

COVE CURRENTS

Greetings from the Executive Director

Blanketed in white, Palmyra Cove Nature Park was gorgeous this winter. I hope the cross-country skiers and snowshoeing enthusiasts enjoyed it. Surely the photographers did.

If you have been reading this newsletter for more than a year you know that I love snow not only in reality but also in movies, photographs, and paintings. I automatically have a positive feeling about anything that includes snow. There is a restful quietness about it; a time for reflection and for planning.

I should hasten to add that in spite of my enthusiastic embrace of this snowy winter I was thrilled to see not a single flake on February 12th before, during, or immediately after Frost and Feathers Ball. This annual winter fund-raiser had to be cancelled in 2010, a disappointment to all involved, due to an early February blizzard. This year more than made up for that disappointment. With more than one hundred partying guests in attendance, the exhibit hall of the Environmental Discovery Center decked out in sapphire blue and white, excellent food, wine, and music, it was the best fund-raiser we have ever hosted at PCNP. Best in terms of the friends we enjoyed and the funds we raised.

The dominant activity in the park this winter has been the building of a road and the removal of approximately 220,000 cubic yards of material from the 22.7-acre Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) in the park. At the rate of approximately 150-200 truckloads a day the material has been moved over the road through the park and on to Camden where it is being used to cap the Harrison Street landfill, a former municipal dump. On this site the Salvation Army will construct the Ray and Joan Kroc Center, a 132,000 square foot community center. This Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) project in the park should be completed by mid-April.

Simultaneously, a new wetland is under construction to replace Dragonfly Pond which was destroyed during the excavation of the CDF. As the winter ends and we prepare to welcome students for spring field trips, the pressure is on to complete Bullfrog Pond to the extent that it can be used as a teaching site this spring. Regardless, Bullfrog Pond is

our wetland teaching site of the future. It will also provide a pleasant area for our visitors to sit and enjoy a few quiet moments in a natural setting.

For the hikers and birdwatchers among our guests the Burlington County Bridge Commission, with support from the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders, will be expanding the trail system at Palmyra Cove Nature Park. Construction is scheduled to begin this spring.

One of the more beautiful and interesting areas of the park is located at the Tidal Cove, south on the Cove Trail. Presently, the pedestrian footbridge at the southern end of Cove Trail stretches across the Tidal Cove and is an excellent location for bird watching or just enjoying the natural beauty of the area. The new trail will add approximately one mile to the total trail system in the park, but more importantly, it will open up the far side of the foot bridge, between the Tidal Cove and the Pennsauken Creek. At this time, the water table is too high to support hiking in that area. The new trail will have a boardwalk surface where the water table is high and a sandy/dirt surface where the ground is higher. The trail will follow the creek east and loop back to the footbridge. The Pennsauken Creek Trail promises to be an excellent addition to PCNP's existing trail system.

As the weather gets warmer and spring bird migration increases, the butterflies will be back as well. You will find them clustered in and around the flower beds in the median strip on Park Drive and in the beds close to the Environmental Discovery Center. These beds are lovingly maintained by volunteer gardeners led by bird watching and gardening enthusiast, Ward Dasey. Ward has scheduled Spring Garden Planting Day at Palmyra Cove on Saturday, May 7th. If you would like to help, please contact me at cruvolo@bcbridges.org. I will let Ward know of your interest and he will be in touch with you.

As spring approaches there will be plenty to do and to see at Palmyra Cove Nature Park. So, dig out your hiking boots and your binoculars and visit often. We'll be looking for you.

Clara Ruvolo, Executive Director





Hunting and Conservation

There was an article in my local newspaper the other day about a decline in hunting and hunting license sales nationwide. I was very disappointed to read this and here's the reason why. Since the middle of the last century hunters have been in the forefront of conservation efforts in this country. How can I make such a statement? Consider the following.

In 1937 Congress passed the Pitman-Robertson act. This law placed an 11% excise tax on sporting firearms and ammunition for the purpose of raising money for wildlife conservation

and restoration. Since its introduction the tax has raised 700 million dollars for wildlife.

Every duck hunter in the United States is required to purchase a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp commonly called "Duck Stamps". The program was established in 1934 as a federal license to hunt migratory birds, primarily waterfowl. The funds raised are used to purchase or lease wetlands in the National Wildlife Refuge system. Ninety eight cents of every dollar raised is used for this purpose. Eighty-seven percent of purchasers of duck stamps are hunters. Hunters and ducks are not the only ben-

eficiaries of the duck stamp program. All of the refuges are open to the general public. I buy a duck stamp every year and I don't hunt ducks, but I do use the refuge system.

