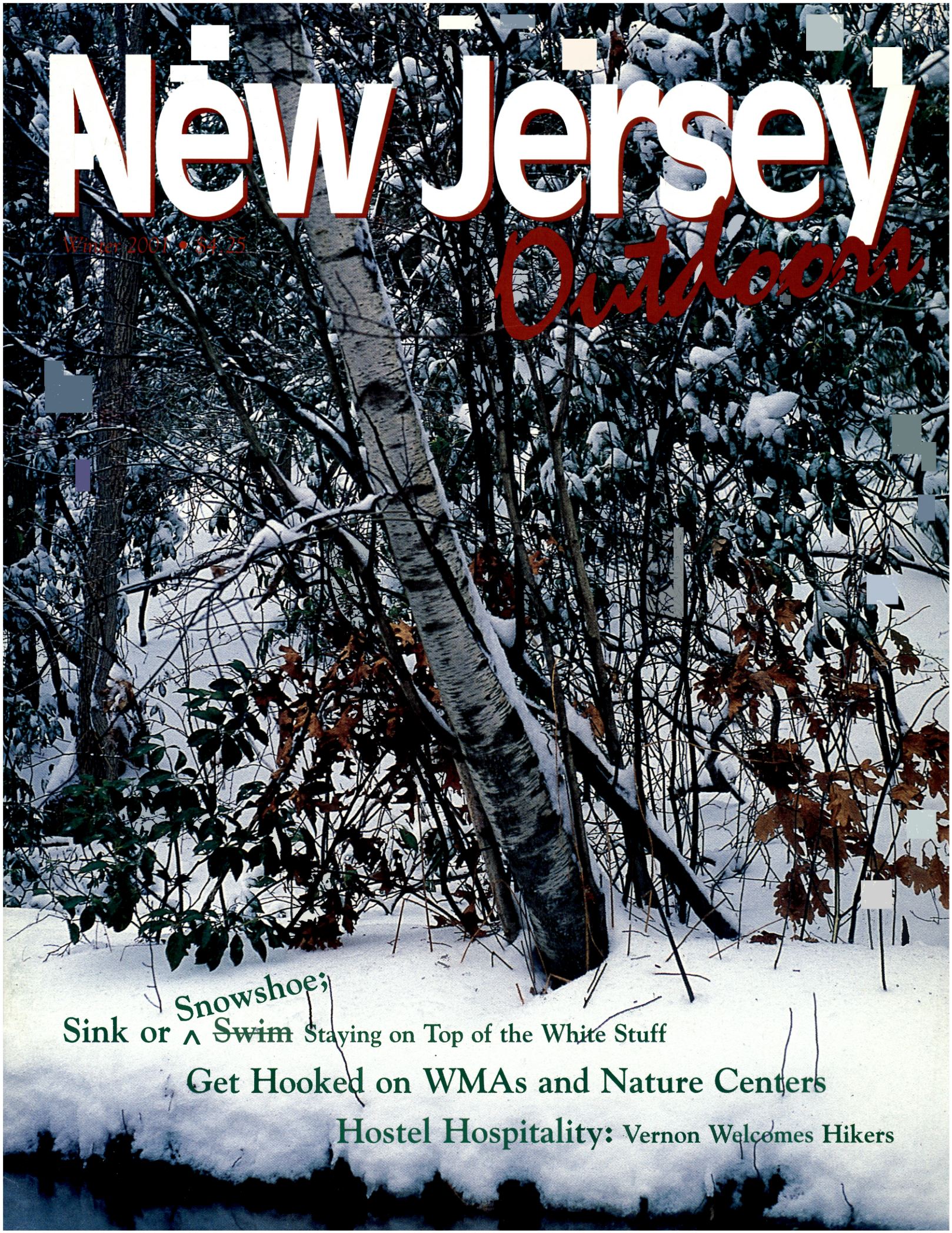
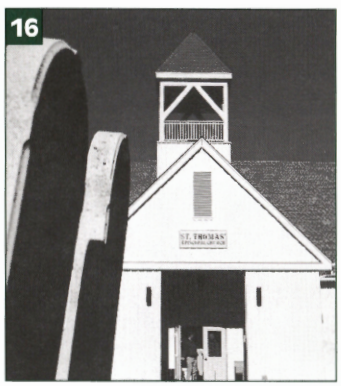

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Snowshoe;
Sink or ^ ~~Swim~~ Staying on Top of the White Stuff
Get Hooked on WMAs and Nature Centers
Hostel Hospitality: Vernon Welcomes Hikers



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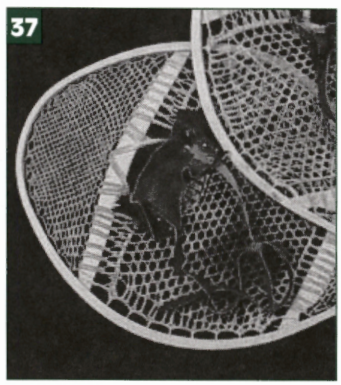
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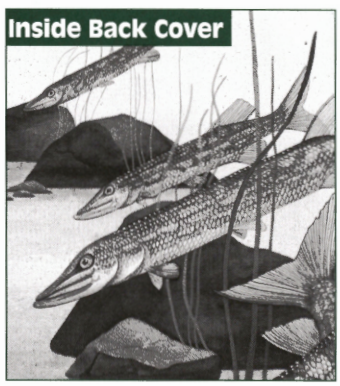
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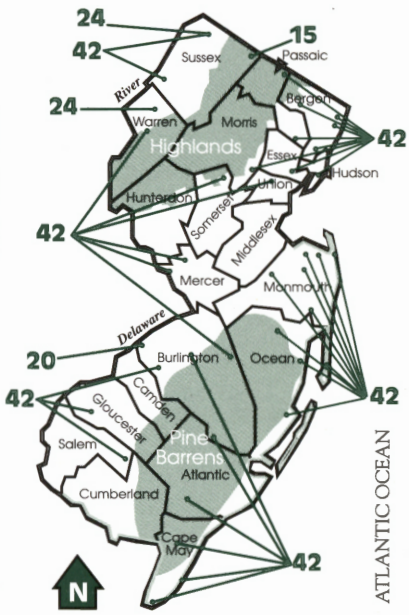
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Front Cover
This leaning birch stands in Shark River Park.
© *Robert Jasany*

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A red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) buries his nose in his tail at IBSP
© *Steve Greer*

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The voracious chain pickerel is the subject of the Wildlife in New Jersey profile on page 64. © *2000 Kathy Johnston*

Back Cover
A Northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) brightens a snowy branch at Strawbridge Lake. © *Steve Greer*

From the Governor



Christine Todd Whitman,
Governor

Last year, the construction industry in our state was busy. Thirty-two thousand housing construction permits were issued. That's more activity than we've seen in New Jersey in more than a decade, and it's mirrored by a boom in nonresidential construction.

Some New Jerseyans look at this news with alarm and say we should stop development altogether. I know because I hear from them. But I don't believe that is a realistic alternative. Since we know growth is in our future, we need to act now to promote smart growth.

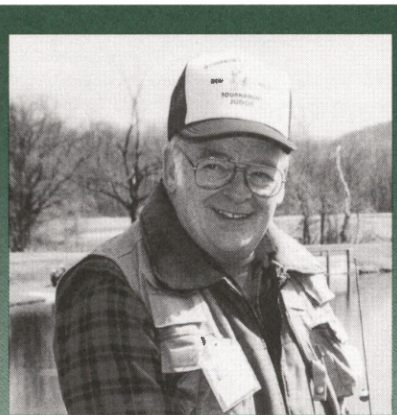
That's what New Jersey's State Plan does. The New Jersey Development and Redevelopment Plan (as it is officially called) was adopted in 1992 to balance the need for economic growth and development with the preservation of New Jersey's natural, cultural, and historic resources. Implementing the State Plan will save 122,000 acres of open space, over and above the million acres we already will be saving.

I'm proud of what my administration has achieved in promoting smart growth. We have, for instance, made it more feasible to restore brownfields to productive use. We already use the Internet to post certain information on various brownfields. Now I have asked the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to gather information relating to all brownfield sites in New Jersey and make it available and regularly updated on the Web.

Following the State Plan is going to make New Jersey an even better place in which to live, work, and raise a family. I want to hear from everyone with a stake in development and redevelopment. Let's work together to make sure our developed space is as welcome a place to call home.



From the Commissioner



Robert C. Shinn, Jr.,
Commissioner

New Jersey is one of the most densely populated states in the nation. It is urban and suburban; it has farmlands, small towns and great cities with lots of variety in between. Every now and then, you stumble upon a place that you would never expect to be where it is—someplace so different and special you smile and think, "only in New Jersey." And so it is with Palmyra Cove Nature Center.

Tucked just under the Tacony Palmyra Bridge, along the edge of the Delaware River in Burlington County, is an exceptional example of such a place. Palmyra Cove Nature Center is the first of what I hope will be many New Jersey sites that feature walking and hiking trails, diverse wildlife, natural vegetation, birding opportunities, environmental education and a dredged material disposal site. Yes, you read that correctly, dredged material.

This area is an upland site that historically has been used by the Army Corps of Engineers for the disposal of dredged material from the Delaware River. Owned by the State and leased to the Burlington County Bridge Commission, the nature park has been made possible through the work of many and in partnership with various government, non-profit, and private sector entities.

Palmyra Cove Nature Park is featured on page 20 in this issue of New Jersey Outdoors. I encourage you to take a ride down Route 73 and stop at the Nature Park. You'll probably see school buses with kids going on a field trip lead by the Audubon Society; if you look closely, you'll see lots of the resident wildlife. It is a perfect example of multiple uses of an open space area in a place that you just wouldn't expect it!



Mail Box

Article Prompts Renewed Search

Thank you for the excellent article by Marie A. Sylvester about the *New Era*. I have been researching that disaster since I believe my great-grandfather, Christopher Sehl, was a passenger. Family tradition says that he and his four brothers were on a German ship that ran aground off New Jersey in a storm. One of the brothers, Matthew, was lost in the wreck, but the others reached Albany, New York.

The article was most enlightening and renewed my attempt to locate names of those poor unfortunate people on that ship. I have found the names of some of the victims and survivors . . . (and) a partial list of passengers from Bremen . . . (but) I could not locate a list in the National Archives. I imagine that the original manifest went down with the ship. I wonder if any of your researchers or readers might have been able to locate a passenger list for the *New Era* . . . (or) if there is any mention of names of those identified from the ship at the mass grave site in the West Long Branch Cemetery.

Susan B. Mason
Queensbury, NY

Editor's Note: *No one surnamed Sehl appeared among the survivors and victims listed in* ***The Wreck of the Ship New Era Upon the New Jersey Coast, November 13, 1854****, by Julius Friedrich Sachse, Litt.D., which was the only book about the disaster that I was able to obtain. If any readers can provide the requested information, please send it to me and I will be happy to forward it to Ms. Mason.*

A Multiple-Use Magazine

As the editor, you must receive a variety of mail. When I read that persons do not renew subscriptions because their favorite sports are not covered, I wish they would consider how fine it is just to have a New Jersey magazine.

As an older subscriber I neither hunt nor fish, but there is enough variety to have me even use the magazine as I tutor English as a Second Language one-on-one in our library.

Jessie Schlichting
North Arlington

Editor's Note: *I'm pleased that you enjoy the magazine and use it to teach others about our language and our state. Kudos to you, Mrs. Schlichting, for caring and sharing.*

Failing Eyesight

I am no longer able to read, so I can't renew my subscription. I have given a 2-year subscription to my nephew, who loves it and can use it in his schoolwork.

I want to tell you that it is a beautiful magazine and I'm sorry I can no longer enjoy it. Do you have it in large print?

Mae Shiffert
Washington

Editor's Note: *Unfortunately,* ***New Jersey Outdoors*** *does not have a large print version, but arrangements have been made with the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped to record each issue. They will make the audio version available to those who are unable to read the magazine itself. All services of the Library—including equipment and postage—are free to qualified New Jerseyans. For information or an application, visit www2.njstatelib.org/njlib/njlbh.htm or call 800/792-8322 or 609/530-4000.*

State of New Jersey
Christine Todd Whitman
Governor

Department of Environmental Protection
Robert C. Shinn, Jr.
Commissioner

Peter Page
Director of Communications

Sandy Huber
Chief, Office of Publications

New Jersey Outdoors

Winter 2001, Vol. 28, No. 1

This publication is dedicated to promoting and encouraging the wise management and conservation of our natural, cultural and recreational resources by fostering a greater appreciation of those resources, and providing our residents with the information necessary to help the Department protect, preserve and enhance them.

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Joe Earley Hooks Top Honors in Surf Fishing Tournament

More than 1,000 participants took part in the Governor's 9th Annual Surf Fishing Tournament on Sunday, October 1, at Island Beach State Park in Ocean County. Sunshine and warm temperatures allowed participants to take advantage of a beautiful autumn day outdoors with family and friends.

"I would like to thank the many sponsors, prize volunteers and participants who have helped make the surf tournament a success for the past nine years," said Division Director Bob McDowell. "Their cumulative efforts have helped raise nearly $60,000 for a variety of conservation projects such as the construction of a beach access ramp, two mobile fishing education carts and specialized wheelchairs for the disabled and elderly."

DEP's divisions of Fish & Wildlife and Parks & Forestry, the New Jersey Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Jersey Coast Anglers Association and the New Jersey Beach Buggy Association sponsored the event.

Albacore, striped bass, blackfish, bluefish, red drum, fluke, kingfish and weakfish were eligible for entry in the tournament. Of these, striped bass, blackfish, bluefish, fluke and kingfish were the species submitted.

Overall length determined the grand prize winner as well as place winners for each of the species categories. There were children, teen and adult angler categories, including sub-categories for male and female anglers. In addition, there were categories for fly-fishing and Becoming an Outdoors-Woman students (female and male novice anglers who attended the surf fishing and fly fishing workshops held Saturday, Sept. 30). The inclusion of first, second and third place winners was dependent upon the number of entries submitted in each species category.

DEP Commissioner Bob Shinn presented the awards to the successful anglers. The grand prize went to Toms River's Joe Earley, who reeled in a 32-5/8" striped bass. He received the Governor's Trophy along with a Penn rod and reel combo, various gift certificates and other prizes. In addition, his name will be engraved on the Governor's Cup, which will be permanently displayed at Island Beach State Park.

More than 50 surf rod and reel outfits, including 15 donated by Penn Reels, were awarded as prizes. Ultimus Lures donated all of the early entry prizes.

There were no winners in the fly-fishing category, so the Silver Label 909 fly rod with a Vortex 9-10 large-arbor reel including line and backing (retail value, approximately $1,000) donated by The Orvis Company Store in Paramus will be held over for next year's tournament.

The winners, listed by category, were:

Striped Bass (Adult, Male)
1st Place (32-5/8") and 2000 Governor's Cup Winner—**Joe Earley** (Toms River)
2nd Place (31")—**Mike S'dao** (Port Murray)
3rd Place (30-1/4")—**Bob Blaszak** (Wharton)

Striped Bass (Adult, Female)
1st Place (27-3/8")—**Deborah Mitchell** (Toms River)
Second Place (25-1/2")—**Hope Cordes** (Brooklyn, NY)

Striped Bass (Teen, Female)
1st Place (26")—**Arelys Rodriguez** (Absecon)

Striped Bass (Child, Male)
1st Place (29-1/4")—**Mark Anthony Langal** (Lanoka Harbor)
2nd Place (28")—**Zach Paone** (Toms River)
3rd Place (26-1/2")—**Vincent Pomponio** (Howell)

Striped Bass (Child, Female)
1st Place (28-1/4")—**Jaime Jonach** (Toms River)
Note: Jaime also caught a 24-1/2" striped bass

Kingfish (Adult, Male)
1st Place (15-1/8")—**James Baisley** (Stony Point, NY)
2nd Place (14-1/2")—**Jerry Talarico** (Sicklerville)

Kingfish (Teen, Female)
1st Place (13-5/8")—**Kerry Cameron** (Churchville, PA)
2nd Place (13-1/2")—**Brielle Talarico** (Sicklerville)

Fluke (Adult, Male)
1st Place (24-1/8")—**Jason Garey** (Toms River)
2nd Place (22")—**Anthony Ingram** (Levittown, PA)
3rd Place (21-1/4")—**James Rosso** (Lambertville)

Fluke (Adult, Female)
1st Place (18")—**Carole Carey** (Florence)
2nd Place (16-3/4")—**Dorothy Harrison** (Wayne)
3rd Place (16")—**Magda Swift** (Morristown)

Fluke (Teen, Male)
1st Place (16-1/4")—**Robert Zangari** (Cherry Hill)
2nd Place (15-7/8")—**Chris Clawson** (Hamburg)
3rd Place (15-1/2")—**Josh Dudash** (Beachwood)

Fluke (Child, Male)
1st Place (22-3/4")—**Jason Jayanty** (Jersey City)
2nd Place (16-1/4")—**Cody Myers** (Delran)

Blackfish (Adult, Male)
1st Place (19-1/2")—**Zoltan Egyed** (Trenton)
2nd Place (17-1/4")—**John Salato** (Toms River)
3rd Place (16-1/8")—**Alex Vegh** (Trenton)

Blackfish (Adult, Female)
1st Place (15-1/2")—**Arlene Parrino** (Middletown)
Blackfish (Teen, Male)
1st Place (16-3/4")—**John Salato IV** (Toms River)
2nd Place (15-1/4")—**Michael Battista** (Howell)
3rd Place (14-1/8")—**Joe Rosetti** (Bloomfield)
Bluefish (Adult, Male)
1st Place (17-7/8")—**Timothy Fleury** (Franklinville)
2nd Place (17-1/2"; caught at 7:00 a.m.)—**Don Szymanski** (Basking Ridge)
3rd Place (17-1/2"; caught at 9:54 a.m.)—**John Pedone** (Toms River)
Bluefish (Adult, Female)
1st Place (16-5/8")—**Elizabeth Haines** (Berwick, PA)
2nd Place (16-1/2")—**Sharon Becker** (Little Egg Harbor)
3rd Place (16-3/8")—**Lynn Catalano** (Browns Mills)
Bluefish (Teen, Male)
1st Place (16-5/8")—**Andrew Nastasiak** (Pt. Pleasant)
2nd Place (16-1/2")—**Bill Nastasiak** (Pt. Pleasant)
3rd Place (16-1/4")—**Mike Henry Jr.** (Fairless Hills, PA)
Bluefish (Teen, Female)
1st Place (16-1/4")—**Autumn Parkerson** (Toms River)
2nd Place (15-1/2")—**Krisla Batesko** (Lakehurst)
3rd Place (15-1/4")—**Jessica Dickson** (Jackson)
Bluefish (Child, Male)
1st Place (17-7/8")—**Steven Senese Jr.** (Manville)
2nd Place (17-3/4")—**Joshua Buckalew** (New Egypt)
3rd Place (17")—**Travis Watson** (Sussex)
Bluefish (Child, Female)
1st Place (14-3/4")—**Katie Abdill** (Delran)
2nd Place (14")—**Rachel Jochem** (Tabernacle)
Becoming an Outdoors-Woman
1st Place (24-1/2")—**Rita Carey** (Forked River)

Tuckerton Seaport Wins National Award

Tuckerton Seaport, which was featured in the Fall 2000 issue of *New Jersey Outdoors*, has been named as the recipient of *Coastal Living Magazine*'s annual Tourism Award. Criteria included the development of a site that was architecturally honest and pleasing, with educational and historic value, and a good tourism experience.

"We are all thrilled to be given this honor by such a fine publication," said John Gormley, executive director of the seaport, "and much of the credit goes to our dedicated staff and hundreds of volunteers. We are proud of what we have accomplished here since our grand opening in May. Our attendance since opening counts over 22,000 and our memberships have soared to more than 5,000 families."

Gormley also said that the 10,000-square-foot Tuckerton Yacht Club is well on its way to completion and will be open to the public in mid to late April. The Yacht Club is a re-creation of a building, lost to fire decades ago, that was a home base to the charter boat fleets of Barnegat Bay. In its new incarnation, the Yacht Club will serve as a Visitors Center and will also house marine science exhibits—many hands-on—from Rutgers University Marine Science Research Division, Richard Stockton State College and the Jacques Cousteau Estuarine Reserve.

Liberty State Park License Plate Now Available

More than 10 million European immigrants saw the Statue of Liberty, then landed at Ellis Island for processing before boarding the trains at the Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal to travel to their new homes in the U.S. This northern New Jersey waterfront in the area that is now called Liberty State Park is minutes by ferry from the statue on Liberty Island and from Ellis Island.

When you purchase the new Liberty State Park License plates, you celebrate and support the re-creation of this area into a modern park with a world-class science center, 60-acre nature area and swimming, tennis, boating and fishing facilities for all to enjoy.

To get your plates, just go to any New Jersey motor vehicle agency with your current plates and registration and pick up the new Liberty State Park plate, or call 888/486-3339 on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to order by mail. From out of state call 609/292-6500.

Plates cost $50 with an annual $10 renewal fee. You can order personalized plates with up to five characters for $100 and a $10 yearly renewal by mail.



New Jersey State Library

Winners Lured from Seven States and Canada

First place winners in the 18th Annual Ocean County Decoy and Gunning Show hailed from New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio, and Ontario, Canada, according to Freeholder John C. Bartlett, Jr., who serves as liaison to the Ocean County Parks & Recreation Department, which sponsors the event. Bartlett expressed appreciation to the organizations, volunteers and businesses, saying, "We are fortunate that so many people are willing to contribute their time, expertise and funds to help the county sponsor this extraordinary heritage event. The show helps us to preserve an important part of our history. We hope the competitions will stimulate an interest in these crafts and skills and help to pass them from one generation to the next," he said. Ocean County Recreation Manager **Mike Mangum**, who coordinates the event and has been involved since the show's inception, notes that there were more decoy competitions this year than there were actual decoys in the first year.

