



Mark Your Calendar:

Monday, February 12, 2007 7:30pm

Meeting & Program, "Vernal Pools" by Doug Wechsler.

Saturday, February 17, 2007 9:00am

Field trip to Barnegat Lighthouse. Lead by John Courtney. Call 429-4987 to register.

February Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Monday February 12, 2007 7:30pm at the Audubon Senior Center, Oak and Oakland Avenues in Audubon, NJ. The meeting will feature a program on Vernal Pools by Doug Wechsler. Our refreshment volunteer is Alice Palermo.

Vernal Pool Program



Doug Wechsler

Our February program will be on Vernal pools by Dough Wechsler. Vernal pools are fascinating, but often overlooked ecosystems. They are seasonal ponds, lacking fish, which are important breeding habitat for amphibians like wood frogs, chorus frogs, marbled salamanders and a host of unique crustaceans, insects and other invertebrates. Doug

Wechsler will zoom in on some of the many interactions among animals living in vernal pools and present a close-up view of these creatures through his stunning photography.

Wildlife photographer, author, and naturalist, Doug Wechsler has recently published his 21st book, Frog Heaven: Ecology of a Vernal Pool. His previous books are on frogs, snakes, birds and insects. His work has also appeared in Ranger Rick, National Wildlife, Natural History and hundreds of other publications.

Wechsler is Director of VIREO (Visual Resources for Ornithology), the world's most comprehensive collection of bird photographs, a part of The Academy of Natural Sciences. As part of his job, Wechsler explores rain forests around the world to photograph forest birds. At night, he often goes prowling to learn more about sleeping birds and tropical frogs.

Wechsler also spends much time in wetlands closer to home. For his most recent book, he has been studying a large vernal pool in Delaware over the last fifteen years.

When he is not in his office in Philadelphia, you can look for Wechsler canoeing in a salt marsh, photographing from a helicopter in Borneo, or hiking in the New Jersey Pine Barrens with his wife Debbie.

Wechsler will also sign copies of his newly released book, Frog Heaven: Ecology of a Vernal Pool, and his other books.

To find out more about Doug Wechsler and his work visit:

<http://www.dougwechsler.com/download/download.html>



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Please send news items to Janet Goehner-Jacobs at awspublicity@aol.com

<http://www.audubonwildlifesociety.org>



*"In all my years birding, I never noticed that Bufflehead had neck feathers puffed out!"
-photo by Chip Krilowicz*

February Field trip to Barnegat Lighthouse
Saturday, February, 17, 2007 9:00am

This field trip will be lead by John Courtney. We will meet at 9:00am. Bring lunch. We will probably bird at the jetty until lunch and then afterwards go to a few places in the area. There are restrooms at the state park. For more information call John Courtney at 429-4987. Since this is a joint trip with the New Jersey Audubon Society please register before the trip with John, so we will have some idea of the number of participants. You may also register through NJAS at 609-261-2495 (Rancocas Nature Center).

Directions: Go route 70 East to the circle with route 72 Eastbound. Follow 72 East all the way to the end at Long Beach Island. (Don't follow signs for Barnegat as it leads to the town not the state park.) When you get to the end of 72 make a left (North) onto Long Beach Blvd. Follow this for about 8 miles into the town of Barnegat Light. The road here becomes Central Ave. When you get to 8th street, make a half-left onto Broadway. Just before the end of Broadway, make a right into the parking lot of Barnegat State Park.

*Note: To view the January field trip report by John Maret go to:
http://audubonwildlifesociety.org/1_20_trenton_marsh.htm

Non-native Bird Species

Most birders probably realize the origins of the House sparrow, Mute swan, and European starling as examples of non-native bird species. These are just some of a number of species that were deliberately imported from Europe and released in the United States so European immigrants would have wildlife that was familiar to them.

The process of a population boom didn't take long for some of the species. The House sparrow was introduced with just eight pairs that were released in the spring of 1851 in Brooklyn, New York. Numerous similar introductions in different cities occurred in the years following this first release resulting in house sparrows being established throughout the lower 48 states. House sparrows were established in California by 1910. So it took only 60 years to become a permanent part of this country's avifauna. The House sparrow lacked a natural predator when it arrived in North America. Several characteristics also contributed to its population explosion such as its ability to thrive on most any food. Their preferred nesting sites are numerous, primarily around human structures where this species resides. They are a particularly hardy and aggressive species. They begin nesting in late winter or early spring, often before migrants have returned, which results in these migrant birds having fewer choices for nesting sites. House sparrows typically raise two clutches of three or more chicks (most often four to five) each breeding season. The main concern with the House sparrow is this aggressive breeding. They are taking away nest sites from other native bird species like Eastern Bluebirds and Purple Martins. Aggressive measures are needed to prevent this. I'll have more on control measures in a future article, but a web search will produce many sites that will get you started on controlling this pest.

The Mute swan was thought to be introduced into the US onto large estates on Long Island and the lower Hudson River Valley possibly in the mid 1800's. Here again, the Mute swan was a popular species in England. It was even protected for being a bird of royalty. It was wanted by some here in the US and was introduced. Most of the problems associated with House sparrows also apply to the Mute swan. For further reading, see this link to an article on Mute swans in the Chesapeake Bay area.

<http://www.cnn.com/TECH/science/9807/08/swan.bullies/>

Non-native Bird Species-Continued

Another recent threat has been starting to come to light - parrots and the caged bird trade. In addition to the problems of capturing wild birds and possibly threatening their survival as a wild population, escaped and deliberately released parrots can and do survive and thrive in areas where they are not supposed to be. Here again, parrots compete with the native bird species, threatening their survival as populations.

