

# Gloucester County Nature Club

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

March 2002

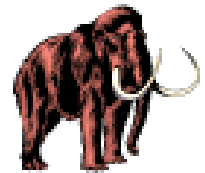
**REGULAR MEETING – Thursday, March 7, 2002 – 7:00 pm – EIRC, 606 Delsea Dr. Sewell**

Bob Cassel, Program Coordinator, 478-2496

***NOTE: This meeting date is on the first Thursday of the month, for this month only!***

### The Ghosts of North America

In 1876, Alfred Russell Wallace noted “We live in a zoologically impoverished world, from which all the hugest, and fiercest and strangest forms have recently disappeared”. In the past fifty to fifteen thousand years, Earth’s largest land animals (those weighing more than a hundred pounds) passed through a wave of extinction. In the Western Hemisphere, the Age of *Great Mammals* came to an abrupt end 13,000 years ago as 68% of North America’s megafauna and 80% of South America’s megafauna became extinct (mastodons and mammoths, three ton ground sloths, native horses and large camels, a beaver and an armadillo as large as a bear, sabretooth and scimitar cats, the American lion, giant land tortoises, etc).



The large animals of our “American Serengeti” may be extinct, but the plants (and some animals) have not yet caught on. Today, we live on a continent of ghosts, their presence hinted at by *ecological anachronisms*. Join us as we learn more about these anachronisms and the ghosts that haunt them. Learn about a time in the not-so-distant past when everyone alive knew the familiar call of distant mammoths... about the secret strategies of persimmons and mangos... the private lives of avocados and Osage oranges... the armor of honey locust and holly... the tree that dreams of dinosaurs... and the future ghosts of North America. *Note: Our presenter, Erik Mollenhauer, EIRC supervisor of science and social studies, is personally haunted by ghosts.*

**FIELD TRIP –Sun., March 17, 2002 - Leaving 8:30 am from Timberline Shopping Ctr., Mantua Twp.**

Kris Mollenhauer, Field Trip Coordinator, 589-4387

### **Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, Pennsville, NJ**

Wear your green and join us for a St. Patrick's Day tour of Supawna Meadows given by the refuge's resident wildlife biologist, Linda Ziembra. This is the closest national wildlife refuge to Gloucester County. The refuge lies along the Delaware River, north of the Salem River, in Pennsville Township, Salem County. Approximately 75 percent of the current 2,500 acres is brackish tidal marsh. As part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Supawna Meadows provides wintering and migrating waterfowl with an important feeding and resting area.



refuge.

Management of the refuge centers around the protection and enhancement of high quality habitat for use by migratory birds (waterfowl, wading birds, songbirds, woodcock and shorebirds). A variety of habitats including tidal wetlands, fresh water wetlands, old fields, grasslands and forest are represented in these areas. The refuge provides habitat for ducks, geese, herons, egrets, glossy ibis, tree swallows, barn swallows, a variety of warblers and sparrows, red fox, white-tailed deer, woodchuck and muskrat. A pair of bald eagles and a number of ospreys nest on the

The refuge currently has limited facilities: visitor opportunities are being developed. Opportunities for volunteers to help refuge staff survey for birds, reptiles, amphibians and other fauna and flora will be discussed.

Come ready to do some walking and bring field guides and binocs. If it's a warm day we may get to hear some spring peepers and wood frogs. Please call to register

### **Upcoming Field Trips:**

**April 13:** Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve

**June 13:** Annual Picnic at Red Bank Battlefield Park



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## **Environmental Info/Nature Notes – March, 2002**

Gloria Caccia, Environmental Coordinator, 582-0980

### **Lawn and Garden Pesticides Fatal to Birds**

According to the EPA's wildlife mortality incident base, just three of the chemicals commonly used in the garden and home—diazinon, chlorpyrifos, and brodifacoum—kill thousands of birds each year. National Audubon Society reports that the birds with the highest risk of exposure include waterfowl, such as brant geese, which have been known to eat large quantities of pesticide-treated foliage. Seed-eating songbirds, because they are attracted to pesticide granules and treated seeds, are also at high risk. A third hard-hit group includes scavengers as well as raptors such as red-tailed hawks and great-horned owls, which often feed on pesticide-poisoned prey.

The inescapable conclusion from this information is that birds, such as robins, when they eat worms and grubs from pesticide-treated lawns, are also being poisoned.

As National Audubon points out, it is not “mission impossible” to garden and care for a lawn without using pesticides—the more than 6,000 certified organic farmers in the U.S. do just that in their farming. And the city of Arcata, California, after 15 years of using non-toxic pest controls, has banned all pesticide use on city property.

To help reduce the pesticide threat, the National Audubon Society has launched BirdCast. website ([www.Birdsource.org/Birdcast](http://www.Birdsource.org/Birdcast)) will give information on local pest threats and safest ways to manage them.

