



# Gloucester County Nature Club

## Monthly Newsletter

Nature Club meetings are open to the public  
December 2002

### **\*\*\*\*\*Note Change of Meeting Place (this meeting only)**

**Directions to Sewell School-** From Glassboro-Woodbury Road (Rt. 553) on the north side of Rt. 55 turn onto Mantua Blvd., this will take you behind Timberline Plaza. Stay on Mantua Blvd for approx. ½ mile. Make a right onto Spruce St., the school and parking lot will be on your right.

### **Regular Meeting – Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm, Sewell School, Mantua**

Bob Cassel, Program Coordinator, 478-2496

#### The History of the Christmas Bird Count

It's Christmas day, a time filled with tradition and the presents are opened. The women folk are busy creating the holiday meal while the men drift outside for some sport. What is the favorite activity? Shoot and kill as many birds as possible before the big meal. The year is 1900 in the United States and one tradition is about to fall while another tradition is about to start. This is the year of the first Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Learn how this growing tradition turned a gruesome pastime into a scientific boon. Various speakers will explore the history of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the history of the count in Gloucester County, and share some experiences of the count. We will wrap up with pictures and calls of some of the species you could possibly see on the Gloucester County Count – see the Dec. 14 field trip.



### **Field Trip-Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, Audubon Christmas Bird Count**

Kris Mollenhauer, Field Trip Coordinator, 589-4387

#### Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Looking for an alternative to the holiday madness of the mall? A wonderful tradition many of us have added to our holiday season is participating in one of the over 1,900 Christmas Bird Counts held throughout the Western Hemisphere. The Gloucester County CBC will be held on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. Over 13 groups will divide up a 15 mile count circle and census all the birds seen. Many groups will begin or end their day searching for owls, and use the daylight hours to identify bald eagles, yellow-rumped warblers, great blue herons, as many as 9 different sparrows (or more), and many other birds. We invite you to join us in this wonderful tradition by joining a group for either a full or partial day. National Audubon requires a \$5 fee of all participants, used for administrative costs. If you'd like to join the count please call Bob Cassel at 478-2496 or Brian Hayes at 468-9272.

## MacArthur Forest- November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2002

In a light rain 20 nature club members stood under a great forest canopy...an island of old growth forest in Haddon Twp. surrounded by concrete, including three schools, high-rise apartment buildings, a water tower and a shopping center. Rain made the tree bark black and added drama as we looked at the buttress roots and the stag-headed appearance of these huge oaks. Our tour guide and volunteer for the Newton Creek Watershed Association, Maggi Downham did an excellent job of showing us these ancient giants and pointing out how susceptible this old forest is to development and invasive species. Our youngest club member, Robbie Keefe (age 3 mo.), slept soundly as we walked past a massive American Beech tree that is over 300 years old, Tulip trees that have cavities big enough to sit in, Scarlet Oaks that look like they are on fire and a impressive pair of willow oaks growing only 12 feet apart and over 250 years old. We found the understory of the forest to be very interesting, the bumps on the Hackberry stems, the yellow flowers of the Witch Hazel trees, the Tree Ear jelly fungus on a decaying branch, and the pink flowering Beech Drops growing up from the tree roots. MacArthur Forest is a treasure and should be saved for future generations. In such a populated area it would make a well-placed environmental center to teach about forest ecology and environmental stresses. They have a fantastic website **macathurwoods.com**. Go there to get addresses of who to write letters to or click on Alerts to read about our trip. Since the weather kept many people away we may try to schedule another visit in the future. Thanks to Maggi for a great tour and thanks to the dedication of all the folks who are working to preserve MacArthur Forest.



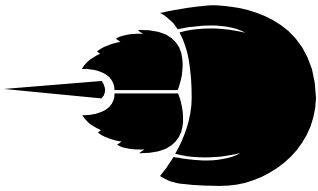
### **Conservation Notes**

Gloria Caccia, Environmental Coordinator, 582-0980

#### International Right to Know Initiative

The Sierra Club and more than 200 other organizations are supporting the “International Right to Know” initiative, which would require U.S. companies that operate abroad to disclose harmful activities they currently engage in such as dumping toxic waste, hiring brutal security forces, and employing child labor. This would help ensure that U.S. companies conduct themselves with the same accountability and fairness wherever they do business. Here at home American companies must follow domestic right-to-know laws that require they disclose the environmental and social impact of their practices. According to Sam Parry, a Sierra Club international representative, these same companies do not follow these standards outside the U.S.

