



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

January 2010

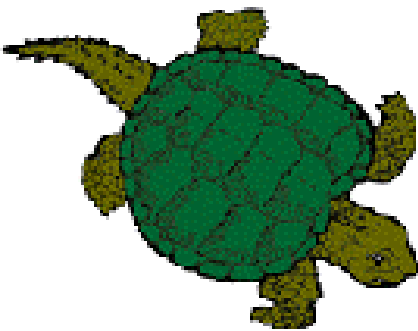
Program – Tales of Turtle Tails

**Thursday, January 14th at 7:00 PM at the Holy Nativity Lutheran Church,
Wenonah, NJ** (directions below)

Presenter: Cindy Pierson, The Turtle Lady

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks (856) 468-6342

The fossil remains of oldest known turtle, *Odontochelys semitestacea*, recently discovered in China, date from 220 million years ago in the Triassic Period. Since that time, turtles have been a part of life on Earth and have adapted to marine, fresh water and terrestrial habitats. Today there are about 300 species, many of them endangered. Tonight, Cindy Pierson, affectionately known as The Turtle Lady, will introduce us to some of these amazing creatures and tell us why and how turtles play a vital role in keeping our ecosystem healthy. She will be bringing with her Snappers of assorted sizes, some Red Eared Sliders, as well as exotics: 2 African Spur Thigh Tortoises - 30 pounds and 85 pounds - a Bell's Hingeback, a Forest Hingeback, a South American Side Neck, a Diamond Back Terrapin and 3 baby Musk Turtles! A main focus of her talk will be to raise awareness of the importance of Snapping Turtles in our ecosystem, and what a mess our waterways would be if we let them disappear. Many people think that snapping turtles are mean and ugly and Cindy is eager to dispel those myths and misconceptions. Cindy will also talk about the history and folklore of turtles and the effect of the 2004 Athos oil spill in the Delaware. She will tell us why the turtle lady's favorite bird is "Ted the Turkey Vulture", who will be attending also.



Cindy Pierson has been described (by her daughter) as “a science teacher with a passion for Snapping Turtles”. She lives in the home her great-great grandfather built in 1889 on the banks of the Pompeston Creek in Cinnaminson. It was there that Cindy first discovered the wonders of nature. The creek and its turtles have been a part of her life ever since. Cindy was recently elected President of the Board of Trustees of the Pompeston Creek Watershed Association.

This will be an enlightening and entertaining program for the whole family. Join us for an evening with Cindy Pierson, the Turtle Lady and her live turtle friends.

Directions: The Holy Nativity Lutheran Church is located just off Rte 553 (Woodbury Glassboro Rd.) immediately south of the traffic light at Mantua Ave. The church parking lot can be accessed by entrances on either Woodbury-Glassboro Road or Lenape Trail (first left off of Mantua Ave).

Field Trip – Eagles at Conowingo Dam, with gulls on the side

Saturday January 16th, 2010 9:00AM (carpool leaving from Riverwinds at 7:30AM)

Trip Leaders: Jonathan Stillwell & Karl Anderson

Conowingo Dam is the best place nearby to see Bald Eagles in the winter. Large groups of them feast on the fish that pass through the dam on the Susquehanna River. A large parking area affords a good view of the river and eagle feeding and interactive behavior. Eagles also perch on electrical towers and in nearby trees. There's an adjacent level hiking trail on an old railroad bed that affords access to a riverside wooded area that's good for viewing woodpeckers and other songbirds. We will also visit another nearby site to view several species of gulls, some of them rare.



Bring binoculars, spotting scopes and cameras with long lenses on tripods. It's also a good place for digi-scoping. There are Port-O-San facilities at the parking area and restrooms are sometimes open at the dam. Bring water and a lunch or snacks. Lunch is also available on the return trip in the small town of Port Deposit.

We will carpool from the Riverwinds complex in West Deptford at 7:30 AM. Meet in the parking lot near the canoe/kayak launch. Take entrance road straight in, veer right as if to go to the river. We will arrive at the dam around 9:00 AM.

Directions to Conowingo Dam: 67 Miles total.

Take Rt. 295 to the Del Mem Br and continue on I-95 for 27 miles through DE and into MD. Take EXIT 93, for Port Deposit/Rt 222. Go RIGHT at the light at the off-ramp. At the next light turn LEFT and go NORTH on Maryland Rt 222 toward Port Deposit for about 9 miles until you come to the intersection with Rt 1. Turn LEFT onto Rt 1 and go across the dam. After crossing the dam, proceed up the hill and take the first LEFT on Shuresville Road. Proceed about a mile. Make another LEFT turn (a very sharp turn) onto Shures Landing Road. This road goes 1/2 mile down to the parking areas near the dam.

Any questions - call Jonathan Stillwell at (856) 241-8658 Evening / (609) 485-6524 Daytime.