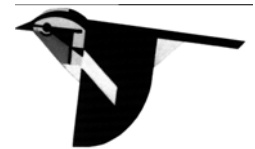


The

### **2002 Bird Quest Expected to Draw More Participants than Last Year**

The **2002 Gloucester County Bird Quest** will take place on **Sat., May 4, 2002 from 7 AM to 12 NOON in Gloucester County**. During this time, teams of people visit parks and natural sites in Gloucester County and find as many different bird species as they can. The purpose of the Bird Quest is to discover the natural areas of Gloucester

County, to learn how to identify birds by sight and sound, and to have fun with friends, colleagues and family. **The Quest is an educational event, novices are encouraged to participate.** At 12 NOON, all participants gather at Atkinson Memorial County Park on Delsea Drive to report results, and for a **free lunch, t-shirts and prizes.**

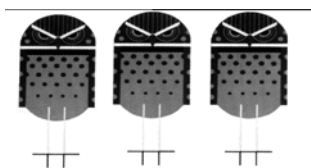


The organizers want to significantly increase the number of teachers who participate in this year's Quest. **To that end, they are hiring a school bus that teachers can ride on, at no cost.** (A second bus will be provided for other participants who wish to ride it.) Several knowledgeable birders will ride the bus, guiding groups of teachers when the bus stops at selected sites. In addition to 5 hours of professional development credits for all teachers, each teacher who rides the bus can bring another teacher for free (the \$8 registration fee will be waived for the colleague). **Free refreshments will be provided at the first stop of the morning (with free lunch and T-shirts at noon.)**

Last year's **Gloucester County Bird Quest** attracted nearly 300 participants, including teachers, school groups, scout troops, environmental commissions, families and residents of Gloucester and neighboring counties. This year the organizers are planning for at least 400 participants.

The **2002 Gloucester County Bird Quest** highlights the importance of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), a nation-wide effort to draw attention to the plight and needs of migratory birds. The 2002 IMBD theme, "*A Celebration of Special Places*", stresses the importance of stopover sites habitat to migratory birds. The colorful IMBD T-shirt showing 42 different bird species migrating at night is given free to all participants.

A county map and other materials are provided to each registered team. Participants can also attend any of a series of twelve free field trainings (listed below) in the two weeks before the Quest. An \$8. fee per participant covers the cost of lunch, T-shirt, prizes etc. To obtain more information and a team registration form, or to join a team or to ride the bus, contact Anne Rossell at EIRC, 606 Delsea Drive, Sewell NJ 08080. Information can also be requested by phone (856-582-7000 X110) FAX (856-582-4206) or e-mail at [anner@eirc.org](mailto:anner@eirc.org).



## **Bird Quest 2002 Training**

## **Sessions**

**April 15 - Monday 6:00 - 7:00 PM    Birding Basics**  
Alcyon Lake Park, Pitman

This session is great for the beginning birder. We will discuss the tools of the trade from field guides, binoculars, scopes, to clothing, footwear, and repellants. We will discuss general techniques and helpful hints on identifying that bird. *Directions: From 322 take Lambs road to W. Holly Ave. Take Track Ave. past sports fields; meet at the pavilion.*

Leader: Brian Hayes

CoLeader: Mimi Glass

**April 18 - Thursday 6:00 - 7:00 PM Birding by Ear Part I**

EIRC, 606 Delsea Drive

This is a classroom training session, the first of two parts, which will help you identify bird songs and calls. The second part of this training is in the field where you can use your recently learned skills. *Directions: On Delsea Dr. (47) in Washington Twp. located next to the Dairy Queen and the Italian Bistro.*

Leader: Erik Mollenhauer

CoLeader: Kris Mollenhauer

**April 19 - Friday 6:00 - 7:00 AM**

**Birding by Ear Part II**

Greenwich Lake Park, Greenwich

This is the second part to the classroom training of Birding by Ear. This training is in the field where you can use your recently learned skills. *Directions: From Kings Hwy take Tomlin Station Rd (607) North. Meet in the parking lot off of Tomlin Station Rd (607) just north of 295/130 overpass.*

Leader: Erik Mollenhauer

CoLeader: Deb Maka

**April 21 - Sunday 8:00 - 9:00 AM**

**BirdQuest Training**

Wheelabrator Wildlife Management Area, Westville

*Directions: Access is from Rte 130, opposite Hazel Ave in Westville, just south of Big Timber Creek. Meet in parking lot on the right just before the guard station.*

Leader: Ron Kegel

CoLeader: Loretta Dunne

**April 23 - Tuesday 6:00 - 7:00 PM BirdQuest Training**

Scotland Run Park, Clayton

*Directions: From Delsea Dr. (47) in Clayton take 610 Clayton-Williamston Rd. East towards Williamston. Meet at park headquarters on the right across from Wilson Lake.*

