



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

January 2006

Program – Wilson, Audubon, Ord & a Flycatcher
Thursday, January 12th at 7:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell
Acting Program Coordinator - Deborah Maka



In 1838, the last volume of what most people consider the single greatest book on natural history was published. John James Audubon's *The Birds of America* dramatically changed the way birds had previously been portrayed in print. In advance of our March field trip to the first American residence of Audubon at Mill Grove, Jeff Holt will speak on the history of Audubon's signature work. Based on his article titled "Wilson, Audubon, Ord & a Flycatcher" (Cassinia, Volume 70), he will explain how Audubon's relationship with Alexander Wilson (the father of American Ornithology) influenced the publication of *The Birds of America*. He will provide a glimpse into the complex process required in the early 1800's to produce and publish such a unique historical and artistic work. Available for viewing and comparison will be plates produced by both Audubon and Wilson. If time permits, Jeff will also offer a brief discussion of Audubon's mystery birds, five birds depicted in *The Birds of America* which have never been definitively identified.

Field Trip – Moonlit Walk at Alcyon Park
Saturday January 14th, 7:00 PM at Alcyon Park, Pitman

Trip Leader: Kris Mollenhauer

Co-leader: Ed Cleary

On Saturday, January 14th at 7 PM we will welcome the first full moon of the New Year with a moonlit walk at Alcyon Park in Pitman. Bundle up for a short hike around the park. Why is it so hard to keep track of the rising and setting of the moon? Is it the lady in the moon, the man in the moon or the rabbit in the moon? Children and adults will get some facts and some fiction about our old friend, Luna. We'll also take a look at some constellations in the winter sky. This is a weather-related event and is entirely dependent on a clear sky. So if it is cloudy, we will try again on Sunday, January 15th at 7PM. The park is located off Holly Ave., on the west side of Alcyon Lake. Drive through the gates and park on the upper level near the playground.



Field Trip Report: Audubon Christmas Bird Count (12/17/05) - by Barry Bengel

Since this was the first count I was ever involved in, I did not know what to expect. The first thing in the morning I remember thinking: “OK, it’s still dark out and it’s REALLY cold. What in the world did I sign up for?” But over the course of the day, that question was answered by the many sights and sounds that had taken place during the day:

- Hearing a Great Horned Owl calling, and hearing it answer back when imitated.
- Seeing a flock of thousands of Snow Geese settling down in a cornfield in Harrison Township. While the ground was already white with geese, other geese were still circling and coming dropping down, which created a whirling tornado-like effect. If you have never witnessed this happen, it is quite breathtaking! And very noisy!
- The tiny Winter Wren flitting about in the underbrush foraging for food.
- Near the end of the day, seeing a large mixed flock of Red-winged Blackbirds and Grackles – approximately 3000 of them! They were feeding on the ground in a field, and then all in unison jumped up and flew towards the trees at the edge of the field to roost for the night.
- Good conversations with fellow participants – both during the count itself, and at the post-count wrap-up meeting.



These are just a few of the many sights and sounds that will stay in my memory, and most certainly each and every participant will have their own fond memories from this year’s count.

A Quick Look

There were **56 participants** in the count, and overall **86 different species of birds** were seen. Out of this number, **14 species were seen in every area**. More details will be provided in next month’s newsletter.

Thank You!

Thank you to all of the people who were able to make the event a success. Thank you to Ron Kegel for taking on the task as area coordinator on short notice, and doing a great job! Thank you to Kirk and Donna Strohmeier for hosting the post-count wrap-up at their home; there was a mountain of good food, a warm fireplace to sit near, and plenty of interesting conversation. And last but certainly not least, a special thank you goes out to Bob Cassel for his many years of service as area coordinator. Without his efforts over the years, it’s doubtful that this event would be the success that it has been over the years.

Conservation Corner by Loretta Dunne

Winter Nights

The cold, long nights of winter are perfect for introspection. Perhaps that is why New Year's Resolutions are so popular. Not only is there a feeling of a new beginning but the extended evenings give us some time to take stock of where we are and where we want to go. What better time to look at your own relationship to the environment? We all have ideals as to what we would like our relationship to be with the natural world. Why not take the time to set some personal goals to get you closer to your ideals?

You and the Politics of the Environment

Although following politics can be frustrating, if we do not speak up for nature, no one else will.

