



Natural Places
of **Gloucester County**
NEW JERSEY

A publication of the Gloucester County Nature Club

Preface

The beautiful natural areas in Gloucester County, New Jersey, tend to be unknown and unexplored by many local residents. The goal of this book is to introduce these diverse, special natural areas so more people will learn to love them and work to keep them protected for generations to come.

If you haven't spent much time outdoors in Gloucester County, you will be amazed at the possibilities. As a county map shows, protected areas available to the public exist in most areas of the county. Some will be in completely unanticipated places, such as the wildlife area that has been preserved around Wheelabrator, the trash-to-steam plant in West Deptford. On a recent visit to this spot, a bald eagle flew low overhead and Baltimore orioles sang from the trees. The other extreme is the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge. This gem of a spot is on the far reaches of the county and is a private refuge that requires permission before you visit. When you drive down the dirt road toward the refuge, you will look around and think, "Can this still be Gloucester County?"

There are birds, flowers, trees, mammals-such as foxes and groundhogs-frogs and fishes waiting outside your door. Those with a deep interest in nature as well as everyone who needs to get outdoors and be in the wild every now and then can appreciate these parks. And who doesn't enjoy some open space, trees, and fresh air every now and then? What are you waiting for? Pick up this book and head to the closest site. Even if you have been to Ceres Park before or walked on the Riverwinds Trail in West Deptford, this guide will open your eyes to features and wildlife that you did not realize were there.

Walk your territory and make Gloucester County your home. Use this guidebook to connect with the natural heritage that has been preserved for you and your family.

About Gloucester County

Gloucester County has a land area of 325 square miles, which puts it midway in size order of the 21 counties of New Jersey; ten are larger, ten are smaller. Historically, Gloucester County was carved out of the British Province of West Jersey in 1686. At the time, it included what are now Camden and Atlantic Counties. Camden County was separated from Gloucester in 1844, and Atlantic County in 1837. The estimated population today is about 300,000 people. The population of Gloucester County is growing at a rate of about five percent per year, making it one of New Jersey's fastest-growing counties.

The portion of the county that is north and west of a line through Washington Township. Glassboro, and Elk Township is in the Outer Coastal Plain of New Jersey. Waterways here, such as Raccoon Creek, Mantua Creek, Woodbury Creek, Oldmans Creek, and Repaupo Creek, originate as small streams in a region of low hills in the center of the County and flow westward into the Delaware. Their lower reaches are characterized by extensive fresh water tidal marshes. There are also flood plain forests, wooded hillsides, and farmlands.

The remainder of the County is in New Jersey's Outer Coastal Plain. The rivers here, including the Maurice River and its tributaries, and the Great Egg Harbor River which forms part of the boundary between Camden and Gloucester Counties, flow south and west through adjacent counties into Delaware Bay or the Atlantic Ocean. The southwestern part of the county - including parts of Monroe and Franklin Townships - are within the New Jersey Pinelands, better known as the "Pine Barrens", an area of upland pine and oak forests, conifer and hardwood swamps, and non-forested wetlands that are of great interest to naturalists everywhere.

Gloucester County was settled at an early date. Swedes and Finns were at Swedesboro in 1642. Woodbury, the county seat, dates to 1683. Settlement was initially along the Delaware River, which was and still is an avenue of commerce. Large areas along the Delaware River today are occupied by industrial plants and oil refineries. The northwestern section of the county - with towns such as Woodbury, Paulsboro, and Deptford - is still the most densely populated section. But this is changing as farmland in the central part of the County gives way to development.

Public open space dedicated to passive recreation is at a premium in the county. Many of the parks shown on a county map are almost completely developed as athletic fields and are of little interest to the naturalist - although, as noted below, even some unpromising areas deserve a second look. For New Jersey as a whole, about 15 percent of the state is publicly-accessible land in something that approximates its natural condition. The total area within Gloucester County of all the sites described in this book, including parking areas and athletic fields but not including the marshes along Raccoon and Oldmans Creek, plus some sites that were not included, is only about 21 square miles, or six percent of the land area of the county.