Leader: Bob Duke

CoLeader: Doris and Dwight Weir

**April 24 - Wednesday 6:00 - 7:00 AM BirdQuest Training**

Ceres Park, Mantua

*Directions: Access from 553A(Pitman-Barnsboro Rd.) Watch for Ceres Park sign on W. side of road after you cross Rt. 55. Meet in parking lot.*

Leader: Bob and Carol Cassel

CoLeader: Karen Kravchuck

**April 25 - Thursday 6:00 - 7:00 PM BirdQuest Training**

Chestnut Branch Park, Mantua

*Directions: Access from 553A (Main St. Barnsboro). Meet at wildflower gardens.*

Leader: Jeff Holt

CoLeaders: Doris and Dwight Weir

**April 28 - Sunday 8:00 - 7:00 AM**

**BirdQuest Training**

Floodgate Road

*Directions: Access from Rt. 44 South of Gibbstown. Turn right onto Floodgate road (at the racetrack) meet all the way down at the gate by the river.*

Leader: Dr. Ebert

CoLeader: Marge Dolente

**April 28 - Sunday 6:00 - 7:00 PM****BirdQuest Training**

Washington Lake Park - Backend

*Directions: Take Larson Lane off the North side of Chapel Hts. Rd(639), East of Gloucester Co. Community Church. Meet at the parking area.*

Leader: Bob and Carol Cassel

CoLeader: Maria Keefe

**April 29 - Monday 6:00 - 7:00 AM****BirdQuest Training**

West Deptford Scenic Park, West Deptford.

*Directions: From 130/295 take exit 21 Delaware St (640) west. Trailhead starts about 300 yards North of the intersection of Grove St. and Delaware St. (640). Meet in parking lot.*

Leader: Dr. Ebert

CoLeader: Loretta Dunne

**April 30 - Tuesday 6:00 - 7:00 PM****Birding by Ear Part I**

EIRC, 606 Delsea Drive

This is a classroom training session, the first of two parts, which will help you identify bird songs and calls. The second part of this training is in the field where you can use your recently learned skills. *Directions: On Delsea Dr. (47) in Washington Twp. located next to the Dairy Queen and the Italian Bistro.*

Leader: Erik Mollenhauer

CoLeader: Brian Hayes

**May 1 - Wednesday 6:00 - 7:00 AM****Birding by Ear Part II**

Lake Narraticon, Swedesboro

This is the second part to the classroom training of Birding by Ear. This training is in the field where you can use your recently learned skills. *Directions: Access from Park Ave. in Swedesboro.*

Leader: Erik Mollenhauer

CoLeader: Deb Maka

**May 2 - Thursday 6:00 - 7:00 PM****BirdQuest Training**

Wheelabrator

*Directions: Access is from Rte 130, opposite Hazel Ave in Westville, just south of Big Timber Creek. Meet in parking lot on the right just before the guard station.*

Leader: Bob Duke

CoLeader: Marge Dolente

**Extinction Rate Across Globe Reaches Historical Proportions**

(abstracted from an article in the January-February issue of American Scientist magazine)

“Half of all living bird and mammal species will be gone within 200 or 300 years”, according to University of Texas-Austin botany professor, Dr. Donald Levin, article co-author with his son, Phillip S. Levin, a National Marine Fisheries Service biologist. They noted that, on average, a distinct species of plant or animal becomes extinct every 20 minutes, a loss rate that is highly unusual. This rate clearly qualifies the present period as one of the six great periods of mass extinction in the history of Earth.

The numbers are grim, some 2000 species of Pacific Island birds (about 15 percent of the world total) have gone extinct since human colonization. Roughly 20 of the 297 known mussel and clam species and 40 of about 950 fishes have perished in North American in the last century. The globe has experienced similar waves of destruction just five times in the past.

Biological diversity ultimately recovered after each of the five past mass extinctions, probably requiring several million years in each instance. As for today's mass extinction, Levin said some ecologists believe the low level of species diversity may become a permanent state, especially if vast tracts of wilderness area are destroyed.

Other experts, in contrast, say breaking up today's vast ranges into smaller habitats could promote the evolution of new species. That's because populations of the same type of organism that are separated from each other may diverge over time. As populations are reduced in size, genetic changes may accumulate more rapidly. Another reason diversity may rebound—as it normally does after a major extinction episode—is that disturbances caused by human being do not eliminate habitats, but merely change them.