Each winner was presented with a blue ribbon and an engraved plaque, enhanced with a three-dimensional miniature carving by **Dave Rhodes**, of Port Republic. The carving symbolized the recipient's area of expertise. Rhodes is an award-winning carver in his own right. The unique plaques are possible because a business or an individual sponsors each. The winners were:

Ken Barnett (Hammonton)	South Jersey Pond Box Building Contest
Carl Becker (Fairhaven)	Delaware River Working Decoy Rig Contest
Gary Bell (Brick)	Gunning Boat Accessories Contest
Bob Birdsall (Clinton)	Photo, Professional Contest
Rich Brooks (Langhorne, PA)	Fish Decoy Contest
John Clayton (Toms River)	Decoy Collector of the Year
Joseph Coppack Sr. (Philadelphia, PA)	Decorative Fish Contest, Open
Laurel Dabbs (Westfield Center, OH)	Working Shorebird Rig Contest
Mary Gardineer DiFilippi (Whiting)	Decorative Songbird Contest, Open
David Disbrow (Tuckerton)	Archery-Waterfowl Fun Shoot
John Finley and **Emma** (Millstone)	Retriever Contest, Novice
Evelyn Granit (Toms River)	Contemporary Shorebird Decoy Contest
Kevin Hammell (Pt. Pleasant)	Striped Bass Plug
Jamie Hand (Goshen)	Barnegat Bay Working Decoy Contest
Gus Heinrichs (West Creek)	Barnegat Bay Feather-Edged Sneakbox Contest, Rowing Division, Traditional
Robert Henry (Mount Joy, PA)	Working Decoy Contest, Junior Division
Roman Herrmann (Woodbine)	Decorative Shorebird Contest, Open
Valerie E. Hibner (Absecon)	Women's Skeetshoot from a Sneakbox
David Jack (Deptford)	Best in New Jersey Contemporary Working Decoy Contest
Forrest Jennings (Shamong)	Delaware River Decoy Contest
Mark Johnson (Tillsonberg, Ontario)	Contemporary Gunning Boat, Development Class
Billy Kidd (Manahawkin)	Kids' Skeetshoot from a Sneakbox Fun Shoot
Marty Kristiansen (Little Silver)	Barnegat Bay Sneakbox Contest, Development Class
Lindsey Kurtz (Galloway)	Volunteer of the Year Award
Doug Lepree (Malaga)	Best Gunning Display Award
Sam Lewis (Lakewood)	Saltwater Fly-tying Contest, Junior Division
J. W. Marshall (Tuckerton)	Photo, Amateur Contest
Trish Mayeuk (Little Egg Harbor)	Junior Art Contest, Ages 11-13 Division
Kevin McBride (Greenbackville, VA)	Art, Professional Contest
Terry McNulty (Tuckerton)	Contemporary Working Decoy Rig Contest
	Cork Decoy Contest
Tom Moore and **Midnight** (Vincetown)	Retriever Contest, Advanced
Greg Morrison (Brick)	Saltwater Fly-tying contest, Adult Division
Wes Potter (Tabernacle)	Barnegat Bay Working Decoy Rig Contest
Adam Pszwaro (Carneys Point)	Official State Duck Calling Championship
Richard Raisner (Little Egg Harbor)	Decorative Bird of Prey Contest, Open
	Decorative Wildfowl Contest, Open
Albert Riehl (Villas)	Decorative Gamebird Contest

Erin Ritson (Galloway)	Junior Art Contest, Ages 14-18 Division
Sally Schneider (Brick)	Traditional Working Shorebird Contest, Open
Charlie Schwandt (Little Egg Harbor)	Junior Art Contest, Ages 8-10 Division
Charles Shropshire (Tuckahoe)	Model Barnegat Bay Sneakbox Contest, Gunning Category
Bill Simonsen (Egg Harbor Township)	Barnegat Bay Feather-Edged Sneakbox Contest, Sail Division, Traditional
Jacki Sivelli (Maverick Ridge, NY)	Puppy Retriever Contest
Allan and **Bonce Stanley** (Dover, DE)	Great Barnegat Bay Team Waterfowling Competition
Allan and **Jacob Stanley** (Dover, DE)	Barnegat Bay Team Duck Calling Championship, Open
Allan Stanley (Dover, DE)	World Championship Skeetshoot from a Sneakbox
	Barnegat Bay Duck Hunters Calling Championship, Open
	Barnegat Bay Hunter Goose Calling Championship, Open
Bonce Stanley (Dover, DE)	Kids' Open Duck Calling Contest
	Kids' Open Goose Calling Contest
Ron Stevens (Hope Mills, NC)	Barnegat Bay Sneakbox Yachting Category
	Model South Jersey Gunning Boat Contest, Half Model Category
	Model South Jersey Gunning Boat Contest (Open); Whittling Contest
Toms River Seaport Society (Toms River)	Antique South Jersey Gunning Boat, Restoration Contest
Dave Willey (Little Egg Harbor)	Art, Amateur Contest

The Hurley Conklin Award is presented annually to those who have lived in the Barnegat Bay tradition. This year's recipients were: **Sam Liefried** (Tuckerton); **John Lafferty** (Staffordville); **Ken Maxwell** (West Creek); **Edward Ahearn** (Waretown); **Janice Sherwood** (Wading River); and **Elwood Harvey** (Toms River).

And Then There Were Six

The following was inadvertently omitted from Cindy Ross's article, ***Gourmet Grub for the Trail****, which appeared in our Summer 2000 issue.*

Mountain House

Oregon Freeze Dry's Mountain House brand of freeze-dried foods has been a favorite of backpackers, hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts for over 25 years. The line includes breakfast and lunch/dinner entrées, as well as vegetables, meats, snacks and desserts. Mountain House's traditionally meat-based selection of entrées now includes a few vegetarian meals.

Mountain House offerings rated consistently high across the board. Our favorites include *Beef Teriyaki*, piquantly flavored beef and vegetables with the added crunch of water chestnuts and peanuts; *Sweet & Sour Pork with Rice*, pork, rice and vegetables smothered in a delicious pineapple sauce; and *Long Grain & Wild Rice Mushroom Pilaf*, a delicately seasoned rice blend with mushrooms, broccoli, green beans and sweet red peppers, accented with roasted garlic and topped with Parmesan cheese.

Most require no cooking; you just add water to reconstitute the food. The single serving entrées, packaged in foil pouches, weigh from 2.7 to 6.4 ounces (those with noodles) and make 20 ounces of food. Cost is between $4.60 and $6.50.

Mountain House
PO Box 1048
525 25th Avenue SW
Albany, OR 97321
541/926-6001 or 800/547-0244
www.mountainhouse.com

WebWanderings

PineyPower.Com (www.pineypower.com/) is a great source of information about New Jersey's Pinelands. It features information about the area's parks, campgrounds, attractions, history, and environment, as well as interviews with old timers, and reviews of Pinelands area restaurants. The site, a *Yosemite Treasure* award winner, is among the very best links for travelers to the Pinelands.

Fall Faults

Two of the images that illustrated the fall issue's windsurfing story were incorrectly attributed to Margaret Conroy. The leftmost image on page 30 and the centerfold picture (pages 32 and 33) actually came from the author's archives. Also, while the Snurfer mentioned in the article's sidebar (page 34) was indeed a precursor of the snowboard, Fred Stopplekampf uses a Snowfer—a specialized windsurfing board—on frozen lakes in the winter.

Finally, the pike pictured on page 49 must have swallowed the photo credit that should have appeared next to it. Kevin Wicki's "catch of the day" actually was caught on film by the article's author, Oliver Shapiro.

Something for Everyone



Article by Paul Tarlowe and Stefanie Schneider
Al Ivany photos courtesy of NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife

A spotted turtle slips beneath the surface of tea-colored water as you paddle by. A yellow-breasted chat scolds you from a hedgerow as you bike past. You may come upon the tracks of a wild turkey while cross-country skiing, or see a pod of dolphins leaping from the bay as you fish from the jetty.

Sightings such as these can be enjoyed throughout New Jersey on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)—gems of open space, administered by the Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife, that exist incognito. These multiple-use public lands are often overlooked by those seeking wilderness to explore. While hunting and fishing are probably the two activities most commonly associated with them, WMAs also provide the public with excellent opportunities for birding, wildlife viewing and photography, cross country skiing, hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, and kayaking. And although some are heavily used for short periods (e.g., buck week), they receive little use most of the year.

Overseen by the division's Bureau of Land Management, the primary purpose of these areas is to provide habitat for wildlife. However, they also serve to offer recreational opportunities, safeguard water supplies, provide flood protection, and preserve critical ecosystems.

The acreage within the WMA system is steadily growing. Since the purchase of the 387-acre Walpack Tract in 1932, holdings have increased to more than 265,000 acres, 43% of all state-owned open space. Initially, the properties were purchased with money from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, federal funds, and donations. Since 1960, acquisitions have been purchased primarily through the Green Acres Program and with proceeds from the Waterfowl Stamp Program. Governor Whitman's quest to preserve an additional million acres of open space for New Jersey's future is rapidly adding many more acres to the WMA system. These acres also will offer a variety of recreational opportunities, several of which are spotlighted below.

Opposite page: Rockport Pheasant Farm

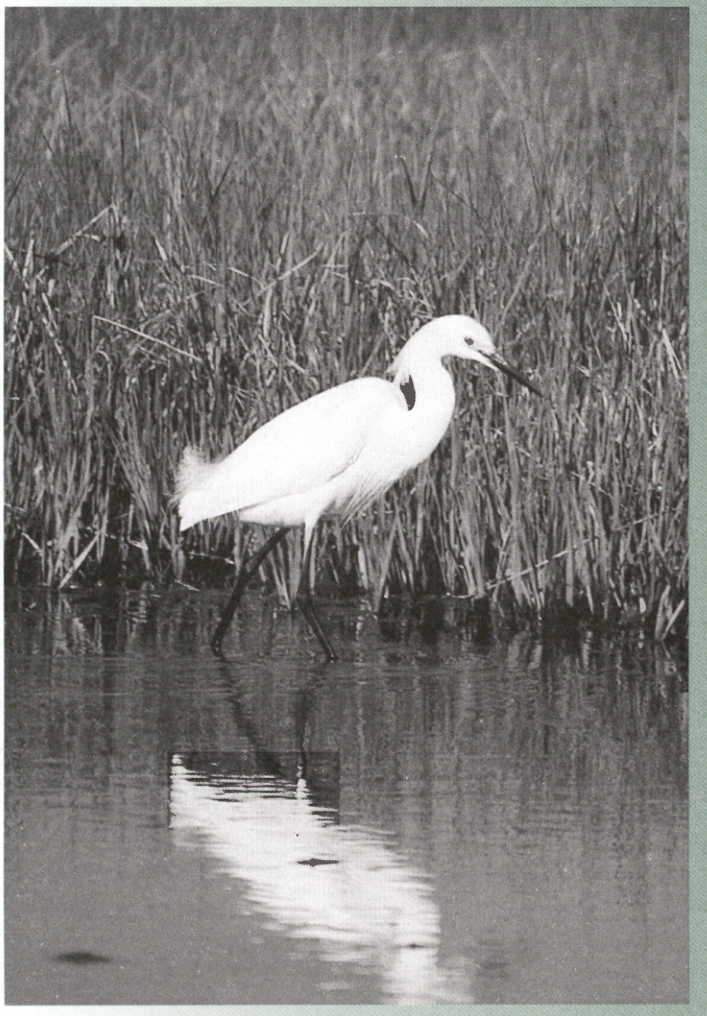
Viewing Life in the Wild

An exciting project underway in New Jersey is providing wildlife viewing opportunities for both residents and tourists on our WMAs and numerous other open space areas administered by the state, as well as by counties and municipalities and private conservation groups. The Division of Fish and Wildlife has made it easy for even novice wildlife watchers to enjoy the rich diversity of wildlife that skilled naturalists have appreciated for decades.

A Watchable Wildlife Program for New Jersey was created in 1997 when the division published the *New Jersey Wildlife Viewing Guide*. The book is the keystone of the program and lists 87 of the best wildlife viewing sites in eight regions; included are sites on 18 WMAs.

Wildlife Diversity Tours are a unique feature of the viewing guide and the Watchable Wildlife Program. Featured in four of the eight regions, these tours make it easy to plan a two-day trip to one of the less developed areas of New Jersey. The descriptions in the guide provide detailed information about the region as a whole, interpretive text about the five sites featured on the tour, and traveling directions. There's also information about the types of recreation available, what species of wildlife you might expect to see, and the best time of year to visit.

Great Bay WMA



WMAs are featured in the tours in all four regions. Let's explore some of them, beginning with the *Ridge and Valley* and *Highlands* regions of northern New Jersey. This area of the state features mountain ranges, lush valleys, dense hardwood forests, hemlock ravines and numerous lakes, ponds, streams, bogs and freshwater marshes that support bears, bobcats, beavers, otters, deer, turkeys and numerous other species.

Whittingham WMA, with an extensive freshwater marsh, headwaters of the Pequest River, and diverse upland forests and fields, is home to a variety of wildlife. Wood ducks, river otters, turkeys, forest raptors, and long-tailed salamanders are just a few of the many species that can be seen there. A viewing platform was recently constructed on a limestone bluff overlooking the extensive headwater marsh complex, affording visitors a panoramic view of the WMA. The platform is just one of the many enhancements made possible on the 18 WMA viewing sites through an allocation of Green Acres Bond capital improvement funding.

The state's largest known bat hibernaculum is located in **Wildcat Ridge** WMA near Hibernia. An observation platform with interpretive signage facilitates great viewing of the more than 25,000 bats that hibernate in the mine and swarm near the entrance on fall evenings in prelude to their long winter sleep. Since WMA regulations allow only hunting and fishing activities after dark, those interested in seeing the swarming bats must register for interpretive programs offered on fall evenings. Call division biologist Mike Valent (908/735-8975) for information. Wildcat Ridge also features an official Hawk Migration Association of North America hawk watch at the top of the ridge. It's staffed by division volunteers who perform the hawk counts from August 15 to November 15, and again in the spring from February 15 to May 15. A small house near the hawk watch serves as an interpretive center, and a short trail leads to a nearby beaver pond. Visitors can keep tabs on the count or pick up information about the extensive trail network that runs throughout the WMA, forming part of the Highlands Trail and eventually connecting to the Appalachian Trail.

Take a leisurely paddle through **Black River** WMA, just down County Route 513 in Chester, on the historic Black

River. The Black River Valley has long been a travelway for people and wildlife. Revolutionary War troops walked along these banks more than 200 years ago. Later, people and goods traveled the route by train. The old train tracks have been converted into a 3.5-mile rail-trail with parking areas at both ends. There are also parking areas at either end of the 3.5-mile river stretch that serve as canoe launch and take-out sites. This is a great way to see river and wetland wildlife as you slowly navigate the meandering stream through the extensive floodplain marsh. For those who enjoy a longer paddle, the Black River continues through Hacklebarney State Park.

One of the treasures of the Wildlife Management Area system is the 4,000-acre **Pequest** WMA, off Rt. 46 in Warren County, about nine miles west of Hackettstown. Here you will find the Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center, a state-of-the-art facility that produces 600,000 trout for public waters every year and provides interpretive programming for thousands of visitors each year. The center caters to schools, organized groups and the general public, presenting programs on a wide range of natural resource topics. It is open, free of charge, seven days a week (excluding holidays) from 10 am to 4 pm. Visitors can enjoy a video about the trout rearing operation, a self-guided tour, interpretive exhibit hall, picnic areas and a marked trail network that features a self-guided interpretive Natural Resource Trail. Special weekend programs are also offered. For information visit www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw or call 908/637-4125.

Visitors to the **Rockport Pheasant Farm** in Hackettstown can see a variety of pheasants and other gamebirds, as well as penned white-tailed deer and a variety of waterfowl. History buffs will enjoy visiting the basin where boats travelling the Morris Canal could dock for the night (hence the name Rockport). The canal towpath here has been preserved as well, and a short hike leads visitors to a vista overlooking the scenic valley.

The *Piedmont* region extends from Connecticut to the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. The rolling hills

Fishing access site at Pequest WMA for people with disabliities



of this region provide some of the best agricultural land in the state, dotted with productive woodlots and bordered by forested ridges. Rivers and valleys cut through the mountains and provide a perfect habitat for a variety of wildlife, including waterfowl, reptiles and amphibians. Farming in this region has attracted red-tailed hawks, grassland birds, deer, coyotes, wild turkeys and many other species. Here **Assunpink** WMA, with its three lakes, is a popular fall rest stop for migrating waterfowl. A boat launch on Assunpink Lake provides easy access for canoes, kayaks and other small, electrically powered boats. Cartop launching is possible at all three lakes. Assunpink's large fields and hedgerows provide some of the best birding in the state. Unmarked trails traverse the fields throughout the WMA.

The unique *Pinelands* region, historically known as the Pine Barrens, is in the southern half of the state. Protected as the Pinelands National Reserve, it is overseen by the Pinelands Commission, which helps to limit development and provide protection for endangered, threatened and rare species. This region hosts numerous viewing sites with vast pine forests, pure, tea-colored streams, and numerous cedar swamps and wetlands that are best explored by canoe. These ecosystems provide habitat for some wildlife and plant species that are unique to the pinelands, such as the Pine Barrens treefrog, pine snake, corn snake, and dozens of rare butterflies and plants.

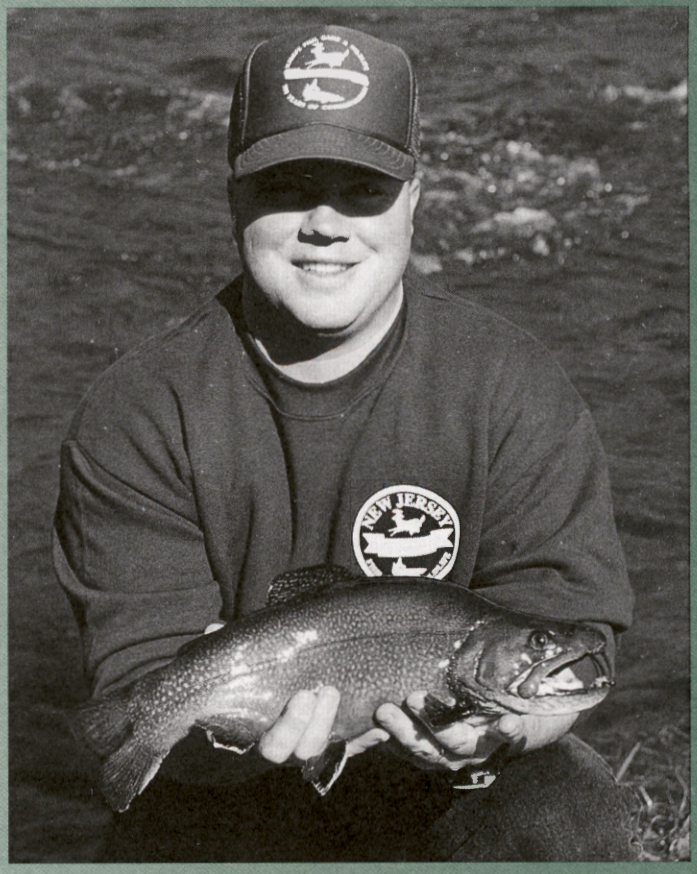
The 24,726-acre **Greenwood Forest** is a popular WMA here, with upland pine-oak forest interspersed with fields and white cedar bogs. A state-of-the-art elevated boardwalk has been constructed at Webbs Mill, part of Greenwood Forest, so that viewers can experience a pinelands bog without sinking up to their knees in peat. This bog hosts visitors from around the globe, drawn by its fine examples of rare pineland plants.

Another pineland WMA, **Stafford Forge**, includes a unique "pygmy forest" on the plains in its northern end. Here, a dense stand of dwarf (but mature) pitch pines, blackjack oak, and scrub oak trees barely reaches 4 to 6 feet in height. The WMA's four ponds, freshwater marsh and hundreds of acres of forests

Clinton WMA



Trout to be stocked in Pequest River.



Pequest WMA



provide a haven for nesting, migrating and wintering wildlife. Canoeing and hiking are popular here.

The fresh, brackish and salt water tidal marshes and adjacent uplands of the Lower Delaware River Region provide a productive mix of viewing site habitats that support a diversity and abundance of aquatic mammals such as otters, muskrats, ducks, herons, and egrets. **Salem River** WMA, known locally as Mannington Meadows, is a mix of old farms, tidal marsh and impounded freshwater marsh. Salem River is a haven for wintering waterfowl and spring migrants, and their abundance and diversity at this location is hard to beat. Some of the walking trails follow former nursery roads and offer unusual groupings of trees that provide valuable habitat for songbirds. Two observation platforms have been built overlooking the marsh off of Route 45. Both platforms are elevated and provide good views of the entire marsh, which is bisected by Route 45. Visit nearby **Abbotts Meadow** WMA, which has an excellent reputation for grassland birds.

Viewing sites on the marshes, bays, beaches and dunes of the *Cape May-Delaware Bay* region abound with both breeding and migratory bird life. This area is a key link in the migratory paths of many North American avian species and is world famous for its birding opportunities during migration. It is equally important to populations of resident terns, plovers, herons, ducks, ospreys, harriers (marsh hawks), and bald eagles. Breathtaking viewing opportunities exist here. For example, Delaware Bay beaches host the largest population of red knots in the western hemisphere during spring migration. In addition, species like the ruddy turnstone and semi-palmated sandpiper can be seen by the thousands. The birds stop to feast on horseshoe crab eggs that are laid on Delaware Bay beaches in May and June.

Higbee Beach WMA boasts some of the best birding in the world. Birders descend on Higbee during both the spring and fall migration for warblers and raptors respectively. More than 250 bird species call Higbee home at some time during the year. In addition, the freshwater and upland habitats, interspersed with food plots, support a variety of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and butterflies. Visitors can walk miles of trails through fields and woods and along the Delaware bayshore. Higbee supports the last remnant coastal dune forest on the bayshore, with inland dunes 20 feet high, stabilized by a forest of red cedar, holly, and beach plum. Marked trails through the dunes are planned for the summer of 2001. Three observation platforms provide excellent vantage points for birding.

Moore's Beach WMA, just up the bayshore in Cumberland County, is one of six bay beaches to host the phenomenal conflagration of horseshoe crabs and shorebirds which occurs in May and June each year. There is no longer a passable road leading out to the beachfront, but visitors can park in the designated area and walk a mile through the saltmarsh to the beach on an old road that once lead to the community of Moore's Beach.

Lying adjacent to the coastal forest section of Belleplain State Forest, **Dennis Creek** WMA boasts one of the finest expanses of salt marsh in the state. Dennis Creek is probably best known for its waterfowl hunting; however, excellent birding can be found by walking the upland edge in the spring. An elevated viewing platform at the end of Jakes Landing Road overlooks the tidal creek, salt marsh and forest treeline. A boat ramp makes launching here to explore the marsh by boat an easy task.

Tuckahoe WMA encompasses 13,905 acres of salt marsh, freshwater impoundments, and upland forests bisected by the scenic Tuckahoe River. A system of dikes encloses several freshwater impoundments on both sides of the river that are frequented in the fall and winter by a tremendous diversity of waterfowl as well as golden and bald eagles. These impoundments were created

in the middle of the 20th century to provide habitat for waterfowl, but shorebirds and wading birds use the area as well. Visitors can drive the 8-mile stretch of dikes on the Corbin City side of the WMA; it meanders past 3 large freshwater impoundments and through a pine-oak forest. A walking trail wanders along the dikes on the Tuckahoe side of the WMA.

Heislerville WMA, in lower Cumberland County, is similar to Tuckahoe. It too includes a variety of the same habitats, freshwater impoundments, pine-oak uplands and tidal marsh, all of which can be viewed by driving the dikes. Heislerville is adjacent to the federally designated Wild and Scenic Maurice River and is home to historic East Point Lighthouse.

At 22,225 acres, **Peaslee** is one of the largest WMAs in the state. Visitors can drive through the area for good looks at typical pineland habitats including pine-oak uplands, white cedar bogs, hardwood swamps, and scrub-oak forests. The driving tour begins and ends on Hesstown Road, 5 miles east of Millville on State Highway 49.

