



# COVE CURRENTS

## GREETINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am convinced that nothing makes time seem to pass more quickly than publishing a quarterly newsletter. Nothing except perhaps publishing a daily, weekly or monthly newsletter, but let's not go there. Summer has arrived and so, alas, has the deadline for Cove Currents, Summer issue.

Last year at this time I indulged in a bit of nostalgia, reminiscing about my long ago childhood summers. This year my focus is on the future of Palmyra Cove Nature Park. New activities and programs begun this year will be developed further in the months and years ahead to become, for many, fond memories in their own right.

It is official. Burlington County Bird Quest, held for the first time this spring at Palmyra Cove, will become an annual event. Our thanks to all who participated this year and congratulations to the winning team, Moorsetown Merlins, with sixty-five species of birds sighted and recorded. Next Burlington County Bird Quest, May 5, 2007. It is not too soon to mark your calendar; time flies.

One of our most ambitious undertakings to date is the Wetlands Education Program funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Ed Sanderson and Kristina Merola, along with our partners from Burlington County College will spend the summer conducting the fieldwork necessary to identify and record the many flora and fauna, including marine species, found in the Cove. This inventory will be used not only in a wetlands curriculum for workshops and student field trips, but also in a self-guided tour brochure of our beautiful tidal wetland. In addition, it will provide a baseline from which to judge the health of the Cove in the future.

In May, students from St. Joseph's Pro Cathedral, in the city of Camden, celebrated the culmination of a two year study of wetlands, funded by a \$2,500.00 grant from the Verizon Telephone Pioneers, by planting 350 plant and tree seedlings in a newly constructed wetland at the north end of the Park. The

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary donated \$1,000.00 to cover the cost of the plants. Maintaining this wetland and watching it mature over the coming seasons and years will bring a sense of accomplishment to our students and pleasure to our visitors.

For many of us summer and camp are synonymous; camp and Palmyra Cove seem to be a perfect match as well. The first session of Palmyra Cove Summer Camp is planned for the week of July 31 through August 4, 2006. Be sure to read Kristina's column for details. Looking forward to summer, 2007 Palmyra Cove will offer four one-week camp sessions. Cove Campers will experience interactive environmental programs and enjoy nature related arts and crafts.

The next time you visit the Environmental Discovery Center be sure to stop by the falcon camera monitors. The cameras are focused on the Peregrine Falcon box located under the arch of the bridge. Often the falcon is outside of the box and can be viewed in real time. A new Peregrine Falcon curriculum will be introduced in the fall using, among other teaching aides, live images from the falconcam. More about that program when vacations have ended and the new school year begins.

Now, I fear that I may have turned a greeting that should convey a sense of the easy-going lazy days of summer at the Cove into one that mirrors the hectic days of schedules and time constraints that define our everyday lives.

Fortunately, there is a sure remedy. No, it is not for me to rewrite this column; it is for you to spend time at Palmyra Cove Nature Park. Bring the children, your kayak, fishing pole, binoculars, camera and a picnic. Leave the wristwatch at home. Time will seem to stand still and stress will disappear.

Visit often. We'll be looking for you.

Clara Ruvolo, Executive Director





## Bird Quest

Ah – Spring time and a middle aged man's fancy turns to ... birds. Yes birds. Boy, if you told me at 18 that spring time would trigger my fancy in feathered creatures, I would have said you were crazy.

Well I am no longer a young man, and I can't get into too much trouble pursuing birds. The first annual "Burlington County Bird Quest", sponsored by the Palmyra Cove Nature Center provided a great opportunity to pursue my fancy. The guidelines were simple, form a team and track down as many species of birds as possible within the hours of seven a.m. and noon. In addition to the time constraints, there were two additional restrictions - your team had to have a contingent of novice birders and you had to stay within the borders of Burlington County.

I put together a team of eight including, myself, my wife Molly and fellow "STEMERs" Betsy Schnoor, and Sam

and Kathy Carswell. Other team members included Clayton Clark, Bill Nicholson and my long-term partner in crime, Bob Schmidt. We named ourselves the "Moorestown Merlins", the Merlin being a small falcon with a big time attitude.

