

Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public
September 2004

Program– Cape May, A Journey Through the Looking Glass
Thurs, Sept 9th at 7:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell



Program Coordinator- Bob Cassel 478-2496

Our September program will feature Kevin T. Karlson, a professional wildlife photographer and avid birder from Cape May County. Kevin's work is widely published in numerous birding magazines and journals, as well as in field guides, calendars, and CD ROM's. Kevin recently contributed over 800 photographs to a major revision of the CD ROM "The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Guide to Birds of North America." Kevin has traveled the world photographing birds but still finds his home Cape May among his favorite places. This program will feature slides and include lots of Natural History illustrating the magic of Cape May.

Field Trip – Autumn in the Pines
Sunday September 26, 10 AM to mid-afternoon

Trip Leader: Karl Anderson

Co-leader: Kris Mollenhauer

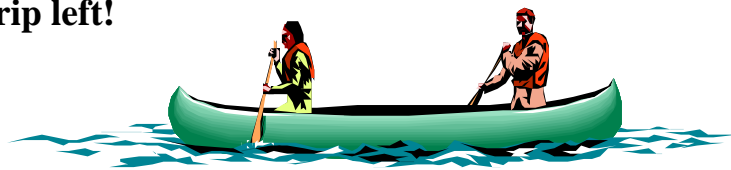


Meet at the parking lot by the office at Brendan Byrne State Forest (formerly Lebanon S.F.). After a brief introduction to pine barrens ecology, we will drive south on Route 563 through Chatsworth, the "Capital of the Pines" with stops at several locations for fall flowers including several pine barrens specialties, plus scenery and a bit of local history. There will be relatively little walking, but be prepared for about 30 miles of driving in the course of the day. Bring lunch and beverage. Binoculars are optional. There are rest rooms at the meeting place.

Directions: Route 295 north to Route 70; Route 70 east for about 23 miles to the intersection with Route 72 at the "Four Mile" traffic circle; continue east on Route 70 for about one mile; watch for Brendan Byrne S.F. sign on right. Turn in, and continue on this road to the office. Travel time from Woodbury is about one hour.

Also, there's one remaining Summer trip left!

Kayaking/Canoeing trip
September 1, Wednesday 6:00 PM
Riverwinds, West Deptford
Trip Leader: Deb Maka



Co leader: Paula Hayes

Join us for a trip down one of the local Gloucester County waterways. You will need your own canoe or kayak and transportation to the launch site. Experienced people only please! This is a great way to see the "other" side of our streams.

Directions: From South on 130/295 take exit 21; make a left at the light onto Crown Point Road. At the next light make a right onto Grove St. At the next light, the intersection of Grove St. and Delaware St (640), make a left into Riverwinds. Meet at the gazebo by the river.

Field Trip Report - Brightview Farm (6/12/04) by Karen and Ellie Allen

Just a note to let (trip leaders) Bob Duke and Kris Mollenhauer know how much Ellie and I enjoyed GCNC's field trip to Brightview Farm. From the first moment we read about the outing in the newsletter, we knew it held lots of promise.

First, neither of us has ever seen Bobolinks, Dickcissels or Meadow Larks, so learning about and seeing three new birds in one day would be a quite a treat. Second, the names of the Bobolinks and Dickcissels were so funny, we expected to have many flights of fancy along the way (e.g., "Bobolink, Bobolink fly away home" . . . "Bob, Bob, Bob -- Bob, Bob-o-link"). Add to that the colorful appearance these birds give and the R2D2 description of the song and, well, it was irresistible.

What these birds taught us was how elusive they can be, even in plain sight! Right at the start, we did see a few beautiful Bluebirds making a classic picture sitting along the fence. But, although several members of the group had fleetingly glimpses of Bobolinks, they seemed to stay low to the ground for the most part. Sometimes we could hear them, but just out of viewing range. The new birds were scarce. Then, as we turned the corner on the last field, there he was - just sitting out on a fence post as big as life - Bobolink! We were treated to some aerial acrobatics as two of them repeatedly flew about the field in tandem, with one coming back to rest on that same fence post over and over, singing away as they soared back and forth, up and down. Their yellow and white patches really do resemble dandelion tufts. They really do look like a dandelion gone to seed, and part of their song really does sound like the little robot from Star Wars. Amazing! We stood rooted until they tired of all the eyes watching them and flew out of sight. On the migratory count back in May, a long-time birder gave us some sound advice. She told us that we should judge the day not by the number of sightings, but rather by the quality of our sightings and how much we enjoyed them. This one was a good day for us.

We would like to have seen the Dickcissels and Meadowlarks as well. But no one could be disappointed by this day. The weather was picture perfect. As has always been our experience with the club, the experts in the group were more than willing to share their

knowledge and to put up with innumerable questions from us novices. We enjoy every trip, and we always learn something!