Bald eagles are making a comeback in southern New Jersey and the best place to view them is the **Stow Creek** Viewing Area in Canton, Salem County. A well-established eagle nest can be seen in a large sycamore tree that stands in a field next to an abandoned 18th century farmhouse on the banks of Stow Creek. Bald eagles are very sensitive to disturbance, making it difficult to observe them at close range, so the division purchased property across the river from nest. There it constructed an observation blind, complete with interpretive signage, to give New Jerseyans a place to observe these majestic birds. In addition to bald eagles, this scenic spot offers wildlife watchers the opportunity to see a variety of marsh wildlife.

WMA Recreation

Development on WMAs is done with public recreation in mind. Parking areas and trails are constructed to provide access. Various organizations have helped the division develop accessible fishing sites for people with disabilities in the **Flatbrook-Roy, Rowands Pond,** and **Pequest** WMAs. Some WMAs have shooting and archery ranges (members of the general public, if accompanied by a license holder, can practice with bows, shotguns, and muzzleloaders). There are more than 30 boat launches throughout the WMA system that make access to our lakes, rivers, and ponds possible. A current hunting, fishing or trapping license, or a Boat Ramp Maintenance Permit must be displayed in the vehicle window to use some of these launches.

Activities other than those directly related to wildlife can also be enjoyed on WMAs. Areas such as **Wildcat Ridge** and **Pequest** offer hikers breathtaking views of forested mountains and beautiful habitat. Cross-country skiing and mountain biking are permitted in the management areas as well. Mountain biking is allowed on existing trails and roads from March 1 to April 15 and June 1 to September 15, as well as on Sundays throughout the year. Bikes are permitted year round on major designated trails except for the Highlands Trail, which passes through the **Berkshire Valley** and **Wildcat Ridge** WMAs. People taking part in any of these activities should be aware of hunting seasons. Hunting season information can be found in the *Fish and Wildlife Digest*, which is available at most sporting good stores and division offices, and can be viewed on the division's Web site.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife has published the *Wild Places and Open Spaces Map*, the most up-to-date map of New Jersey showing all state parks and forests, WMAs, and federal public lands. A chart on the reverse side of the map provides phone numbers and information on available activities and facilities for each area. WMAs are also identified on the state's official transportation map and guide, available by calling 800/JERSEY-7 or 800/VISIT-NJ, or by e-mailing a request to coirein@doc.state.nj.us.

Take advantage of New Jersey's great outdoors. To purchase the *Wild Places & Open Spaces Map or Wildlife Viewing Guide*, call 609/292-9450. Information about purchasing the map and viewing guide, as well as general information about the division, wildlife, fishing, hunting, and programs at Pequest, is also available on-line at www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw.

Paul Tarlowe is a wildlife education specialist with the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife. Stefanie Schneider is a seasonal naturalist at the division's Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center.

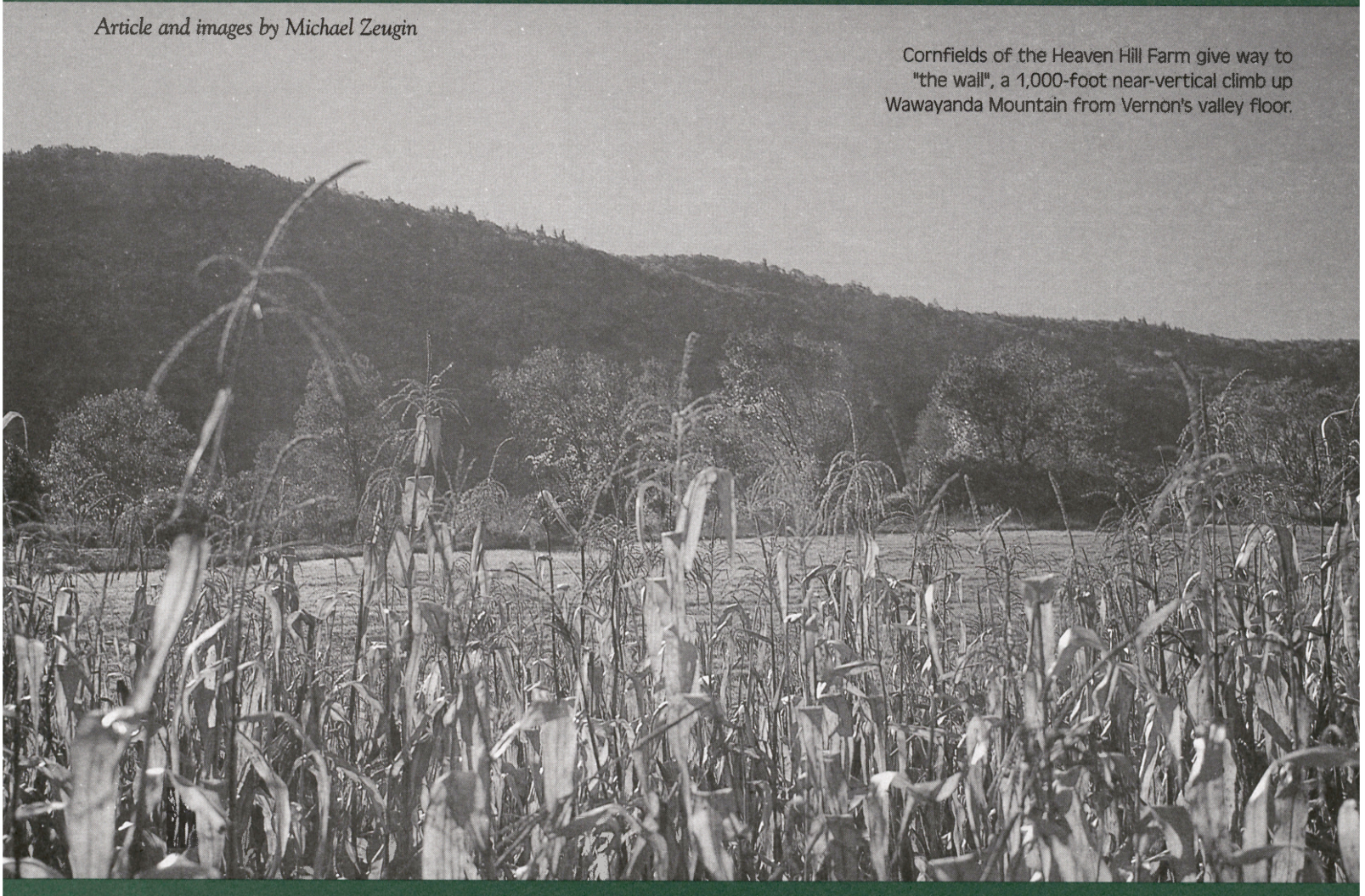


Selected Wildlife Management Areas



Hostel Territory

Article and images by Michael Zeugin



Cornfields of the Heaven Hill Farm give way to "the wall", a 1,000-foot near-vertical climb up Wawayanda Mountain from Vernon's valley floor.

7/23/99 *"I'm reborn, so clean. YOW!" - 'Buckdancer'*

In this bucolic, glacially carved valley, residents go about their daily business mostly unaware that the word is out. A thousand miles down The Trail there's a buzz: Vernon, New Jersey, is hostel territory.

With the season winding down and without even making it into this year's guide for Appalachian Trail thru-hikers (hikers traveling the length of the Georgia-to-Maine trail), the hostel in the basement of Vernon's St. Thomas Episcopal Church has become an instant success. Starting in spring, southbound hikers who stopped at the hostel spread the word to northbound hikers as their paths cross and vice versa.

6/19/99 *"Vernon is becoming one of these great hiker friendly towns with everything a hiker needs" - 'Rezin & Spicoli'*

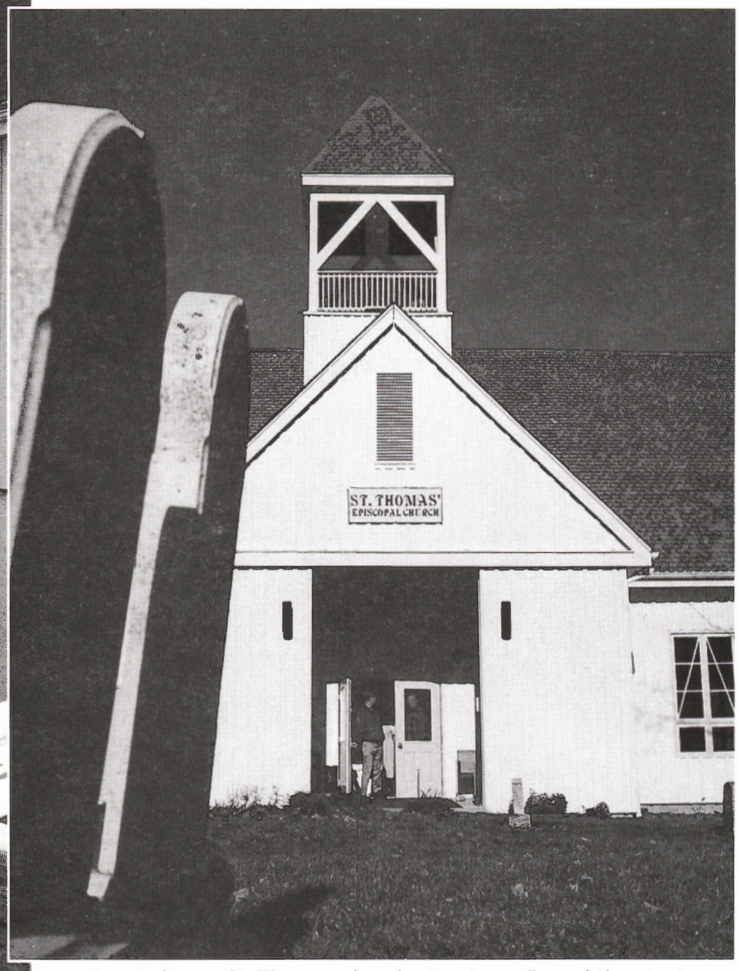
Robby Peters, also known by his adopted trail name, Shawnee, is a thru-hiker en route to Maine. He says he's been hearing about the new hostel for almost 1,000 miles. The reviews are so good that Vernon has been on his must-stop list for a while.

Shawnee, who normally lives in Illinois, has taken time off from work to make the epic Georgia-to-Maine trail journey. For him, Vernon's town center, shopping and post office conveniences, coupled with the shower and indoor accommodations at the St. Thomas hostel are ideal. He says the constant pressures of the trail melt away for a few hours of down time. The hostel limits stays to two nights, barring an emergency. This keeps it from turning into a hangout for the sedentary.

Shawnee described a hostel in a southern state that, lacking a stringent time limit, had developed a frat house atmosphere, with some revelers staying



Thru-hiker Robby Peters enjoys some downtime in the St. Thomas Hostel's sunken courtyard.



A new, larger St. Thomas church structure allowed the startup of the trail hostel.

for weeks. For a south-north thru-hiker that kind of downtime, costing 10 to 20 miles a day, can mean arriving in Maine during colder weather. It can also lead to becoming a trail dropout—someone who starts the journey but doesn't get very far.

There are also the *yellow blazers*, trail hikers who hitchhike on the road from trail section to trail section. The Appalachian Trail is blazed with white markings. Paul DeCoste, chairman of the New Jersey Appalachian Trail Committee, says yellow blazing is a phenomenon that seems to show up in cycles, with very few yellow blazers one year and then a wave of them in another.

Most hikers, though, are strongly motivated, having expended a fair amount of energy planning for the attempt. Hostel and trail registers show that some travelers fly to the eastern start points just to get their boots on the trail. And not all them come from the United States, so Vernon is rapidly developing an international reputation as a trail town.

7/19/99 *"It never fails to amaze me, the big hearts and hospitality of the American people . . . God works in many ways." - 'Hedgehog' (Yorkshire, England)*

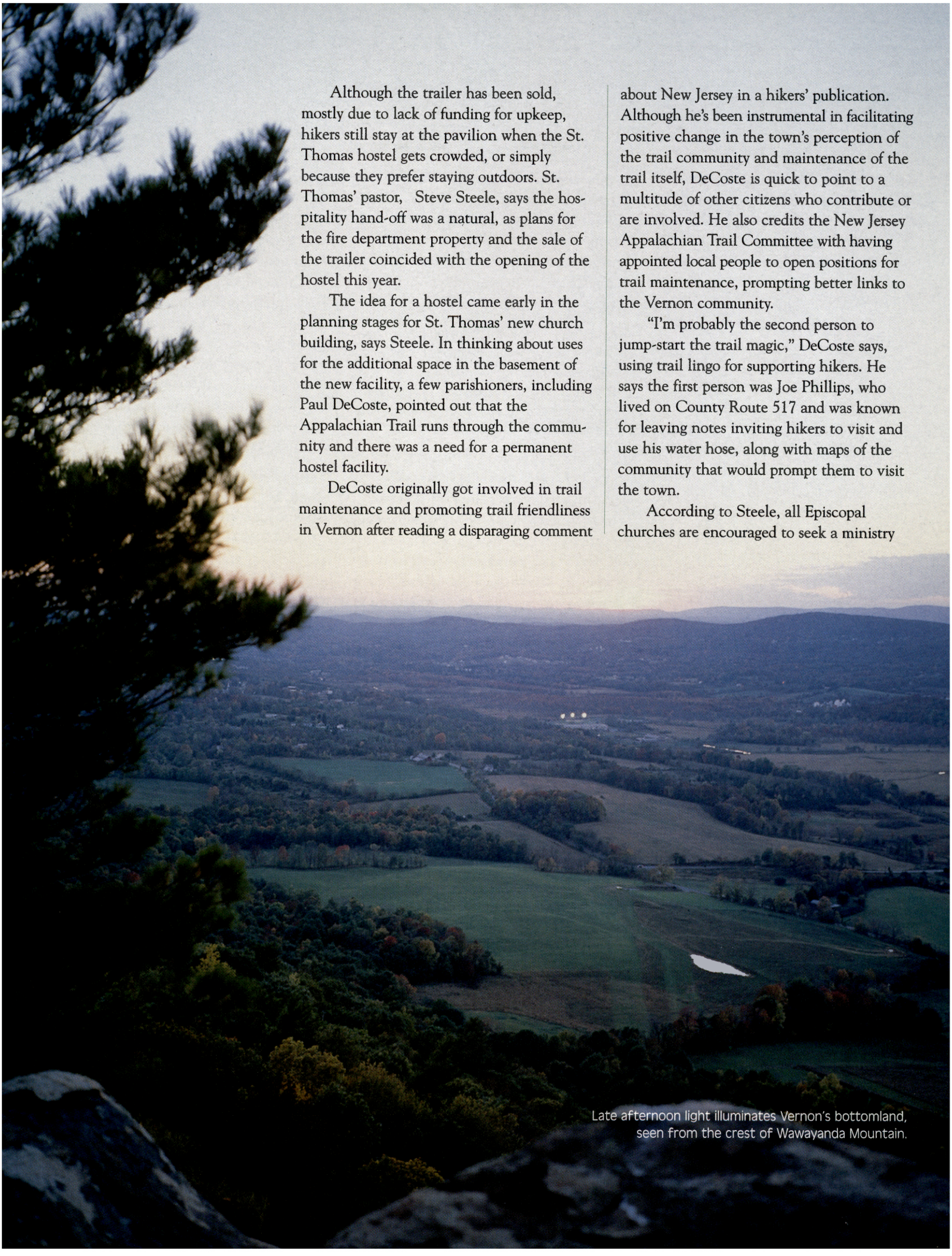
Glen Scherer, author of *A History of the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference*, pegs 1928 as the year the section from Vernon to High Point first opened. Since the early years, hikers have stopped in town for supplies and to pick up or drop off mail.

Even before the St. Thomas hostel opening, thru-hikers had good experiences in Vernon. Until this year the Vernon Township Fire Department had provided showers and allowed hikers to camp under their roofed pavilion on Route 515. The 1,000-foot climb up the wall-like ridge that runs along Route 94, didn't damp their enthusiastic comments on northbound departure.

7/22/98 *"Vernon was great! Fire and Police were super and it was great to eat townie food again. Exciting climb here." 'BreakNAway'*

Bob Baldwin Jr., president of the Vernon Township Fire Department, says the hikers have always been welcome. Until recently, they used the three showers in the department's hazardous materials decontamination trailer and slept under the firehouse pavilion roof. The fire department has had good experiences with trail hikers.

"The unbelievable thing is we've never had any problems with thru-hikers; in fact sometimes we've found the floor cleaner because they sweep up, " Baldwin says.



Although the trailer has been sold, mostly due to lack of funding for upkeep, hikers still stay at the pavilion when the St. Thomas hostel gets crowded, or simply because they prefer staying outdoors. St. Thomas' pastor, Steve Steele, says the hospitality hand-off was a natural, as plans for the fire department property and the sale of the trailer coincided with the opening of the hostel this year.

The idea for a hostel came early in the planning stages for St. Thomas' new church building, says Steele. In thinking about uses for the additional space in the basement of the new facility, a few parishioners, including Paul DeCoste, pointed out that the Appalachian Trail runs through the community and there was a need for a permanent hostel facility.

DeCoste originally got involved in trail maintenance and promoting trail friendliness in Vernon after reading a disparaging comment about New Jersey in a hikers' publication. Although he's been instrumental in facilitating positive change in the town's perception of the trail community and maintenance of the trail itself, DeCoste is quick to point to a multitude of other citizens who contribute or are involved. He also credits the New Jersey Appalachian Trail Committee with having appointed local people to open positions for trail maintenance, prompting better links to the Vernon community.

"I'm probably the second person to jump-start the trail magic," DeCoste says, using trail lingo for supporting hikers. He says the first person was Joe Phillips, who lived on County Route 517 and was known for leaving notes inviting hikers to visit and use his water hose, along with maps of the community that would prompt them to visit the town.

According to Steele, all Episcopal churches are encouraged to seek a ministry

Late afternoon light illuminates Vernon's bottomland, seen from the crest of Wawayanda Mountain.

that fits into their community and setting. "Though we are involved in some of the classic ministries such as sheltering the homeless and gathering food [for the needy], one of the avenues specific to this rural setting is the Appalachian Trail," Steel explains.

For Steele and the church, the hostel represents more than a resting-place for weary hikers. He feels that there is an essential spiritual aspect to the odyssey of thru-hikers.

"When somebody goes about taking six months out of their lives to walk 2,100 miles through the forest, they are exhibiting what I would call a longing for spiritual adventure," he says.

A talk with thru-hikers confirms Steele's viewpoint. Sometimes it is the St. Thomas hostel and the people in Vernon that specifically fill some deep spiritual need.

6/19/90 *"This is the kind of place that gives me a little more faith in humanity, which I desperately need!" - 'Genghis Kahn'*

The St. Thomas hostel falls under the umbrella of an Episcopal Church ministry. Although a small donation of $5 is suggested to defray costs associated with shower, laundry and refrigeration facilities, ministries are by definition non-profit. But studies show that thriving churches are those involved in active ministries. Steele says the ministries add to the vitality of the church: " It's just a fact of Christian life that those who give are blessed."

Here too, Steele's views may be borne out. Appalachian thru-hiker terminology actually refers to people who give something to a hiker as trail angels and positive human-trail interactions as trail magic.

In Vernon, trail angels apparently abound. More and more people give hikers rides to and from the trail junction on Route 94 at the Heaven Hill Farm. At almost 2 miles, a trudge along Route 94 in summer's heat with traffic can feel hellish to hikers accustomed to the cooler quiet of the forest canopy. (Ambient air temperatures in full forest are typically 10 degrees cooler than on the open highway). Once they get to the hostel they often seem almost overwhelmed.

6/17/99 *"What a fantastic place. Thank you so much for providing this for us. Had a wonderful angel who brought all of us here. This town is a hiker's paradise. A very heartfelt 'thank you' to all. Peace, Joy and Bright Blessings to all." - 'Posey Picker'*

Hiker experiences are not always good ones. Maybe that's what makes the positive experiences in Vernon stand out. Shawnee left his camera behind at a resting point in Georgia, early in his journey. The camera was found by two women, who later caught up with him as they leapfrogged past each other with different pacing and rest schedules.

But the Georgia trail apparently harbored a predatory trail hobo, who specialized in scavenging lost items and scamming along a section of the trail. The women told Shawnee that the scam artist convinced them to give him the camera, saying he knew the camera's owner and would get it back to him faster. Neither Shawnee nor the women ever saw the camera again. Hikers offset the negatives of the trail against the positive mental and physical rejuvenation they get from the Vernon hostel.

6/29/99 *". . . Great place to spend the night and catch up on the chores. Once again, the kindness of strangers in New Jersey amazes me. Thanks again." - 'Patches'*

Randy Propster, a thru-hiker taking some time off from college, had the misfortune of contracting giardia parasites from water not purified carefully enough. This resulted in constant vomiting for days. Unable to travel and weakening, Propster and his girlfriend, Sheri West, were stranded in the forests of Virginia and in need of help. West hiked out to a forest service road and sat for four hours, waiting for chance to bring passersby.

Help came in the form of would-be car campers who had made a wrong turn and were lost. Together they got Propster to a hospital for urgently needed care. Fortunately, the two hikers had a friend living nearby who put them up until Propster's strength was recovered. After about 10 days of downtime, they resumed their northward journey.

Even without illness, the steady pounding the body takes on the trail sometimes demands relief.

"Just a little heaven on Earth. Thank you, Steve, and all the great people of St. Thomas for the place to rest weary hiker legs and hearts." - 'Paddler'

Steele says the hikers are, in general, a good crowd. He describes them as "mostly a middle-class group with varied interests and levels of education." To some degree the trail filters out slackers. It takes stamina and character to make it to New Jersey on foot, belongings on back, from either Maine or Georgia.

In its first season the hostel attracted a fair amount of overnighters. DeCoste says a northbound wave is concentrated in the spring and early summer, followed by a southbound wave in the late summer and early fall, to synchronize with the seasonal temperature changes. Sometimes there are just a few people sharing the large space. Other times the facility is packed with upwards of 10 hikers. The peak number one night was 21 at mid-season.

More are expected in coming years, as the news spreads through Appalachian Trail guidebooks and is written up in trail and hiking magazines. DeCoste and others fear the hostel's early popularity is a harbinger of a possible overwhelming future. He believes that once publicized, the St. Thomas hostel, which is a fairly large space, may reach useable limits

The spot's popularity is bound to

grow, partially because Vernon is a natural stopping point. To the west High Point and Pochuck Mountain are less surrounded by conveniences. To the east, the next population center pass-through is the town of Greenwood Lake. Further on there is a long unpopulated section through Sterling Forest and onward to New York State's Harriman State Park. In either direction of travel, hikers are aware of the impending lack of conveniences and use Vernon to stock up supplies.

This brings business to local merchants. Food stores and restaurants, farm stands and other merchants all benefit from the influx of business that previously stuck to the trail and passed Vernon by.

Trail register comments show the Vernon experience gets better for hikers every year. For DeCoste, work on the trail, promoting the idea of Vernon as a trail town, and finally the fruition of that idea in a trail hostel came to a zenith this past summer, not here in Vernon, but in New Hampshire.