Family Fun Walk

Monday January 18, 2010 at 10:00 AM at Alcyon Lake, Pitman

Trip Leader: Maria Keefe (856) 627-7010

Email: walkingwith4boyz@comcast.net



Join us on Monday, January 18, 2010 at 10:00 AM at Alcyon Lake, Pitman for a winter walk with the kids. This is a nice short walk on a paved path in case the weather is very cold. We will walk at a toddler's pace exploring as we go. Dress in layers according to the weather. Everyone welcome.

Directions: From Rt 55 Exit 53A (or Exit 53 if coming from the south) take Rt 553 (Glassboro Road) south for about 1.5 miles to Holly Avenue. Turn right (west) on Holly Avenue. Continue for 1.2 miles to the park entrance, which is on the left. There is a small sign. Drive past the sports fields; meet at the pavilion.

Next Walk: Friday February 12, 2010

Conservation Corner – Winter Conservation Tips by Jayne Rhynard

Do your New Year's Resolutions include trying to "green up" this year? Let's start with January, when the cold settles in and sometimes snow and ice too.

Ice Melting Product Safety for Pets

We all need to be safe on the ice, but pet owners also worry how to keep our furry friends safe. The main concerns with Ice melting products are the fear that your pet could eat an amount that is harmful and the concern that the chemicals dry out their paws, causing discomfort. There is not usually a reason to worry that your pet will consume enough product to be toxic but try to avoid sweet smelling products that may have an appealing taste for your pet. However, according to the ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center, ingestion in excess amounts can potentially produce effects such as drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, vocalizing/crying, excessive thirst, depression, weakness, low blood pressure, disorientation, decreased muscle function and in severe cases, cardiac abnormalities, seizures, coma and in extreme case, death. Products containing calcium chloride and magnesium chloride (chemicals that draw moisture from the air) or too much rock salt can cause dried out paws. Avoiding the use of these chlorides where animals will spend a great deal of time can help.

The most common, and often sole ingredient in ice melters labeled "Pet Safe," is urea (sometimes listed as carbonyl diamide or carbamide resin), a bio-degradable chemical common in fertilizers. Urea won't harm your pet's paws, but it also won't melt ice. All of the chemicals mentioned can contaminate runoff and damage surrounding vegetation, however, calcium chloride and magnesium chloride may be less harmful. There is no third-party green certification for ice melt so buyers need to be wary of marketing claims and carefully read labels.

Tax Credits for Energy Saving

You have probably heard about the tax credits that are being offered for homeowners who make energy efficient improvements to their existing homes. The law's official name is the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and its purpose is to provide energy incentives for both individuals and businesses. Read more at <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=206871,00.html>. Some of the more interesting credits are:

Residential Energy Property Credit: Taxpayers can receive a credit up to 30 percent of the cost of all qualifying improvements and raises the maximum credit limit to \$1,500 for improvements placed in service in 2009 and 2010. The credit applies to improvements such as adding insulation, energy efficient exterior windows, garage doors and energy-efficient heating and air conditioning systems. The standards have been raised for qualifying products.

Residential Energy Efficient Property Credit: This 30% credit with no maximum is to help individuals pay for qualified residential alternative energy equipment, such as solar hot water heaters, geothermal heat pumps and wind turbines.

Plug-in Electric Drive Vehicle Credit: This increases the minimum credit for qualified plug-in electric drive vehicles purchased after Dec. 31, 2009 to \$2,500 with a maximum of \$7,500, depending on the battery capacity. Qualifying vehicles must be new, have 4 (or more) wheels, a gross vehicle weight rating less than 14,000 pounds, and propel itself on a battery with at least 4 kilowatt hours rechargeable from an external electric source.

Kid's Corner – Alphabet Hike* by Deb Maka

Most of us go out on hikes looking for trees or frogs or birds. What about looking for alphabet letters? The shapes of alphabet letters are hiding on the ground, in the trees, on the water, and in the sky. Have you ever looked at a tree branch and thought it looked like the letter “T”? When you look at the world a little differently, letter shapes pop out at you from everywhere.

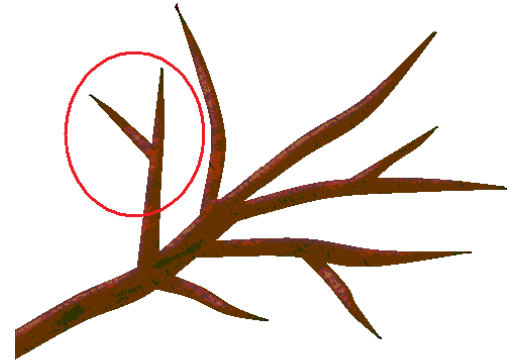
What you need:

- Your imagination
- Something to record your findings (pencil & paper, crayons, or a camera)

What you do:

1. Go outside with your eyes wide open
 - Start by looking for the letters in your first name. Found them all? Now try the rest of the alphabet.
2. To see something different, try a different view
 - Lie on you back and look up at the sky. Get down low on your hands and knees. Stand on your head to see an upside-down scene. Letters can be hiding almost anywhere.
3. Examine the patterns in clouds, mud, and snow; in branches and leaves; in sunlight & shadow.
 - Look at big shapes and small ones. Use binoculars or a magnifying glass to really zoom in.
4. As you discover every letter, a picture will help you remember it better.
 - Carry a camera or sketchbook and take your letters home as photos or drawings

* adapted from GREEN HOUR® a program of the National Wildlife Federation (<http://www.greenhour.org/>);
Discovery Journal & Activities (issue #102: Scavenger Hunt)



EXAMPLE: The Letter "Y"

Other Nature Notes

Raptor Census: Calling all experienced birders.

