

Gloucester County Nature Club

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

April 2001

REGULAR MEETING -Thurs., April 5, 2001 - 7:00 pm – Pitman High School Auditorium, Linden & Edgemoor Aves. Pitman (Edgemoor Ave. intersects Woodbury-Glassboro Rd., Linden Ave. intersects Holly Ave.)

Bob Cassel, Program Coordinator, 478-2496

Note the change of location and meeting date!!!

Raptor Project:

The Raptor Project: a close encounter with 15-20 different kinds of LIVE EAGLES, HAWKS, OWLS and FALCONS. Raptor Project stars include “Cody” (a Golden Eagle with a seven foot wingspan), “Snowman” (an Arctic Snowy Owl), “Paragon” (a Peregrine Falcon) and “Tiny Tina” a Saw-whet Owl. This is the largest and most varied collection of traveling raptors in the world. The presenter and Project Director, Jonathan Wood, is a Master Falconer and Wildlife Rehabilitator, bringing unique insights, observations and humor to this nationally acclaimed show. His program emphasizes awareness of the vital role of raptors in the environment, their conservation, rehabilitation (of injured birds) and captive breeding programs (to re-establish endangered species). Presenting up to 1,000 educational programs a year, the Raptor Project has been seen on PBS, Good Morning America and The Today Show, to name a few. Great for families.

FIELD TRIP –Sunday, April 22, 2001 – Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve, New Hope PA -12 noon – Meet at Timberline Shopping Center on Woodbury-Glassboro Rd. in Sewell

Kris Mollenhauer, Field Trip Coordinator, 589-4387

Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve, New Hope PA, is a botanical collection of Pennsylvania native plants in a natural setting. Over two dozen trails lead you through beautiful woodlands and bright meadows with more than 1,000 species of native plants. In April we can expect to see Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Bellworts, Wood Anemone, Spicebush, Trillium and many more plants in bloom. There is a visitor center and a gift shop where you can purchase seeds or native plants. Free admission. Bring binoculars. Check out their website at www.bhwp.org.

This Spring the Nature Club is offering a series of five mini-field trips (each lasting 1-2 hours) highlighting some unique signs and sounds of springtime in Gloucester County.

Tuesday, March 27, (7 pm) – Stalking Spring Peepers after Dark – Scotland Run Park

If you have never met a peeper, you should know that a peeper is a tree frog. The peeper is no bigger than a minute—maybe three-quarters of an inch, greenish-brown, pop-eyed. Many people associate the first peeper calls in March with the entrance of Spring. This he does by puffing up his tiny throat, thrusting his head forward, and crying PEEP-er, PEEP-er, PEEP, PEEP, PEEP-er. They are found in small, temporary or semi-permanent ponds or swamps in low, brushy, second growth woodlands. Bring waders or the tallest boots you have and a flashlight. We will meet at the visitor’s center at Scotland Run County Park in Clayton, across the road from the dam.

Monday, April 2, (5 pm) – On the Trail of *Trailing Arbutus* – Elk Township

The Trailing Arbutus (& swamp pink) are wild plants that don't grow in domestic situations. They need unpolluted, undisturbed situations with ecological integrity. This rare plant (*Epigaea repens*) blooms in early spring; its creeping stems bear clusters of sweetly fragrant pink or white flowers that are sometimes hidden by the hairy evergreen leaves. In its native habitat, trailing arbutus seems to prefer the acid soil of the pinewoods of the eastern part of North America. It is the provincial flower of Nova Scotia and the state flower of Massachusetts, where a law protects the plant.

Sometimes called mayflower, or ground laurel, it is one of the best-loved American wildflowers, said by the poet, John Greenleaf Whittier to have been the first blossom seen on these shores by the Pilgrims. Meet at the WaWa store in Richwood (on the eastbound side of Rt. 322.)

Tuesday, April 24, (5:30 pm) – Searching for the Elusive *Swamp Pink* – Glassboro Wildlife Mgt. Area

Come out and search for the rare and endangered Swamp Pink (*Helonias bullata*). In April its one-to-three foot stem is topped by a one-to-three inch long cluster of pink flowers dotted with pale blue anthers. One of the first wetland plants to bloom, their fiery pink flowers stand out against the drab brown colors of the wetlands in early spring. This beautiful flower exists within forested wetlands bordering meandering streams and Atlantic white-cedar swamps in Gloucester County. In the past, members of the Nature Club have been involved with plant rescues of the swamp pink from development sites.