DeCoste was staying in a large trail hut on the shoulder of New Hampshire's Mount Washington. There a young lady gave a presentation on her thru-hiking experiences after dinner, in lieu of monetary board. Once finished she fielded questions. As DeCoste listened, someone in the group asked, "What was your greatest surprise?" Her two-word response: "New Jersey."

Vernon continues to grow towards welcoming and supporting the yearly wave of nomads in their summer migrations, building a positive image that grows ever stronger. The facilities and grounds at St. Thomas have become a focal point of the town's growing reputation as hostel territory.

As Vernon's trail sensibility increases, it gives more of us *townies* a heightened awareness of the wilderness that surrounds us. The result can sometimes be a revelation that comes *without* hiking all 2,100 miles of the Appalachian Trail:

8/17/98 *"Hiked from Lake Wanda along ridge and down to the Valley. Have lived on this mountain for 28 years. First time I have hiked this trail. I didn't know what I was missing." -'Jan'*



Wiped clean—a fog sea creates an eerie illusion of Vernon's glacial prehistory.

Michael Zeugin, whose "Skimming the Surface of Inland Waters" appeared in the Fall 2000 issue of **New Jersey Outdoors**, *is a freelance writer and part-time English lecturer at Rutgers University. The Highland Lakes resident is a certified ski instructor who also enjoys surfing, windsurfing, canoeing, hunting, fishing, hiking and mountain biking.*



The Palmyra Cove Nature Park is "home" or a rest stop to 215 avian species.

Courtesy of John Shinski

Burlington's Ugly Duckling Story

by George Nyikita

Looking south as you cross the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge into New Jersey, you'll catch a glimpse of a small island wilderness. Better known to locals as *The Dunes*, it is home to some of our country's endangered birds and wildlife. This island of greenery, renamed the Palmyra Cove Nature Park, is a project aimed at preserving open space as a place for wildlife to thrive and for people to learn about this unique ecosystem.

Located on the Delaware River at the foot of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge, the park is bounded by Route 73 and the Pennsauken Creek. The 350-acre tract is being maintained as a wildlife haven under a 30-year management agreement between the Burlington County Bridge Commission and the New Jersey Tidelands Commission.

A Feast for the Eyes . . . and for Wildlife

In the fall, the park paints the New Jersey skyline with an array of colors. The bright oranges, yellows and browns illuminate the riverbanks in the autumn sunlight. In the spring, nature lovers can see the bright colors of exotic plant life blooming along the shoreline and along the many trails within the park. It is truly a sight to be experienced.

The park serves as an oasis in a highly developed area and is extremely important as a feeding ground for migratory birds. The ecologically sensitive tidal marsh, full of vegetation, provides food and cover for many wildlife species, including wading shorebirds such as the great black-backed gull and the Iceland gull. Purple finches, Western kingbirds and other neotropical migrant birds also have been seen in the park. A family of red foxes has made the nature park its home and can be seen wandering throughout.

The landscape consists of woodlands peppered with open fields and wetlands. The river shoreline and large tidal cove make up the western and southern end of the park. This heavily vegetated area contains a wealth of native plant species, including some exotic plant life. The wetlands along the Delaware River and at the mouth of the Pennsauken Creek are classified as a riverine tidal flat, which is subject to daily flooding. When the river recedes at low tide, shorebirds cover the beach as they feed.

Knowledgeable local birdwatchers, members of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club and the New Jersey

Audubon Society, have observed at least 215 species within this wildlife refuge, including 2 endangered and 11 threatened species. Bald eagles, an endangered species, have been seen feeding in the park during their annual migration. Peregrine falcon, also an endangered species, are regular visitors and are known to be nesting nearby.

Within the park, 64 species of neotropical migrants have been spotted. These small, colorful songbirds breed to the north and spend the winter in Central and South America. Although they migrate at night, they can be observed during the day as they feed voraciously and take a break from flying. The rest and food these birds get from stopping at the park provides them with the energy they need to continue their flight south; it is extremely critical to their survival during migration. Current research shows that very high numbers of migrating birds stop at Palmyra Cove.

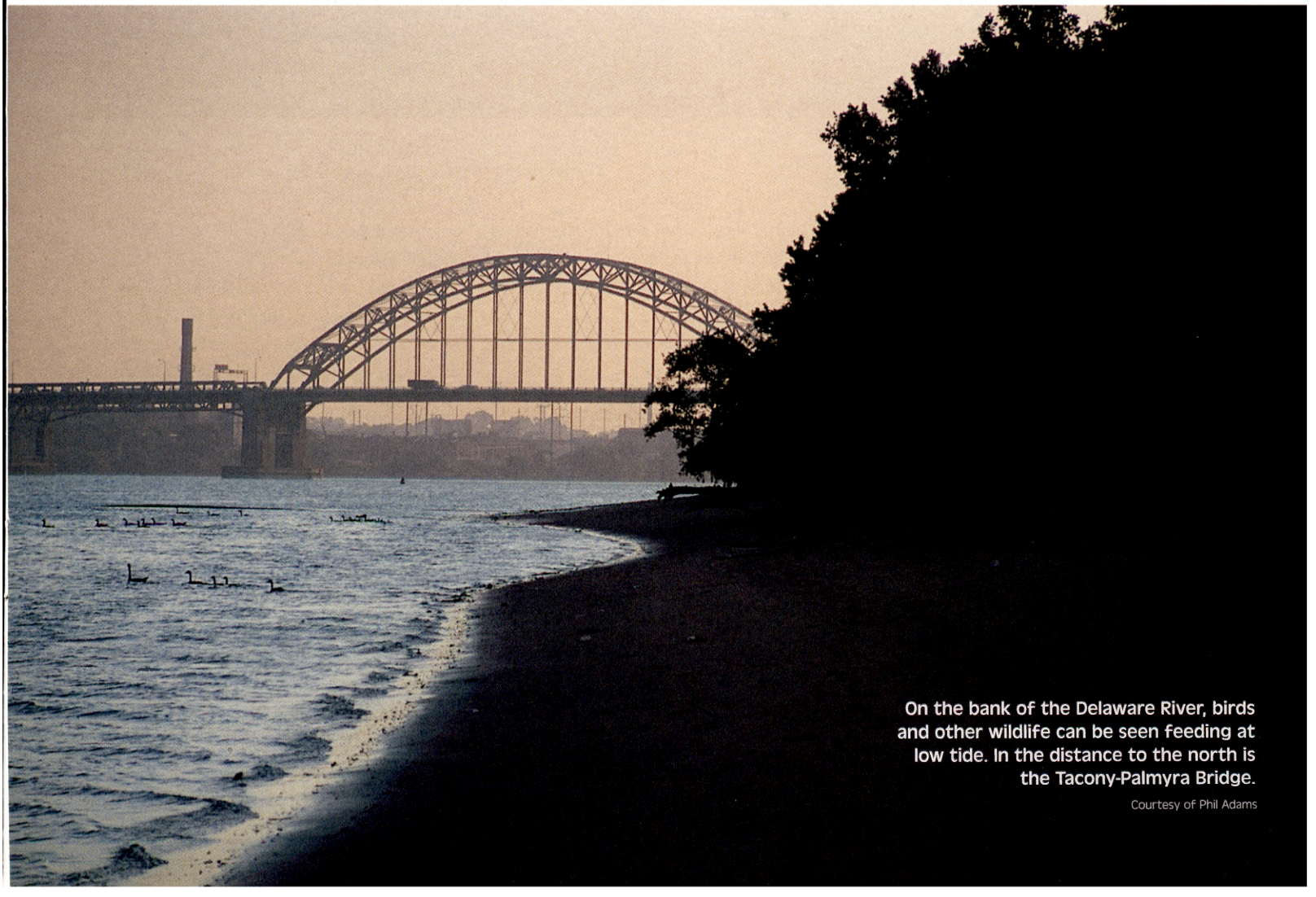
From Trash to Treasure

This area, originally intended to be purely a site to deposit dredge material, has blossomed into a natural haven for many different types of wildlife. The Army Corps of Engineers continues to use a portion of the park as a dredge material site for the ongoing dredge operations along the Delaware River. These materials can be used as a resource for soil blending operations for Burlington County and other regional projects.

The Corps operation can be viewed as a prototype for other projects along the Delaware River and can provide economic benefits to other communities along the river. The dredging operation has been producing materials for the area for a number of years and has been shown to work in harmony with nature and still be a viable asset.

Teaching Nature's Lessons

The Palmyra Cove Nature Park is an ideal place for environmental education, too. Coming soon will be an environmental education center, which will be the park's focal point. It will house interpretive displays and offer learning opportunities concerning the wide array of plants, birds and other wildlife to be found in the park.



On the bank of the Delaware River, birds and other wildlife can be seen feeding at low tide. In the distance to the north is the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge.

Courtesy of Phil Adams



Subject to daily flooding, the tidal cove is a good place to see marine life. It is also a prime spot for bird watching.

Courtesy of Carol Beske

The education center will also have displays and information on the historical importance of both Palmyra Cove and the neighboring Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. In addition, it will feature displays from the Army Corps of Engineers dredging operation that will illustrate how the dredge material site works in conjunction with the park.

The center will host local school, college, and club field trips. And environmental organizations, such as the New Jersey Audubon Society, will assist students and club members in developing lesson plans and activities.

Interpretive materials, such as a self-guiding nature trail booklet, will be available at the educational center to help visitors identify the birds, flowers and plants most often seen at the site. A brochure that explains the importance of wetlands will also be available. Such materials will enhance the casual visitor's experience and promote careful use and stewardship of the area.

Perfect for Passive Recreation

The nature park has an extensive trail system, which begins at the environmental education center, wanders by the tidal marsh—a prime bird watching area that is attracting much attention as the park is developed—and continues along the Delaware River before going back to the center. Visitors will be exposed to a wealth of colorful riverine flora and fauna; with some guidance, they can learn about the importance of wetlands ecosystems and a variety of other habitats.

Palmyra Cove Nature Park is valuable to the community as a place for passive recreation. It is large enough and covered with enough vegetation that a visit feels like a walk in the country, far from the traffic and congestion of nearby residential and commercial areas. The trails threaded throughout the park make it a pleasant place for walking and jogging.

These activities will be encouraged by the addition of low-impact improvements such as bird-watching platforms and benches along the trail. Along the shoreline of the river and at the lagoon in the tidal cove, there will be docks for families to fish and rent canoes.

A Partnership Project

This environmental initiative has been made possible through a partnership with a mix of state, county and local government entities with private sector and non-profit involvement. The nature park has received funding from many sources, including the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the Delaware River Port Authority, Burlington County (through the state's Green Acres program), the Office of Maritime Resources and the Burlington County Bridge Commission.

A number of local organizations have contributed to this project. This is truly an example of how all levels of government, the private sector and local community organizations can come together for a common good.

The need for preserving wildlife and providing environmental education to the community cannot be overstated. To that end, the Palmyra Cove Nature Park has committed itself to preserving this precious wildlife haven while providing an educational and economic resource to the community. We hope you will come visit and experience one of South Jersey's natural environmental havens.

The park is open from dawn to dusk so that families, nature lovers and other community members can experience this natural resource. For directions or additional information, please call 856/829-1900.

George Nyikita serves as the executive director of the Burlington County Bridge Commission, in which capacity he oversees its daily operations. The commission is responsible for maintaining and operating the Burlington-Bristol, Tacony-Palmyra and Riverside-Delanco bridges.



Shown here is the head of the hiking trail that offers a self guiding tour through the Palmyra Cove Nature Park.

Courtesy of John Sbinske



The Palmyra Cove Nature Park offers a number of open fields and woodlands, perfect for nature lovers to enjoy.

Courtesy of Phil Adams



SNOWSHOEING: JUST AN "OLD SHOE" SPORT

by J. Wandres

I guess I was like a lot of people; that is, I didn't give a lot of thought to snowshoeing as a winter sport. Maybe it's because other snow sports—hotdogging, x-treme freestyle, downhill racing, even cross-country skiing—get better press. There are at least a dozen skiing magazines. Each hypes, examines, commentates on and reviews a particular aspect of skiing and all the equipment necessary and nice to have to enjoy it. Each magazine has ads that show Beautiful People having loads of fun using their super-high-tech gear and wearing really, *really snazzy* clothing and staying at seriously expensive resorts in far away mountains. In the face of all that, snowshoeing isn't very s—e—x—y.

Ah, therein lies its growing popularity, as I have discovered and I am now prepared to reveal to readers of this fine publication. By the time you traverse to the end of this article you will know a bit of the history of snowshoes. You will be able to impress your friends by describing the difference between the Alaskan and the Green Mountain Bearpaw styles and discuss the pros and cons of asymmetrical racers. *And* you'll know the words to your very own snowshoe song. But first, a bit of history.

Finessing the Flotation Factor

Paleontolgists mucking about in the Aleutian Islands have uncovered snowshoes so old they may have been worn by people crossing over from Asia to Alaska when the Bering Strait was still a solid frozen bridge. Now *that's* old!

As the first settlers fanned out across North America over the next few millennia they designed new and improved snowshoes to help them get around. Two great improvements included bending the front up to make walking easier, and

adding a "tail" to help keep the feet moving in the same direction as the snowshoe.

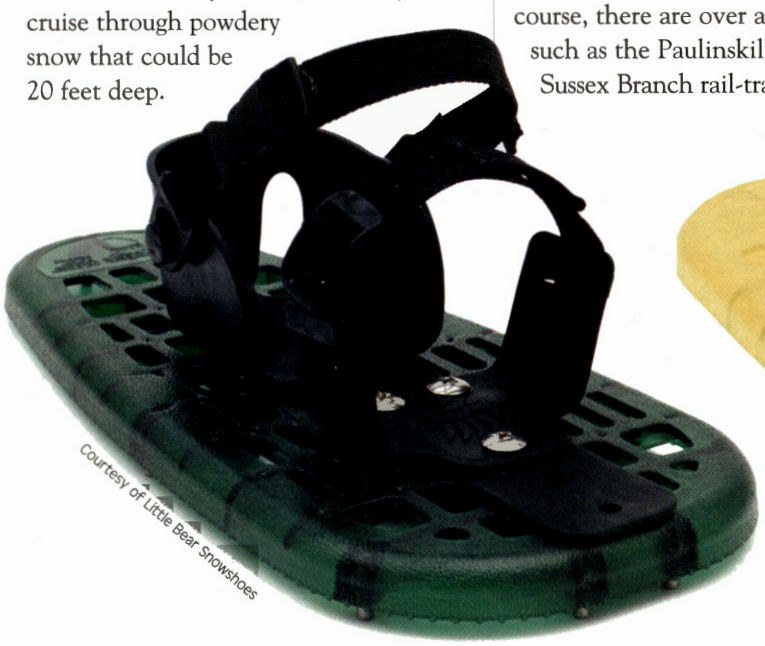
Native Americans discovered that the best wood for the frames is white ash, because it is strong, lightweight, and bends easily after it has been steamed. Now, you don't actually need to know this unless, of course, you plan to build your own snowshoes, but the best ash trees grow on the north face of a hill (away from the sun), because the trees grow more slowly and have a straighter, tighter grain. The Attikamek people, who used to live in Canada and the northern part of the United States, developed a system of laces and bindings that utilized smoke-tanned moose hide. The snowshoes were laced with wet strips of rawhide, which shrank as they dried, making for a very taut fit. The lacing and frame was varnished to protect against moisture and rot.

Native American snowshoe crafters were nothing if not clever in modifying designs to suit local snow conditions. Alaskan snowshoes are long—up to 5 feet—including the long tail, and up to a foot wide (no "bigfoot" jokes please), with close-webbed lacing. This gives the wearer excellent *flotation*, or ability to cruise through powdery snow that could be 20 feet deep.

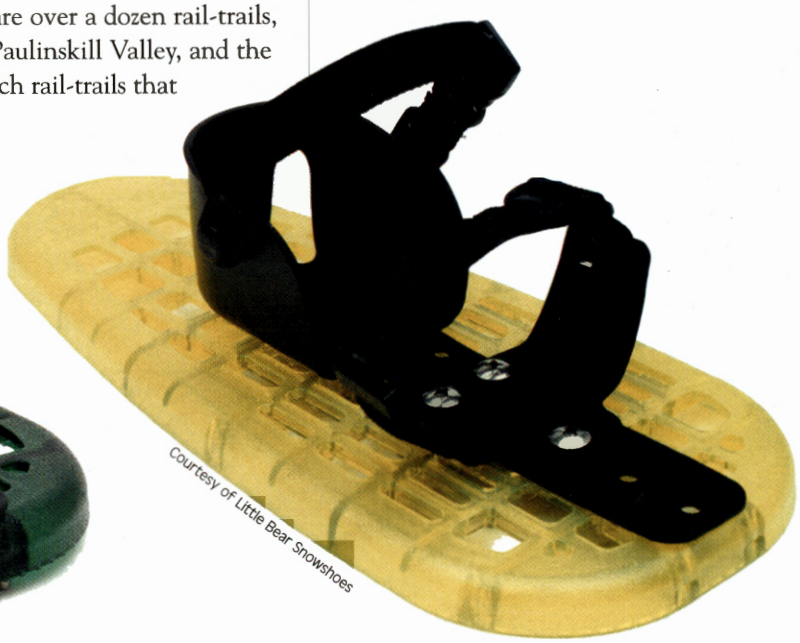
The drawback is that their length makes traversing up and down hilly terrain, or kicking steps into the snow, nearly impossible. At the other extreme is the Green Mountain Bearpaw design. It ranges up to 36 inches long by about 10 inches wide, and has a slightly upturned toe that tapers to a rounded tail. They're better for traveling through heavy underbrush and are just okay for climbing and step kicking. In many ways, this style has been the forerunner of the modern, aluminum and fabric snowshoes.

Back-Country Bushwhacking Is Great

To a large degree, the growing popularity of snowshoeing probably has to do with the ease of enjoying it and the fact that you don't have to invest a whole lot of money in equipment. Basically, you just strap them on your feet, put on layers of warm clothing, find yourself some snow, and you're on your way. Nearly all of New Jersey's state parks have miles of well-marked hiking trails. There's also the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the entire New Jersey Highlands region, all laced with long-distance hiking trails. And, of course, there are over a dozen rail-trails, such as the Paulinskill Valley, and the Sussex Branch rail-trails that



Courtesy of Little Bear Snowshoes



Courtesy of Little Bear Snowshoes



Courtesy of Havlick Snowshoe Company

wind through some pretty scenic areas. But there's no "law" that says you have to stay on trails. Snowshoers can go "bush-whacking" off-trail just as well. That's the great thing about snowshoeing: you can go off by your lonesome, or with a friend, or with a group; you can pack just a lunch and a Thermos of soup to go day-tripping, or pack cold weather equipment and food to enjoy winter overnight camping. (See *Bundle Up for Winter Camping* in NJO's Winter 2000 issue)

Getting Your Act Together

Some manufacturers still turn out traditional wood frame snowshoes with laces. In this article, we'll consider only the modern models. Outdoor equipment manufacturers have come up with a variety of durable, lightweight snowshoe types made with an aluminum (or titanium) frame and fabric decking. The newest models are plastic co-polymer, injection-molded snowshoes that incorporate the frame and deck into one piece.

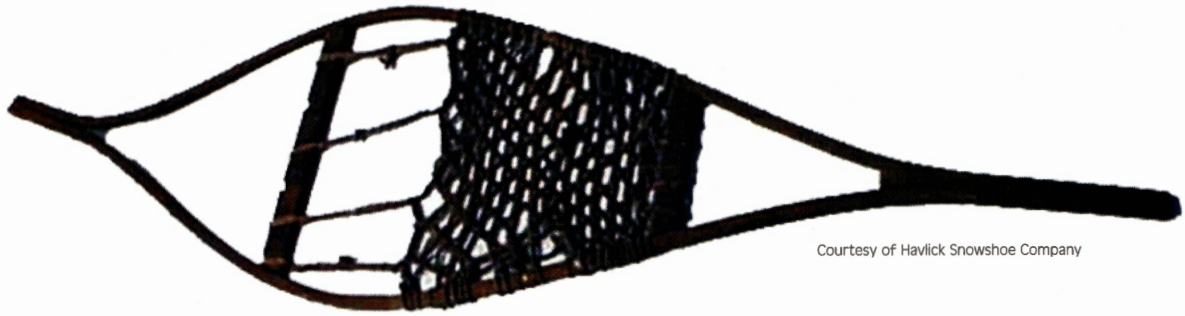
There are snowshoe designs for all types of terrain and snow conditions, uses—from casual recreation to competition racing—and experience levels. Here's a primer on what to look for when you go shopping:

The frame: All aluminum snowshoes have upturned toes. They are available as symmetrical and asymmetrical (a left and right). Most have a round end, but a few are teardrop shaped. Asymmetricals let you walk (or run) with your feet closer together, and there is less tendency to bang your ankles when running than with symmetrical snowshoes. The deck is made of a solid panel of synthetic fabric riveted to the frame. Because the deck is solid, it provides more flotation than the traditional laced rawhide deck; that's one reason why modern snowshoes can be made smaller.

As on traditional snowshoes, aluminum and molded frames have a pivot system. This lets the foot roll from heel to toe with each step. Basically, the pivot lets the tail end of the snowshoe stay in the snow while the foot goes through the motions of taking a step. There is the rotating pivot and the fixed pivot. Each has advantages and drawbacks. At least one company offers a dual pivot system that combines the best of both systems, and can be adjusted for more or less deck rotation.

The key to your success on snowshoes is in the binding. The binding keeps the foot attached to the frame right over the pivot point. There are all kinds of bindings available, but the critical element is a binding that won't require constant adjustment or let the snowshoe fall off. It must also provide lateral stability to keep your feet pointing in the same direction as the snowshoe, in particular when you traverse up and down hill.

As you may have heard, snow—even the powdery stuff—is slippery. That's why snowshoes include traction devices. These are cleats made of aluminum, stainless steel or titanium and add stability. There is a large cleat



Courtesy of Havlick Snowshoe Company

directly under the pivot point, and there are (or should be) two smaller cleats on either side of the snowshoe toward the rear. These give lateral stability during hill traverses.

When you add up all these components they may total a few pounds of weight. That may not seem like much, but remember: you'll be lifting those few pounds thousands of times during the walk; add the weight of snow on the shoes and it can add up to a lot of fatigue. The lightest of recreational snowshoes weigh about 2.5 pounds each. Weight also affects what size snowshoe to look for. To your body weight, add up to 25 extra pounds for boots, clothing and a backpack filled with lunch and other equipment. A person whose total weight is about 175 pounds can get away with the smallest aluminum frame snowshoe, about 8 by 25 inches. This size is also good for children up to 100 pounds. If you weigh about 225 pounds including equipment consider the 10-by-36-inch snowshoes.