About the Gloucester County Nature Club

Established in 1949, the Gloucester County Nature Club (GCNC) was started by a small group of Gloucester County residents with a common interest in the natural world. The GCNC is a local non-profit, membership organization that works to educate others in the community and promote conservation of the county's natural resources. Additionally, the GCNC is a group of folks who like to play and appreciate the wonder of the world around them. The Club has worked to promote appreciation of wildlife through various means, and it decided that a book was a good method for revealing the hidden treasures in the county to all residents.

The club's history includes a continuous record of monthly programs, field trips, and newsletters. All activities are organized and conducted by its members who volunteer their time, resources, and knowledge. All programs and field trips, which cover an array of topics, are free and open to the public.

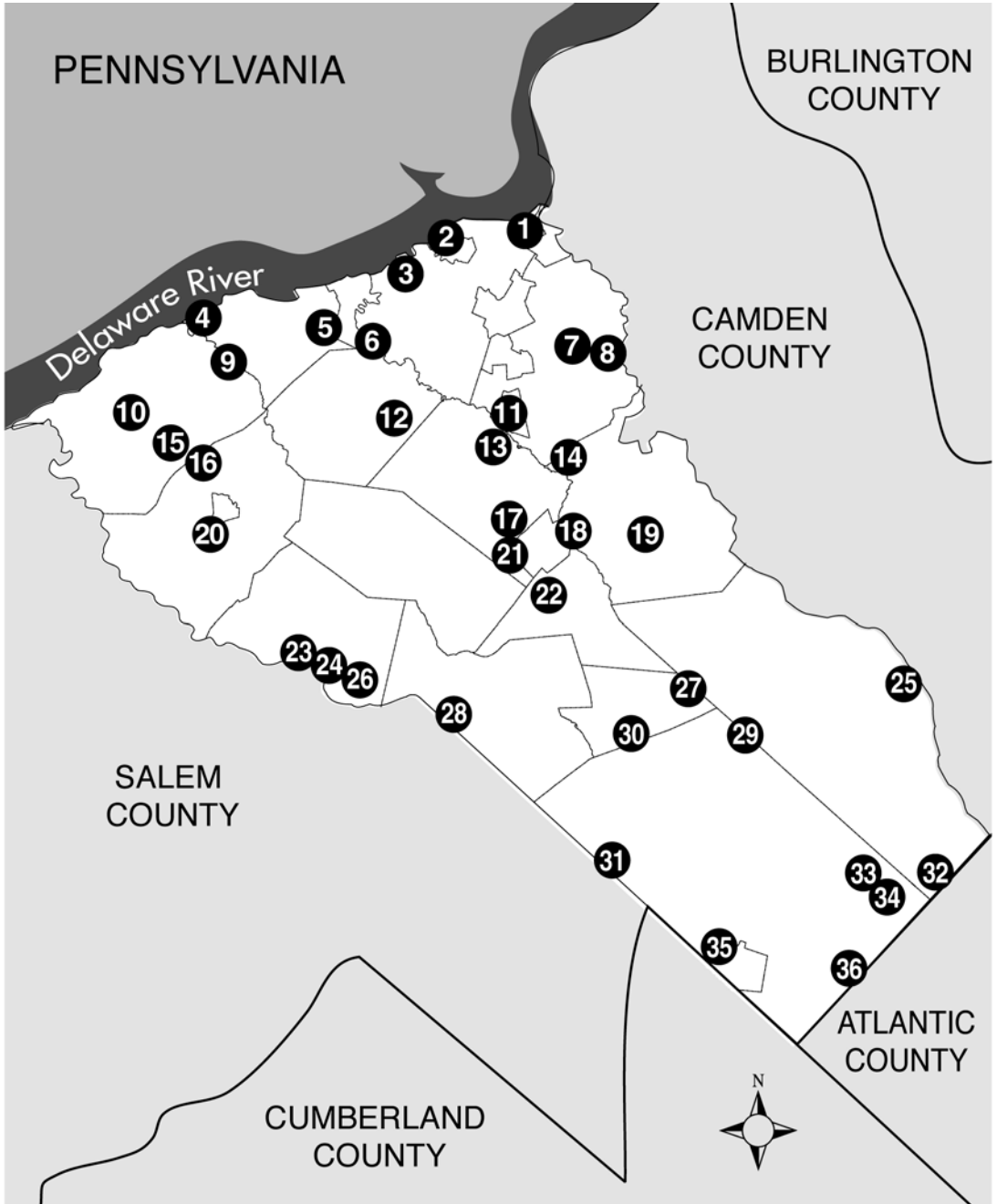
As of 2006, the club has about 250 memberships (including individuals and families) which represents 400-500 people of all ages. While most members reside in Gloucester County we have many members from neighboring counties and even members from other states.

