

Gloucester County Nature Club

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

May 2001

REGULAR MEETING – Thurs., May 10, 2001 – 6:30 pm – EIRC Building, 606 Delsea Drive (Rt. 47)...north of Pitman near the Dairy Queen

Bob Cassel, Program Coordinator, 478-2496

Note the early start of this meeting! Plant Sale, from 6:30-7:00 PM. The May meeting is host to our traditional plant sale. We count on members to bring some cullings from their own gardens to be offered for sale, as a fundraiser for the Club... and for members to purchase a few new plants to take back to your garden. So come prepared! And don't come late or you may find the best plants are already sold!

Underwater Shipwrecks and Marine Life of the New Jersey Coast"

A desert off the coast of New Jersey? Yes, the underwater shelf of New Jersey's coast is flat and sandy. The numerous shipwrecks, possibly more than 2000, serve as habitats for fish and invertebrates. Also, New Jersey's aggressive artificial reef program is productive in the same way. Herb Segars, a professional photographer whose work has been published in National Geographic, National Wildlife, Natural History and numerous other magazines worldwide, comes from Brick, New Jersey. His program of slides and narration will give an underwater experience you never imagined. We have asked him to bring along the equipment he uses to capture life under the sea.

FIELD TRIP –Sat., May 12, 2001 – Gloucester County Bird Quest 2001 – Gloucester Co. sites, 7 am - 12 noon – followed by lunch at Atkinson County Park picnic pavilion at noon

Bird Quest Coordinator, 582-7000 X128 or X110

It's not too late to sign up for the 2001 Gloucester County Bird Quest, which will take place from 7 AM to 12 noon, May 12, in Gloucester County. Last year's Quest, the first ever, attracted 125 participants, organized in 25 teams. Teams consisted of school groups, scout troops, environmental commission, families and friends, young and old. This year the Nature Club is planning for as many as 300 participants. During the Quest, teams of 4-8 (or more) people visit parks and natural sites of their choice in Gloucester County to find as many different bird species as they can. You don't have to know anything to join a team; novices are welcome and even essential. 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. The purpose of the Quest is for people 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. After searching for birds for five hours, all teams meet at Atkinson Memorial County Park on Delsea Drive to report results, and get a free lunch, free Quest T-shirts and prizes. This year's colorful Quest T-shirt features three migratory songbirds in a shade-grown coffee plantation to hi-light the importance of international cooperation needed to keep New Jersey's birds going in the future. During the week prior to the Bird Quest, the Nature Club will conduct morning and/or evening bird walks open to anyone who wants to improve their skills and knowledge of the County. For more information and a

registration form, to form a team or to join a team on May 12, call Anne Rossell at 856-582-7000 x110. The Nature Club is offering pre-Quest field trainings for any participants (including RKBs) who want to be better prepared for May 12. Walks will be led by an experienced birder and biologists from the NJ Endangered/Nongame Species program who are using the walks as additional training for the Gloucester County Diversity Project. The walks are open to people of all ages. You do not need to pre-register.

Bird Quest training opportunities:

- **Saturday morning, May 5**, 9-12 am - Forest Birds Training (call Melissa at 609-777-4136 or Steve at 609-292-1231 to find out site location)
- **Sunday morning, May 6**, 7-8 am - Marsh Birds Training, at Greenwich County Park. Meet in the parking lot at the entrance to the park no later than 7.
- **Sunday evening, May 6**, 6-7 pm - Birding Basics, at Washington Lake Park, Washington Twp; meet at entrance off Chapel Heights Rd (near Gloucester County Community Church) no later than 6 pm
- **Monday morning, May 7**, 6-7 am - Forest Songbirds, at Ceres Park in Mantua Twp. Meet in the parking lot at the entrance of the park no later than 6 am.
- **Tuesday morning, May 8**, 6-7 am - River and Marsh Birds, at Wheelabrator, Westville. Meet at wildlife refuge parking area on the right of the weigh station, no later than 6 am.
- **Tuesday evening, May 8**, 6-7 pm - Scrub/shrub Birds, at Scotland Run County Park. Meet at the nature center parking lot, near the dam, no later than 6 pm.
- **Wednesday morning, May 9**, 6-7 am - Grassland Birds, at Chestnut Branch Park. Meet at the main parking lot inside the park, no later than 6 am.