And now for the $64 question: what will it cost? All this wonderful design expertise doesn't come cheap. A run-of-the-mill pair of recreational snowshoes can cost from $150 to $200. Top-of-the-line will max out at around $300. Add the cost of polypropylene *long john* undergarments, boots that will keep your tootsies toasty for hours, gaiters (waterproof covers that go over your boots to keep the snow out; knee-high gaiters also help keep your legs warm), adjustable snowpoles (optional) for balance on hilly terrain, a backpack and supplies. You could easily spend up to $500 before you set foot out the door. If you have never been on snowshoes, it makes sense to find an outfitter that will let you try out different styles on a rental basis. By the way, some outdoor retailers may sell their used rental equipment at a discount at the end of the season.

Taking Your Act on the Trail

When you have snowshoes on, you don't glide along the surface; you do sink in. How far you sink in is related to the size of the snowshoe and the weight on it, and the conditions of the snow. On a single trip, you will probably experience many kinds of snow. You could plow through dry, powdery snow in the deep woods, follow a hard-packed snowmobile trail, slop through warm, wet snow, and zip along the hard crust of a refrozen snowfall all in the course of a few miles. Be ready to adjust your stride and pace accordingly.

Experienced snowshoers like to say that it's just like walking. That's easy for them to say; they're experienced and may be in great physical shape. There is a rhythm to snowshoeing; it takes a little while to get the hang of it. And there are techniques to help you should you fall. The best way to learn is to go out first with a group or hiking club. Watch how the others do it, and ask them to critique your style. You might even prac-



Courtesy of Little Bear Snowshoes

tice falling and getting up while someone is around to show you how to get up.

How far should you journey? A better question is: how far can you go? If you're accustomed to hiking 10 to 15 miles on a dry trail during the spring or autumn, figure on half that distance, at best, if you're a novice. Don't overdo it. Your pace should be easy enough to let you to enjoy the hike and hold a conversation with others in the group.

What to take? If you're on your own, or hiking off-trail, take U.S. Geological Survey topographical ("topo") maps. These show contours of the land and heights of hills and mountains (some in feet; some in meters). The maps sold as sheets may be more current and up-to-date than those published in hiking guidebooks. If you're hiking in a state park, get a trail guide from the ranger. These show not only the trails but also access roads and other features, although they generally do not show contours and elevations. Bring binoculars to look for wildlife or scenic vistas.

Should you take a cell phone in case of an emergency? It won't hurt, but you might not be able to get a signal deep in the midst of a trackless forest. Best bet when hiking in a state park is to let the ranger know when you're starting out, which trails you plan to take, and when you expect to return.

You'll need a backpack large enough to store extra layers of clothing. As weather conditions change during the day, you'll put on and take off layers several times. You'll need two or more bottles of water because, yes, you do perspire as you track. A Thermos of hot tea, and power bars or fruit, will help keep your energy level up. Leave candy bars home. Not only do they give you a quick "rush and crash" energy, but they may become as hard as ice in your pack. Remember: it's better to drink and snack on a regular basis than wait until you're fatigued and famished before you stop to rest and replenish. You should also carry safety equipment: a first aid kit, blister pads, sun block and lip balm. Bring moist towelettes and toilet paper for calls of nature.

Snowshoeing has a wonderful capacity to attract everyone to the sport. Just about everyone, regardless of experience level, can enjoy snowshoeing—as long as there's snow, of course.

Over the past few years, Aberdeen freelancer J. Wandres has delighted—and enlightened— ***NJO*** *readers with articles about barns, beavers, bouldering, iceboating, rail-trails, Walnford, winter photography and, most recently, Tuckerton Seaport.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Adirondak Mountain Club, North Jersey Chapter
www.hikeleader.com/sys-tmpl/door/
Betty Heald, Chapter Chair
156 Spring Lane
Paramus, NJ 07652
201/967-2937
ebheald@aol.com

Appalachian Mountain Club (www.outdoors.org/)
The AMC offers workshops in the Delaware Water Gap through a partnership with the National Park Service. The AMC operates the **Mohican Outdoor Center** (50 Camp Road, Blairstown, NJ 07825-9655) within the National Recreation Area to help provide quality outdoor programming and access to this important public resource. In 2001, the AMC will offer the following snowshoeing workshop at the Center:

Snowshoeing for Beginners

This workshop will be held from Friday to Sunday, February 9 to 11. It will introduce the experienced three-season hiker to snowshoeing and will cover cold-weather equipment, nutrition, navigation, and safety. Sessions will be indoors and out doors; equipment will not be provided.

The fee ($126/member; $140/nonmember) includes instruction, two nights' lodging, Saturday and Sunday continental breakfast, and Saturday dinner. To register, please call 908/362-5670 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday)

Eastern Mountain Sports (www.emsonline.com/emsdirect/index.html)

- Somerset Shopping Center
  347 Route202/206 South
  Bridgewater, NJ 08807
  908/725-7255
- Freehold Raceway Mall
  3710 Rte 9
  Freehold, NJ 07728
  732/409-2424
- 820 Route 17 North
  Paramus, NJ 07652
  201/670-6464
- Market Fair
  3535 US Route 1
  West Windsor, NJ 08540
  609/520-8310
- Woodbridge Center
  277 Woodbridge Center Drive
  Woodbridge, NJ 07095
  732/634-8787



The Snowshoe Song

Written by W. G. Beers in 1874

(You provide your own tune.)

Here's to the slim snowshoe
In glory we renew,
Its fame will live and pleasure give
To manly hearts and true.
May its graceful dipping
The fair and brave enthrall,
And with it live the echoes of
Our mountain snowshoe call.

Chorus
Hear the wild shout of the snowshoers!
Tull-lul-lul-li-it-too
Ringing o'er mountain and valley!
Tull-lul-lul-li-it-too

Winter Trails
A program of the **American Hiking Society** (www.americanhiking.org/events/winter.html) and **SnowSports Industries America's Snowlink** (www.snowlink.com/), Winter Trails is an annual festival of winter hiking. Hans Karlsen's High Point Center (Route 23 off Interstate 84, in High Point State Park) hosts this free event in New Jersey. Event offerings include snowshoe demonstrations, workshops on winter camping and other topics, giveaways, activities for children, and much more. For additional information, call 973/724-4484.

© Scott Markewitz

THROUGH THE YEARS

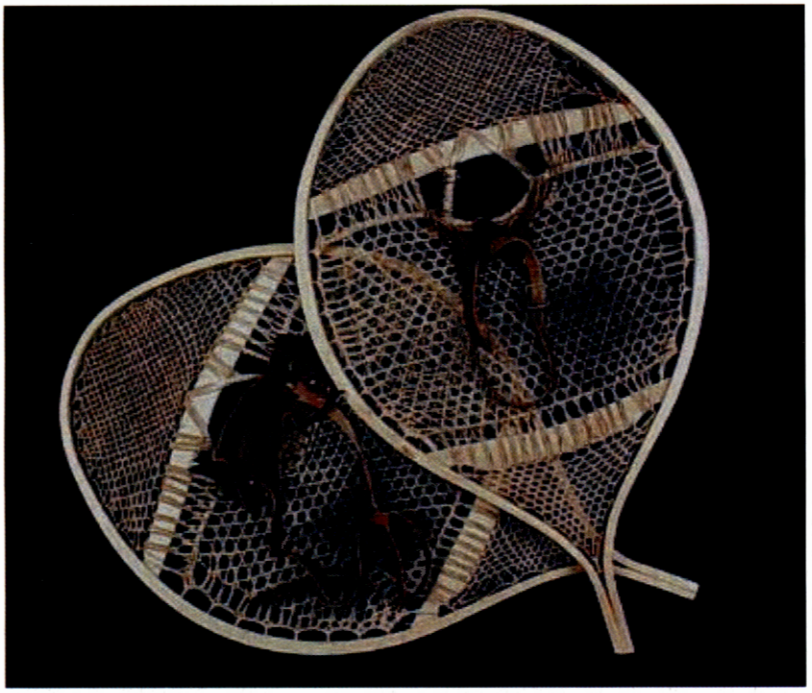
These Swenson & Swenson snowshoes are the bearpaw type. They measure 29" long and 13" wide.



Courtesy of Paper Mill Village Antiques



Courtesy of Havlick Snowshoe Company



Courtesy of James D. Julia, Inc.

These hand-made snowshoes are believed to be Indian-made. They measure 31 1/2" long and 19 1/2" wide. Their large rounded shape makes them ideal for very soft and/deep snow.



Courtesy of Little Bear Snowshoes



Courtesy of Little Bear Snowshoes



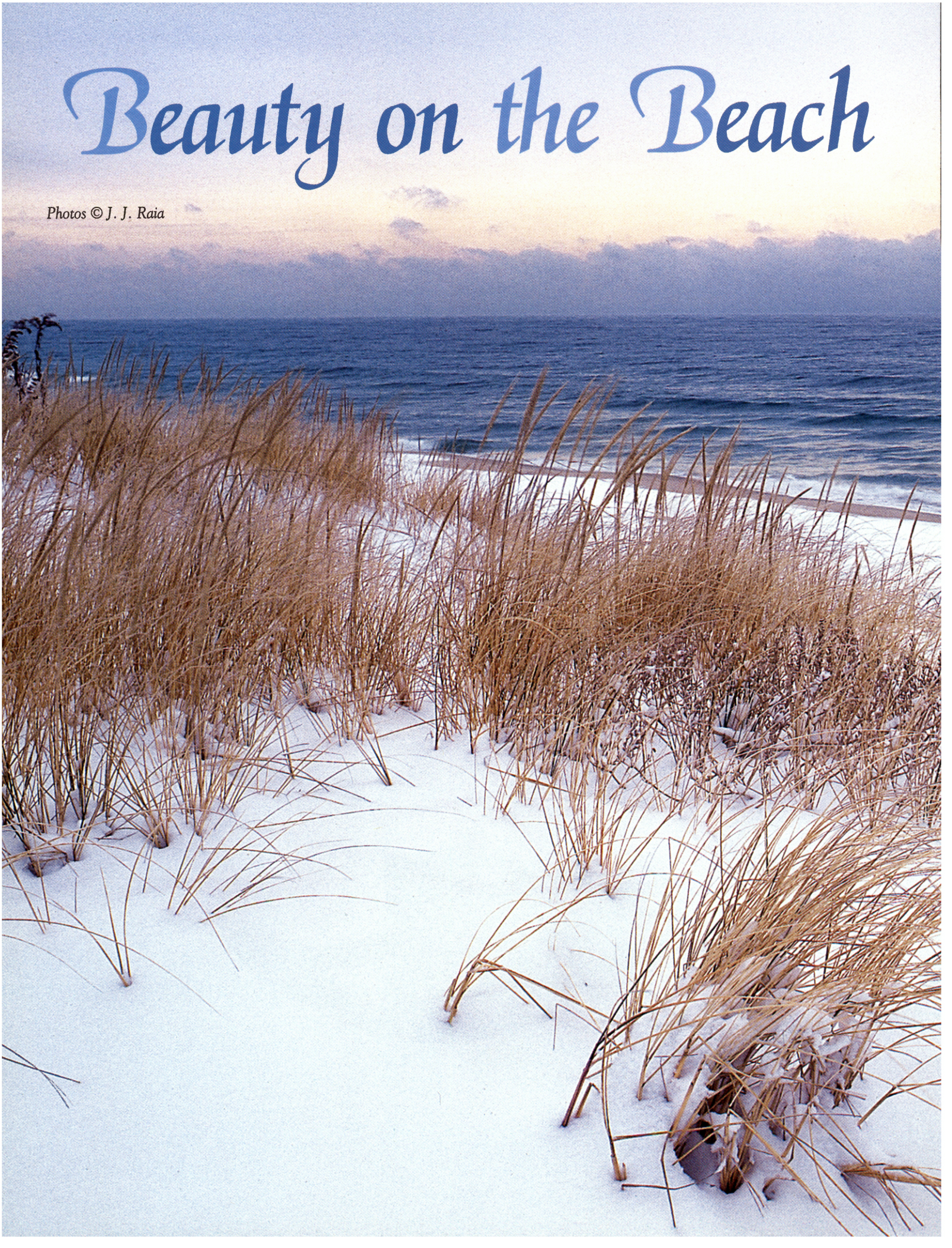
Courtesy of Little Bear Snowshoes



Courtesy of Little Bear Snowshoes

Beauty on the Beach

Photos © J. J. Raia









As timeless as the ebb and

flow of the tide,

as multi-hued as an artist's

palette, as numerous as

grains of sand,

as varied as the changing

seasons—so are the images

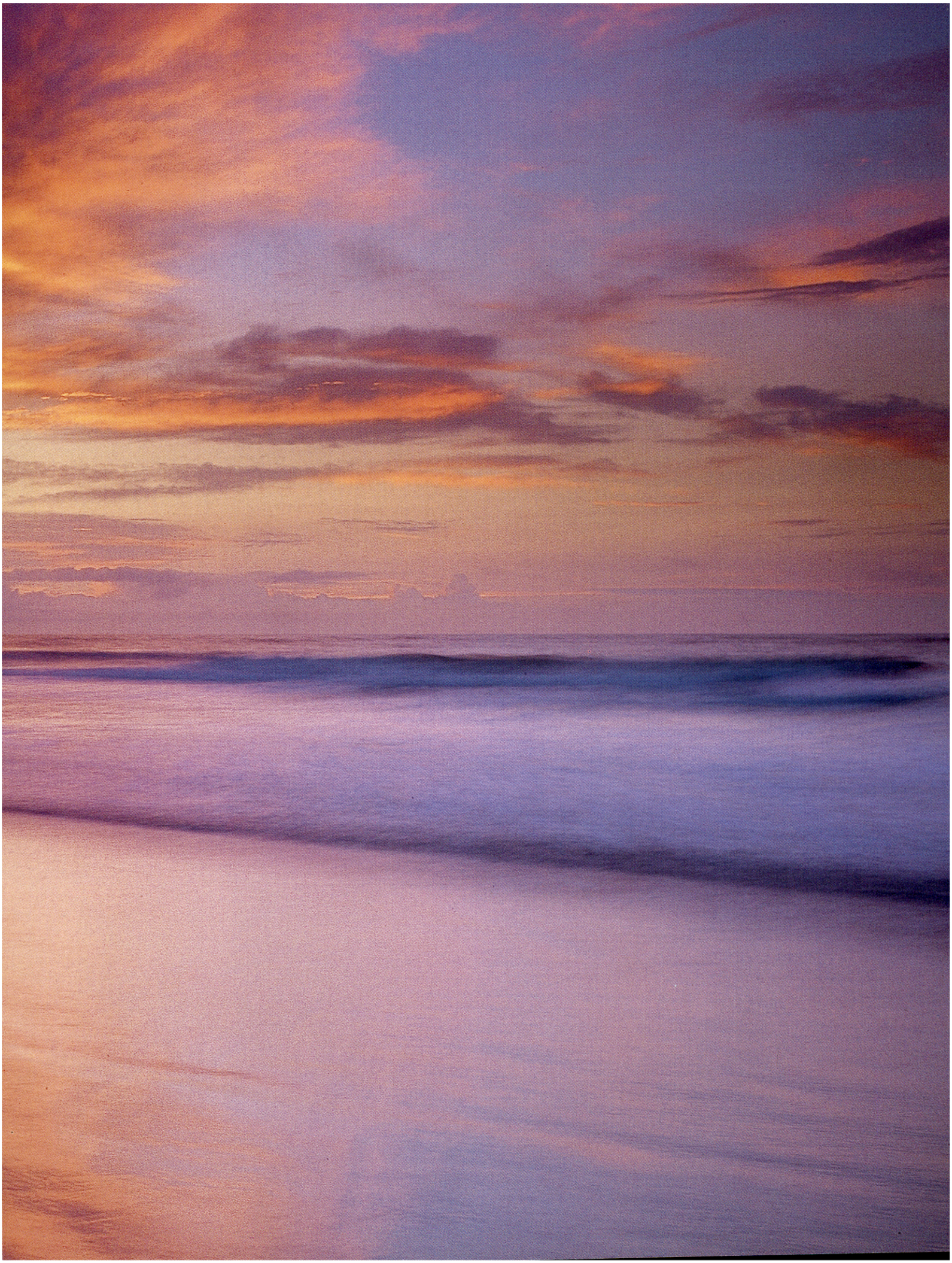
of beauty offered by

New Jersey's beaches.









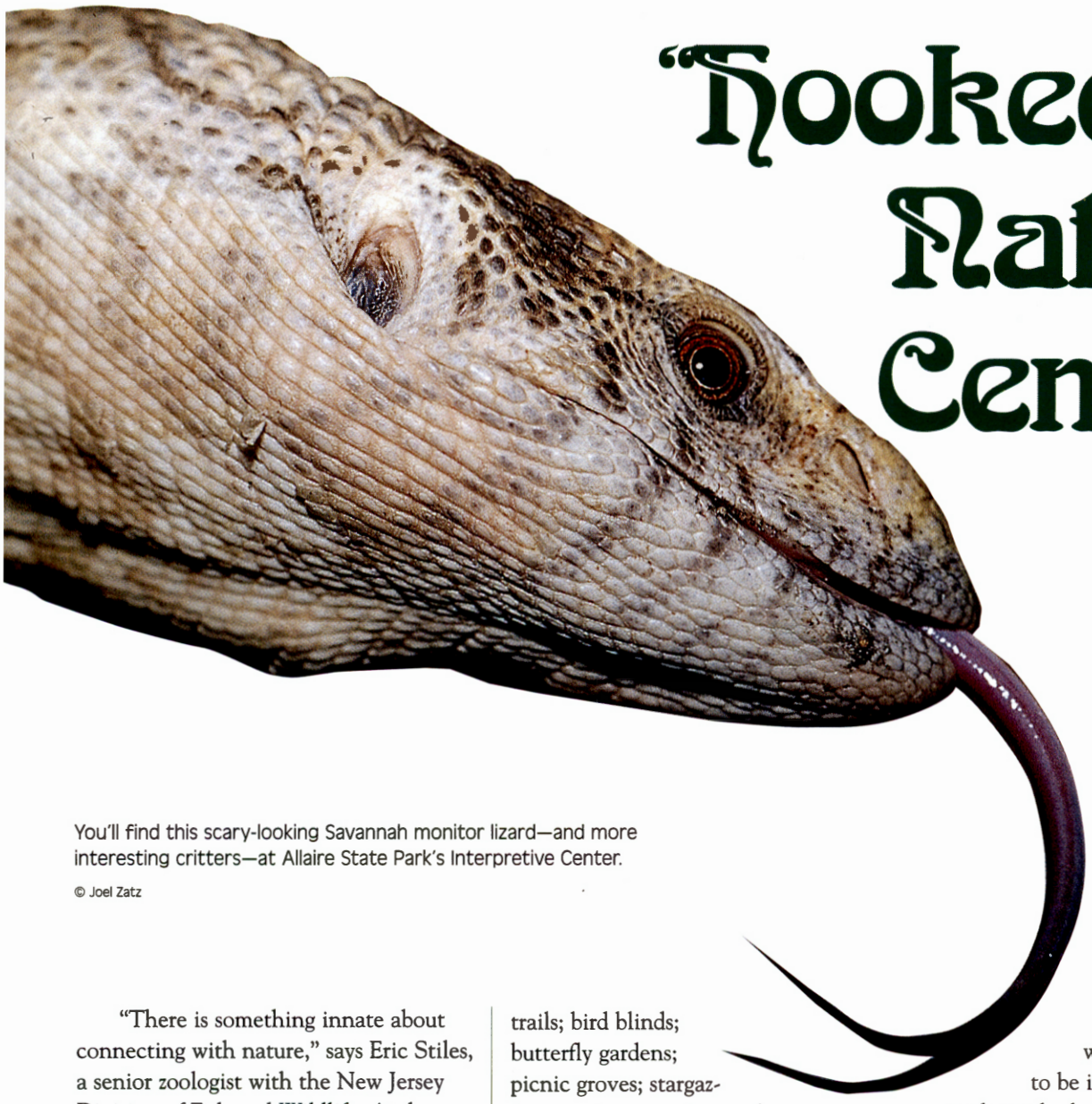



FREEWILL



"Hooked on Nature" Centers

by Arline Zatz



You'll find this scary-looking Savannah monitor lizard—and more interesting critters—at Allaire State Park's Interpretive Center.

© Joel Zatz

"There is something innate about connecting with nature," says Eric Stiles, a senior zoologist with the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. And there's no better place to begin than a visit to one of the dozens of nature and interpretive centers within the Garden State. Some are operated under the auspices of a state, county or local government agency; others are run by environmental or not-for-profit organizations.

No matter how large or small, each has its own unique array of exhibits guaranteed to arouse your curiosity and whet your appetite to learn more about Mother Nature. In addition to live animals, interesting displays, and exciting programs, the majority of centers offer a multitude of bonuses at each site—hiking, bicycling, skiing, or snowshoeing trails; bird blinds; butterfly gardens; picnic groves; stargazing events; campsites; and much more.

A visit to the **Pequest Natural Resource Education Center** requires an entire day because there's so much to see and do. Start by watching *Hooked on Nature*, a 15-minute video showing how eggs are taken from the hatchery's own brood stock, and how the 600,000 brown, rainbow and brook trout are raised each year. Spend as much time as you like inside the exhibit hall—the numerous hands-on displays for all ages are captivating. After, take a self-guided tour of the grounds. At the first overlook you'll see 3,000 to 7,000 gallons of water a minute flow through raceways. Next is the nursery building where eggs are transferred to be incubated in the fall. A peek inside the windows will show how the trays, each filled with about 20,000 eggs, are stored. From the observation deck, you'll see a mile of concrete raceways used to keep trout until they're large enough to be released. During summer months the butterfly garden is quite active, and the easy trails are a delight to hike year round. Bring a fishing rod and try your luck just outside the hatchery along the Pequest River.

State Park Centers Focus on the Local

While interpretive centers in the state park system vary in size, they all feature exhibits on local flora and fauna

One of the many bonuses of visiting Cheesequake State Park's Interpretive Center is either taking a regularly scheduled walk with the naturalist or doing it on your own on any one of several lovely trails.



© Joel Zatz

along with descriptive information on the natural history of the specific area they're located in. **Cheesequake State Park**'s interpretive center's attractive hands-on displays, and the live turtles and frogs housed in spotless, well-maintained tanks are certain to please, as are the regularly-scheduled lectures on the park's wetlands, salt marsh, and forest presented by naturalist Jim Faczak. On Saturday afternoons, Faczak leads nature walks. He describes them as a "windows of the world wilderness experience," because you'll be gazing deep into the forest and wetlands. If you're interested in getting your children involved in learning more about environmental science the fun way, come on a Sunday. That's when the free 90-minute Families Achieving New Standards in Mathematics and Science (FAMS) seminar is held. Hiking on one of the self-guided trails just outside the interpretive center is another bonus.

Getting to **Allaire State Park**'s nature center is part of the adventure, for the surrounding pine trees provide beautiful greenery against fallen snow as well as a canopy of shade on the hottest summer's day. Only a short distance away from the hustle and bustle of historic Allaire Village, the cozy nature center, located in a log cabin adjacent to a lovely pond, is filled with exhibits for all ages. Live caterpillars chomp greedily on leaves; a scary-looking Savannah monitor lizard tests the air with his forked tongue; a huge sand hornet's nest looms high above; and a live honeybee display arouses everyone's curiosity. Allow lots of time here because naturalist Lorraine McCay's enthusiasm is contagious and she'll let you come almost eye-to-eye with the insects she captured. The live Madagascar hissing roach thrills most kids, who usually leave imitating its sound. And, if you've never seined, join her for this thrilling adventure, then help deposit the catch of the day in the large tank for



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all to admire. McCay recommends hiking one of the park's level, sandy trails to "find outside what was discovered inside." You can also fish, bird watch, camp, picnic, ride the Pine Creek narrow gauge train, or stroll through the village.