In addition to official state and federal efforts, there are private organizations founded by hunters that have made significant contributions to conservation. One such organization is Ducks Unlimited that has saved over 12 million acres of waterfowl habitat. There are others, too. Pheasants Forever has preserved 135,000 acres of habitat in addition to working with land owners to manage their properties for wildlife conservation.

Some hunting organizations, such as the National Wild Turkey Federation, concentrate their efforts on wildlife restoration. In 1973 there were 1.3 million turkeys in the wild. Today with the help of the Federation there are more than 7 million wild turkeys nationwide.

There are more organizations out there. There is probably a group dedicated to conserving every hunted species. The important thing to remember is that these efforts don't just benefit game species and hunters. All species benefit and those of us who enjoy the outdoors benefit as well.

I hope you can see my point. If hunting were to disappear all of this conservation effort would go away, too. I can't imagine what would take its place.

Clyde Croasdale, *Guest Contributor*



Frost and Feathers Ball



Returning

The days are longer now, the afternoons warmer. Any snow that falls is quickly melted by the afternoon sun. They will soon be back, weaving and darting, rising and falling, only a few feet above the water.

Every year around the middle of April, thousands of bank swallows, fresh from their long flight from South America, descend on the Philadelphia area, along the Delaware River and local creeks. These graceful little birds with white vests and brown wings and tails, return annually like clockwork, to their nesting places.

Along the Poquessing Creek, a stone's throw east of the Torresdale Train Station in northeast Philadelphia, there is a sanctuary. Covered by overhanging elm trees on the south side and leaning maples on the north bank, a green canopy is created. In this roof of leaves and branches, catbirds, robins, and blackbirds forage for both food and nesting places each spring. Fifty yards west is an aged concrete bridge which expands the creek, supporting the railroad tracks that carry speeding trains toward New York to the north and Washington DC south. The bridge with its massive worn pillars has been the summer home of two of these swallows for the past three years.

I have watched the arrival of these acrobatic aviators during the last few nesting seasons. Appearing around April 15, they then scout the area of the old nest. A few days later, both birds begin to gather small twigs and bits of mud from the bank of the Poquessing Creek. They fly to and from the nest inside a cavity the size of a baseball on the side of a pillar, one of many supporting the bridge. This small opening is a safe place for the nest. It is ten feet above the slow moving creek, and on a surface too smooth for predators, such as snakes and raccoons, to scale.

In about two weeks the old nest is restored and ready. The female swallow seems to have disappeared; however, she is inside and on the nest quietly producing two or three white eggs the size of large marbles. In the second or third

week, the eggs will hatch, and during the next five weeks the adult swallows can be seen every fifteen minutes entering the nest with mouthfuls of insects. Often the young swallows will consume twice their weight in insects daily. By late June the young can be seen standing at the opening of their secure home stretching their wings and eagerly waiting for their next meal. At this stage, the adult birds will often perch on a nearby branch and encourage the young to make their first precarious leap from the nest, a short one to a nearby branch or bush on the bank of the creek. By July, the young are out of the nest and are able to capture insects on their own.

It is late August. The days are already shorter, the nights cooler. The mornings are crisp and chilly. Oak trees and maples are beginning to lose their leaves. Robins, catbirds, and blackbirds are banding together.

In September, large flocks of birds will be seen crisscrossing the Philadelphia skies. By October, most of the songbirds and swallows will be gone.

Soon it will be winter and the darkness of December will be upon us, followed by the snow and ice of January and February. But finally March is here and the days slowly become longer, the afternoons warmer. Green clumps of grass appear and daffodils push up out of the dormant land.

And, again, in April, another of nature's miracles: the swallows. Returning.

Gerald Lambert, *Guest Contributor*



Geocaching

One day last January a visitor to the Cove asked for a trail map, and after a few moments told me he was here to search for a "cache." (The dictionary defines a cache as a "hiding place for provisions".) The visitor told me there were five caches in our park, and called himself a "geocacher." I decided to investigate what exactly this gentleman was talking about.

Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with handheld GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called caches or geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. Geocaching is enjoyed by people of all age groups, with a strong sense of community and support for the environment.

While researching on the web for this article I came across

the Official Global GPS Cache Hunt Site <http://www.geocaching.com>. I found this website to be a good resource. You can watch videos of people geocaching, explore the latest GPS units, read Blogs from geocachers around the world. I decided to try looking for geocaches in Palmyra Cove. There was open feedback dialogue which stated "My Pal, Myra". When I clicked on it, it read "A Cache by Kayaking Janet Hidden : 11/4/2005" followed by a short narrative about Palmyra Cove Nature Park.