As I looked at the hay fields, some already cut and others still standing, I thought about how easy it is for us to alter the course of natural history. These birds evolved according to the centuries-old rhythms of the seasons and thrived in that environment. Modern farming techniques require cutting much earlier in the season to improve the yield of the fields. At the same time, that alters the most basic rhythm -- the cutting no longer occurs after the young birds have fledged. Instead, it happens while the parents are brooding or caring for nestlings. It destroys the nests. Some of the fields at this farm have been preserved specifically to support these bird populations, and that's great. But what else can be done to encourage other farms to cut their fields later in the season to help sustain these species? What happens if we don't preserve them? Those are the sort of questions that haunt us. - *Karen and Ellie Allen*

Report on the Purple Martin Festival (8/21/04) Mauricetown, NJ by Maria Musciano-Keefe

I received the flyer and stuck it in my purse. Another thing that I didn't want to file or recycle, just in case. I talked to Deb and we decided that we needed to get together and what better 'excuse' than the 3rd annual Purple Martin Festival. We drove down to the meeting spot and the police had blocked off the bridge so traffic could only go one way at a time. We walked to the top and met the other 40 or so birders. There was a light rain, cloudy skies at around 6:05 pm. They advertised the festival from 6-8 and I wondered to myself how long it would be past 8:00 since I left Bob to fend for himself with the boys.

We didn't see any Martins at first. Pat Sutton of CMBO was excited, and she wanted us all to be excited as well, something you can't help but be if you are around her. She kept explaining to the group that the Martins will gather and swirl around in huge groups and "Swoosh" all at once will fall into their roost. Hmm. Swoosh? I don't know about that. I almost felt like I was being set up for a let down. But, it was a beautiful breezy day and Deb and I were enjoying ourselves. We were right over the river and were seeing lots of birds - Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Greater Black Backed Gulls, Forester's Terns and two lifers... Caspian Tern and Clapper Rail. It was a good day. The martins continued to gather. Many swallows mingled above and around us, over the water, phrags and marshes. I again heard Pat mention the "Swoosh" and thought, "We'll see."

Brian and Paula happened to be heading to the shore and decided to make a quick stop to see the festival. As they arrived the sky was clearing from a drizzle. The sky was white and grey and Deb and I commented on how it's probably easier to see the birds against the white and grey rather than a sunny blue sky. The sun was slowly making it's descent and the sky was becoming prettier every minute, it was also becoming more crowded with "specks of pepper", the martins.

Around 7:30, Pat was bubbling with excitement and I was getting more excited. Not just from her energy, but there were masses of birds forming large flocks. Swirling around. They were so far away that without binoculars, I couldn't see them. But with the glass to my eyes, there were thousands. You could have told me millions and I would have believed it. Every turn of the focus would bring more in view, showing the thick layers of birds.

The sky was spectacular in itself. Pinks, amber, blue and grey. The water sparkled with pink highlights. The clouds were low and full. Pat yelled out a "Wow." At that point, the birds were forming funnel clouds. They looked like the skeleton of huge tornados ripping apart houses and instead of debris swirling around, it was birds. Tiny black specks of pepper when on the far

end of the funnel, and birds on the closest. I could follow the funnel up and down, amazed at how low and high they reached. Another "Wow" and "Don't take your binoculars down. Keep them on a swirl of birds and stick with it." She didn't want us to miss them dropping into the marsh to their roost. I couldn't have put them down if I tried. I was glued and amazed. Someone said they saw an eagle, but eagle-smeagle, this was something I had never seen before. I was on a funnel and then yes, there was a "Swoosh" birds dropped, as if they gave up and just fell to the ground. Many more followed and some birds fell out of formation to join another crowd. The funnel was gone. "Wow"

Scanning left and right as people were shouting out, "To the right of the boat", "To the left of the white house", "Directly over the brown house" each of us hoping to see the most dense area of birds. Someone yelled, "Look up" reluctantly I did and they were swirling above us as well. I quickly went back to the railing, propped up my elbows and gazed. I yelled out my own, "Holy Smokes" as there were more birds there than before I had left to glance up. The cheers, the voices, the "WOW"s, and what I swear was the energy of the birds was filling me with excitement. The wind was picking up. Blowing straight at us as if coming from the funnel clouds. My eyes were watering and it felt like we would soon be consumed by the tornado, but I held fast and never gazed away. At once, the remaining, biggest congregation of birds in their huge black swirl of chatter, started dropping. I gasped. People cheered. Pat yelled that this is the phenomenon and threw in another "WOW". More and more were disappearing into the marsh, down, down, down they all went.

I scanned left and right. No birds. Nothing where the sky was just full. Everyone applauded. It was 8:00. As if we were at last call, a policeman was on the megaphone asking us to move to the left of the bridge so they could remove the cones. Deb said it was 6 seconds after 8:00. I believed her. My eyes felt like I had just walked out of a movie theatre from holding the binoculars to my eyes for so long. Then I saw the sky. It was awesome. The colors and clouds were breathtaking. That alone would have been a spectacle, but the martins stole the show.

