe. Just what you need to stuff stockings and find places full of natural beauty tucked away in our county.

The Natural Places Guide is one of the many ways the Nature Club provides valuable detailed information, not available elsewhere, about the plants, trees, birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians at over 35 local Natural Places. Each site description includes directions, address and parking information plus a map of the site to make visiting easy and enjoyable. For the Second Edition, information for existing sites has been brought up-to-date. Several new sites have also been added, including: Tall Pines State Preserve, Andoloro WMA, and Tranquility Trails.

Copies of **Natural Places of Gloucester County NJ** are now available for purchase at local retailers including:

- Words Matter - 52 S. Broadway, Pitman, NJ 08071
- Damingers Natural Pet Foods - 641 Main St, Sewell (Mantua Township), NJ 08080
- Wild Birds Unlimited Cherry Hill - 1619 N Kings Hwy, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034
- Wild Birds Unlimited Sicklerville - 609-B Berlin Cross Keys Rd Sicklerville, NJ 08081

The book is also available through the club's online store. To access the online store, [click here](#).

A New Nature Club Project for 2021: The Big Year Eco-Challenge

This past month the Nature Club's Executive Committee agreed to partner with Monarch Teacher Network and begin a new project in 2021: The Big Year Eco-Challenge (BYEC).

BYEC will be a year-long effort to identify and document all the plant and animal life of five natural areas in Gloucester County, and two additional sites beyond the county. Site leaders and small teams of volunteers will periodically visit the sites from January 1 through December 31, 2021 to identify as many species of wild plants and animals as they can find. The project will involve Club members and county residents using an app and website called iNaturalist to document biodiversity of the five sites. The iNaturalist app empowers ordinary people to participate in citizen science and to become more knowledgeable naturalists.

BYEC is based on an iNaturalist project that club members Jeff Mollenhauer and Karl Anderson did this past autumn on the Elephant Swamp Trail near Elmer. The work at that site (still ongoing) has identified over 700

species of plants, birds mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fungi and more! And it has revealed fascinating associations and relationships among creatures that inhabit that area.

The five project BYEC sites in Gloucester County will include Elephant Swamp Trail, Tall Pines State Preserve, Ceres Park, RiverWinds and Piney Hollow Preservation Area. All of these areas are featured in the newly released Natural Places of Gloucester County book. The sixth project site is located in Cincinnati Ohio: Otto Armleder Memorial Park. The seventh project site is yet to be identified.

The following Club members/County residents have volunteered to help survey the five Gloucester County sites: Rich Dilks, Marie Hageman (Tall Pines State Preserve), Jayne Rhynard, Marilyn Henry, Barb Bassett (Ceres Park)... Dan Ceravolo and family, Karl Anderson and Gale Cannon (Riverwinds Park), Jon Stippick, Joe Arsenault (Piney Hollow Preservation Area), Jeff Mollenhauer, Kris Mollenhauer, Erik Mollenhauer (Elephant Swamp Trail). Maria Keefe and Kevin Jeffers have also offered to help. Additional volunteers can be added to the teams if people are interested.

During the 2021 year, teams from the BYEC sites will engage in light-hearted competition ("challenges") to see which team and/or person identifies the most species and the most interesting life-stories at their site. The year-long challenge will be broken into four mini-challenges by season... each about 3 months in length... providing multiple opportunities for teams and individuals to share discoveries and to win a challenge and the associated bragging rights.

BYEC is a perfect project for this time of Covid-19 since site surveys can be carried out by individuals or teams of two to four socially distanced people... and there is no long-distance travel. Teams can visit their sites as often as they wish. Some knowledge of plants and animals is helpful but not necessary. What is necessary is a pair of eyes... curiosity... and a desire to learn more about the fascinating plants and animals of our natural places.

Jeff Mollenhauer will serve as Principal Investigator for the BYEC and will help train and support the site leaders. Karl Anderson has offered to serve as Principal Botanist for the sites. Monarch Teacher Network has secured funding to produce a film about the year-long BYEC project. The finished film will feature sites and teams involved in the surveys. Waterworks Productions... which produced films for Monarch Teacher Network and the "Mad Hatter Tree Party"... will be the producer for the BYEC film.

As the 2021 year unfolds, we will provide periodic updates in the Newsletter discussing what BYEC teams have found.

If you want to know more about the Big Year Eco-Challenge or volunteer in some capacity, contact: Erik Mollenhauer at emollen213@gmail.com

Go to the following website to view a short video with James Bailey that illustrates some of the power of iNaturalist. As of November 2020, Bailey has over 12,800 species posted on iNaturalist.

[An Interview with silversea starsong · iNaturalist](#)

Natural Events for the month of December

- Geminid meteor shower – peaks on the night of December 13.
- Shortest day of the year is December 22.
- Bald eagles arrive from the north and winter in New Jersey.
- Raptor migration ends mid-month.
- Great horned owls are pairing up this month – listen for their calls
- Watch for late waterfowl migrants – shovelers, mergansers and goldeneyes.
- Take part in a local Christmas Count.

Club Notes:

- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Karen Kravchuck at blackbirdsinging@hotmail.com or call 609-617-6693 (cell).
- 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 GCNC Newsletter, PO Box 563, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15th of the preceding month.
- The December Executive Committee meeting will be held online via videoconference on Sunday December 6th. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.

Please remember to help out the Gloucester County Nature Club while shopping online!



With the COVID-19 pandemic hanging over our heads, all of us will likely be doing a lot more shopping online this Holiday season. Don't forget that shopping at Amazon can also benefit the Gloucester County Nature Club at **NO extra cost** to you!

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. You can choose from nearly one million organizations to support.

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. The purchase price is the amount paid for the item minus any rebates and excluding shipping & handling, gift-wrapping fees, taxes, or service charges. You may even use your existing Amazon.com account for your purchases.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.