



Cove Currents

GREETINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR

January is a time for hibernation; April is a time for awakenings. Winter may have lingered beyond its welcome, but the return of the Red-Winged Blackbirds, staking out territory among the tall reeds in the Park is a sure sign of spring. The frost of winter is gone, the sun is warm, the songbirds are singing and Palmyra Cove Nature Park is the place to be.

Picture your family hiking through the winding trails in the woods, binoculars in hand, or along the shore at low tide, eventually arriving at the Environmental Discovery Center for a picnic lunch. After lunch, come into the Center to enjoy the exhibits and friendly conversation. We will be interested in learning what you have seen, deer or fox tracks perhaps? Maybe a snake sunning itself after a long winter nap? Or a turtle slowly making its way to the nearest body of water? You may even catch a glimpse of the pair of Peregrine Falcons who are making their home at the top of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge.

You might like to spend time helping us clean up the trails. We are often in need of clean-up help but never so much as at the end of winter. You may stop in the Environmental Discovery Center any time during business hours and let us know that you would like to pick up litter in the Park. We will be happy to provide volunteers with gloves and bags. The River Trail is in constant need of clean-up because everyday high tide deposits debris between the tree line and the water line. You might want to adopt a trail, or a portion of one, to keep clean year round.

If work is the last thing on your mind, bring the family to "Springfest" on Saturday, April 23, 2005 at 11 AM and help us celebrate Earth Day. This fun-filled day will include woodcarving and basket-weaving by vendors who will demonstrate their creative skill and also sell their works of art. As a special attraction, Mount Holly artist Irvane Spracklin will be present with the first of the 14 life-sized eagle sculptures for Burlington County's "Eagles Have Landed" public art project. Irvane will decorate the fiberglass eagle on a mooring with a collage of well-known Burlington County scenes including the Tacony-Palmyra and Burlington-Bristol Bridges, Riverton Yatch Club, Riverfront Promenade and Keystone Watchcase Tower in Riverside. "Springfest" provides an ideal opportunity to meet a local artist at work and to learn more about the "Eagles Have Landed" project to benefit non-profit art, cultural and historical organizations in the county. Also, PCNP educators will be on-hand to conduct habitat hikes, seining in the Delaware and ground water demonstrations. Come. Enjoy the day with us.

Educators, please note that PCNP is completely booked for the month of May with school field trips. If you would like to bring your class in June, please call now for reservations.

There is something for just about everyone at Palmyra Cove Nature Park and spring is an ideal time to get to know us. If you are already a regular visitor, please come often.

We'll be looking for you. 

Clara Ruvolo, *Director*





Volunteering

Spring into action. Become a PCNP volunteer.

Attention birders: If you would like to share your knowledge and experience with new birders, consider leading Bird Walks at Palmyra Cove Nature Park. Dates and Times are flexible.

Other areas needing help include:

- Reception Desk on weekends
- Trail maintenance
- Trail guides
 - Exhibit guides
 - Education assistants
 - River trail clean-up
 - Other areas of your interest

PCNP will train all volunteers if training is required. Scheduling is flexible! And PCNP provides bags and gloves for clean-up volunteers.

Please help. A few hours a few times a month is all it takes!

For more information, please contact:

Terri Zinn
Assistant to the Director
856-829-1900, extension 262
tzinn@bcbridges.org



EDUCATION AT THE COVE

SPRING ACTIVITIES

The change of seasons brings an exciting time to the park. We are anticipating fox kits and owlets being born early in the spring. Activity at our ponds will increase dramatically as the water temperature steadily rises. We will be offering Night Hikes to explore the world of reptiles and amphibians after dark. We are also beginning to get many requests for our Orienteering activity which involves learning to use a compass and map to find locations in the park.

SCHOOL VISITS

Our calendar dates are filling up with schools that want a hands-on experience with nature. We have several schools that are returning again this year. Among the returnees are Charles Street School, Columbia, St. Joseph's Pro Cathedral, Southampton, Tabernacle, and Thomas Paine. We are looking forward to cultivating new relationships with Baldwin, Beeler, C.P. Lamb, Delran Middle School, Indian Mills, and Samuel Smith. Spring fever is rampant at the Cove. We are excited about the opportunity to share our experiences in nature with the people who visit the park.

