



COVE CURRENTS

In Memory of Catherine M. Nyikita

November 5, 1923 - October 13, 2009

Catherine Nyikita, a beloved colleague at Palmyra Cove Nature Park, passed away on Tuesday, October 13, 2009 at the age of 86.

Catherine had been the receptionist at the Environmental Discovery Center since it opened in the spring of 2003. She was there every morning welcoming visitors and colleagues alike with a smile and an encouraging word. She made sure that the candy basket was filled, the coffee was brewed, the brochures and other PCNP literature were neatly placed in their respective holders, and that all was ready for the day's activities. Catherine was always ready to help wherever needed; she was especially effective as the first person in the organization to greet the visiting public. Catherine was at ease with people, as they were with her. When visitors met Catherine they remembered her and, on the rare occasion that she was not present, they asked for her. As effective as Catherine was at her job I think we will remember her best as a friend. Catherine was smart, hip, and fun.

Catherine was a literary person, the go-to final editor of any document generated at PCNP: *Cove Currents*, numerous letters, and invitations to special events. She read widely and was always ready to discuss a favorite work or a favorite author such as Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Catherine and I shared many books in the time we knew one another, something I will cherish as a special and dear memory.

Catherine was part of the team, sharing, in one way or another, every aspect of work and play at Palmyra Cove Nature Park. Up on the latest trends, she looked forward to attending our fund-raisers, often discussing what color scheme would be best for the event, what the table centerpieces should look like, and, of course, what we would be wearing.

Above all, Catherine was a strong, elegant, dependable presence. Each of us counted on her, in our own way, to brighten our days and to put our work in perspective. We will miss her very much.

Clara Ruvolo, Executive Director



The Prince of Darkness

The Great Horned Owl is a large bird ranging from 18 to 24 inches long with a wing span of 36 to 60 inches. This owl has an average weight of four and a half pounds. The Great Horned Owl is mottled brown on the back with a grey hued chest and belly with darker grey barring and a collar of white on the upper breast. It is a big-headed bird with large, staring yellowish orange eyes. A most distinctive feature is the prominent tufts of feathers projecting above the forehead, giving the impression of horns, thus accounting for the owl's common name.

The habitat of the big owl ranges from the cold subarctic in Canada and Alaska to the jungles of Amazonia. It inhabits northern forests and

arid deserts. It's at home in steamy swamps and suburban parks. What accounts for such adaptability? It could be the owl's unbelievably varied diet.

The Great Horned owl is a nocturnal hunter as are most owls. It is well equipped for this role. It has excellent night vision and acute hearing. The owl's flight feathers are es-

pecially adapted to allow it to fly silently. When it catches its prey, it dispatches it with its big bone-crushing feet and talons. What does this bird eat? Anything and everything it can catch. This bird is capable of killing and eating anything equal to or smaller than itself. The diet of this bird is known to include small mammals such as mice, squirrels, rabbits and skunks. It also eats other birds, including hawks and other owls. Reptiles and fish also show up on its dinner table. It has been known to take the occasional dog and cat. One other thing, nothing hunts the Great Horned owl except maybe another Great Horned owl. No wonder the owl was considered a harbinger of doom in many ancient cultures. Unlike other alpha predators it is common and abundant. It is not currently an endangered species.

Great Horned Owls nest in late January or early February in our neck of the woods. The Great Horned Owl does not build its own nest. It will appropriate the nests of other large birds or use cavities in dead trees. The female lays two or three eggs which hatch in about a month and the young are ready to fly in thirty to forty days. Both male and female take care of the young. Anything or anyone approaching the nest is likely to be attacked. Great Horned Owls nest in our park. Last year, one pair in the park was known to have successfully fledged three new owls.