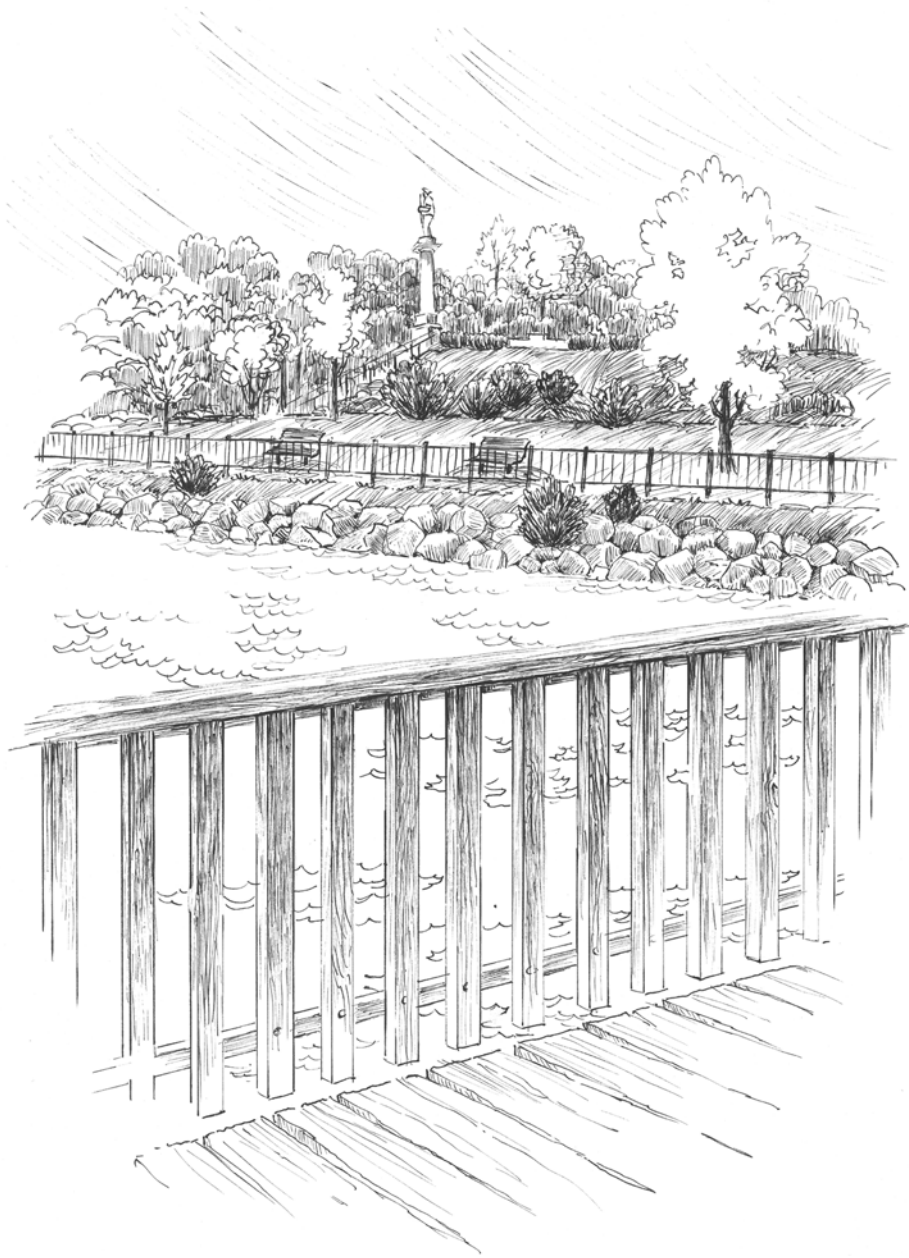
The Club has been active over the years in the community sponsoring such events like Bird Quest, County-wide Environmental Commission Conferences, the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, and the Vulture Festival to name some of the more recent projects or events. These events and activities are developed by the Nature Club to provide valuable information to Gloucester County residents about the environment and educate our communities about nature in the hope that if you understand and cherish nature you will want to save it.