The five- hour time restriction severely limited the amount of ground we could cover. We therefore decided to limit our birding to four areas – Hawkins Road and Chairville School, both in Medford, Taylor's Refuge in Cinnaminson and finally, Palmyra Cove. Our goal was to search for breeding woodland birds and migrants at Hawkins Road, breeding grass land birds at Chairville and breeding birds and migrants at both Taylor's and Palmyra Cove.

Weather has a major impact on the movement of migrating birds. Birds that migrate long distances between their "winter homes" in Central and South America and their breeding grounds in North America have learned to use the weather to their advantage. In the spring they use warm fronts to help push them north. In the fall it's cold fronts that move the birds. Even with "bird brains", the birds have learned it's a lot easier to move long distances when you have a twenty mile tail wind at your back!

Bird Quest was scheduled for May 6th, - rain or shine. The five-day forecast leading up to the 6th was calling for rain, but as the week progressed, the weather forecast improved. For once the forecasters were correct, and we were granted a beautiful spring day. In addition to all the locals, ie robins, blue jays, cardinals, mourning doves, etc. we also tallied some less common birds – including both spring migrants and seasonal breeders. Among some of the "good birds" we

sighted were:

- Ruby Throated Hummingbird
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Eastern Phoebe
- Eastern Kingbird
- White-eyed Vireo
- Red-eyed Vireo
- Ruby Crowned Kinglet
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- Wood Thrush
- New World Warblers
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Northern Parula
- Yellow Warbler
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Pine Warbler
- Black and White Warbler
- Prothonotary Warbler
- Worm-eating Warbler
- Ovenbird
- Common Yellowthroat
- Hooded Warbler
- Scarlet Tanager
- Eastern Towhee
- Bobolink
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Baltimore Oriole
- Bald Eagle

Unfortunately, time constraints forced us to drop Taylor's refuge off the itinerary. If our goal was to see as many species as we could, we undoubtedly spent too much time observing birds, as opposed to checking them off our list and moving on. My preference is to observe a "good bird" as long as it makes itself available for observing. While it undoubtedly reduces the quantity of birds you might observe, it improves your birding skills and you never know when you might see that particular species again. Many of these birds may only be seen once or twice in a season, and I like to keep them in my binoculars as long as possible. Even so, we still managed to tally around 65 different species of birds.

Our day wrapped up at Palmyra Cove Nature Center, where all participants were provided a delicious lunch, a poster of the "Birds of Burlington County", and a T-Shirt. Not a bad deal for the \$12/person entrance fee! Oh I almost forgot, our team's 65 species was good enough for first place. The Moorestown Merlins are now in the record books as the winners of the first Burlington County Birdquest. All participants had a great time. It just goes to show you that you don't have to go to some exotic location to see some great birds, heck - you don't even need to leave Burlington County!

Mark Pensiero



## Education Corner

**Summer Staff:** We have added new staff this summer and welcome the return of one of our veterans. Dana Young joined our staff in spring, and she has been working with schools and other visitors the past several weeks. Dana is a sophomore at Rowan University, pursuing elementary education with majors in math and science. She will have many opportunities to hone her skills in education and science at Palmyra Cove. Matt Vetter is returning for a third year at the Cove. Matt has completed a degree in Environmental Studies at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore. He is entering his senior year at Salisbury University and expects to graduate as a biology major in the spring of 2007. His course work and experience are assets we hope to utilize. Our interns from last summer, Jessica Ruvolo and Liz Pierson, have taken advantage of exciting opportunities elsewhere. Jessica will be caring for animals at the St. Louis Zoo. Liz traveled to the boundary waters of Minnesota to work at the Ely Wolf Center. We appreciate their service to Palmyra Cove and wish them well in their new ventures.

**Summer Activities:** Our summer educational programs are available to schools, home school groups, child care organizations, camp programs and civic organizations. We are pleased to welcome back the San Miguel School of Camden for a fourth summer. San Miguel has been visiting the Cove since our first summer. They will have four visits that focus on wetlands and river ecology, forest ecology and orienteering. Other return visits are scheduled for Hainesport Summer Recreation and Cherry Hill Public Schools Summer Program. A new visitor to the Cove will be the Fort Dix Summer Camp.



## Naturalist's Notes

**S**pring has been a very busy time at the Cove. With our summer resident birds displaying and nesting, turtles basking in our many wetland areas, and flowers in full bloom, there were many opportunities to make new personal discoveries. Some of the beneficiaries of the great weather and beautiful sites were the many school groups that came to visit.