Clyde Croadsdale, *Guest Contributor*



IF A TREE FALLS IN THE FOREST ... THE OWLS' GIFT

Fall 2009 was extra special for hikers of Palmyra Cove. Where the Eastern Cottonwood Trail and Honeysuckle Trail converge, a nesting Great Horned Owl gave birth to three owlets. Since the tree where they made their home was visible from the trails, visitors to Palmyra Cove were able to see not only the Mom but three fluffy, white baby owls. Everyone was abuzz with their developing story. In years past, attempts to fledge the chicks in that very same tree were spoiled by marauding raccoons. But this year was different. The owlets steadily grew, tucked behind a watchful mom through the cold days of winter. Everyone was thrilled. Visitors and staff alike were trading stories on the progress of the owls. It was the talk of the Cove! The owls now had a myriad of human parents too, cautioning hikers to watch the nest from a distance so as not to disturb the owls.

To the delight of everyone, three healthy owlets fledged in spring and the nest was empty. Then summer foliage swallowed up the view of their tree home. Nevertheless, when I led people on hikes I would have them crane their necks between leafy trees to see the tree. "Remember where it is,"

I would tell them, "because in January you will see a Great Horned Owl in the hole of that rotted tree." But nature had other plans. In October a soaking rain rotted the tree beyond its ability to stand. It now lies on its side, and the owls will need to find another home this year. Once again we are reminded of the importance of places like Palmyra Cove that provide nesting habitat. We are all hopeful that another tree whose life cycle includes rotted nesting cavities will provide a cozy home for the owls.

To Earth-based cultures, like Native Americans the fallen tree has other significance. The easy viewing of the owls was not coincidence. It was the owls' gift to humans. The belief is that they willingly relinquished their privacy so we humans could come into "relationship" with them. When we enter into relationship with Nature we are reminded to respect others and live in a mutually sustainable way. When I first saw the fallen tree I knew that the owls were taking back their privacy; they had finished teaching us at their own expense. So I kneeled by the tree and gave thanks for their gift: to preserve and protect that which sustains us all.

Bonnie Hart, Ecopsychologist, *Guest Contributor*
Nature Guide for "Hiking with Hart"
Founder www.EarthGym.org

What Does Greening Actually Mean, And How Can We Make Positive Changes?

New Programs are offered from 7 to 8 pm at Palmyra Cove Nature Park this winter. Come join us to define and discover what the term “Greening” is all about. There are many uncomplicated and easy things we can all do that will make a difference in global health.

The following programs will be led by Jeannie Francis, who has her own business and has also been working with both the Camden County Mastergardeners, and the Gardeners of Palmyra Cove. Jeannie will be giving the following programs in the Discovery Center at Palmyra Cove.

Jan 6, 2010: Understanding Recycling
Jan 13, 2010: The Garden and Yard

Jan 20, 2010: Household Cleaners
Jan 27, 2010: Cosmetics and Body Products
March 3, 2010: Green Living
March 10, 2010: Greening with Children
The cost of each program is \$5.

The classes are open to the public and you are invited to come join the fun while learning how to make a positive change in your home, yard and the personal products you use.

Call Pam Reid for reservations:
856-829-1900, Ext. 270.

Pam Reid, *Assistant to the Executive Director*

Gardeners' Corner: There will be a meeting of the Gardeners of Palmyra Cove on January 7, 2010 from 7 pm to about 9 pm. The meeting is open to the public and all are welcome. Come help plan, and participate in the Gardens of Palmyra Cove this year. Call Pam Reid at 829-1900, Ext. 270 for more details.

Connecting With Nature: Soul To Soul

In our busy lives, we expend a lot of energy taking care of others. In supporting others, our own support system or “ground” often becomes eroded, resulting in feelings of stress and fatigue. We become quite literally, tapped out. However, turning to our most basic support system, the Earth, we can quickly restore our grounding and our energy for life.

This workshop will help us connect with the types of sensations that arise when standing at the ocean's edge or overlooking a grassy meadow. Earth-based cultures believe such sensations are not merely internally produced but are generated by the earth speaking to us through our feet. Such feelings of contentment and inspiration are mere morsels of Nature's nourishment available to anyone willing to enter into soul-to-soul communication with the world around them.