Locator Map Key

1. Wheelabrator Trail (*West Deptford Twp.*)
2. Red Bank Battlefield Park (*National Park*)
3. West Deptford Scenic Trail (*West Deptford Twp.*)
4. Floodgates Road (*Greenwich Twp.*)
5. Greenwich Township Walking Trail (*Greenwich Twp.*)
6. Mantua Creek Wildlife Management Area (*East Greenwich Twp.*)
7. Charles Fasola Park (*Deptford Twp.*)
8. Timber Creek Park (*Deptford Twp.*)
9. Greenwich Lake Park (*Greenwich Twp.*)
10. Raccoon Creek and Birch Creek Marshes (*Logan/Woolwich Twp.*)
11. Wenonah Conservation Area (*Wenonah*)
12. Hidden Acres Township Park (*East Greenwich Twp.*)
13. Chestnut Branch Park (*Mantua Twp.*)
14. Old Pine Farm (*Deptford Twp.*)
15. Pedricktown Marshes (*Logan Twp.*)
16. Raccoon Creek Wildlife Management Area (*Woolwich Twp.*)
17. Ceres Park (*Mantua Twp.*)
18. James G. Atkinson Memorial Park (*Washington Twp.*)
19. Washington Lake Park and Washington Lake (*Washington Twp.*)
20. Lake Narraticon Park (*Woolwich Twp.*)
21. Alcyon Lake Park (*Pitman*)
22. Glassboro Wildlife Management Area (*Glassboro/Clayton/Monroe Twp.*)
23. Harrisonville Lake Wildlife Management Area (*South Harrison Twp.*)
24. Stewart Memorial Park (*South Harrison Twp.*)
25. Winslow Wildlife Management Area (*Monroe Twp.*)
26. Lincoln Road County Parkland (*South Harrison Twp.*)
27. Scotland Run Park (*Clayton/Franklin Twp./Monroe Twp.*)
28. Elk Township Trail and Elephant Swamp (*Elk Twp.*)
29. White Oak Branch Wildlife Management Area (*Franklin/Monroe Twp.*)
30. Little Ease Park (*Clayton*)
31. Malaga Lake (*Franklin Twp.*)
32. Cedar Lake Wildlife Management Area (*Monroe Twp.*)
33. Unexpected Wildlife Refuge (*Franklin Twp.*)
34. Piney Hollow Preservation Area (*Franklin Twp.*)
35. Van Hook Pond Preserve (*Newfield*)
36. Tuckahoe Preserve (*Franklin Twp.*)

Locator Map







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Red Bank Battlefield Park

This developed park preserves the remains of Fort Mercer, site of the Revolutionary War Battle of Red Bank. Also located in the park is the James and Ann Whitall House (circa 1748) which served as a hospital after the battle. The park provides an excellent view of the Delaware River and its boat traffic and bird life. It is buffered on the south by the dredge spoil areas of Washington Point.