***Old Growth Forest at Haddon Township, Camden County –  
a report by Matthew “Twig” Largess, ISA-Certified Arborist***

The 30-acre MacArthur tract in Camden County is an old growth forest surrounded by concrete, including three schools, high-rise apartment buildings, a water tower, and a shopping center. This forest consists of many large, climax species, including: an impressive tulip tree grove; massive black, white, red and chestnut oaks; massive American beech; and red maple with a great native understory of American hornbeam, spice bush and many other native species. A creek runs through this slightly hilly stand. This forest looks ancient. The tulip trees have cavities large enough to sit in and their bark has a lot of balding. The black oaks have massive buttress roots and impressive heights. The white oaks have a stag-headed appearance and a lot of spiral twists with balding bark. There is a lot of pits and mounds on the forest floor and some big trees standing and decaying on the forest floor. And also an abundance of wildlife including bats, yellow salamanders, red fox, whitetail deer and red-tail hawks, their last haven.

There is an abundance of moss and mushrooms and has a feeling of a cathedral forest. This stand is six miles from downtown Philadelphia and three miles from Camden, the second poorest city in the U.S. Human litter abounds. Jumbo jets fly right over the canopy. Humans have used these woods for years, but only the edges show signs of major disturbance.

Contact with top old-growth specialists throughout the U.S. conclude that this is a tremendous scientific find that it should be preserved at all costs.

Of his February 2002 visit to this 30-acre site, a life-changing experience. This is a last pre-colonial period. Its value is priceless and threat to be cleared for numerous athletic



Matt concluded that walking into this forest was remnant of what New Jersey looked like in the scientific information is limitless. It is under fields.

## **Storm in Mexico Devastates Monarch Butterfly Colonies** (abstracted from an article by Carol Kaesuk Yoon)

After a severe winter storm in mid-January, in the mountains of central Mexico, dead monarch butterflies lay in piles on the ground, in some places more than a foot high. Between 220 and 270 million frozen butterflies had rained down from roosts when they normally festooned towering trees.

“It was really macabre,” said Dr. Lincoln P. Brower, a butterfly biologist. “I’ve been going down there for 25 years, and I’ve never seen anything like it.”

It is estimated that 74 percent of the monarchs at the Sierra Chincua colony and 80 percent at the Rosario colony had been killed. Along with a few smaller colonies, which scientists have not surveyed, the butterflies in these major colonies make up the entire breeding stock of monarchs for the eastern United States and Canada.



The spectacle of the monarchs’ long and rugged mass migration north from Mexico each spring, a highly unusual behavior for an insect, has made the species a favorite of nature lovers. The butterflies fly north, stopping to lay eggs in the southern United States. The monarchs that develop from those eggs continue the journey, and by summer butterflies reach as far north as Canada.

The monarchs’ epic migration is so exceptional that scientists have called it an “endangered biological phenomenon.” If the populations that fly north each year from Mexico were to disappear, the mysteries of that migration might never be solved.

While it is unlikely that a single event could ring the death knell for the Mexican monarch populations, researchers said the radically reduced numbers left the butterflies vulnerable to future whims of weather, disease and continuing deforestation in and around their winter resting grounds in Mexico.

Scientists will know in coming weeks how precarious the situation of the devastated populations has become, as they get a better sense of how many millions survived and what shape the butterflies are in as they begin to move north. “A bad winter followed by a bad spring could be catastrophic,” said Dr. Karen Oberhauser, a monarch ecologist at the University of Minnesota.



The Rosario and Sierra Chincua colonies are thought to harbor perhaps two-thirds of all the butterflies in Mexico’s monarch sanctuaries. The storm on Jan. 12 and 13 dropped about four inches of rain in the area and was followed by freezing temperatures. Temperatures following the storm were the lowest recorded in the winter colonies in the last 25 years.

Because forest trees can act as an umbrella against the rain and a blanket that can retain heat, scientists and conservationists have been warning for years that the thinning of the forests in the relatively small area they have chosen for their habitat could threaten the butterflies by increasing their exposure to these elements. An early study showed that in the last 30 years, nearly half the prime forest in the area had been degraded or destroyed. Dr. Brower said that he believed the loss of forests had contributed to the die-off.

*Mark Your Calendar!*

**Saturday, May 4: Gloucester County Bird Quest (Third Annual)**

**Monday, May 6 (7-9pm) The Raptor Project (back by popular demand!) – Pitman High School**



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**Executive Committee Meeting:** The next Board of Trustees/Executive Committee Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 3, 2002 at 7:00 pm at the home of Deb Maka, 619 Quincy Ct., Glassboro NJ 08028. Call for directions, 863-0330. Members are invited to attend the Executive Meetings.

**Club News:** The Nature Club is always looking for ideas for future programs and field trips. Please contact the program and/or field trip coordinators with your ideas. For information about the Gloucester County Nature Club, call:

Brian Hayes, President 468-9272

Mimi Glass, Membership Chair, 589-6435

Information for next month's newsletter should be sent, by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, to:

Erik Mollenhauer, 606 Delsea Dr. Sewell NJ 08080, 582-7000 X128

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c/o EIRC  
606 Delsea Dr.  
Sewell NJ 08080