



Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

December 2023

Program: “The Death of Koschei the Deathless”: a Tale for the Ages”

Presenter: Erik Mollenhauer

Thursday, December 14, 2023 at 7:00pm at Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah, NJ (directions below)

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342

“The Death of Koschei the Deathless” is an epic story created long ago by an indigenous culture of central Eurasia. Keen observers of the natural world, of animals and human behavior, they created an enduring tale involving tricksters, shape-shifters and powerful forces beyond the control of ordinary people... a tale that cuts to the heart of human experience and to our rightful place in the natural world. The indigenous storytellers sought... as we still do... to answer existential questions about life. What is the invisible power behind the visible world? Why are we here? What endures in this life... and why?

Tonight’s storyteller, Erik Mollenhauer, came upon this story ten years ago. It has haunted him ever since to the extent that he is in the process of getting it published. Erik has studied the art of storytelling for many years and has told stories to people of all ages. Following tonight’s telling, the audience will have the chance to share their thoughts about hidden messages embedded in the story by the original storytellers and can explore their timeless significance. The audience can also view several full-color, original oil paintings by a professional artist that will serve as illustrations for the forthcoming book.



“The struggle of man against power is the story of memory over forgetting.” - Milan Kundera

National Audubon Christmas Bird Count – Saturday December 16

Date set for the annual Audubon Bird Count is December 16, Saturday. Please join us if interested. It is such a fun time and a premier citizens science endeavor. Braving the December weather, seeing living things in their natural unimpeded environment, gathering with people that enjoy the same outdoors, and sharing sightings are just part of it.

New birders and new participants are always welcome. You would join up with a group/leader in one of the 13 zones within the Count circle. Having new folks along always adds a great twist because it is also nice to see the experience through others eyes. Heck we might even see a 'Mugwump'! If you don't know what one is, see below. As an entire count we generally fall into the 85-95 species of birds.

You might be lucky enough to see a Bald Eagle, or an Owl if you are going out with a party who tries to get owls in the wee hours of the morning. Or you may find out the answer to the question, why do some birds stand on one leg!? That answer will be below too!

Additionally, anyone unable to do the count with us can do their own count at their feeders/yard and submit their findings. One simply needs to be in the count area and would be added to the specific zone. This helps the count as well because the field people don't always have access to feeders. I can mail you a checklist if needed. If any questions or need to be placed with a group, give me a call or see me at the December meeting.

Happy birding! Give it a try.

'Mugwump'= a bird that sits on a fence with its 'mug' on one side and its 'wump' on the other!
Standing on one leg= if it lifted the other leg too, it would fall down!?
Of course you've probably already heard those corny jokes!
Ron Kegel, compiler 856-881-9262

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 20th of the preceding month.
- The club would like to welcome the following new members who have joined during the current club year:
 1. Karen Stafford of Mullica Hill
 2. Dominique Butts of Cherry Hill
 3. Sharon Selby of Oak Valley
 4. Felicia & Mark Karalis of Williamstown
 5. Jennifer Haller of Franklinville
 6. Linda Mattioli of Cherry Hill
 7. Mark Fitzpatrick of Clayton
 8. Brian Walker of Runnemede
 9. Frank Fletcher of Woodbury
 10. Lisa Simmons of Mantua
 11. Gail & Frank Lokaj of Wenonah
 12. JR Ramos & Heather Fox of Wenonah
 13. Brian Waters of Westville

New Book: “Observations by a Field Naturalist of Southern New Jersey” makes a great gift!

This book by well-known South Jersey naturalist Karl Anderson is a compilation of 100 newspaper columns he wrote between 2009 and 2022. With few exceptions, they deal with plants and animals that we see, or could see, in southern New Jersey every year if we were in the right place at the right time.

Do you want to know how to tell a huckleberry from a blueberry? What is making those holes in your lawn? How about the sex life of a land snail? And why did the skunk cross the road? These topics, and 96 others, can be found in this book.

Karl worked for New Jersey Audubon Society for many years, managing and developing the Audubon nature center at Rancocas State Park where he led field trips for bird, botany and general nature study. He has led or co-led over sixty tours across North America and beyond. After retiring from New Jersey Audubon, he worked part-time as a

botanist for the State of New Jersey while continuing to do botanical inventories and lead local field trips. His favorite New Jersey haunts are the Pine Barrens, the Delaware Water Gap NRA, and any overgrown vacant lot. 162 pages. 5.5"w X 8.5" h. Weight: 9 ounces. Spiral bound for durability. Published March, 2023.

Copies of **Observations by a Field Naturalist of Southern New Jersey** are now available for purchase at local retailers including:

- **Antiques on Evergreen** - 429 S Evergreen Ave, Woodbury, NJ 08096
- **Dambly's Garden Center** - 51 West Factory Rd, Berlin, NJ 08009
- **Daminger's Natural Pet Foods** - 641 Main St, Sewell (Mantua Township), NJ 08080
- **Triple Oaks Nursery & Herb Garden** - 2359 Delsea Drive, Franklinville, NJ 08322
- **Wild Birds Unlimited Cherry Hill** - 1619 N Kings Hwy, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034
- **Words Matter** - 52 S. Broadway, Pitman, NJ 08071
- **The Yellow Garage Antiques** - 66 South Main St., Mullica Hill, NJ 080621

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



YOUTUBE CHANNEL: We are continuing to post recordings of recent club programs for the convenience of members and the public. To find the club's channel, use [this link](#) or search for the club's full name within YouTube. 19 videos are now available, including these recent additions:

- [An Introduction to Pinelands Ecology](#) (October 2023)
- [Bird Coloration: The Hows and Whys](#) (November 2023)

The November video is the first to feature improved audio thanks to a body-worn microphone that the club has recently purchased. This video also has hand-edited closed captions.

Be sure to subscribe to the club's channel and "like" the videos so they will get recommended to more people! We will continue recording programs whenever permitted by speakers and their sponsoring organizations.