The **Annie M. Carter Interpretive Center**, located in **Batsto Village** in the heart of the pinelands, is one of the best places to learn about the ecology and natural resources within **Wharton State Forest**. Inside the 1800s building, where naturalist Gil Mika offers audio-visual programs, there are live reptiles and fish, as well as mounted local animals and birds. Outside, there are butterfly and hummingbird gardens, and a spectacular view of Batsto Lake. "Getting to the Center is part of the experience," he says, "because the trail affords an opportunity to admire the lake, aquatic plants, birds, and animals. Outside the building, there's also a partially submerged log that's usually occupied by a dozen red-bellied turtles." Stargazing is one of the special events held here year-round.

At **Island Beach State Park**, the mission of the nature and interpretive centers—to introduce people to a barrier beach and its plant and animal life—is so successful that you'll return again and again because one day isn't enough time to absorb the natural highlights and various programs. Make the nature center (formerly known as the Aeolium) your first stop to learn about the birds that frequent the area, the shells found here, and check out the huge aquarium. It's filled with various species of aquatic life caught by participants who opted to seine in Barnegat Bay. Families and individuals are also welcome to register for other programs, including surf fishing, night hikes, beach walks, or the canoe and kayak tours led by naturalist Diane Bennett. The plantings adjacent to the nature center are low maintenance native plants known to draw wildlife, and if you want to stretch your legs walking through a dwarf red cedar forest with bayberry shrubs and typical beach plants, try the self-guided loop trail that starts near the building.

Don't leave Island Beach without visiting the interpretive center located approximately seven miles beyond the



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Above: Besides the fascinating displays within the Island Beach State Park and Nature and Interpretive Centers, visitors can participate in many programs, including seining. Here visitors who have done the seining check the net for treasures found.

Right: Interpretive specialist Beth Gore points out the queen bee within the honeybee display at Washington Crossing Interpretive Center.

main gate. There you'll see an old beach buggy, historical time charts, displays on animal life, including the migration path of ospreys; information on the history of baymen; and many artifacts, including clam rakes and a sneakbox (an old duck hunting boat). The **Emily deCamp Herbarium** contains dried and mounted specimens of local plants. Outside, the same species thrive in **Janet's Garden**.

First-time visitors to **Liberty State Park**'s interpretive center may be surprised to find a haven for wildlife in the middle of Jersey City. Opened in 1984, this center makes up for its diminutive size by offering an abundance of educational programs about the Lenape Indians, the Central Railroad of New Jersey, and immigration, as well as native craft workshops, falconry demonstrations, seining and estuary exploration. Display rooms focus on river and salt marshes, the cultural history of the area, and development from before the Europeans arrived to the present time. A visit isn't complete, however, without exploring the 36-acre natural area outside and Liberty Science Center, with its three floors of interactive exhibits focused on invention, health and the environment.

Among the best, **Washington Crossing State Park**'s interpretive center has something for everyone, from tanks filled with snakes and turtles to interactive quiz boards and mounted insects. You'll see a display of different animal tracks, and one of minerals found in New Jersey; you'll follow the metamorphosis of the monarch butterfly, and watch 4,000 honeybees at work. Kids can assist the naturalist in seining for minnows, bass, crayfish and snails for the aquariums; learn that Washington crossed the Delaware River here; explore by computer; or simply sit and read books about the wonders of nature. Outside, there's a lovely butterfly garden and scenic walking trails. Interpretive specialist Beth Gore or naturalist Wayne Henderek present programs here year-round. Family nature walks, night hikes, astronomy seminars, flintknapping demonstrations, and maple sugaring are also offered.

There's plenty to do at the **Lebanon State Forest**'s interpretive center, says interpreter April Hughes, especially during



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Above: Visitors to the Cooper Environmental Center will find many interesting displays, including this one on the pelts from animals common in Ocean County.

Left: Visitors delight in touching a corn snake held by a naturalist at the Cooper Environmental Center.

Below: The three-story Wells Mills Nature Center is as interesting outside as it is inside.

Below right: From the Elizabeth Meirs Morgan Observation Deck at the Wells Mills Nature Center, visitors have a fantastic view of Wells Mills Lake and the surrounding woods. Bonuses here include canoeing, fishing, open playing fields, picnic areas, a playground, streams, bogs, swamps, uplands, and rare and interesting vegetation unique to each habitat, in addition to great hiking trails.


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the winter when the snowmobile and snowshoe trails are open. It's also the time that thousands of tundra swans migrate from the Arctic to enjoy the area's warmer climes until March or April. "It's a fantastic sight," says Hughes. During summer months, the **Butterfly Pavilion** is filled with eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises, and plants. In the interpretive center, tanks contain the creatures representative of the species found in the Pine Barrens. "The big tank," notes Hughes, "is a combination land/water tank occupied by turtles, tadpoles, and salamanders, each in a different stage. I take visitors out to catch the tadpoles and fish, place them in the aquarium, and by summer's end, the tadpoles turn into frogs! " Displays also include birds' nests and eggs; and information on history of the area from the Lenape people to the blueberry and cranberry agriculture in the area, including everything in between — the iron, glass, terra cotta, and the sawmills. Before leaving, check out the bird feeders; with the loaner binoculars, you'll probably spot several varieties. Outside, there are several trails that lead to mixed habitats, including a natural cedar swamp. You can also bike the 10-mile loop trail; picnic; camp in your own tent or trailer or in one of the park's new yurts. Plan on returning for one of the programs offered for all ages, including blueberry picking (Saturdays during June and July); the cranberry harvest (September); or dog sled races along sand roads (October).

Sanctuaries for Birds and More

The New Jersey Audubon Society—a privately supported non-profit organization founded in 1897—invites the public to its staffed centers to "learn about the natural world and why it's important to preserve the habitats that support the species observed." Each center has its own personality, and although some are small and not well maintained, all have dedicated personnel willing to answer any questions and recommend excellent adjacent trails that afford an opportunity for fine bird-watching.

NJAS's **Lorrimer Sanctuary** is situated on 14 acres. Part of the main house, which dates back to the late 1700s, houses the visitors' center, interpretive displays, hands-on exhibits, and an observation window overlooking a winter bird feeding station and pond. Outside, you might spot a blue-winged warbler or migrating songbird as you amble along one of the self-guided nature trails. Children's programs include a natural history day camp, field trips, and Saturday nature classes. Adults can choose from nature study workshops, slide presentations, bird watching field trips, and more.

You'll probably have a problem deciding what to do first when arriving at NJAS's **Owl Haven Nature Center**, located within Monmouth Battlefield State Park. From spring through fall, butterflies—including the black swallowtail, American copper, and painted lady—flutter through the gorgeous garden. If you want to stretch your legs before visiting the nature center, the park offers more than 25 miles of old farm roads and trails of various lengths, going through grassy fields, cornfields, deciduous forest,


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Below: The Buttinger Nature Center's Kate Gorrie Memorial Butterfly House

marshes, and an old orchard. Bring binoculars; you may spot one or more of the 100 species of birds that frequent this area, including hawks, bluebirds, and owls. Although tiny, the nature center is chock full of mounted specimens of New Jersey wildlife, skulls of animals found in the woods, a display of birds' nests, and mammal bones. It also offers a marvelous gift shop, which carries nature items and hundreds of books and field guides. Many educational programs and field trips are offered. Sanctuary director Pete Bacinski hosts a guest natural history speaker every third Wednesday evening, and offers regularly scheduled walks and bird watching events as well. For a winter visit, bring your cross-country skis or snowshoes and enjoy the park's scenery.

Naturalist Linda Horner notes that the **Nature Center of Cape May**, the newest of the NJAS sanctuaries, "is very heavy on family and children's programming, particularly during summer months when science programs are offered to children age 3 and up on a different theme each week." In-depth programs for older kids, plus craft classes, rainy day activities, and evening programs, are also offered for all ages. The center's tanks are filled with native fish, including sea robin and jellyfish, caught during one of the most popular programs, *Harbor Safari*. There are also interactive games and hands-on exhibits. Feel free to picnic; the view of the harbor is fabulous, and the theme gardens—planted so that visitors can learn about planning a backyard habitat using plants that attract birds, butterflies, and other wildlife—are interesting to stroll through. Presently, the garden themes include shade loving plants, seaside drought resistant native plants, butterflies, wetlands, and herbs. The center hosts an open house in April and its annual birding extravaganza in May. It also has a gift shop that's loaded with bird feeders, nature books, and related items.

Spring 2002 will mark the opening of the **Plainsboro Preserve Environmental Nature** and **Education Center**. The 6,500-square-foot center, will be sited on the edge of the 630-acre preserve's McCormack Lake. The center, which will feature an amphitheater and a two-story glass window providing a sweeping view of a 50-acre lake, is modeled after the NJ Audubon Society's Cape May Bird Observatory. The NJAS will partner with Plainsboro Township in designing educational and outreach programs and assist in planning nature walks and other activities. The preserve's trails—a haven for hawks, osprey, river otters, black bear and owls—are already open to hikers on weekends.



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Count on County Park Centers

If you love bicycling in new places, borrow any size, free, at the **Warren E. Fox Nature Center**, and familiarize yourself with the lush surroundings while pedaling a two-mile paved trail before exploring the nature center. Opened in 1984 in Estell Manor County Park, it offers an opportunity to learn more about both the area's pinelands and upland and freshwater wetlands. Displays include live turtles, snakes, frogs, and insects, in addition to information on the history of this 1,600-acre Atlantic County park, which was an industrial site at the turn of the century. Many elevated railroad beds remain, making for fine walks and dry feet through the swampy areas. Bonuses include a picnic area, playgrounds, and primitive camping. Naturalist John Hansen encourages visitors to "touch and smell while inside the nature center to ensure a positive experience with the natural world and return often to learn more."

As the years go by, **Cooper Environmental Center**—celebrating its 20th anniversary this year—gets bigger and better. Naturalist Chris Claus notes its mission is to offer all ages a fun education in natural science. "Because we're close to Barnegat Bay, we concentrate on native critters in the salt marsh." Inside, visitors can find samples of these creatures in the salt-water fish tanks, as well as turtles and live snakes. The building is

Below: You'll find out all about the diamondback terrapin turtle at The Wetlands Institute's live display.

filled with dozens of mind-boggling displays on bats; has touch-and-tell boxes filled with pinecones, horseshoe crab shells, and more; mounted animals; and fossils found in Monmouth County. Weekends are filled with various activities and special talks on snakes, while summer months mean ecological pontoon rides around Cattus Island where you'll spot river otters, great blue herons, shore birds, and nesting osprey. The center offers a unique Junior Naturalist Program where volunteers, ages 8 to 15, work with the animals, learn how to become a naturalist, and then introduce the animals to visitors. The new Dorothy Hale Wildlife Observation Deck offers a sweeping panorama of the wetlands plus a permanent telescope to view the wildlife. Plan on returning again to search for reptiles and amphibians on the Saturday and Sunday nature walks.

If picnicking, paddling, bicycling, hiking, and birding entice you, **Wells Mills County Park**, with its unusual three-story nature center, is the place to go. Inside the center, learn about South Jersey's bays, the animals and fish common to the area, where the best places to paddle are, and why this was an ideal location for a sawmill operation in the late 1700s. A variety of duck decoys are on display as is a replica of the Estrow House, which stood on this land until the early '50s. From the third level observation deck, you'll have a panoramic view of the beautiful pond and grounds.

Wetlands, Wildlife and Watersheds

Visiting **The Wetlands Institute** any time of year is a fun hands-on experience for everyone. Learn through immersion in the marsh habitats with an experienced naturalist; choose from a wide variety of programs or self-guided marsh tours; but definitely begin inside the attractive cedar shake building that resembles a turn-of-the-century coast guard station. Visitors enter through the Tidepool Museum Shop where a vast array of unique gifts, crafts, and history books are sold, before reaching Marshview Hall. Lectures are held in this vast room, which lets you see the surrounding acres through the picture windows; examine wildlife art and carvings; and on a large TV monitor, have a close-up view of nesting osprey via a mini camera close to the nest. Wetlandia, where dozens of interesting 'please touch' exhibits await, is the final stop in the main building. More is in store: The Diller Coastal Exhibit Building has interactive exhibits designed to inform visitors on the important role wetlands play in our lives. You'll find many aquariums and a touch tank inhabited by horseshoe crabs, turtles, and other living marsh creatures. When you're finished here, walk along the salt marsh trail, where you'll be surrounded by birds, fiddler crabs and other creatures. Before leaving, climb the spiral stairs to the Observation Tower for a 360 degree panorama of the wetlands.

For children under 8 (and the young at heart), the **PAWS Farm Nature Center** is the ticket. Educator/naturalist Cathy Ashcroft welcomes families to this unusual non-profit operation, hoping everyone will leave "knowing that the environment is worth caring about and that each one of us has to take responsibility for the animals. Also, that before children acquire a pet, that they can be responsible for all their needs." For the child who may not have experienced a meadow area, Ashcroft notes "here there are wonderful things to see in nature. Because the area around us is so built up, there's little out there in the way of wildlife. However, this property is like an island because it's been kept in its natural state so birds migrate through and there are lots of animals." In the farmhouse that serves as the nature center, children learn where food comes from and play educational games. Outside, they can touch the sheep and goats and see a great horned owl, hedge hogs, guinea pigs, parrots and a red-tailed fox. In the dairy barn now converted to a play area, they learn about the food groups as they play at shopping. They may search for dinosaur bones in a sand-



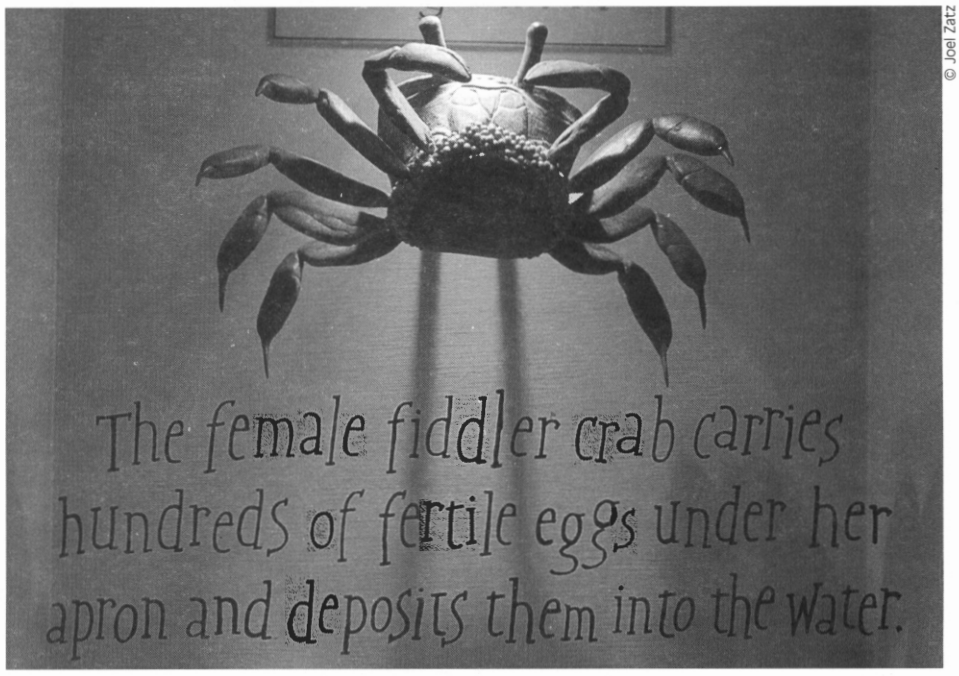
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Below: Don't miss the beautiful nursery display at The Wetlands Institute. Here, an enlarged model of a female crab shows how she carries hundreds of fertile eggs under her apron before depositing them in the water.

Bottom left: Nature center visitors often are treated to a glimpse of wildlife on a nearby trail.

box, look at fossils, and learn how dairy cows produce milk.

A visit to the **Buttinger Nature Center** is akin to meeting Mother Nature in person. The grounds are magnificent and education director Jeff Hoagland focuses on "the surroundings and the miracle of nature," since he feels it's critical to keep children in touch with the natural world. The environmental education program, he says, gives them a basic understanding of their relationship to the natural world. Children can experience the rich diversity of life, discovering which plants and animals live here. When the kids get connected to the natural world, they will then care about water quality, environmental issues, and wastewater. Visitors who come to the center, situated on the Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association's nature reserve, learn the value of a watershed and about stream and pond ecology. They can explore the two discovery rooms filled with interactive exhibits, live animals, and feel boxes. They learn where certain insects are found, and how to catch them and care for them. The "outside classroom" consists of an 8-mile trail network with fields, forest, ponds, stream, wetlands and grassland, a 3.5-acre arboretum, and a 4-acre pond, plus a picnic area and one of the best butterfly gardens in the state—the **Kate Gorrie Memorial Butterfly House**. This structure, adjacent to the center, features a native butterfly plant garden beckoning visitors to walk the winding pathway, sit, and admire the collection. Don't worry about the butterflies escaping; they're enclosed in mesh screening.



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Editor's Note: Outstanding nature centers proliferate in our state. Only a few could be spotlighted in this article; more are briefly described in the sidebar entitled *Additional Nature, Interpretive, and Environmental Centers*. And there still are others that should be acknowledged. If you've a favorite that wasn't mentioned here, let us know about it. (See masthead for contact information.)

A frequent contributor to ***New Jersey Outdoors****, Arline Zatz is the award-winning author of numerous books about the Garden State and ways to enjoy New Jersey's outdoors. Her most recent* **NJO** *article explored Wawayanda State Park.*

Additional Nature,

Belleplain State Forest Interpretive Center — The displays, live animals, and incredible amount of information featured at this center make visitors aware of everything that's native to the area. "While here, visitors also have an opportunity to work on arts and crafts, take nature walks, camp or take an auto tour of the surrounding 17,000-acre forest," notes Kathleen Meyer, a visitor services assistant.

Cape May Bird Observatory/Northwood Center — This NJ Audubon center offers bird-watching classes, disseminates information, and sponsors a hawk watch each fall at Cape May Point State Park.

Cape May Point State Park Nature Center — One of the best sites for bird watching in North America, this small nature center and museum features exhibits such as a saltwater tank and preserved beach and marine species. Three miles of marked trails and boardwalks traverse the natural area of the park, which also offers several photography blinds. Special programs are held throughout the summer.

Cora Hartshorn Nature Center — The Stone House, set amid 17 lush wooded acres, serves as headquarters, classroom, and nature center for the Hartshorn Arboretum and Bird Sanctuary. Besides 80 native wildflowers and common flowers found along three miles of trails, children can experience the natural world through creative, interactive indoor and outdoor activities.

Flat Rock Brook Nature Center — Although small, this nature center contains a library, classroom, display room filled with changing exhibits, and a greenhouse housing amphibians and reptiles. The 'outside' classroom, a 150-acre preserve with self-guided trails through a wooded section of the Palisades, offers a stream, 180-million-year-old volcanic bedrock formations, wetlands, ponds, meadows, and quarry cliffs. Bonuses include a native garden planted for wildlife, Nature Discovery classes and a plethora of programs.

Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center — There are always weekend family events scheduled here, ranging from classes on natural science to guided tours of the swamp, trail walks, bicycle and canoe trips, and craft workshops. Inside, are *please touch* exhibits, a collection of skulls and minerals, and quiz boards, plus a reference library, auditorium, and classrooms.

Hackensack Meadowlands Environmental Center — The center, former home of the famous Trash Museum, is perched over the Kingsland Creek Marsh in the Hackensack River estuary. A new high-tech exhibition center is expected to open in spring 2001. The center also sponsors a variety of special events, weekend workshops, canoe and pontoon boat trips, trail and bird walks, lectures, and audio-visual presentations.

High Point State Park Interpretive Center — Housed inside the park office, the center offers interpretive displays, including natural artifacts, stuffed birds, birds' nests, and skulls. Programs are also scheduled throughout the year on a variety of topics. The oldest nature center in the state, it's scheduled for renovation in the near future, according to park naturalist Kate Monahan.

Huber Woods Park Environmental Center — Inside this center are hands-on displays featuring plants, animals, and the park's history; a weather station room; bird watching area; and a classroom for family programs on snakes and other topics. Outside, there's Discovery Path—a short trail offering examples of native plants that attract wildlife and are suitable for backyard gardens—and six more miles of trails for walking, mountain biking and horseback riding through a grove of tulip trees, an oak-hickory forest, and meadow.

James A. McFaul Environmental Center — The primary exhibit, an active honeybee hive, can keep youngsters (and adults) entertained for hours. In addition to a few fish tanks, turtles, and feel boxes, environmental education programs are offered throughout the year. Special events include hayrides and maple sugaring. Outside there are several gardens and a wheelchair accessible boardwalk.

John J. Crowley Nature Center — The only known working seismograph on the East Coast, which supplies information to the National Earthquake Bureau in Colorado, is housed here. On certain Friday evenings, the public may gaze at the stars through the Observatory's telescope and a number of telescopes positioned outdoors. Naturalist Phil Conroy maintains a weather station and displays of birds sighted in the park, and offers children's workshops on botany, photography, model rocketry, rock collecting and astronomy. Outside, hiking trails meander through a climax oak and hickory forest.

Kateri Environmental Education Center — Programs, offered to the public by preregistration only, include pumpkin carving, night hikes, an outdoor survival weekend for women, and a family fossil fun day. Outside the building, visitors may explore a variety of water bodies and habitats.

Lord Stirling Environmental Education Center — The first solar-powered building in the nation, this center holds hundreds of programs for all ages throughout the year. Among the most popular are the Festival of Trees (December), The Great Environmental Magic Show (February), a carving and wildlife festival (May), and a mushroom festival (October). Exhibits inside the beautiful building change periodically, and there's a gift shop loaded with fantastic nature items and books. Outside, 8.5 miles of level walking trails with 2 miles of boardwalks (to keep your feet dry) meander through marshes, swamps, and forest, offering gorgeous views of rivers, streams, ponds.

Interpretive, and Environmental Centers

Monmouth Battlefield State Park Visitors and Interpretive Center — The interpretive display area, filled with several recovered artifacts, is situated on top of Combs Hill, once commanded by the Continental Army artillery. Bonuses include cross-country skiing and snowshoeing along 15 miles of trails; sledding on the hill north of the visitors center; picnicking and the annual reenactment of the Battle of Monmouth the last weekend in June.

New Jersey Forest Resource Education Center — "Be a forester for a day and a steward for the rest of your life" is the motto here. You can easily become a forester, too, because the classroom is outdoors where skills and information about the natural world are learned through a variety of hands-on experiences. Examine the Learning Deck, a platform in the shape of the state with major rivers and streams etched into it; sort and prepare acorns for planting (September and October); walk through the ABC Arboretum, a living tree classroom arranged in alphabetical order according to tree name; and enjoy hiking along 5 miles of trails.