Among our returning schools is St. Joseph's Pro Cathedral of Camden. As a result of grant funding provided by the Telephone Pioneers, we created The Delaware River Watershed project. The purpose of the project is twofold: we want to offer environmental education to students who may not have as many opportunities to explore and observe nature in a rustic setting, and we hope to promote a sense of stewardship for the Delaware River Watershed. The students will be making four visits to Palmyra Cove this spring - two by the sixth grade and two by the seventh grade. The students will use the knowledge and skills they acquired in the fall visits to continue their exploration of the watershed at

Palmyra Cove. The spring activities will be interdisciplinary and involve problem-solving skills. The work will be challenging and fun for the students and staff. We know the St. Joseph's students are up to the task.

SCOUTING

Many scouts participated in a Klondike Weekend on February 26 and 27. The scouts camped in the park and participated in many activities, the highlight being a sled race. Palmyra Cove Nature Park provides many opportunities for scouts to pursue badges. As soon as the leaves return to the trees, a local scouting group will be learning to identify trees as part of the Forestry Badge requirements. Earth Connections and Naturalist Badges activities are also very popular in the spring. Pack 60, Moorestown, will test their map reading and compass skills in our Orienteering program.

STAFF TRAINING

Our educational staff participated in a two-day workshop on watersheds and groundwater. Our first day involved making a paper model of a watershed, mapping a watershed, and assessing the health of a watershed. Our small-group training mirrored the activities and procedures that are part of our students' experiences. The focus of our second day was the water we do not see - groundwater. Many activities required working with our new groundwater model. The staff looks forward to these days of learning and developing camaraderie. The groundwater unit will be adapted to use in a school outreach program next fall. Consult our website or call for more information on activities that we offer.

Edward Sanderson
Environmental Educator

Visit our website at www.palmyracove.org

Guest Opinion

Introducing Tom Bailey

Submitted by Clara Ruvolo, *Director*

While the temperature indicated winter, 25°F, and a lingering snowfall covered the trails, the angle of the sun reflected spring.

It was late morning on the last Saturday in February. I was walking Cove Trail, getting close to the footbridge, when I saw Tom Bailey, an avid birder at Palmyra Cove. As we walked back toward the Environmental Discovery Center, still on Cove Trail, Tom asked if I had seen any of the Northern Saw-Whet Owls that had been wintering in the park. Thanks to Bennett Landsman's generosity, I had seen several photographs of this beautiful owl, but I had to admit to Tom that I had never seen one in its natural habitat. Tom suggested that we turn onto Saw-Whet Trail; he knew where to find one.

We made our way through the snow and over fallen logs to a tree where Japanese Honeysuckle had attached itself, growing to the top and forming a canopy of vines and leaves. The Saw-Whet likes to roost on a branch under the canopy where it is camouflaged and protected. We moved quietly, stopping several feet from the tree. Tom pointed, I looked and there it was – facing front, stretched to its full seven inches, looking right back at us. At that moment, and thanks to Tom Bailey, I had my life siting of a Northern Saw-Whet Owl.



One of four boys in his family, Tom began birding at the tender age of five. The family lived in Palmyra. Tom's father had bird feeders in the yard and kept a chart on which he recorded species of birds, Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers and Baltimore Orioles that came to his feeders. With the encouragement of their father, Tom and his brothers observed the birds and helped keep the chart current. His father occasionally took the family on

birding trips to Brigantine, but it was on a trip to Washington's Crossing State Park that Tom, at age six, observed a bird banding demonstration and was hooked on his lifetime hobby.

Tom began birding regularly at Palmyra Cove in the early 1980's. It was at that time that he accumulated sitings and sent his information to *Records of New Jersey Birds*. As others read about the species he had seen, they began contacting him and in that way he met other birders.

Tom's most memorable experience as a birder occurred on a birding trip to Arizona in 1984. Until then all of his birding had been done on the East Coast. "That was my first trip out west," Tom remembered with enthusiasm, "I had 70 life sitings on that trip. I saw species of birds that until then, I had only seen in books." His most memorable experience at Palmyra Cove occurred in November 1993 or '94 when he sited a Snowy Owl.

Tom's Tips for Beginners:

- Get a good pair of binoculars.
- Get a good field guide.
- Become familiar with common birds in your backyard.
- Visit local parks and refuges.
- Meet other birders by joining organizations such as New Jersey Audubon and Delaware Valley Ornithological Club.
- Sign up for field trips.

Do not hesitate. Start birding at Palmyra Cove and before long you'll be telling others about your own life sitings.