The Saturday morning nature walk attendees did get to share in some of the perfect spring weather at the Cove, and in the rainy day hikes as well. Some of the interesting organisms we have observed included Yellow-bellied

We will be very involved in our biodiversity study of the Cove through our EPA Grant. Burlington County College (BBC) instructors will be visiting regularly to study the flora and fauna of the cove region of the park. We have a mapping expedition planned for June 20 and expect to add to our data on fish, reptiles, amphibians and insects. We also will be doing our weekly water monitoring of several sites. Pat Slavin, Anne Tokazewski and Lisa Storino of BBC will offer invaluable assistance throughout the summer. Additionally, I will be meeting with Timshel Purdun and Ned Gilmore of the Academy of Natural Sciences to prepare teacher workshops for the 2006-2007 school year.

### **Looking Backwards and Forwards:**

This newsletter provides a brief opportunity to reflect on our past and focus on our future. We hosted more than twenty different schools and over one thousand students this past spring. We anticipate the fall being very busy, particularly in October. As our educational programs expand, it is important to reassess our activities and focus on our future directions. Our staff training sessions this fall will be dedicated to that task.

Edward Sanderson, *Director Environmental Education*



Sapsucker, Yellow Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Redstart, Pied-billed Grebe, Fowlers Toad, Red-bellied Turtles, as well as Star of Bethlehem, Paulownia, Catalpa and false Indigo in flower.

Summer is almost here and we have much to offer during the hazy days to come. The following are our Saturday morning nature hike topics:

### **July 15 Moving with the Birds: Listening for nestlings**

Our baby birds have hatched. They are in the process of getting their mature feathers and are begging their parents very loudly for food. We will look for different species' nests and listen for their begging calls.

### **August 5 Palmyra Woods Walk**

When it's hot, cool down naturally in our shaded woods with a leisurely stroll. We will identify all of our woodland organisms and their importance in our environment while enjoying summer in the shade.

*Naturalist's Notes continued on page 4*

## Letter to Ed

Dear Ed,

My compliments to you and your staff on the well organized and extremely informative program that you have created at your facility.

Under your direction, the program has grown and become exceptional since our first trip in 2004. In my capacity as the district's float school nurse, I attend many class trips and, therefore, have the opportunity to watch and evaluate programs and facilities. Your program is one of the best, if not the best.

Your staff is energetic and knowledgeable. They interact with students with a warm and charismatic professionalism and make learning fun. Please extend my praise to your teachers, maintenance crew and support staff on their great work. Your staff is always smiling. We feel so welcome when the bus pulls in and you and your staff are there to greet us and we appreciate it when you wave us off at the end of the day. It sets the tone of a very warm and inviting place to learn. Every aspect, from the clean facilities to the environmental lessons, is of the highest standard. Congratulations on a job well done.

I wish you continued success with your program and look forward to returning each year.

Sincerely,

Patricia Adrangna, RN

Float School Nurse

North Hanover Township School District

Columbia and C.B. Lamb Schools

### *Naturalist's Notes Continued*

#### **August 19 Moving with the Birds: Warbler Migration Begins!**

The first southbound Warblers can be found in early August. Brush up on your bright little songbirds, including Blue-winged Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart and Canada Warbler. This is a sample of the early migrations. Keep checking the trees around the Cove for later migrating warbler species.

#### **September 2 Flowers and the Butterflies That Love Them**

Late summer is a great time to find butterflies. By offering flowers that bloom late in the season, like Goldenrod and Monarda, we can increase our butterfly populations. Learn about our local butterflies and some of the late flowering plants around the Cove.

#### **September 16 Moving with the Birds: Duck, Duck, Duck, Snow Goose**

Wood Duck are flocking, Blue-winged Teal are in their peak fall migration flocks, Northern Shoveler are arriving the same time as Northern Pintail and Green-winged Teal. Snow Geese are migrating from their breeding grounds on the Artic Circle. The Cove is a great place to spot the active Anseriformes.

Kristina Merola, *Naturalist*

## Cove Currents

### Palmyra Cove Nature Park

1300 Route 73 North

PO Box 6

Palmyra, NJ 08065-1090