We will meet at Glassboro Wildlife Management Area in Glassboro/Clayton at the intersection of Rt. 47 and Carpenter Ave. Directions from Rt. 47, 1.5 mi. north of Rt. 610 (Academy St., Clayton); turn right (east) onto Carpenter Ave. (dirt) across from the County complex next to Together, Inc.

FUTURE EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Field Trips:

Monday, June 4, (5:30) pm – Summer Snow in Gloucester County: *Mountain Laurel* in Bloom – Ceres Park, Mantua

Saturday, June 2 – In Search of Great Trees: Rambles with Mimi. A driving tour of some of South Jersey's most spectacular trees, led by none other than Mimi Glass.

Programs/Event

May 10: “Underwater Shipwrecks and Marine Life of the New Jersey Coast”

Participate in the 2001 Gloucester County Bird Quest, May 12, 7 am – 12 noon

The Gloucester County Nature Club is organizing a unique education event for May: the 2001 Gloucester County Bird Quest. This year's Quest is co-sponsored by conectiv, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, Daminger's Country Store & Wild Bird Depot, D'Angelo's Greenhouses, Eagle Retirement & Investment Planning, Educational Information & Resource Center, Equity Bank N.A., the Gloucester County Education Association, Gloucester County Parks & Recreation, Heritage's Dairy Stores, Platt's Farm Market, Shop-Rite Supermarkets, Drs. Simmerman & Floyd, Optometrists, South Jersey Gas Company, Wheelabrator Gloucester Company, L.P. and the local environmental commissions of Deptford, East Greenwich, Franklin Twp, Harrison Twp, Logan Twp, Mantua Twp, Pitman, South Harrison Twp., Wenonah, Westville and Woolwich Twp.

The Quest will take place on Saturday May 12, from 7 AM to 12 noon in Gloucester County. During this time, teams of 4-8 people will visit parks and natural sites of their choice in the county and find as many different bird species as they can. The purpose of the Bird Quest is to discover the natural areas of Gloucester County... to learn

how to identify the unique birds that live in and migrate through the county.... and to have fun with friends, colleagues and family. Because the Quest is an educational event, at least half of each team's members should be novice birders: people who know very little about bird identification but who are interested in learning. At 12 noon, all teams report to Atkinson Memorial County Park on Delsea Drive to report results, and for a free lunch, t-shirts and prizes.

Last year's Gloucester County Bird Quest, the first ever, attracted 125 participants, organized in 25 teams. The teams included teachers, school groups, scout troops, environmental commissions, families and residents of Gloucester and neighboring counties. Each team was led by a reasonably knowledgeable birder (RKB). The winning team (The Sapsuckers) located 72 species but clearly all participants felt like winners because of how much they learned and enjoyed the Quest. This year the Nature Club is planning for as many as 300 participants, including more teachers, school and youth groups.

The 2001 Gloucester County Bird Quest will occur on the same day as International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), a nationwide effort to draw attention to the plight and needs of migratory birds. The 2001 IMBD theme (*Shade the Coffee – Shelter the Birds*) hi-lights the importance of shade-grown coffee plantations in Central America as critical winter habitat for migratory birds. The colorful IMBD t-shirt, which is being used as the foundation for the Gloucester County Quest t-shirts, features three migratory songbirds in a shade-grown coffee plantation. Note: You can purchase shade-grown coffee through The National Arbor Foundation, 100 Arbor Ave. Nebraska City, NE 68410; 888-448-7337; www.arborday.org. They will ship the rain forest shade-grown coffee to your door on a monthly basis for less than \$20.00.

A county map and other materials are provided to each registered team, along with opportunities to attend free field trainings in the days before the Quest. Professional development credits will be available to teachers who pre-register for the five-hour event. A \$6 fee per participant covers the cost of lunch, t-shirt, prizes etc. To obtain more information and a team registration form, or to join a team, contact Anne Rossell at EIRC, 606 Delsea Drive, Sewell, NJ 08080. Information can also be requested by phone (856-582-7000 x 110), fax (856-582-4206) or email at anner@eirc.org

New Guidelines for Communications Towers

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recently issued guidelines to decrease the number of birds killed after colliding with communications towers. The service estimates that more than 4 million birds dies each year in North America after colliding with towers. That danger particularly affects 350 species of night-migrating songbirds.