What to Look For: There are some fine specimen trees, including a very large multi-stemmed sycamore, several large hackberries, black walnut and persimmon. Gray squirrel, chipmunk, and other human-adapted mammals are present. Early-morning arrivals may

glimpse red fox. Breeding birds include Baltimore oriole, chipping sparrow, blue jay, and other home and garden species. Monuments commemorating and describing the Battle of Red Bank are located in the northern section of the park. The Whitall House is open to the public free of charge, Wednesdays through Fridays, 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., and 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. on Saturdays and Sundays from April to October.

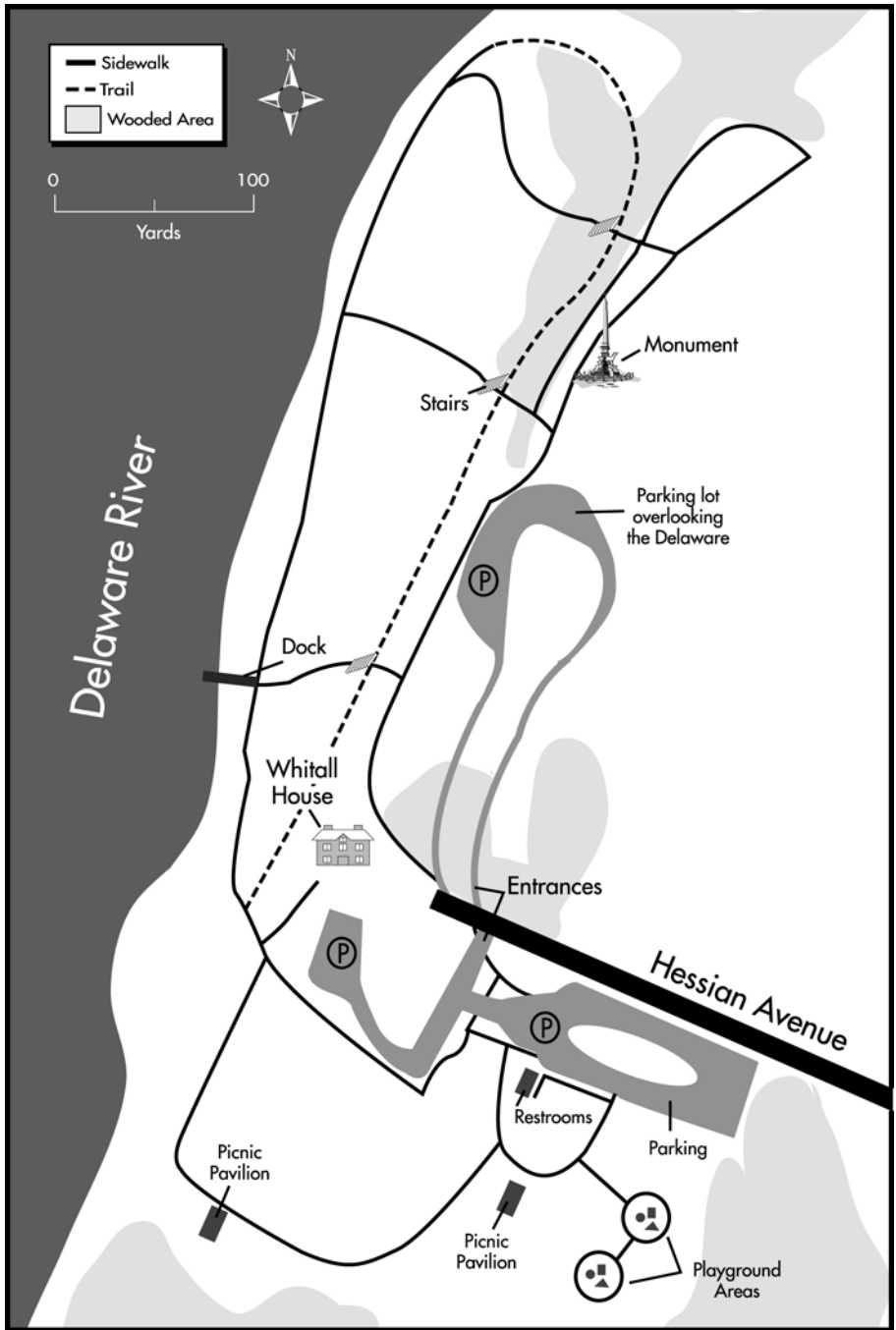
Seasonally: From spring to fall, this is a nice place for a picnic. In winter, long-eared owls have been known to roost in the red cedars bordering the driveway; to help find them, look for droppings or “whitewash” beneath the trees, along with the regurgitated masses of hair and bone fragments called “owl pellets”. Tree sparrows and other open-country winter resident birds forage with the gray squirrels on the open lawn areas. Waterfowl, including great and double-crested cormorants, gulls, common and red-breasted mergansers, ruddy duck, canvasback, common loon, and others, are sometimes abundant in winter and early spring on the Delaware River.