New Jersey Marine Sciences Consortium Education Program — Among the consortium's offerings is a family science half-day program, called FISH, that's "a mini-version of the educational programs we offer," according to Director Kim Kosco. In this one, families go on a beach trip, collect shells, seine, and then return to discuss, in a small group, what they found.

Parvin State Park Interpretive Center — The center's displays—bird nests, deer antlers, turtle shells, and hollowed logs that woodpeckers have worked on—are set up outside the old Cabin Keeper's House. This is also where visitors meet for a variety of activities, including nature craft workshops, outdoor sketching, scavenger hunts, and guided walks through the lush woods.

Poricy Park Nature Center — The center and an 18th century farmhouse and barn still stand on their original foundations. Visitors can see live native reptiles, amphibians and other exhibits, but one of the most exciting activities is searching through the streambed for prehistoric fossils.

Rancocas Nature Center (NJ Audubon) — The visitor center, a 130-year-old farmhouse set in a grove of trees, houses a small museum, classroom, library and book/gift shop. The natural history of the state and region are featured in exhibits and displays that include live animals and hands-on objects. Outside, self-guided trails on the120-acre tract lead to a variety of habitats including upland woods and freshwater marshes.

Scherman-Hoffman Sanctuaries (NJ Audubon) — This site has a small bird display area and occasional exhibits, with a telescope set up for viewing the animals and birds that frequent the feeders. Its gift shop has an excellent array of guidebooks and gifts, and the trails, winding along the headwaters of the Passaic River and fields, are outstanding. Nature walks led by naturalists are held Friday and Saturday mornings.

Scotland Run Park Nature Center — This center may be tiny, but it's big on information about South Jersey. Visitors are drawn here for the lecture series, bird walks, educational programs, and slide shows on the Pine Barrens and the Jersey Shore; to splash around in Scotland Run, and to learn how to determine stream health by monitoring aquatic critters. The self-guided Helen S. Brown Nature Trail, just outside the building, offers an excellent introduction to typical area habitats. Visitors also may picnic, fish, boat, visit the arboretum and sniff the flowers in the small garden.

Swartswood State Park Nature Center — The center, located in the same building as the park office, features a display of the entire watershed area, a mounted bear and a video on bears of New Jersey, along with a variety of species-related exhibits. Naturalists conduct nature craft programs and hikes during winter months; throughout the summer, there are interpretive hikes and kayak trips on the 550-acre lake.

Tenafly Nature Center — The center's two rooms are filled with touch-feel boxes, mounted birds and mammals, live snakes and turtles, quiz boards, a weather station, library and gift shop. Outside, there are trails, a three-acre pond, and new cedar-roofed picnic area. Program offerings include classes on maple sugaring and making apple cider.

Trailside Museum and Nature Center — The nature center offers seasonal displays, live native reptiles, geological exhibits, films, a gift and bookstore, and more. The museum features animals mounted in family groups and arranged according to their eating habits, a Discovery Room; a weather station; a special dark room in which florescent minerals glow; and game boards that activate bird songs. Programs are offered weekly at the planetarium, and walks, lectures, and special events are scheduled throughout the year.

Weis Ecology Center (NJ Audubon) — This private, nonprofit, environmental education center provides free trail maps, and has a nature store stocked with bird feeders, nature books and maps, an exhibit room for occasional exhibits, and two live snakes. Regularly scheduled events are held during summer months.

For More Information

Atlantic County

- ***Warren E. Fox Nature Center***
  Route 50
  Estell Manor, NJ 08319
  609/625-1897
  www.aclink.org/parks/nc.htm

Bergen County

- ***Flat Rock Brook Nature Center***
  443 Van Nostrand Avenue
  Englewood, NJ 07631
  201/567-1265
  www.flatrockbrook.org/
- ***Hackensack Meadowlands Environmental Center***
  2 DeKorte Park Plaza
  Lyndhurst, NJ 07071
  201/460-8300
  www.hmdc.state.nj.us/index.html
- ***James A. McFaul Environmental Center***
  Crescent Avenue
  Wyckoff, NJ 07481
  201/891-5571
- ***Lorrimer Sanctuary (NJAS)***
  790 Ewing Ave.
  Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417
  201/891-2185
  www.njaudubon.org/abtnjas/-lorrimer.html
  lorrimer@njaudubon.org
- ***Tenafly Nature Center***
  313 Hudson Avenue
  Tenafly, NJ 07670
  201/568-6093

Burlington County

- ***Annie M. Carter Interpretive Center***
  Batsto Village
  RD#9
  Hammonton, NJ 08037
  609/567-4559
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-wharton.htm
- ***Lebanon State Forest Nature Center***
  Route 72
  New Lisbon, NJ 08064
  609/726-1191
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-lebanon.htm
- ***PAWS Farm Nature Center***
  1105 Hainesport-Mount Laurel Road
  Mount Laurel, NJ 08054
  609/778-8795
- ***Rancocas Nature Center (NJAS)***
  794 Rancocas Road
  Mount Holly, NJ 08060
  609/261-2495
  www.njaudubon.org/abtnjas/ranco-cas.html
  rancocas@njaudubon.org

Cape May County

- ***Belleplain State Forest Interpretive Center***
  County Route 550
  Woodbine, NJ 08270
  609/861-2404
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-belle.htm
- ***Cape May Bird Observatory/ Northwood Center (NJAS)***
  707 East Lake Drive
  Cape May Point, NJ 08212
  609/884-2736
  www.njaudubon.org/abtnjas/cmbo.-html
  cmbo1@njaudubon.org
- ***Cape May Point State Park Nature Center***
  Located at the end of Cape May Point
  Lighthouse Avenue
  609/884-2159
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-capemay.htm
- ***Nature Center of Cape May (NJAS)***
  1600 Delaware Avenue
  Cape May, NJ 08204
  609/898-8848
  www.njaudubon.org/abtnjas/nccm.-html
  nccm@njaudubon.org
- ***The Wetlands Institute***
  1075 Stone Harbor Blvd.
  Stone Harbor, NJ 08247
  609/368-1211
  www.wetlandsinstitute.org/index.-htm

Essex County

- ***Cora Hartshorn Nature Center (CH Arboretum and Bird Sanctuary)***
  324 Forest Drive South
  Short Hills, NJ 07078
  973/379-3587
  www.hartshornarboretum.com/-index.htm
  info@hartshornarboretum.com

Gloucester County

- ***Scotland Run Park Nature Center***
  980 Academy Street
  County Route 610
  Clayton, NJ 08312
  856/881-0845
  www.co.gloucester.nj.us/parks/-scot.htm

Hudson County

- ***Liberty State Park Interpretive Center***
  Morris Pesin Drive
  Jersey City, NJ 07060
  201/915-3409
  www.libertystatepark.com/interpre.-htm

Mercer County

- ***Buttinger Nature Center***
  31 Titus Mill Road
  Pennington, NJ 08534
  609/737-7592
  www.thewatershed.org/reserve-BC.-html
  SBMWA@TheWatershed.Org
- ***Washington Crossing State Park Interpretive Center***
  355 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road
  Titusville, NJ 08560-1517
  609/737-0609
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-washcros.htm

Monmouth County

- ***Allaire State Park Nature Center***
  Allaire Road
  Farmingdale, NJ 07727
  732/938-2371
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-allaire.htm
- ***Cheesequake State Park Interpretive Center***
  300 Gordon Road
  Matawan, NJ 07747
  732/566-3208
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-cheese.htm
- **Huber Woods Park Environmental Center**
  Brown's Dock Road
  Highlands, NJ
  732/872-2670
  www.monmouthcountyparks.com/-parks/huber.html

- ***Kateri Environmental Center***
  160 Conover Road
  Wickatunk, NJ 07765
  732/946-9694
  www.collierservices.com/Kateri/-KATERI.html
- ***Monmouth Battlefield State Park Visitors Center***
  347 Freehold-Englishtown Road
  Manalapan, NJ 07726
  732/462-9616
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-monbat.htm
- ***New Jersey Marine Sciences Consortium Education Program***
  Building 22, Fort Hancock
  Highlands, NJ 07732
  732/872-1300
  www.njmsc.org/edu.htm
  education@njmsc.org.
- ***Owl Haven Nature Center (NJAS)***
  250 Englishtown-Freehold Road
  Tennent, NJ 07763
  732/780-7007
  www.njaudubon.org/abtnjas/owl-haven.html
  owlhaven@njaudubon.org
- ***Poricy Park Nature Center***
  Oak Hill Road
  Middletown, NJ 07748
  732/842-5966
  www.monmouth.com/~poricypark/

Morris County

- ***Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center***
  247 Southern Boulevard
  Chatham, NJ 07928
  973/635-6629
  www.parks.morris.nj.us/asp/parks/-info.asp
- ***New Jersey Audubon Society (Headquarters)***
  9 Hardscrabble Road
  Bernardsville, NJ 07924
  908/204-8998
  www.njaudubon.org/
- ***Scherman-Hoffman Sanctuaries (NJAS)***
  11 Hardscrabble Road
  Bernardsville, NJ 07924
  908/766-5787
  www.njaudubon.org/abtnjas/-scherman.html
  scherman-hoffman@njaudubon.org

Ocean County

- ***Cooper Environmental Center***
  1170 Cattus Island Boulevard
  Toms River, NJ 08753
  732/270-6960
  www.oceancountygov.com/county/-parks/cattus.html
- ***Island Beach State Park Nature and Interpretive Centers***
  Seaside Park, NJ 08752
  732/793-1698
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-island.htm
- ***New Jersey Forest Resource Education Center***
  370 East Veterans Highway
  Jackson, New Jersey 08527
  732/928-0029
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/-service/njfs_frep.html
  njfsfrec@bellatlantic.net
- ***Wells Mills County Park***
  Route 532
  Waretown, NJ 08758
  609/971-3085
  www.oceancountygov.com/county/-parks/wellsmills.html

Passaic County

- ***John J. Crowley Nature Center***
  Rifle Camp Park
  Rifle Camp Road
  West Paterson, NJ 07503
  973/523-0024
- ***Weis Ecology Center (NJAS)***
  150 Snake Den Road
  Ringwood, NJ 07456
  973/835-2160
  www.njaudubon.org/abtnjas/weis.-html
  weis@njaudubon.org

Salem County

- ***Parvin State Park Interpretive Center***
  701 Almond Road
  Pittsgrove, NJ 08318-3928
  856/358-8616
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-parvin.htm

Somerset County

- ***Lord Stirling Environmental Education Center***
  190 Lord Stirling Road
  Basking Ridge, NJ 07920
  908/766-2489; 908-766-2575 (TDD)
  www.park.co.somerset.nj.us/envi-ronm.htm

Sussex County

- ***High Point State Park Interpretive Center***
  1480 State Route 23
  Sussex, NJ 07461
  973/875-1471
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-high.htm
- ***Swartswood State Park Nature Center***
  Country Route 619
  Swartswood, NJ 07877-5230
  973/383-5230
  www.state.nj.us/dep/forestry/parks/-swart.htm

Union County

- ***Trailside Museum and Nature Center***
  452 New Providence Rd.
  Mountainside, NJ 07092
  908/789-3670
  www.unioncountynj.org/

Warren County

- ***Pequest Natural Resource Education Center***
  Off Route 46 (9 miles west of Hackettstown)
  Oxford, NJ 07863
  908/637-4125
  www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/pequest.htm

Notes:

- Admission to most nature centers is free, although there may be a nomi nal fee for parking in state parks from Memorial Day through Labor Day or for certain programs and materials. Since hours are subject to change, and buildings may be closed when the naturalist is leading a trip, it's always a good idea to check the day before. The majority of nature centers are wheelchair accessible, as are a few trails.
- New Jersey Audubon's Owl Haven Nature Center is scheduled to move to Fort Hancock in spring 2001.

Cut Bait; Cut Costs

Article and images by Gary Gresh

The cost of saltwater fishing continues to escalate, with no end in sight. Rising party and charter boat fares, launch and dock fees, and gas, oil, and maintenance prices take an increasing chunk out of anglers' wallets. In one area, though, smart anglers can help minimize costs. And it's one thing that affects almost every angler at one time or another—bait. Shrewd fishers know where to shop for bait bargains; they know to catch or gather their own bait and how to preserve it for use on trip after trip.

Headed for the bait shop? Try your local supermarket first. Kernel corn and cooked rice have long been used as chum for winter flounder. Food colorings are sometimes added to the chum or cut baits to further entice these winter flatfish.

One of the best supermarket buys for anglers is frozen squid. The price per pound is a fraction of what you will pay at a bait shop, although the store squid are often smaller. Squid strips are great bait for most popular inshore species. Whole squid are used for codfish. Smaller pieces are great for saltwater panfish. Squid is also great crab bait.

If you prefer larger squid for bait, check out the price in the supermarket's fresh seafood department. It may be cheaper than at the bait shop. Fresh chowder clams, mussels, butterfish and mackerel can also be purchased at fish markets and some supermarkets.

Clams will attract winter flounder, sea bass, porgies, tautog (blackfish), ling, codfish, kingfish, blowfish, weakfish, black drum and even striped bass. Mussels are good bait and chum for winter flounder.

Butterfish are great bluefish baits. Mackerel can be cut into chunks or strips for bluefish, weakfish and fluke (summer flounder). Tiny pieces will catch porgies and also are good crab bait.

Summer flounder fishermen may want to pick up a bag of frozen smelts at the store. They are a particularly good back bay bait for fluke.

Do you want to try chumming for blues, kingfish, blowfish or porgies? Pick up a few cans of cheap fish-flavored cat food; it normally contains a lot of ground-up menhaden, an oily fish that makes great chum.

Pass the Salt

Keep your purchased squid, clams and mackerel in top shape for months to come by salting them. Salt, which has been used as a preservative for centuries, will keep bait in fishing condition for many months, eliminating the need to buy new for every trip. Salted baits do not smell or turn color as fresh bait does when left exposed to the elements.

All you need are the baits, a sharp knife, a box of kosher salt, and a plastic

container to hold the cut baits. Kosher salt is available in most supermarkets and in some bait shops.

To prepare squid, first clean and wash them. Cut them into the same size strips you normally use on your fishing trips. Pennant-shaped strips of three to four inches in length are ideal for fluke, weakfish, bluefish, sea bass, ling and tidal water catfish. Smaller pieces, an inch or so long, and slightly more than a quarter inch wide, are great baits for saltwater panfish such as porgies, Norfolk spots, kingfish and blowfish.

Next, place the squid strips in a plastic container and add a generous amount of kosher salt. Large margarine tubs, quart containers or zipper-lock bags are good for this purpose. Mix the squid so that all strips are coated with salt. Fish scents may be added if desired. Crab scents, such as shedder oil, are good for weakfish, fluke and sea bass. Bunker oil (a natural scent of the Atlantic menhaden) will help attract bluefish.

Close the container and keep it in the refrigerator or cooler. The salt will keep the bait white and will toughen it. I've kept salted bait for months in the fridge, taken it on innumerable fishing trips and never had it go bad.

Mackerel may also be prepared in this manner. Veteran angler Bill York does it when the mackerel are fresh caught on a spring fishing trip, but it will work just as well with mackerel purchased fresh or frozen, then defrosted. Either fillet the fish and cut the fillets into strips or cut the mackerel into chunks; Bill cuts strips from the white belly. While the meat from this section is not as thick as the rest of the fish, its color can give it added fish-catching appeal.

Bill then places the cut bait in a zipper-lock freezer bag, adds kosher salt and a healthy dose of bait scent, and either refrigerates it for upcoming trips or freezes it for later use.

Cut into strips or chunks, preserved mackerel is excellent bait for bluefish, fluke and weakfish. You can dice the cut mackerel and chum with it if you wish. The fish scents give it an added attractiveness in a chum slick.

Clams also take well to salting. Fresh surf clams can no longer be purchased at many bait shops, but both frozen clams and fresh chowder clams can be substituted.

Just cut up the clams, salt them down as with the squid and mackerel, add clam oil if you want, and refrigerate. The clam pieces can be cut smaller during your fishing trips, if need be. The salt will preserve them and make them tougher.

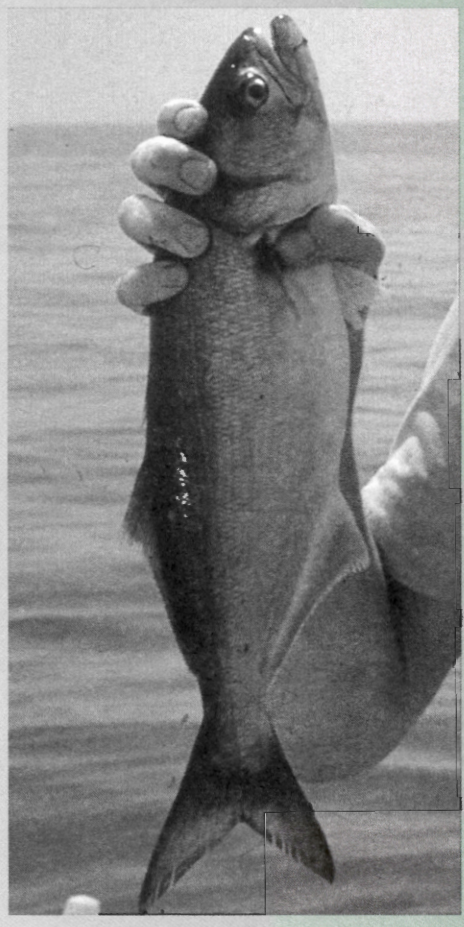
Tiny pieces of salted clams are deadly on porgies, spots, blowfish and kingfish. Strips are used for winter flounder. Larger pieces attract big sea bass and tautog and can be fished with a squid strip for weakfish. Some winter flounder anglers dye their clam baits red or yellow.

Salted bait enables you to have "fresh" bait in your refrigerator yearround. The containers take up little space and produce no odor, so they can be stored easily. And with salted bait in your fridge, you are your own bait shop. This not only saves money, but is invaluable when the bait shops close but the fishing continues.

Search Soil and Sand

Saltwater anglers can even gather and catch much of their own bait. Earthworms and night crawlers are usually thought of as freshwater baits, but they also have their place in the salt. They'll catch winter flounder and spots. And the last couple of years, party boat sharpies on the Delaware Bay have been using crawlers to score on weakfish. You can dig in the garden or compost heap or under stones for worms. They can also be found on the sidewalk or pavement after a rainy night. Keep them in wet moss or

Bluefish eagerly respond to lower cost baits, including cat food chum, salted mackerel, butterfish and fresh cut spot.



soil in a cool, dark place. Properly cared for, they should last for the duration of your trip.

In addition to gathering earthworms, winter flounder anglers can sometimes dig for bloodworms in sod banks. They can also collect mussels from pilings and rocks—checking first to make sure they're not in condemned waters—to use as bait and chum for the tasty flatfish.

If you have a clamming license, you can dig your own clams for bait. Read the regulations carefully though, so you'll know when and where to dig, as well as the possession limit. Clams are great bait for stripers, tautog, porgies, sea bass, kingfish, blowfish, ling and winter flounder.

Most people enjoy crabbing, and crabs are the best bait for tautog and will

Cut blueclaw crab makes a great bait for tautog and will also catch weakfish when shedder crab isn't available.



also catch sea bass, weakfish, fluke and other popular game fish. Chunks of legal sized blueclaw crabs may be used for tautog or fished with squid strips for weaks and fluke. Once in a while you may catch a larger crab riding over a shedder crab that is about to lose its shell. Shedders are the best weakfish bait and catch almost everything else, too.

Calico and rock crabs make good tautog baits as well. With any of these crabs, cut off the legs and cut the bodies into sections between the leg knuckles. Insert your hook through the leg knuckle to hold it in place. You will get a lot more baits out of a shedder crab because the meat is so firm.

You can also catch and dig fiddler crabs on the sides of sod banks and marshes. Run a hook through the knuckle for great tautog bait. Most crabs are pretty hardy and will stay alive for a couple days if kept cool and moist in the shade, cooler or fridge. Keep damp grass or paper towels on them.

Trap or Reel Them In

Minnows inhabit most tidal creeks and rivers and can be caught in nets, seines and traps. (Check current regulations for legal harvest gear.) As a bonus, you might catch some grass shrimp at the same time; these are great for weakfish, tautog and white perch. Keep minnows and shrimp alive in a minnow bucket placed in flowing water. If keeping them in a closed bucket, use a portable air pump, a tablespoon or so of peroxide, or occasional splashes of seltzer to oxygenate the water.

Minnows may also be kept alive on a wet towel on a tray in your cooler. They will last all day or more when kept in this manner. This actually works better than keeping them in a minnow bucket. They are great fluke bait and also entice inshore snapper blues, sea bass and weakfish when drifted.

Eels are easy to catch or trap, and live eels are a top bait for big striped bass. Eel traps (which look like elongated minnow traps) or hook and line baited with minnows or worms in tidal creeks will do the trick. Eels are very hardy and will survive for long periods if kept moist and cool.

Other baits can be easily caught. Spot is one of the deadliest baits in the Delaware Bay. Spot can be livelined for big weakfish and blues. Strips of spot will catch weaks, blues and flounder; small pieces will catch porgies, blowfish and even other spots.

Fresh spots make the best baits. You can keep them on ice or in a refrigerator overnight and get some use out of them the next day but they deteriorate quickly. Frozen spots are not good baits. They get too soft and mushy to attract fish.

These fluke and weakfish, taken by Bill York, fell to salted supermarket squid and minnows trapped in a tidal creek.



When the spots run in the bay, they will be very plentiful in tidal creeks, and are often found in the surf. That is one of the best places to catch them. In surf or creek, use small hook, such as a no. 8 or 10, depending on the size of the spots. Tip the hook with a tiny piece of bloodworm, cut spot or clam. Bloodies are the best bait. The larger, pan-sized spots that occasionally run in the bay require slightly larger hooks.

You can also catch spots in crab traps baited with fish frames, drop nets and cast nets. These are all effective methods in the surf or in tidal creeks.

If you don't liveline them, cut fresh spots into strips. With very small spots, you might want to just fillet them and use the whole fillet. Some anglers prefer to scale them first to release more scent. To catch porgies and the like, cut fillets into tiny squares for bait. You can use the head for bait in the surf for fluke and blues.

Other fresh cut baits can be just as effective as spot. Fluke belly (and back) remains a deadly bait for those cannibalistic flatties as well as the occasional blue and weakie. Due to restrictions on bag and size limits and filleting on board, flounder belly sees little use today. But if you run out of minnows, flounder belly may still be the best bait in town. It can outfish the popular minnow/squid combo and is unbeatable when fished with a minnow.

Another enduring bait is shark belly. Take one of the many small sharks (but be aware of size limits and take only legal fish) that can be all too common in inshore waters, fillet it and cut it into strips. Shark skin is tough, so many anglers skin the strips, leaving only enough skin to hold the hook. It's very effective, but change it often.