Created with help from the telecommunications industry, researchers, wildlife agencies and bird conservation groups, the guidelines include recommendations to:

- consolidate new antennas on existing towers or structures
- build towers as short as possible without guide wires or lighting
- place new towers away from wetlands and other areas where birds are known to gather
- use white strobe lights on towers that must be lit for aviation safety

The recommendations precede the anticipated construction of 100,000 more towers in the next 10 years. The Federal Communications Commission has registered more than 75,000 towers, with nearly 45,000 measuring greater than 200 feet in height. Of the anticipated new towers, 1,000 likely will stand more than 1,000 feet tall—a hazard to migrating birds. For more information, visit <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/issues/tblcont.html>

Environmental Info/Nature Notes - April, 2001

Gloria Caccia, Environmental Coordinator, 582-0980

Action Alert: re: Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, because of inadequate funding, has declared a moratorium on putting new species on the endangered list. The Service indicates that, to deal with the current backlog of candidate species and critical habitats, it would need about \$100 million a year, but they received only \$7 million this year to carry out these responsibilities. Unfortunately, species on the brink of extinction cannot wait for eventual consideration. They need action now. The Fish & Wildlife Service is part of the Department of the Interior. Please write to Interior Secretary Gale Norton and ask her to request sufficient funding for the endangered-species program budget and to end the endangered-species listing moratorium. Her address is: Secretary Gale Norton, Department of the Interior, 1849 C St. NW, Washington DC 20240 or go to <http://congress.nw.dc.us/cgi-bin/alertpr.pl?dir=nwf&alert=181> and click on the Take Action button to e-mail your request.

Plant a tree...cool the globe

Although we live in a society dependent on automobiles and fossil fuel-generated electricity, we can reduce our emissions and offset those we cannot entirely eliminate. Planting trees, which pulls carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere naturally, is one of the most effective means of offsetting CO².

How many trees do you need to plant to offset your carbon emissions? American Forests' Personal Climate Change Calculator can quickly help you calculate the effect your lifestyle has on our Earth's climate. It can also tell you how many corresponding trees you should plant. Trees planted through American Forests' Global ReLeaf Forests program cost just \$1 per tree and help restore damaged ecosystems nationwide. Go to http://www.americanforests.org/clmt_chg/carbcalc.php3. Warning: You may be shocked at the impact of your lifestyle.

Cowbirds: Unwelcome Nest-Guests

In March, a small relative of blackbirds and grackles that lives year-round in the southern U.S. but spreads north in spring may become quite noticeable on the ground in fields and pastures. Named for their feeding habits, cowbird flocks often gather near horses and cows to feast on the insects those animals attract. But the cowbird's behavior at nesting time is what has earned it its fame—or rather, its notoriety.

Male cowbirds are about seven inches long with a brown head and neck—the rest of the body is black and iridescent. The all-gray female is less distinctive, but she can typically be seen flocking with the males. The cowbird can seem a rather comical creature with a slow, awkward walk and often upraised tail.

Less amusing is the cowbirds' habit of laying their eggs in the nests of other birds. Most birds need 20 minutes to an hour to lay an egg, but the female cowbird takes less than a minute; she leaves her egg in secret while the nest's rightful owner is away. The unwitting nesters will usually accept the cowbird egg and raise the baby cowbird as their own. Unfortunately, cowbird eggs hatch sooner than the eggs of other species and the young cowbirds grow quickly, using their size to their advantage in getting more food from the parents. This cowbird parasitism is actually endangering a number of species of birds.

Prevent Spread of West Nile Virus

In the battle against West Nile virus—the sometimes-fatal disease transmitted by mosquitoes—many agencies use pesticides in urban and suburban areas to kill the carriers. The virus has affected 60 avian species, including Merlin, Great Horned Owl, Gray Catbird, warblers, gulls, swans and Bald Eagle. Officials at American Bird Conservancy urge the use of measures deemed less toxic and harmful to birds and other fauna. ABC suggests using nontoxic microbes and insect growth hormone regulators to control mosquitoes at the larval stage, the primary strategy recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Birders can aid the fight against West Nile virus by cleaning out all standing water on their property. “The public can also contact mosquito abatement officials to request that they use the more efficient and less damaging control method of larvaciding as opposed to adulticiding.”