This communion is not so much a supernatural experience as a deeply natural experience of entering into relationship with Nature. As you slow down and tune

into the natural dynamic, you take it on more fully and Nature fulfills its process in you. What we see outside is what we are inside. We discover that everything in Nature is alive and everything is a teacher, including animals, rocks, and the wind.

We will explore methods for tapping into this support, including a guided meditation and rock divination in order to re-establish the powerful dialogue between ourselves and the natural world. Time permitting we will also take a short Nature walk.

*a 10 minute technique based on ancient teachings to ask about and receive clarity on an issue in your life

9:30 am – 11:30 am Sunday, January 10, 2010

9:30 am – 11:30 am Sunday, February 7, 2010

Bonnie Hart, Ecopsychologist, *Guest Contributor*
Nature Guide for “Hiking with Hart”
Founder www.EarthGym.org



Education Corner



School News: In early September students and staff were just getting acquainted with each other, but by the last week of the month the visits to Palmyra Cove began. The Cove hosted the “Make A Splash” water festival on September 25th. More than 200 students from Rush School, Cinnaminson, participated in the day’s activities. Students moved through eight learning stations that focused on some aspect of water conservation. The fall schedule included visits by eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and four high schools with a total of approximately 1500 students. Fall visits have become more desirable in recent

years due to the cooler weather, increased activity of park wildlife, and state testing that now takes place in May. We curtail our wetland activities as winter temperatures become more prevalent, although many of our programs continue through the winter. We have several schools participating in orienteering (using maps to navigate the park) in November.

World Water Monitoring Day: On October 7th, Palmyra Cove hosted World Water Monitoring Day. Danielle Donkersloot, of NJ Department of Environmental Protection, arranged for various organizations (EPA, Delaware River Basin Commission, NJDEP Stream Ambassadors, and U.S. Geological Survey) to provide learning stations involving water testing, groundwater flow, fishing, watershed conservation, and stream organisms. NJDEP participates in this event every fall at various locations throughout the state in an effort to promote water conservation and demonstrate possible career paths in the environmental science discipline. Palmyra Cove arranged to have St. Joseph’s Pro Cathedral School of Camden participate in the day’s activities. St. Joseph’s has been visiting Palmyra Cove every fall and spring

since 2004. The keynote speaker for the event was Mark N. Mauriello, Commissioner of NJDEP.

Scouting and Family Activities: Several scout groups helped with our October 10 cleanup including Pack 9 (Palmyra), Pack 168 (Cherry Hill), and Pack 159 (Waterford). Matt Hawrylko, Delran, NJ, is planning and executing a trail enhancement project to meet his Eagle Scout Badge requirements. Scouting activities this fall included a night hike (Palmyra Girl Scouts), forestry badge work (Shamong, Pack 47) and orienteering (Pack 159, Flying Eagles and Audubon Girl Scouts).

On November 14 we led a father/son orienteering competition for the Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. This was their first visit to the park.

Cleanups: Palmyra Cove participated in the International Ocean Conservancy’s fall Adopt A Beach cleanup on Saturday, October 10. New Jersey DEP and New Jersey Clean Communities also co-sponsored the event. The statewide cleanup was actually September 26, but Palmyra Cove had to use an alternate date due to unfavorable tidal conditions on the original date. Fifty-six volunteers attended on an overcast, rainy day to collect debris from our shoreline.

On October 24, The Universalist Unitarian Church, Cherry Hill, NJ, sent twenty volunteers who braved rainy weather to clean a half mile of beach. Keeping the river shoreline free of trash is an ongoing challenge. Runoff from streets and sidewalks carries the trash through storm sewers and into the river. Each rainfall carries more trash into the river. The greater the rainfall amount, the more trash that enters the river. On average, we have more than six cleanups per year, but it is not enough to keep up with the volume of trash that accumulates on our banks. It is important to remember that whatever is on our streets, sidewalks, and lawns, will find its way into our rivers and streams.

Edward Sanderson, *Director, Environmental Education*



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.

Photos credited to Bennett Landsman and Steve Greer.