Frank Windfelder's "Big Year at PCNP" Continued

Submitted by Frank Windfelder

A Great Blue Heron seen flying up-river on February 1st was the first new bird of the month. A drake Hooded Merganser was probably the same individual that Tom Bailey had seen on January 30th. I watched a pair of American Crows harassing a Great-horned Owl. There are now far fewer Great Cormorants, and the Northern Saw-Whet Owls appeared to be gone.

On February 3rd, Sandra Keller found an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull and a first-year Bald Eagle along the river. Her strategy was to watch the birds go to roost at dusk, so I reasoned that the same idea ought to apply at dawn as well. I tested the theory on February 7th, when I was treated to the sight of over 1,000 gulls, among which were an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull and a first-year Iceland Gull. I learned belatedly that Ron Melcer saw a Glaucous Gull flying over the parking lot on February 5th.

When I returned to Palmyra Cove on February 9th, I learned that staff member Ed Sanderson had found the Great Horned Owl's nest. With good directions, I was able to observe the bird on nest for myself. A Northern Harrier flying down-river was an extra bonus. Passerines' numbers were very low. The weather and diminishing food supply had taken its toll.

On the 11th, Paul Driver found a Common Loon on the river. On the 22nd, I relocated one of the Northern Saw-Whet Owls that had been seen in January, and on the 26th, Tom Bailey found a Common Yellowthroat.

As in January, sixty-three species were noted at Palmyra Cove, while the total for the year zoomed to seventy-three. And still no Goldeneye!

BOY SCOUT ENGINEERING MERIT BADGE CLASSES

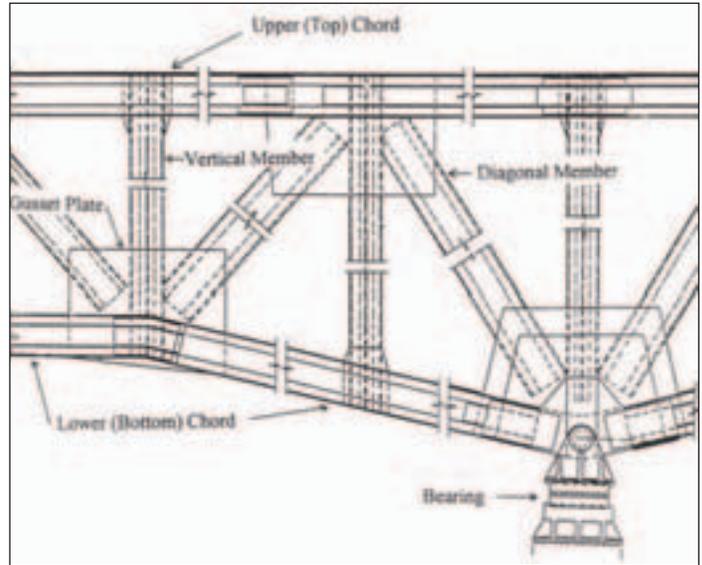
Submitted by Sasha Harding, *Resident Engineer, Burlington County Bridge Commission*

While the prime purpose of the Burlington County Bridge Commission is to provide safe and affordable transportation facilities for the public, providing education to the local youth in obtaining their boy scout engineering merit badges is also very worthwhile. Who knows, perhaps one of these scouts will be a future engineer working at the Commission.

Typically, the two and one-half hour class includes: (1) the history and role of the Commission, (2) a general discussion of engineering and engineering concepts, (3) a general discussion of bridges, (4) a specific discussion of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge, (5) a display of bridge materials, components and artifacts and (6) the showing of a video of drawspan openings at the Tacony-Palmyra, Burlington-Bristol and Riverside-Delanco movable bridges. The length of this class can be adjusted to meet the needs of any scout group.

After the indoor class discussion is completed, a field trip is usually made to the New Jersey side of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge to learn about some of the bridge components and members such as those shown in the sketch to the right.

For further information regarding scout engineering merit badge classes, please see either Terri Zinn whose office is in the Environmental Discovery Center or call her at (856) 829-1900, extension 262.



Letters to the Editor can be mailed to Clara Ruvolo at Palmyra Cove Nature Park, 1300 Rt. 73 North, PO Box 6, Palmyra, NJ 08065-1090. Photos credited to Bennett Landsman • Friends of Palmyra Cove thank Ed McCabe for his assistance in editing *Cove Currents*.

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