Keep Cats Inside

Domestic cats kill hundreds of millions of birds each year, yet many cat lovers don't realize it. The irony is that allowing cats to roam free results in millions of cat deaths also. The American Bird Conservancy is partnering with The Humane Society of the U.S. and American Humane Association to raise awareness nationwide—especially in schools. The organizations' “Cats Indoors!” campaign offers several tips to prevent cats from killing birds:

- Provide a safe, outside enclosure, such as a screened porch, or leash your cat.
- Provide window shelves where cats can monitor the outdoors.
- Clean litter boxes regularly.
- Play with your cat each day. Paper bags and cardboard boxes are sources of unending delight.
- Plant kitty grass (available from pet supply stores) in indoor pots so your cat can graze.
- Keep kittens indoors, and they will usually show no desire to venture outside as adults.

The campaign also sponsors a national children's poster competition and a “National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day.” This year, the day will be recognized on Saturday, May 12. Last year's poster competition drew more than 300 entries. To enter this year's contest, check the Conservancy's website at 222.abcbirds.org.

Nearly 150 years ago, the philosopher-naturalist Henry David Thoreau commented on biodiversity loss.

I seek acquaintance with Nature—to know her moods and manners. Primitive nature is the most interesting to me. I take infinite pains to know all the phenomena of spring, for instance, thinking that I have here the entire poem, and then, to my chagrin, I learn that it is but an imperfect copy that I possess and have read, that my ancestors have torn out many of the first leaves and grandest passages, and mutilated it in many places. I should not like to think that some demigod had come before me and picked out some of the best of the stars. I wish to know an entire heaven and an entire earth. All the great trees and beasts, fishes and fowl are gone.

- Henry David Thoreau

Community Events

Correction: Maria Musciano-Keefe's e-mail address was incorrect in the last newsletter. It should be: kityblu@juno.com.

The Nature Club is interested in partnering with local environmental commissions to do a joint exhibit/display at community events. Please contact our new Community Events Coordinator, Maria Keefe, at Kityblu@juno.com or 856-627-7010 if you might be willing to help man a Nature Club exhibit at one of the following events... or if you know of

another local event that the Club should exhibit at... or if you are a member of a local environmental commission and would like to partner an exhibit with the Nature Club. Maria is developing a display that can be moved around to various events. If anyone would like to work with her to develop the display, please contact her.

Upcoming events (we will need Club volunteers to man the display)

- Saturday, March 31: Pet Carnival Day at Daminger's Country Store & Wild Bird Depot, Barnsboro
- Saturday, April 21: Washington Lake Park annual Earth Day celebration, 10-4 PM.
- Saturday, April 21: Pitman Environmental Commission's annual Earth Day celebration 8-1 PM.
- Saturday, May 19: Deptford Day.
- Sunday, June 10: Gloucester County Water Fest at Scotland Run Park, 11-4 PM.
- Saturday, July 7: Date tentative. Mini-grant clean-up. At least 15 people will be needed to clean up litter at a very interesting, little-known Gloucester County natural site.

Gloucester County Diversity Project Workshops (free)

- Bog Turtles Training Workshop: Saturday April 7, 9-12, site to be determined.
- Pineland Herps Workshop: Wed, April 11 (evening), site to be determined.
- Grassland Birds Workshop: Sat, April 28, 9-12, site to be determined.
- Forest Songbirds Workshop: Sat, May 5, 9-12, site to be determined.
- Scrub/Shrub Songbirds Workshop: Sat, May 19, 9-12, site to be determined.
- Freshwater mussels Workshop: Sat, June 2, 9-12, site to be determined.

Go to website <http://www.state.nj.us/wwwboard/gloucester/messages/44.html> for more information, sites and to sign up, or contact Steve Paturzo at 609-292-1231 or Melissa Craddock at 609-777-4136.

Executive Committee Meeting: The Executive Committee Meeting will be held on Sunday, April 1st at 6:30 PM at the home of Deb Maka, 619 Quincy Ct, Glassboro, NJ (off Rte 322, west of Glassboro) RSVP at 863-0330.

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 15th of each month, to:
Erik Mollenhauer, 606 Delsea Dr. Sewell NJ 08080, 582-7000 X128