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

Should anyone doubt that nature provides splendors which are unrivaled by any that man produces, I would advise them to join us on this woods walk when the mountain laurel is in bloom in Ceres Park. These were planted and tended by nature and are over 12 feet tall in places. *Kalmia latifolia* is one of the most beautiful shrubs in the world. The eminent Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus named *Kalmia* after New Jersey resident Pater Kalm, who in 1748 remarked: “The Swedes have named it spoon tree because the Indians used to make their spoons and trowels of its wood.” We will use a hand lens to take a close look at the starlike pink and white flowers. They are a bit like a mousetrap. Wear good walking shoes and bring binoculars as the woods will be alive with birds. The hike is about a mile; we may cross a stream and walk up and down some hills. Meet at Ceres Park, Mantua, which is on Main St about ½ mile east of the Barnsboro Inn, or about ¼ mile west of the Rt 55 overpass.

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, include a 100-year-old Holly tree, a Monkey Puzzle Tree and the historic Clement Oak.

Gloria Caccia, Environmental Coordinator, 582-0980

Coffee and Birds: Making the Connection



Your choice of coffee can help save habitat for migratory birds!!

What does coffee have to do with birds? Plenty! In the mid-elevations of Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and Colombia, **most of the forests still standing are in traditional coffee plantations.** These provide the *last refuge* for birds that have lost their habitat to the vast destruction of tropical forests. Coffee, a shade-loving shrub, flourishes under the canopy of diverse tree species. Hummingbirds, swallows, warblers, orioles, tanagers and other native and migratory birds find a safe haven in the remaining forests of shade coffee plantations. *Scientists and birdwatchers have noticed a marked decline in migratory bird populations over the last 25 years.*

The tree canopy in shade coffee plantations protects the soil from erosion and provides a natural mulch for coffee plants, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers and herbicides. Prior to the last 20 years or so, nearly all commercial coffee production was managed under the canopy of shade trees. But debt-strapped nations seeking to boost exports have taken deliberate steps to "modernize" growing practices away from shade coffee.

Sun coffee plantations produce higher yields, but at serious social and environmental costs. Converting a traditional coffee farm into a technified operation involves clear cutting the forest. A casualty of this conversion is biodiversity. Studies in Colombia and Mexico found 94-97% fewer bird species in sun grown coffee plantations than in shade grown coffee because most of the birds are found in the canopy of the shade coffee plantations and very few forage in the coffee plants. Coffee plants exposed to the open sun are more susceptible to disease and require large applications of expensive chemicals. Small farmers can't afford the increased costs. The removal of shade trees eliminates the fuel wood, timber and fruit crops that often serve as insurance for growers when coffee prices are low or when crops fail. Even though higher yields are attractive to large grower, flooding the coffee market is economically risky over the long term because prices fall as supplies increase (i.e. if everyone technifies, there will be too much coffee). Until now, coffee importers, roaster, and retailers haven't had a reason to track whether their product is grown in the shade or in the sun. But due to consumer awareness of the impact of technified coffee on the environment, people are starting to ask for shade coffee.

*US Coffee drinkers make up one-third of the world coffee market. By purchasing shade grown coffee, we help keep shade coffee economically viable and preserve increasingly scarce habitat for migratory birds. **If you can't find shade-grown coffee in your supermarket, be sure to ask the manager to carry it in the future. The vote of your wallet counts!***

"Let's be clear: George W. Bush has declared war on the environment..."