Where: 100 Hessian Avenue, Borough of National Park

Directions: From Interstate 295 Exit 22, take Red Bank Avenue west for about 0.5 mile to Hessian Avenue. Turn left on Hessian Avenue, and continue for 1.2 miles to the park. Parking area will be on the left.

Owner: Federally owned but managed by the Gloucester County Department of Parks and Recreation.

Size: 44 acres.



Red Bank Battlefield Park

Visitor Guidelines: The park is open daily from dawn to dusk. Pets and alcoholic beverages are not allowed.

Facilities: Rest rooms, picnic tables, picnic shelters, playground, historic house.

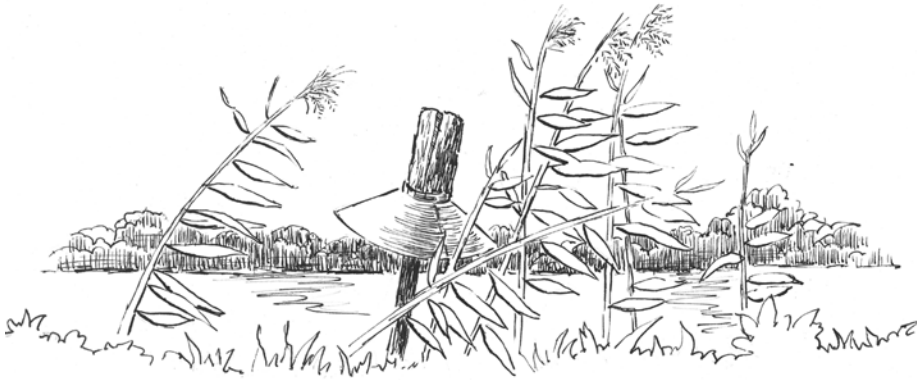
History: Fort Mercer, with Fort Mifflin opposite it on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River, blocked re-supply of British troops in Philadelphia and New York State in the autumn of 1777. To remove the obstacle, British Commanding General William Howe ordered his Hessian troops under Colonel Carl Von Donop to assault the fort. On October 23 about 1200 Hessians attacked. Mistakenly, they climbed the palisade into a portion of the fort that had been abandoned by Colonial commander Colonel Christopher Greene and his 600-man force. The Colonials then fired from the still-occupied portion of the fort and massacred the Hessians.

The site was purchased by the United States Government in 1872. In 1894, the National Park Association was formed to create a camp meeting site and an amusement park “to provide a day resort for excursions, without the attractions of intoxicating liquors.” The town, which had been established as Eagleton in 1894, changed its name to National Park in 1898. The battlefield was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972; and on the State Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Something To Know

Invasive Plants: Of the roughly 3000 species of plants growing wild in New Jersey today, about 1000 were not present in the State at the time of the first European settlement. These have been introduced, usually unintentionally, from other continents and from the western United States. Most of them are harmless; they occupy human-altered habitats, such as lawns and roadsides, in which few of our native species could survive. About 20 species, however, are invasive, spread rapidly into otherwise undisturbed fields, forests, and wetlands, and displace natives. Some of the worst offenders are purple loosestrife, Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, autumn olive, Morrow honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed, garlic mustard, lesser celandine, stiltgrass, the Eurasian variety of common reed, mile-a-minute vine, and Oriental bitter-sweet. Along with habitat destruction, the spread of invasive non-native plants is a major factor in the decline of our native flora.