I'd like to start a census of the Raptor in our area but I need your help. I'm hoping this will be an annual winter census of raptors in Gloucester County. This has been done in Salem County since 1983. Our census would be conducted on the first Sunday of February, which is roughly midway between the beginning of winter and the beginning of spring. Additionally, there is significantly less traffic on the roads Sunday morning than on a Saturday. This year's date [2010] is February 7th. If anyone has questions or is interested in participating you can contact me through email at turkey.vulture2@verizon.net. -- Jack Mahon

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

Wild Birds Unlimited offers an everyday 10% discount (for non bird food items) to GCNC members! *Due to the current volatile market for bird food, the 10% discount for these items has had to be discontinued.* However, members will still receive credit for their purchases towards the Frequent Seed Shopper Program. WBU offers the GCNC discount on all other items in the store. Members are requested to identify themselves as GNNC members before their sales are finalized. Questions? Please contact Sharon at 218-2973 or sillybird348@comcast.net.



Events by other Organizations: January 2010

- January 7 (Thursday) - **Owl Prowl**. Includes live owl presentation. 6:00-8:00 PM. \$Fee. Sponsored by the Palmyra Cove Nature Park – <http://palmyracove.org/>
- January 9 (Saturday) - **Birding Forsythe NWR (Brigantine)** and vicinity for raptors and waterfowl. 9:00 AM to mid-afternoon. Leader: Lloyd Shaw. \$Fee. Sponsored by the Rancocas Nature Center. For info: phone 609-261-2495.
- January 16 (Saturday) – **Birding the North Shore Ponds** (Monmouth County). Leader: Cliff Jones. Sponsored by the Burlington County Natural Sciences Club - <http://oldsquaw.tripod.com/>
- January 31 (Saturday) – **Shark River** (Monmouth County) Birding; for waterfowl, gulls, winter shorebirds. Leader: Sandra Keller. Sponsored by the Audubon Wildlife Society - <http://www.audubonwildlifesociety.org/>.

The following events take place at the Scotland Run Nature Center in Clayton. For details and to register for programs, call the center at (856) 881-0845. All events are free.

- Bird Walks: Saturday 1/9 and 2/6 at 8:00 AM
- Afternoon Nature Strolls: Wednesday 1/20 and 2/17 at 2:30 PM
- Nature Tots: Wednesday 1/13 and 2/10 at 10:00 AM
- Family Nature Adventure: Saturday 2/13 at 10:00 AM. Get rid of the winter blues.

Natural Events for the month of January

- Earthworms burrow below frost line and become dormant.
- Newly fallen snow makes it easy to find and study animal tracks.
- First mating season for gray squirrels.
- Look for flocks of robins eating holly berries in your backyard.
- Great horned owls, America's earliest nesting owl, may be on eggs by the end of the month.
- As days lengthen, tufted titmice and cardinals start singing..

Looking Ahead:

Upcoming GCNC Programs

February 11, 2010: **Pot Luck Dinner and Cargo for Conservation**

March 11, 2010: **Gaviotas** – Hollister Knowlton

April 8, 2010: **Hawks of Southern New Jersey** – Don Freiday, NJ Audubon Society

May 13, 2010: **Hummingbird Gardening** – Ward Dasey

June 10, 2010: **Annual Picnic** (location TBD) and **Awakening Spirits: The Art of Tracking** – Bill Marple, Instructor, Tom Brown Tracker School

2009-2010 GCNC Field Trips

Listed below are the field trips we have lined up for the next season. Changes and additions are not impossible. If you would be able and willing to lead a field trip, please contact Karl Anderson at karlanderson6@aol.com or (856) 845-7075.

February 28 (Sunday) (Rain date February 29): **Full Moon Hike at Alcyon Park** – Kris Mollenhauer

March (date TBD): **Manasquan Reservoir** – Jonathan Weir

April 17 (Saturday): **Bike the Glassboro Woods Trail** – Brian and Paula Hayes

May 9 (Sunday): **Wildflowers at Ridley Creek State Park** – Richard Dilks

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 468-6536.
- 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 15th of the preceding month.
- The January Executive Committee meeting will be held on January 10th at the home of Kris & Erik Mollenhauer. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.