At present, there are many cases of U.S. companies engaging in activities throughout the world that despoil the environment, harm human health, and abuse human rights. For instance, according to the Sierra Club’s The Planet “A U.S. based lead mining company has operated a lead smelter in Peru where the emissions of sulphur dioxide, cadmium, and arsenic exceed World Health Organization Standards. Pollution from the smelter is so bad that 90 percent of the children in the surrounding community have blood levels that exceed international health standards; 20 percent have blood-lead levels requiring hospitalization.”



### Environmental Groups Are Urging a ban on Horseshoe Crab Harvesting

Horseshoe crabs are an ancient species, closely related to spiders, which spawn on the shores of the Delaware Bay each spring. The eggs they lay are critical food for shorebirds along their long and difficult migration north. The crabs are also favored by commercial fishermen who chop them up to use as bait for eel and conch. There is concern that the harvesting of the crabs as they come ashore to spawn in the spring has been responsible for a huge decline in the crabs as well as the shorebirds that consume them.

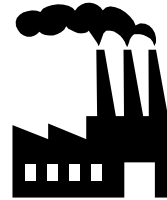
According to Alan Baker of the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada the horseshoe crab populations have dropped 75% in just 11 years. Meanwhile; Larry Niles, chief of the New Jersey Endangered Species Program, is reporting a 51% decline in red knots at the South American wintering grounds in the past two years. The red knots which numbered about 45,000 two years ago are expected to drop to 2,000 individuals by the end of this decade. That raises serious concern over whether the species will survive. The Atlantic Marine States Fisheries Commission reports that last year the horseshoe crabs were harvested at four times their reproduction rate.

As a result, a coalition of environmental groups is calling for an immediate and total ban on horseshoe crab harvests. The restrictions that have been in place since 1998 haven't gone far enough; the crab's population has continued to decline at alarming rates.

(Extracted from an article by Jack Kaskey in the Press of Atlantic City on Nov. 22, 2002)

### NJ Joins Clean Air Lawsuit Against Federal Government

New Jersey will join eight states in filing suit against the federal Environmental Protection Agency's new clean air rules once they are adopted. The rules relate to coal-fired power plants located in the Midwest. The lawsuit seeks to block implementation of these rules which the States contend will expose their residents to dirtier air. New Jersey Environmental Protection commissioner Brad Campbell has said the regulations will reverse the current requirements that require power plants to install pollution controls when they expand or make changes to their plants. Campbell said he feels these rules seek to take us backwards and make it more likely that those with respiratory illnesses such as asthma will have shorter lives. It certainly will mean the air we breathe in NJ will not be improving in the near future.



### Seminar to be held on "The Costs of Sprawl"

ANJEC will be hosting a seminar called "The Costs of Sprawl" on December 11<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 – 9:00 PM at the Washington Township Municipal Building. The meeting will feature three speakers on the above topic and a light supper will be served. The meeting is free, but registration is requested: Call ANJEC at (609) 278-5088 or email to [info@anjec.org](mailto:info@anjec.org)

### Sibley Column in Gloucester County Times

A new nature column written by famed bird artist and illustrator David Sibley is being featured in Weekender of The Gloucester County Times every Friday. The column has

been picked up on a trial basis so if you enjoy be sure to forward your comments to The Times.

**Looking Ahead-**

**Programs-**

January- Planetarium/ Astronomy Program

February- Craft Night, come join us to make nature related crafts

**Field Trips-**

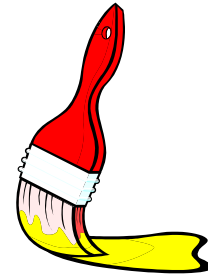
Saturday, January 11<sup>th</sup>- Conowingo Dam, MD

Sunday, February 16<sup>th</sup>- Bombay Hook, DE (driving loop)

Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>- Silver Lake Trail Hike

**Crafters Wanted**

We are planning to have a craft night in February. We would like to have several different crafts that children and adults can make during the evening. If you have a craft idea or would like to help us out with this new tradition please call Paula Hayes at 468-9272.



**Club News**

-Executive Committee Meeting: Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at Erik and Kris Mollenhauer's House- 309 Roosevelt Ave, Pitman, call 589-4387 for directions

-The nature Club is always looking for ideas for future programs and field trips. Please contact the program or trip coordinators if you have ideas or would like to help.

-For information about the Nature Club call Brian Hayes at 856-468-9272.

-Information for the next newsletter should be sent to Paula Hayes at [pnbhayes@aol.com](mailto:pnbhayes@aol.com) or 413 North Stockton Avenue; Wenonah, NJ 08090 by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

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