This is what Kayaking Janet wrote: "Palmyra Cove is a nature park, located along the Delaware River near the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. It is a habitat for migratory birds. There are walking trails thru woodlands and wetlands. In the winter plan to xc ski. Cache is in camo. rubbermaid container with usual trade items. Short walk (continued on page 4)



Education Corner

Staff Spotlight:

Bernie Gustad has been with us since the fall of 2006. Bernie is a retired science teacher who taught at Woodrow Wilson High School, Camden. She spends much of her time traveling in the United States and abroad. Her busy travel schedule sometimes limits the days she can work for us, but we are grateful for the experience and professionalism she brings to Palmyra Cove. Bernie and her husband, Duane, live in Cinnaminson.

Joanne Dunston taught special education for several years and left the classroom when her son

was born. By the fall of 2007, her son was in school all day and Joanne had an opportunity to begin working at the Cove. Her teaching experience and love of the outdoors contribute to her effectiveness as an instructor. She brings a contagious enthusiasm and humor to her job and has become a mainstay of the staff. Joanne totally enjoys sharing her experiences in nature with others. Joanne, her husband, Bob, and her son, Jack, reside in Riverton.

Clyde Croasdale is a retired Philadelphia firefighter and an avid bird watcher. Clyde used to visit the Cove regularly to observe the wildlife and began working here in the spring of 2008. Clyde's interest in birds has led him to places in many parts of North America. When he is not working, he is often exploring woodlands in the Philadelphia vicinity. Clyde loves to share his outdoor adventures with his audience, particularly our students. I am always amazed how Clyde, who was raised in a Philadelphia row home, became so enmeshed in nature. Clyde, who is a regular contributor to Cove Currents, might consider that topic for a future issue. Clyde has now migrated to our side of the river and resides in Palmyra with his wife Sheryl.

Debbie Lord has an impressive background in the environmental field. She worked as a hydrogeologist for the U.S. Geological Survey investigating water quality in ground and surface waters. I met her through her activities as

President of the Pompeston Creek Watershed Association and as a member of Save The Environment of Moorestown. Deb has been the leader in the effort to monitor the water quality of the Pompeston Creek, and has spearheaded many restoration projects to improve the watershed. Deb's unyielding passion for protecting the environment is evident in her teaching at PCNP. Deb, her husband, Craig, and their two children, Nate and Augusta, are residents of Moorestown.

Winter Activities:

Palmyra Cove has been experiencing a winter that is simultaneously noisy and quiet. The snowy weather has muffled the usual sounds and reduced the number of visitors. The NJDEP construction site has raised the noise volume with the activity of trucks and earthmoving equipment. If you could escape the construction noise, the park's ambience captured the mood. Winter snows kept many visitors at home, with only Baptist Regional School visiting on January 5. Appropriately, the theme for their activities was Animals in Winter. Scheduled volunteer cleanups by Doane Academy and Burlington County 4H were cancelled due to snow and ice.

Some visitors, including humans, did not mind the weather. Snowshoeing and Nordic skiing were noticeable pastimes, particularly on new fallen snow. We also had a flock of wild turkeys that lingered in the park most of the winter. One special visitor in mid-February was a long-eared owl. The rare sighting was reported the weekend of February 12 by one of our hikers. This is the first Palmyra Cove recorded sighting of a long-eared owl in five years.

Winter at the Cove is a time of preparation for spring. We anticipate more than 2500 students visiting the Cove in the spring of 2011. Many of our trails have to be rerouted and groomed due to the NJDEP construction project and the effects of ice, snow, and strong winds. Our maps have been edited to reflect these changes. As winter conditions recede our thoughts inevitably turn to spring and its abundance of new life.

Edward Sanderson, Director, Environmental Education



(continued from page 3)

not far off trail. This is where I found my first cache. Enjoy your visit."

I was stunned when I read that 2005 was the year that this cache was hidden. I thought to myself I must be living in a cave. I told my colleague Ed Sanderson about it. He told me that years ago people would use a compass and a map to find the specific location of a cache. Ed also told me that hikers from time to time would bring the caches into the center thinking that it was a lost item.

We both agreed with the invention of the handheld GPS,

geocaching has grown in popularity. Statistically speaking there are 1,303,943 active caches and over 5 million geocachers worldwide. If you are interested in learning more about geocaching contact Bonnie Hart at www.earthgym.org. Bonnie teaches Geocaching 101 along with many other classes related to nature. She also gives guided hikes and lectures here at Palmyra Cove. She is a delightful person and extremely knowledgeable. I am privileged to call her my friend.