Another proven winner is cut sea robin. Fillet the fish and cut it into strips. As with shark, take most of the skin off. To bait your hook, punch a hole in the skin with your knife point and slide the hook through. Deadly on flounder, it will attract other fish as well, including weakfish.

Cut snapper blue can be a real ace-in-the-hole. It is a reliable surf bait for bluefish and can take weaks and fluke as well. Fillet small snappers and cut into strips or take the white belly off of bigger blues.

Porgies and croakers have inundated inshore waters during the last few years. They can make very effective baits, especially in the fall, when shedder crabs are scarce. Fresh cut croaker and porgies will both take fall weakfish.

Whether you catch it, gather it or buy it, your savings on bait costs can be significant. And that money can be put towards all your other rising fishing expenses. Got your eye on a new reel? Pay for it with your bait money!

The many hours that periodic contributor Gary Gresh devotes to fishing and crabbing in the Delaware Bay area are enjoyable, profitable, and productive. His most recent **New Jersey Outdoors** *article focused on Cumberland County crabbing and appeared in our Summer 2000 issue.*

Events

General information is provided here for frequently mentioned event sponsors. In most cases, the bold-faced name is all that will appear in an events description.

Albert—Albert Music Hall, 125 Wells Mill Rd (Rte 532), 1/4 mile west of Rte 9, Waretown; www.alberthall.org; 609/971-1593; ♿; $

Allaire—Allaire State Park/Historic Allaire Village/Allaire Nature Center/Pine Creek Railroad, Farmingdale; www.allairevillage.org; 732/938-2253 (park and village), 732/938-2003 (nature center), or 732/938-5524 (railroad)

Cape May—Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts (MAC) sponsors cultural and historical tours and events in Cape May throughout the year; www.capemaymac.org; 609/884-5404 or 800/275-4278

Cold Spring—Historic Cold Spring Village, 720 Rte 9, Cape May; 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily through Labor Day, then only on weekends in Sept.; http://hcsv.org/; 609/898-2300; $

Hermitage—The Hermitage Education & Conference Center and Museum, 335 North Franklin Tpke, Ho-Ho-Kus; www.thehermitage.org; 201/445-8311; ♿; $

Pequest—The Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center, Rte 46, Oxford (9 miles west of Hackettstown); 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily; registration for weekend programs opens 2 weeks prior to program date; www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/pequest.htm; 908-637-4125

Skylands—Skylands Manor and NJ State Botanical Garden, Morris Rd, Ringwood State Park, Ringwood; www.njbg.org/; 973/962-9534; $ to enter park on weekends from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day and to enter manor house

Trailside—Trailside Nature & Science Center, 452 New Providence Rd, Mountainside; 908/789-3670

Tuckerton Seaport—Tuckerton Seaport, 120 West Main St, Tuckerton; open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; 609/296-8868; $ (ages 6 and over)

Waterloo—The Historic Village of Waterloo, 525 Waterloo Rd, Stanhope; 973/347-0900 (unless otherwise noted); open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday from mid-April through mid-Nov.; $

Wells Mills—Wells Mills County Park, 905 Wells Mills Rd. (Route 532), Waretown; home of Wells Mills Nature Center, which provides a variety of educational programs; 732/971-3085

Wheaton—Wheaton Village, 1501 Glasstown Rd, Millville; closed on New Year's, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, and on Mon. and Tues. from Jan. through Mar.; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; www.wheatonvillage.org; 856/825-6800, 800/998-4552; ♿; $

Whitesbog—Whitesbog Village, mile marker 13 on Rte 530, Browns Mills (Pemberton Township); www.whitesbog.org/; 609/893-4646

Notes: Information listed was accurate at the time it was submitted to *New Jersey Outdoors*. Before traveling to an event, readers are advised to call the number listed to confirm the information provided and obtain any additional information desired.

Where the sponsor has provided such information, symbols have been used to indicate that the event is handicapped accessible (♿), that an entrance or participation fee will be charged or a donation will be requested ($), and that preregistration is required (✎). Lack of the indicative symbol may mean either that the opposite is true or that the sponsor did not provide the information. Please call the contact number for any event about which you have questions.

Ongoing

PEQUEST TROUT HATCHERY AND NATURAL RESOURCE EDUCATION CENTER Visitors can watch a video that shows how trout are raised for stocking New Jersey's public waters, visit the exhibit hall, and see where the trout are actually raised. Pequest also has hiking trails, picnic areas and a year-round schedule of weekend programs (which can be viewed online) covering a wide range of wildlife and natural resource topics. **Pequest**

Sundays except Christmas, New Year's and Easter
PLANETARIUM SHOW Shows at 2 and 3:30 p.m.; ages 6 and up, although some 3:30 shows are for ages 4 and up; **Trailside**; $

Sundays, Jan. through May and Sept. through Dec.
FAMILY NATURE PROGRAM 2 p.m.; **Trailside**

First Saturday of Every Month except Jan., Feb. and Dec.
TRAIL MAINTENANCE Bring lunch and help maintain and repair hiking trails; 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.; **Trailside**; ✎

Saturdays, June 30 through Sept. 1
SATURDAY NIGHT CONCERTS 6:30 p.m. **Cold Spring**

Sept. through Nov.
HAYRIDE/CAMPFIRE Folksinger, hot chocolate & marshmallows; 6:30 p.m.; **Trailside**; $

January

28
MOUNT HOLLY ICE CARVING FESTIVAL Features include ice carving, a chili contest, dog sled demos, costumed characters and more; High Street, Mount Holly; 609/267-5618; ♿



February

Through March 4
CURATOR'S CHOICE Enjoy a selection of special pieces from the collection of the Museum of American Glass; **Wheaton**

Events
February and March

3 and 4
17TH ANNUAL OCEAN COUNTY WILDFOWL ART & DECOY SHOW Featuring the work of more than 125 artists and carvers, carving competitions, free seminars, decoy painting, food, exhibits, and more; Brick High School, 346 Chambers Bridge Road, Brick; www.ocymca.org; 732/341-9622, ext. 2214; ♿; $

MID-WINTER ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES SHOW & SALE More than 80 dealers offering furniture, glass, jewelry, linens and more; **Wheaton**

3 and 6
GREAT ENVIRONMENTAL MAGIC SHOW Second show (3:30 p.m.) on Feb. 3 will be ASL interpreted; schools and other organizations may call in advance to schedule attendance at group shows which will be offered Jan. 30 through Feb. 9; Somerset County Environmental Education Center, Basking Ridge; 908/766-2489, ext. 0; ♿; $; ✎

4
14TH OCEAN COUNTY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL Snow date: Feb. 11; live stage concert of bluegrass music; noon - 5 p.m.; **Albert**

8
THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES AND AT THE HERMITAGE IN LATE VICTORIAN AMERICA Lecture; 7:30 p.m.; **Hermitage**

8 through 11
14TH NEW JERSEY BOAT SHOW Featuring more than 300 types of boats and marine suppliers; NJ Convention & Expo Center, 97 Sunfield Ave, Edison; 800/332-3976; ♿; $

17
CRAFTS IN WINTER Featuring 45 top crafts people from throughout the mid-Atlantic region; **Cape May**

17 and 18
CABIN FEVER Chase away the winter blues by watching ice sculpturing, dog sledding and more; Historic Chester Village, Rtes 206 and 513, Chester; www.chesternj.org; 908/879-4814

18
ALLAIRE VILLAGE 1830S GEORGE WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY Enjoy a patriotic tribute, militia muster, campfire cooking, and free birthday cake; **Allaire**

ANTIQUES IN WINTER Featuring 45 top antiques dealers from throughout the mid-Atlantic region; Convention Hall, Beach Dr at Stockton Pl, Cape May; www.capemaymac.org; 800/275-4278; ♿; $

WINTER CRAFT SHOW Indoor show with food and lots of crafters; Renault Winery, 72 N Bremen Ave, Egg Harbor; 609/965-2111; ♿

19 through 23
FEBRUARY FESTIVITIES **Trailside**

25
ASTRONOMY SUNDAY Rocket launches, solar viewing, vendors, displays, lectures, kids workshops; noon - 5 p.m.; **Trailside**; ♿; $

HARTSHORNE WOODS WINTER TRAIL RUN A scenic and challenging 7.2-mile run with commemorative T-shirts and great refreshments; Henry Hudson Regional School, 1 Grand Tour, Highlands; www.njrrc.org; 732/578-1771; $

28 through March 4
ATLANTIC CITY INTERNATIONAL POWER BOAT SHOW Convention Center, One Ocean Way, Atlantic City; www.acboatshow.com; 215/732-8001; $

March

Through 4
CURATOR'S CHOICE Enjoy a selection of special pieces from the collection of the Museum of American Glass; **Wheaton**

ATLANTIC CITY INTERNATIONAL POWER BOAT SHOW Convention Center, One Ocean Way, Atlantic City; www.acboatshow.com; 215/732-8001; $

3 through 9
6TH ATLANTIC CITY RV SHOW RV and camping show; Convention Center, 2001 Kirkman Blvd, Atlantic City; 800/332-3976; ♿; $

4
TODD HALF MARATHON A 13.1-mile run through rural and residential areas of Lincroft, Holmdel, and Colts Neck; Brookdale Community College, Newman Springs Road, Lincroft; www.monmouthcountyparks.com; 732/542-1642; $

8
THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN 19TH CENTURY NEW JERSEY Lecture; 7:30 p.m.; **Hermitage**

10 through 25
PRESCHOOL SCIENCE DISCOVERY DAYS Ages 4 - 6 with adult; **Trailside**; ✎

11
STORYTELLERS COTTAGE Traditional storytelling for all ages; East Jersey Old Towne Village, 1050 River Rd, Piscataway; www.cultureheritage.org; 732/745-3030; ♿

1830S ST. PATRICK'S DAY Irish music, dance, and the hanging of the Paddy; **Allaire**; $



17
SONGWRITERS SHOW Live stage concert of homegrown country, folk, and bluegrass music; 7:30 - 11:30 p.m.; **Albert**

21 through April 4
TEEN ARTS VISUAL ART EXHIBIT Smithville Mansion Annex Gallery, Eastampton; 609/265-5068

23 through 25
SPRINGFEST 2001 Sussex County Fairgrounds, Augusta; 973/948-2090

23 through 25
PADDLESPORT 2001 Visit the 40th annual PaddleSport Expo and Show to see more than 100 exhibitors, including major kayak, canoe, outdoor gear and clothing manufacturers, and take advantage of entertaining lectures and seminars; Friday from noon to 9 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., and Sunday 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; Garden State Exhibit and Convention Center, Somerset; http://www.jerseypaddler.com/; 888/22-KAYAK; $

24
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE SEAL Watch seals eat, and enjoy crafts, face painting, stories and more; Jenkinson's Aquarium, 300 Ocean Avenue, Point Pleasant Beach; 732-899-1212; ♿; $

26 through 31
PREVIEW OF THE CARVING & WILDLIFE ART SHOW See the wildlife paintings, carvings and drawings of more than 25 artists in a preview exhibition for the May 19 and 20 show and sale; Somerset County Park Commission Environmental Center, 190 Lord Stirling Rd, Basking Ridge; 908/766-2489, ext. 336

31
PEQUEST OPEN HOUSE Tour the state's trout hatchery; enjoy exhibits and a living history encampment, cast a line, shoot a bow or BB-gun, feed the fish, and meet Smokey Bear; 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; **Pequest**

OCEAN DRIVE MARATHON/5K/10 MILER/1.5-MILE PROMENADE JOG, RUN, WALK Sea Isle City; www.odmarathon.com; 609/523-0880; $

April

1
PEQUEST OPEN HOUSE Tour the state's trout hatchery; enjoy exhibits and a living history encampment, cast a line, shoot a bow or BB-gun, feed the fish, and meet Smokey Bear; 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; **Pequest**

7
TROUT SEASON OPENS AT 8 A.M. More than 500,000 freshly stocked trout await anglers in public waters; license and trout stamp required except for those under 16 and NJ residents age 70 and older; www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw; 908/637-4125

VOLUNTEER WORK DAY Whitesbog; ✎

***A WORK IN PROGRESS* WALKING TOUR Whitesbog**; $; ✎

MOONLIGHT WALK Whitesbog; $; ✎

19
THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF BERGEN COUNTY Lecture; 7:30 p.m.; **Hermitage**

20 through 22
CAPE MAY JAZZ FESTIVAL Cape May; www.capemayjazz.com; 609/884-7277; ♿

21
3RD SEMINAR OF CONSERVATION SERIES: *CARING FOR PAPER AND PHOTOGRAPHS* Hermitage; $

22
WILDLIFE SUNDAY A variety of exhibits and activities promoting an appreciation for wildlife; noon - 5 p.m.; **Trailside**; $

27 through May 6
CAPE MAY'S SPRING FESTIVAL Spring Victorian and Tulip & Garden Festivals; Cape May

May

5
VOLUNTEER WORK DAY Whitesbog; ✎

SPRING PEEPERS MOONLIGHT WALK Whitesbog; $; ✎

PINE BARRENS FESTIVAL An evening of spontaneous acoustic music in the tradition of the Albert brothers' cabin; 7:30 - 11:30 p.m.; **Albert**

6
PET FAIR Demos, displays, adoptions, stray pet contest and more; noon - 5 p.m.; **Trailside**; $

New Jersey State Library

Events
June to August

10
A SOCIAL HISTORY OF SELECTED CLOTHING FROM THE HERMITAGE COLLECTION Lecture; 7:30 p.m.; **Hermitage**

19
INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND MUSIC FESTIVAL Sussex County Fairgrounds, Augusta; 973/948-5500

19 through June 24
11TH ANNUAL CAPE MAY MUSIC FESTIVAL Hear the world's most beautiful music in the nation's oldest seaside resort; **Cape May**

20
GARDEN FAIR Plant sale and workshops; noon - 5 p.m. **Trailside**



SPRING WING FLING Hike, canoe, kayak or ride in a van to birding hot spots, plus enjoy seminars, demos, family activities, and more, including an optional evening barbecue; Cattus Island County Park (Toms River), Island Beach State Park (South Seaside Park) and other locations throughout Ocean County; 609/971-3085 or 877/OC PARKS; $;

26
CANOE EXPLORATION TRIP Whitesbog; $;

26 and 27
ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW Cold Spring

June

2
VOLUNTEER WORK DAY Whitesbog;

MOONLIGHT WALK Whitesbog; $;

ANNUAL SOUTH JERSEY CANOE & KAYAK CLASSIC Featuring more than 100 canoe and kayak models, test paddling ($), clinics, antique canoes, races, and more; 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Ocean County Park, Lakewood; 609/971-3085 or 877/OC PARKS

2 and 3
NJ FREE FISHING DAYS Fish the public waters of New Jersey without a license or trout stamp (all other regulations apply); www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw; 908/637-4125

CONFEDERATE WEEKEND Cold Spring

9
ANTIQUE SHOW Hermitage

30TH ANNUAL VICTORIAN FAIR Featuring music, crafts, collectibles, children's activities, and more; Emlen Physick Estate, 1048 Washington St, Cape May; 609/884-5404, 800/275-4278

9 and 10
SEAFARER WEEKEND Cold Spring

16 and 17
FARMFEST 2001 Cold Spring

23 and 24
THREADS THRU HISTORY Cold Spring

30
18TH ANNUAL BLUEBERRY FESTIVAL Whitesbog; ♿; $ (parking)

LADIES OF COUNTRY & BLUEGRASS MUSIC SHOW Live stage concert with female leads featured in all sets; 7:30 - 11:30 p.m.; **Albert**

30 and July 1
ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW Cold Spring

July

1
ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW Cold Spring

4
INDEPENDENCE DAY Cold Spring

7 and 8
RAILROAD DAYS Cold Spring

11 through August 22
WEDNESDAY MATINEES Children's entertainers, puppets, magic, and live animals for ages 4 and up; 1:30 p.m.; **Trailside**; $

14 and 15
ANTIQUE SHOW & SALE Cold Spring

21 and 22
CAPE MAY COUNTY FARE Cold Spring

28 and 29
CHILDREN'S DAYS Cold Spring

August

3 through 12
SUSSEX COUNTY FARM AND HORSE SHOW Sussex County Fairgrounds, Augusta; 973/948-5500

4 and 5
CORNFEST Cold Spring

11 and 12
ANTIQUE SHOW & SALE Cold Spring

18 and 19
ANTIQUE CAR SHOW Cold Spring

25 and 26
HARVEST FEST Cold Spring

September

1 and 2
ARTS AND CRAFTS Cold Spring

8 and 9
REVOLUTIONARY WAR WEEKEND Cold Spring

9
15TH OCEAN COUNTY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL Live stage concert of bluegrass music; noon - 5 p.m.; **Albert**

15 and 16
CIVIL WAR WEEKEND Cold Spring



23 through 26
CAPE MAY FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL Explore different cuisines at workshops, tastings and lectures **Cape May**

29 and 30
19TH ANNUAL OCEAN COUNTY DECOY AND GUNNING SHOW Exhibitors, vendors, contests, wildlife art and crafts, skeetshooting, and much more; 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Tip Seaman County Park, Lakeside Dr, Tuckerton; Pinelands Regional Middle and High Schools, Nugentown Rd. (4th Ave), Tuckerton; park at schools and use free shuttles; 609/971-3085 or 877/OC PARKS

30
HARVEST FESTIVAL Colonial crafts, demos, live music, Revolutionary War encampment, kids games and more; 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.; **Trailside**; $

OKTOBERFEST Enjoy a day of oom-pah-pah music, food and fun on Historic Jackson St; 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; **Cape May**

October

7
29TH ANNUAL TOMS RIVER CANOE & KAYAK RACE Canoe and kayak race down the scenic Toms River; meet at the old Toms River bus terminal, Irons St, Toms River; 13 classes; 609/971-3085 or 877/OC PARKS; $;

13
6TH ANNUAL PINE BARRENS JAMBOREE Enjoy NJ Pinelands music, crafts, food, exhibits, nature walks, canoeing and more; **Wells Mills**

20
10TH ANNUAL PUMPKIN FESTIVAL Cold Spring

27
HALLOWEEN SHOW & COSTUME CONTEST Live stage presentations of bluegrass, country, old time, and folk music, plus an adult costume parade prizes for the most unusual, scariest, funniest, and prettiest costumes; 7:30 - 11:30 p.m.; **Albert**

November

1
GREAT PUMPKIN SAIL Float your lit Jack-O-Lantern on Echo Lake; folk music, campfire and hot chocolate; 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.; **Trailside**; $

3
LEGEND OF THE JERSEY DEVIL SHOW The Jersey Devil will pay a special visit during this live stage concert of bluegrass, country, folk and traditional music; 7:30 - 11:30 p.m.; **Albert**

4
MINERAL SHOW Displays, lectures, demos, and mineral sales; noon - 5 p.m.; **Trailside**; $

9 through 11
CAPE MAY JAZZ FESTIVAL Cape May; www.capemayjazz.com; 609/884-7277; ♿

17
HOMEPLACE FESTIVAL Enjoy good food and good fun along with singing, laughing and socializing at this Pinelands style concert; 7:30 - 11:30 p.m.; **Albert**

December

2
NATURE BOUTIQUE Craft show with crafts of natural materials or nature theme; door prizes and light refreshments; 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.; **Trailside**; ♿

15
HOLIDAY SHOW Live stage presentations of bluegrass, country, old time, and folk music; 7:30 - 11:30 p.m.; **Albert**



Chain Pickerel

by Mimi Dunne

The chain pickerel is a common inhabitant of many of our state's water bodies from acidic Pineland streams in South Jersey to mountain lakes of North Jersey. Though not native to our state, it has become naturalized and widespread. It is equally at home in large and small bodies of water and is well known by anglers for its willingness to hit a variety of baits and lures during all seasons.

A member of pike (*Esocidae*) family, the chain pickerel (*Esox niger*) has a dark green back with creamy yellow on its sides. Its chain-like pattern clearly distinguishes smaller specimens from other members of the family, but larger individuals may be confused with muskellunge and pike, though neither of these toothy critters has scales over the entire cheek and operculum (cover over the gill opening) as does the chain pickerel. The chain pickerel also has a vertical bar under its eye, where the pike and muskellunge have none. All esocids are slender and elongate with well developed teeth.

Pickerel spawn in the early spring, soon after the ice melts. The female may lay 6,000 to 8,000 eggs, which adhere to the sediments or aquatic vegetation. No protection or care is given by the adults to the eggs or young, which experience heavy mortality from fish eating predators. Those that survive feed on small crustaceans and insects. By late summer, the young fish are competent predators on small fish and fry.

Chain pickerel are voracious predators. They will sit and wait in a weedy bed, or bide their time under a log or other structure until a minnow, yellow perch, sunfish or other fish happens along.

Chain pickerel are voracious predators. They will sit and wait in a weedy bed, or bide their time under a log or other structure until a minnow, yellow perch, sunfish or other fish happens along. Chains will usually strike and grasp the middle of larger prey and then turn the fish to swallow it head first. They have been known to school to chase down schools of baitfish.

Anglers can be successful using live herring and shiners, and a variety of artificials including crankbaits, spinner baits, and surface plugs. Remember how the fish strikes when using large bait. Give the pickerel time to turn the bait by letting it run and then setting the hook when it stops.

There are many good places to fish for chain pickerel in New Jersey. They will usually be found with largemouth bass, yellow perch, sunfish and other warmwater fish. In larger lakes like Hopatcong (Morris County), pickerel in excess of 4 pounds frequent the weedbeds and the shoreline docks. Pickerel are also found in Budd Lake (Morris County), Manasquan Reservoir (Monmouth County), Farrington Lake (Middlesex County), Furnace Lake (Warren County), Monksville Reservoir (Passaic County), Lake Musconetcong (Morris County; Sussex County), and Canistear Reservoir (Sussex County). In many lakes in southern New Jersey, pickerel are the only gamefish present since they are able to tolerate low pH.

Although quite bony, the flesh of the chain pickerel is white, sweet and flaky when cooked. Large fish can be filleted with a little practice and many that have savored this fish place it on their list of freshwater table fare favorites.

It should be noted, however, that mercury contamination is a problem in chain pickerel from Pinelands waters. These waters are naturally acidic, and since methyl mercury becomes more mobile in these systems, it is more readily taken up through the food chain. As they are the top predator in Pinelands lakes, chain pickerel bioaccumulate mercury from all levels of the food chain, and authorities recommend that those caught here not be consumed. Anglers can still enjoy fishing in these waters, but shouldn't make a meal of their catch.

Frank McGowen caught the state record chain pickerel in 1957. The 9 lb., 3 oz. fish was caught in Lower Aetna Lake, Burlington County. Anglers who catch chain pickerel weighing four or more pounds can be recognized as skillful anglers. For details, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Skillful Angler Awards Program
NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife
PO Box 400
Trenton, NJ 08625-0400

Senior wildlife biologist Mimi Dunne works out of the Pequest Trout Hatchery & Natural Resource Education Center, where she coordinates several education programs for DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife. Her most recent contribution to NJO was a Wildlife in New Jersey profile entitled "Southern Flying Squirrel."


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