Statement by Senator Barbara Boxer on President Bush's Environmental Record; March 22, 2001

Let's look at President Bush's environmental record after only 60 days in office. He wants to drill in a wildlife refuge. He backed down on a promise to the American people to curb the greenhouse gas, CO2. He moved to block efforts to protect a third of our national forests from roads and logging. He repealed the rule that requires mining companies not to destroy the environment or endanger public health. Now in a stunning announcement, the Bush Administration repealed tough scientific based standards for arsenic in drinking water.

I've been in elected office for 25 years and I have never met one person who defends high levels of arsenic in our

drinking water. The arsenic standard that the Bush Administration has put into effect as of now, is a standard set in 1942. It ignores years of scientific research. And it does not come close to meeting the worldwide accepted standard of 10 parts per billion. Every one of our trading partners in the European Union has this 10 parts per billion standard that he is repealing....

Let's be clear. We believe that George W. Bush has declared war on the environment. But we are here today to tell him that we will fight him in that war – regulation by regulation, legislation by legislation, standard by standard, confrontation by confrontation. We know that exposure to unsafe levels of arsenic causes all kinds of cancer. Lung cancer, skin cancer, and bladder cancer. We know that it causes other severe health problems, including damage to the central nervous system and cardiovascular disease. We know that it can cause reproductive problems and birth defects. Studies conducted by the National Academy of Sciences have shown that 1 in every 100 people who drink water containing arsenic at the old standard may develop cancer. That's a risk factor 10,000 times higher than the amount allowed by EPA in food.

Congress recognized the undeniable health threats posed by arsenic several years ago, passing the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996. This legislation, which passed unanimously by the Senate, called upon EPA to update its standard for arsenic in drinking water by January 2001. EPA followed through with this task by setting a new drinking water standard in January at 10 parts per billion. This standard is based on a decade of sound, peer-reviewed science and will improve drinking water for 13 million people once fully implemented. We need this standard. But instead, the Bush Administration has ignored the science....

President Bush we will NOT stand by while you turn back the clock on our public health standards. Rest assured: If you won't do what is in the best interest of the American people, we will.

Handwritten letters are most effective. To find out who your lawmakers are and their contact information, visit: <http://www.vote-smart.org/index.phtml> You can also send email comments directly to the President at: president@whitehous.gov The online comment section for the White House seems to have been eliminated. We suggest sending an inquiry to the webmaster at the site listed below, asking why you can no longer comment online other than to the President's direct email. There is also no longer an (800) number given for calling the White House. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

Community Events

The Nature Club is partnering with local environmental commissions to do joint exhibits/displays at community events. Please contact our new Community Events Coordinator, Maria Keefe at kityblu@juno.com or 856-627-7010 if you are able to help or if you know of another event where the Club should exhibit.

We will need Club volunteers to man the displays:

- 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)

- 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.

Congratulations to everyone who helped plan and execute the Nature Club's April program. **The Raptor Project program was attended by 350 people, young and old, quite possibly a record for attendance at a Club meeting.** And people weren't disappointed! A spectacular show of 15 hawks, owls and eagles was presented in the Pitman High School auditorium on Thursday, April 5. Thanks to Pitman school district for hosting the event, and for Mr. Warren Swartwood for working with us. It was hard to say what part of the program was the hi-light... the Golden Eagle flying across the auditorium, the Snowy Owl, or the vast amount of information presented by Mr. Jonathan Wood. Mr. Wood has offered to come back again next year for another Club program; meantime, anyone who wants to see him sooner can catch the program on Tuesday, July 3 at The Wetlands Institute (www.wetlandsinstitute.org).

Congratulations to Kris Mollenhauer on a string of successful field trips this past month... 22 people on the *Spring Peepers* trip on March 27 at Scotland Run, after dark (**and thanks to Jill Taylor**, Scotland Run naturalist, for her help/time with this trip)...

16 people on the *Trailing Arbutus* trip on April 2 in Elk Township, 9 people on the *Bowman's Hill* wildflower trip on April 22, and 26 people on the *Swamp Pink* trip in Glassboro Wildlife Management area on April 24.