- Send out one letter a month to an elected official on a crucial environmental issue.
- Keep up to date on the news at the state level. New Jersey PIRG <http://www.njpirg.org/> is one group that does a good job of reporting important state issues.
- Let your elected officials know what is important to you.
- Pick an issue – clean air, clean water, the Endangered Species Act, whales, the state of our fisheries or anything that interests you, and keep up with it. Become an expert.
- Join an organization, such as NJPIRG, NJ Audubon, or the NJ Sierra Club, and follow-up on all of its Action Alerts.
- Read some books:
 - *Wilderness and the American Mind* – Roderick Nash
The history of America's unique attitudes toward nature and the intrinsic value of wilderness.
 - *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time* – Paul Rogat Loeb
This inspiring book urges positive engagement in the world.
 - *An Unreasonable Woman: A True Story of Shrimpers, Politicos, Polluters and the Fight for Seadrift, Texas* – Diane Wilson
After Diane Wilson discovered her town led the nation in toxic emissions, she fought a multi-million dollar chemical company and won. Read her story and get inspired.

You and your Personal Environment

There are probably many ideas that you have considered related to making your own space and life more environmentally friendly.

- Get a bike and use it.
- Replace your incandescent light bulbs with efficient, compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Weatherproof your house.
- Plant a tree or garden that attracts and supports wildlife.
- Make a commitment to shop for local produce.
- Replace an older appliance with one that is more energy efficient.
- Purchase bird-and-people-friendly organic coffee.

- Read some books:
 - *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* – Eric Schlosser
The title says it all.
 - *Radical Simplicity: Small Footprints on a Finite Earth* – Jim Merkel
Helps you examine your “footprint” on the earth measured by your life choices and provides guidance to reduce it.
 - *Noah’s Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Backyards* – Sara Stein
An inspiring book about the restoration of the author’s yard to a healthier habitat with native plants.
 - *This Organic Life: Confessions of a Suburban Homesteader* – Joan Dye Gussow
A personal favorite of mine, this book values real, local food and good eating.

You and Nature

This is as important as the other categories. Getting out into the natural world reminds us why we want to fight to save what we have. Plus, it’s fun to be out and exploring.

- Chose a natural place and learn everything about it, through all four seasons— maybe one of our local parks, the Supawna National Wildlife Refuge, or your own backyard. All open spaces are in dire need of attention and protection.
- Keep a nature journal about your yard.
- Treat yourself to some outdoor trips, such as the ones held by our club or NJ Audubon.
- Chose a species and learn as much as you can about it.
- Read some books:
 - Desert Solitaire – Edward Abbey
The classic book on wilderness written by Abbey while a park ranger at Arches National Park.
 - Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place - Terry Tempest Williams
A story about many things, including the legacy of cancer in Utah, site of the nuclear bomb tests and the author’s connection to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. This is a moving memoir about the meaning of the land and family.
 - Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival – Bernd Heinrich
The amazing winter world of animals.
- Form a reading group of a few people that meets and discusses environmental books

There are many more things to do and more books to read. (Remember our local libraries are a great source of reading material.) All of these are meant to be ideas to inspire and start you thinking of your own interests and goals. The crucial thing is to choose a few goals and see how you do with them. Sit inside during these cold nights and get started. Or go outside and listen for the call of the great-horned owl as you make your plans.

Other Nature Notes

Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The Senate recently voted to block language from the Defense Appropriations bill that would have authorized oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. However, expect additional attempts to be made to try to authorize drilling in the future. Please make sure that you let your congressman and senators know your position on this important wildlife issue. Every voice helps!

Wild Birds Unlimited offers an everyday 10% discount to GCNC members!

Wild Birds Unlimited has a discount agreement with the GCNC executive board and is pleased to offer GCNC members an everyday 10% discount on all purchases excluding optics and food or sale items. Sharon Oakes, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited, appreciates the many volunteer contributions made by GCNC members and hopes members can benefit from this discount. Members are requested to identify themselves as GCNC members before their sales are finalized. Questions? Please call Sharon at 218-2973.

Looking Ahead

Programs-

- February 9 - Non-Traditional Meeting: Nature Photos & Potluck Dishes
- March 9 - 1491: The Americas before Columbus
- April 13 - Organic Farming

Field Trips-

- February 11 (Sat.) - Driving Trip to West Barnegat Bay Shore (Gale Cannon & Karl Anderson)
- March 12 - John James Audubon's House: Mill Grove (Jeff Holt)
- April 1 - Fossil Trip (Erik Mollenhauer)

Club Notes:

- **IMPORTANT NOTICE: Pay your dues!** Club dues are normally collected in September. If you have not yet paid your dues for this year, please do so as soon as possible.
- The January Executive Committee meeting will be on January 8th at Barry Bengel's house.
- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Deb Maka at deborahann@backpacker.com or call 863-0330.
- 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.
- We're still looking for a field trip coordinator, program coordinator, and secretary. If anyone is interested in helping out the club, please email Deb Maka at deborahann@backpacker.com or call 863-0330.

- 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.