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Unexpected Wildlife Refuge

Unexpected Wildlife Refuge comprises fields, forests, wetlands and open water. Main Lake Branch flows through the center of the refuge. Flora and fauna found here are typical of the New Jersey Pine Barrens and include pitch pine and oak forests, Atlantic white cedar swamps, abandoned cranberry bogs, and farmlands. Ten miles of trails wind throughout these various habitats, with a unique system of concrete boardwalks traversing wetland areas.

What to Look For: The refuge is home to a colony of beavers who lodge in Miller Pond. Visitors may see the beavers swimming, eating, or grooming at dusk or early in the morning. Other species

found here include white-tailed deer, wild turkey, red and gray foxes, raccoon, opossum, and skunk. Three observation blinds are located around Main Pond for watching wood duck, hooded merganser, great blue heron, Canada geese, and painted, red-bellied and snapping turtles, river otter, and of course, beaver. Habitat has been specifically created and maintained for bluebirds. The refuge also supports several State and/or Federally threatened or endangered species, including bald eagle, osprey, pied-billed grebe, barred owl, bog turtle and pine barrens tree frog.

Seasonally: Early spring is a good time for watching migrating neotropical songbirds and listening to the ten species of frogs found here. Late May and early June are lovely when the large old stands of mountain laurel bloom. Hot summer days bring out sixteen different dragonfly and damselfly species. Late October is the best time to see brilliant fall foliage.

Where: Unexpected Road, Franklin Township, in Gloucester County; and Buena Vista Township and Buena Borough in Atlantic County.

Directions: Directions are provided upon making an appointment.

Owner: Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization.

Size: 737 acres.

Visitor Guidelines: Visitation is by appointment only. Phone (856) 697-3541. Guided tours are provided to groups of up to five; educational and reference materials are available to visitors at the small nature center. No camping, fires, swimming, boating or biking

is permitted. No hunting, trapping or fishing is allowed. Depending upon the time of year, trails can be wet or flooded.

Facilities: The refuge has been described as “primitive” by many patrons. An outhouse is provided. Parking is very limited. No handicap facilities are available. The access road is unpaved, one-lane and very rough.

History: In 1961, Cavit and Hope Buyukmihci, with their three children, purchased an 85-acre tract in Buena Vista Township. Mostly wooded swampland, the purchase included a cabin and an old barn on an acre of cleared land, a stream and a cranberry bog. The Buyukmihcis were distressed by the increase in land development, reducing the habitat available for wildlife in Southern New Jersey. The couple decided to dedicate their land to habitat preservation so that native wildlife and habitat could thrive.

The Buyukmihcis settled down to raise their children in a simple environment. They made trails throughout the property, erected bird houses and posted “No Trespassing” signs. They named their haven Unexpected Wildlife Refuge after Unexpected Road, off which it is situated. Friends, photographers, clubs and school children visited the refuge to learn about the environment of South Jersey. To support the refuge, Cavit worked as a metallurgist while Hope observed and photographed wildlife within the refuge and wrote about her experiences. She published three books and gave lectures in schools, clubs and churches. In 1970, after befriending a family of beavers, she founded The Beaver Defenders, an organization dedicated to beaver protection and education.

Cavit Buyukmihci died in 1987, shortly after he had retired with the plan of spending more time protecting the refuge and becoming more involved in the cause of animal rights. Hope continued to run

the refuge with the help of dedicated volunteers, supported entirely by private donations from visitors. On June 20, 2001, Hope passed the directorship to Sarah Summerville, who will carry on with the refuge purpose of protecting the wild inhabitants and promoting humane education.