Other Nature Notes

- The Carter family recently visited Cathy's sister in Indiana. While there, they heard about a Snowy Owl had been seen in the area in the middle of the summer. Since Snowy Owls normally spend their summers near the Arctic Circle, this was a rare occurrence indeed. According to Cathy, only three other times have Snowy Owls appeared in Indiana in the summer months. The Carters saw the owl several times, including one time when it was perched on a "Wrong Way" sign!
(For pictures, see <http://www.indianaudubon.org/guide/photopages/LawrenceSNOW.htm>)
- From Bob Cassel: Ever hear of the Harlequin Glorybower or Clerodendrum? In Mid-August, it is blooming profusely in our back yard. The blossoms are basically white with a tube that ascends to five white petals. A rosy colored drupe (fruit) is one inch below the petals and is pea-sized. When the blossoms have emerged, the perfume easily permeates to a distance of ten feet. Then the hummingbirds fly in among the branches, jetting from blossom to blossom. Carol and I stood under the low branches and the hummers ignored us, hovering only inches from our faces. Some horticulturalists downgrade the bush, as it is not too cold weather resistant. Yet this one has survived for over 6 years. It was a gift of Mimi Glass, started from a seedling from her own front yard specimen which has also survived several of our winters.

Reminder - Membership Dues

September brings with it membership renewals. This year we will be raising dues for most members in order to accommodate rising costs of printing and publishing the newsletter. Please remember that your dues are the only costs associated with being a club member, we do not charge for any of our programs or field trips. Many organizations charge their members for each walk or activity they attend. We believe that the club is still an excellent value and hope the added cost will not deter any of our members. It is much cheaper for us to send the newsletter electronically to our members and as a result those members who choose to receive the newsletter electronically will receive a discount on their membership. The new dues will be \$15 for electronic mailings and \$20 for regular mail delivery. Please fill out the membership form at the end of this newsletter and bring it along with your dues to the September Meeting, or send your renewal form and a check payable to "Gloucester County Nature Club" to:
Karen Kravchuck, 25 Barlow Avenue, Mantua, NJ 08080

Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, September 18, 2004

**First Annual "Cradle of Birding" Wildlife & Conservation Festival
John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum**

Events will run from 7AM to 4PM and include classes, workshops, exhibits, guest speakers, and other activities. Keynote speaker will be Pete Dunne of the Cape May Bird Observatory, 2:00 PM, at the Cusano Environmental Education Center Auditorium. Flyers for the event will be available at the Nature Club's September 9th meeting. Details are also available on the Heinz NWR website at <http://heinz.fws.gov>.

Looking Ahead:

Programs-

October 14th - Invasive Plants with Diane Suiter

November 11th – Combined meeting w/ Gloucester County Federation of Watersheds

Field Trips-

October 16th – bike/hike on the Perkiomen River Trail in PA

Club Notes:

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** There will be NO Executive Committee meeting in September. The next Executive Committee meeting will be October 10th at Deb Maka'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@aol.com 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.

WAIVER

Gloucester County Nature Club and/or its leaders, officers, members or representatives shall not be liable for any injuries, loss or damage to person and/or property, direct or consequential, arising out of any trips and/or activities of the Gloucester County Nature Club. The assumption of risk, which is inherent in this type of outdoor activity, is implied on the part of each person who attends any Gloucester County Nature Club trip, and every person participating in any of said trips and/or activities assumes all risk and liability in connection therewith.

Everyone participating in any activity of the Gloucester County Nature Club will be required to read the release of liability, protecting the Gloucester County Nature Club and/or its leaders, officers, members and representatives from liability.

Gloucester County Nature Club and/or its leaders, officers, members and representatives are not in any way responsible for the personal safety of the attendees. When walking along a road, keep to the left, facing oncoming traffic and walk in a single file. When walking along trails, do not follow too closely or move too fast for your safety and for the safety of others (avoid collisions and/or whipped branches). FOLLOW THE LEADER: If you forge ahead, you may find yourself alone. Responsible adults must accompany children under the age of 16. If you expect to drop out of the group early, please inform the leader. Report to one or more of the hikers if you discontinue on route.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2004-2005

- New Member Renewal
- Paper Membership(\$20) - regular mail
- Electronic Membership(\$15) - newsletter via email; ***please provide email address below

Name: _____

Street: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ ***Email Address: _____

Please note any special knowledge you would be willing to share: _____

Would you be willing to serve on a committee? If so, which committee(s): _____

Are there other ways you could participate? If so, how?

Would you like to give a gift membership? If so, indicate Individual ____ or Family ____

Name: _____

Street: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

A note will be sent informing them of your gift membership in the GCNC, thank you.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE WAIVER

Signature: _____ Date: _____