Congratulations to Maria Musciano-Keefe and her crew of Club volunteers who helped man the exhibits at Damingers' Pet Carnival Day on March 31 and the Earth Day Celebrations on April 21 in Pitman, and in Washington Township. And a huge round of applause for Maria and her mom, Marge Musciano, who spent many hours, with some help from Bill Connison and Deb Maka, building and sewing two brand-new, free-standing, portable display backdrops for future exhibits. Standing seven feet high, they only take minutes to assemble. The two exhibits were first put into operation at the Earth Day Community events, and were a big success.

The Migration is Here...

If you live in Gloucester County and are home this May, it's time to discover the spectacle of migration. Weather is the key. In spring, birds surge north on a warm front. Rising temperatures and southerly breezes following cold or rainy weather are a formula for migration. Most migrants fly at night. By morning they are seeking habitat to rest and feed in. Habitat means trees for many of the migrants, especially flowering trees. Most late April and May migrants are insect-eaters, which is why they migrate so late. Flowering trees attract pollinating insects which in turn attract migrating birds. And flowering trees don't just mean trees with big, showy flowers. May species of oaks also flower, more subtly, in early to mid-May. The peak of the warbler migration seems timed to catch the oaks in flower. If your home is blessed with tall oaks, you are in perfect habitat to find spring migrants. Concentrate your efforts on the south and east side of oak woodlots. These are the areas that catch the morning sun and warm quickly. On cool mornings, insect activity will be greatest here. Look for sparks of color, darting movement and snatches of song. Feeding warblers dart quickly among the branches. By the time spring migrants reach New Jersey the males are bursting with color and song as a result of a jolt of hormones. In the flood of spring migrants you may find six species of vireos, six species of spot-breasted thrushes, 35 species of warblers, plus

cuckoos, flycatchers, tanagers, orioles and assorted other species. They begin to arrive in early April; Louisiana Waterthrush is often the first. Migration peaks in late April through the third week in May and dwindles until, by mid-June, the last Morning Warbler and Magnolia Warbler pass by. You don't have to go far to sample the migration; perhaps only as far as your backyard, or the nearest woodlot. Take a seven or eight-power pair of binoculars to see these energetic birds. --- *Abstracted from NJ Audubon magazine article by Pete Dunne, Spring 2001 issue.*

SPECIAL INVITATION TO NATURE CLUB MEMBERS...
for "the experience of a lifetime"...

If you can get a day off from work during the week, plan on joining biologists of the NJ Endangered/Nongame Species program and an international team of scientists, who will be banding shorebirds on the beaches of Delaware Bay, this coming May. Starting in (roughly) the second week of May, large, starving flocks of shorebirds charge in from their South American wintering grounds to feed on horseshoe crab eggs. Of the 15 shorebird species that come to the bay, the Red Knot is the most daring, flying 8,000 miles from the southern tip of South America, burning off nearly half their body weight in a 48-hour, continuous flight from the shores of Brazil. They will attempt to double their body weight in two weeks of feeding in Delaware Bay, before beginning a 2,000 mile flight to their Arctic breeding grounds.

The fear is that the Delaware Bay crab population is declining, and therefore the critical eggs that fuel this incredible feat of bird migration, are dwindling. The shorebird migration is an age-old epic that is at the heart of the Bay's heritage. Each year, for the past several year, scientists have gathered on the beaches of Delaware Bay to trap, band, weigh and release hundreds of these birds, gathering the information that is needed to understand and protect this phenomenon. You can help... and get "the experience of a lifetime" in the bargain. Volunteers are needed to help with all aspects of the banding. If you are a Nature Club member and can spare some time, your help is needed especially on Friday, May 4, but you can also participate May 7, 8, or 9. Please contact Erik Mollenhauer or Anne Rossell at 582-7000 X128 or X110 to pre-register, get driver's directions, a list of things to bring, etc.

Executive Committee Meeting: The Executive Committee Meeting will be held on Sunday, May 6 at 6:30 PM at the home of Brian & Paula Hayes, 413 N. Stockton St., Wenonah, following the Greenwich Park Marsh birds training.

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