Happy Hunting!

Kim Addiego, Cove Assistant



Naturalist Notes

For me, winter was a time for planning events for the rest of the year. This year, I added another preschool children's program for the months of January and February called Nature Craft and Story Time. The program was very successful with 44 children participating in the eight-week long winter series. Though we were not able to go outside very often, the nature stories, crafts, and games were a welcome break from the winter routine. Thanks to all the participants who made the class so much fun this winter.

Also initiated this winter was our new Wildlife Sightings database display located in the exhibit hall. Now, before you go on a walk, you can search through recent wildlife sightings around the park and where they were found. When you are finished your walk, you can search the database to help you identify anything you may have found out in the park. If you search for red bird, all of the predominantly red birds found in the park will pop up for you to look through. The database may also help you identify the yellow flower you found on Eastern Cottonwood Trail. When you are finished identifying your sightings, you can enter them on the wildlife sightings pages next to the computers and they can be added to the database.

Our Cove Caterpillar preschool program began March 7. We have full classes, with 52 children signed up for the spring season, offered on Monday and Tuesday mornings, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., and on Monday afternoons, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. A few of the topics covered over the ten week spring session will include Natural and Unnatural, Signs of Spring, Slithering Snakes, and Wetland Wonders.

I am looking forward to a number of our upcoming events. Palmyra Cove Nature Park's Third Annual Sustainability Fair will include local vendors who sell energy-efficient, environmentally friendly, or natural products. Wildlife educators, like Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge, Turtle

Lady Cindy Pierson, and Falconer Jennifer Pena, will be on hand with wildlife ambassadors to teach about the importance of wildlife. Also in attendance will be children's story author and illustrator Andi Green who will read her new book "Don't Feed the WorryBug."

On the horizon is Burlington County Bird Quest on Saturday, May 7, from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Bird Quest is for anyone interested in having a great time with a fun bunch of people looking for the many species of birds around Burlington County. If you do not have a group of your own, you can join Palmyra Cove's team which stays at the park to bird.

Finally, we are starting to sign children up for Cove Campers summer day camp, being held July 11 through 15 and July 18 through 22, from 9:00 to 12:00 noon, with a night hike the Friday following camp for the campers and their families. New for this year, we are expanding camp to include children entering 3rd through 8th grades.

If you are interested in any of our upcoming programs or events, please check out our website, www.palmyracove.org, come visit us in person, call 856-829-1900 x 267, or send an e-mail kmerola@bcbridges.org for more information!

Kristina Merola, Naturalist



Letters to the Editor can be mailed to Clara Ruvolo at Palmyra Cove Nature Park, 1300 Route 73 North, PO Box 6, Palmyra, NJ 08065-1090.

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Palmyra Cove Environmental Education Foundation thanks Ed McCabe for his assistance in editing Cove Currents.

Upcoming Events Spring 2011 (Registration is required to participate in Palmyra Cove Nature Park programs. For more information please contact Kristina Merola at (856) 829-1900 x 267 or kmerola@bcbridges.org.)

April 18	10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
April 18	1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
April 19	10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
April 23	10:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Palmyra Cove's 3rd Annual Sustainability Fair	All Ages
April 23	10:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Adopt-a-Beach Clean-up	All Ages
May 2	10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
May 2	1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
May 3	10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
May 7	7:00 – 12:00 noon	Burlington County Bird Quest	All Ages
May 7	8:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Spring Garden Planting Day	All Ages
May 9	10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
May 9	1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
May 10	10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Cove Caterpillars	Preschool
May 21	9:00 – 12:00 noon	Beginning Birding for Adults	Adults
June 4	9:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Family Hike	All Ages
June 18	9:00 – 12:00 noon	Beginning Birding for Adults	Adults
June 27	10:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Summer Photography Camp begins	6th through 8th
July 2	9:00 – 12:00 noon	Family Hike	All Ages
July 11	9:00 – 12:00 noon	Cove Campers' Summer Camp Week 1 begins	3rd through 8th grade
July 18	9:00 – 12:00 noon	Cove Campers' Summer Camp Week 2 begins	3rd through 8th grade
August 8	9:00 – 12:00 noon	Engineers of Tomorrow Camp begins	3rd through 6th grade

Families and small groups can reserve their own Summer Evening Hike.

For information contact Ed Sanderson at (856) 829-1900 x 263 or esanderson@bcbridges.org.



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