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

Naturalist Notes

It has been a beautiful autumn and the weather was especially cooperative during the fall 2009 Cove Caterpillar pre-school program that was held Monday and Tuesday mornings. The weekly topics covered, starting September 14, included: Frog Finders, Delaware River Romp, A Butterfly's Life, Leaves and Seeds, Buggin' Out, Tracking Wildlife, Slinky Spiders, Feed the Squirrels, Grow a Forest, White-tailed Deer Hide-and-Seek, and The Call of the Wild Turkey. We had a great time on our nature hikes and the children made wonderful crafts to go along with each topic.

I would like to give claps and cheers to the Cove Caterpillars who spent the most mornings discovering Palmyra Cove's natural wonders with me, Trevor Young and Amaya Espardinez. I would also like to recognize the following Cove Caterpillars for partaking in our adventures frequently: Ben Barasch, Veronica Curry, Beckett Kreismer, Maya Kreismer, Rosemary Merola, Fionnula Fest, Gabriella Gillespie, Madalyn Roach, Andrew Roach, Elizabeth McCarron, Ella Reynolds, Harrison Reid, Chloe Vetrecin, Stella Piezzo, and Emily Young. It has been great getting to know all of you and exploring Palmyra Cove Nature Park together.

Cove Caterpillars will return for ten more weeks on Monday and Tuesday mornings from 10:00 am to 11:00 am in the spring, starting Monday, March 1, 2010. Due to the increase in participation during the fall sessions, we will be adding a new class time as well, Mon-

day afternoon from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm.

Also new, reservations will be required before each class begins in order to participate in that day's activities. Class size will be limited to 10 children per session, so please sign up for your desired day/time as soon as possible.

Speaking of winter activities, please check out our website, or call to inquire about this year's winter programs. For the first time, we offered adults a Winter Dendrology program where participants learned how to identify trees and shrubs without their leaves. We will be offering Family Hikes the first Saturday of each month, Beginning Birding for Adults on the third Saturday of each month, and night-time Owl Prowls around the park starting January 7, 2010.

Thank you, and have a great winter.

Kristina Merola, Naturalist



Hiking with Hart 2010 Dates

9:30 -11:30 am Sunday, January 17

9:30 -11:30 am Sunday, February 14 (Couple's Hike*)

9:30 -11:30 am Sunday, March 14

*COUPLE'S HIKE

Bring a friend or partner! This hike is co-led by Ecopsychologist Bonnie Hart and Marine Biologist Steven Mars. You'll receive a Venus and Mars view, as Bonnie brings a philosophic eye to experiencing Nature and Steve shares his knowledge as Senior Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This moderately paced hike will explore the wooded trails and open fields of the Cove along with the shoreline of the Delaware River. Join us for all or part of this easy hike. All ages and abilities welcome.



Upcoming events Winter 2010

For more information or to register for one of our upcoming events, please call 856-829-1900, Ext. 264.

January 2	9:00-11:00 am	Family Hike	All Ages
January 7	6:00-8:00 pm	Owl Prowl	All Ages
January 14	6:00-7:00 pm	Owl Prowl	All Ages
January 16	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Beginning Birding for Adults	Adults
January 21	6:00-7:00 pm	Owl Prowl	All Ages
January 28	6:00-7:00 pm	Owl Prowl	All Ages
February 6	9:00-11:00 am	Family Hike	All Ages
February 20	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Beginning Birding for Adults	Adults
March 1	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 1	1:00-2:00 pm	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 2	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 6	9:00-11:00 am	Family Hike	All Ages
March 8	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 8	1:00-2:00 pm	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 9	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 15	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 15	1:00-2:00 pm	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 16	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 20	9:00 am-12:00 noon	Beginning Birding for Adults	Adults
March 22	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 22	1:00-2:00 pm	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 23	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 29	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 29	1:00-2:00 pm	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program
March 30	10:00-11:00 am	Cove Caterpillars	Pre-school program

COVE CURRENTS

Palmyra Cove Nature Park

1300 ROUTE 73 NORTH

PO Box 6

PALMYRA, NJ 08065-1090