Here are some examples from California: The Rose-winged parakeet is a notorious grain pest in many areas around the world. If the population of Rose-ringed parakeets now established in certain cities were to leave these urban areas and enter agricultural areas, the potential for economic loss would become a major concern. Two pairs of Lilac-crowned parrots have been observed nesting in wild areas of the San Gabriel Mountains. This species nests on mountainsides in western Mexico, so it is in a perfect habitat. Mountainsides are among the few natural areas remaining in southern California, thus the potential to compete with native birds for nesting needs to be closely monitored.

This country has enough problems dealing with native species like Canada goose and Brown-headed cowbird that are increasing in both population and range because of man-altered habitat, that we don't need any more issues with foreign birds. 56% of the 97 exotic species in the US are considered pests. This article just touched the tip!

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Rancocas Spring Arrivals

To view a list of arrival that Sandra Keller created in date order visit:

http://audubonwildlifesociety.org/spring_arrivals.htm

You can take a look and see what to expect at Rancocas this spring!

Adrift Without Drifts

The daffodils were pushing up and some had already bloomed. The fallen petals of an Asiatic magnolia created the illusion of snow beneath its gray branches. Forsythia and quince were swelling. Out running in my t-shirt and shorts I looked up to see two thousand Snow Geese flying high above arrayed in perfect Vs and extended check marks.

Snow Geese but no snow.

This has been a winter of record high temperatures, many days in the 60's and a couple where the temperature reached 70 degrees. I won't dwell here on the enormous and worrisome issue of global warming, the melting of the glaciers in the central Himalayas that presages future droughts in the world's most populous country, the retreat of the Greenland ice cap that has advanced so far that one jut of land thought to be a peninsula has been revealed as two islands. My subject is more immediate.

I've long been interested in the subtle effects of one's surroundings on mood and overall mental state. I'm not talking about finding oneself in extremes such as the difference in outlook when standing on a mountain top and sitting in a dentist's chair nor even that between a room admitting rays of morning sun and the same room on a cloudy day. Assuming a generally healthy mental condition, none of these circumstances will make us totally happy or totally depressed in and of themselves and, of course, unanticipated events wreak havoc with our plans for contentment: we could be on that mountain top mourning a loved one or under the dentist's lights to relieve an impacted molar. My explorations concern those influences that are way in the background of a day's sensory impressions and may not even be consciously felt when experienced.

Here's an example. I recently changed jobs. I'm doing exactly the same work under exactly the same conditions. I've achieved the goal of being happier on the job but recently realized that I'm less happy getting there. No, I didn't start driving to Philadelphia. The new trip is exactly the same distance as the old – 9.3 miles – and takes slightly less time. The difference is in what my eyes register on the way. The new drive is the same for the first several miles then continues straight through a landscape of suburban housing and some small retail areas. The old route veered away and although it traversed similar territory near its end, the middle few miles wound through the unruly corridor of the Millstone River and past farm fields. I saw mature stands of trees in the farmers' woodlots, roadside flowers, raptors, ground hogs, the occasional fox. In all, a softer, less cluttered landscape. None of these things registered as momentous or even especially interesting but they were soothing to my mind.

Adrift Without Drifts - Continued

Most people are aware of these effects when it comes to their living space; that's why we decorate and plant gardens. It behooves us as environmentalists and lovers of nature to find ways to get more people to expand this awareness into the world at large.

But I started writing about our abnormal winter. I've confessed my love of the cold season in these pages before and as an enthusiast of climatic contrast I found the warmish, ice-free days of early winter to be alarming and the off-season daffodils disorienting. I was adrift without drifts, plodding listlessly down a corridor of colorless, tepid days. Finally, around mid-January, the temperature dropped and a morning dawned with a light cover of snow. The tall wild onions that had sprouted in December gave the yard the look of a punk haircut but somehow I was more content.

John Maret
February, 2007

Take the Energy Star Change a Light Pledge!

New Jersey's Clean Energy Program invites you to join New Jersey and the rest of the country and take the Change a Light Pledge to change at least one light bulb at home to an energy – efficient one. You'll make your home more energy efficient, preserve resources and reduce your electric bill. It's the bright thing to do...Energy Star qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs will:

- Last 6 – 10 times longer than standard bulbs.
- Use two-thirds less energy.
- Save at least \$30 in energy costs over the lifetime of a single light bulb.

If every American home replaced their 5 most frequently used lights or the bulbs in them with ENERGY STAR qualified lighting products, we'd save about \$6.5 billion each year in energy costs and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions from more than 8 million cars.

Visit <http://www.NJCleanEnergy.com> to take the Change a Light Pledge.

Great Backyard Birdcount

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count, February 16-19, 2007. It's fun, it's free, it takes as little as 15 minutes-- and it helps the birds. It's as easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes during February 16–19, 2007. Count birds at as many places and on as many days as you like—just keep a separate list of counts for each day and/or location.
2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time, and write it down.
3. Enter your results on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site! <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>

Other Club's Events:

Burlington County Natural Sciences Club, BCNSC presents, "Orangutans of Borneo" by Carol Richey. February 14, 2007. BCNSC Meets the second Wednesday of the month, September through May at 7:45pm in Lumberton Leas Meeting Room, Lumberton, NJ. For more information on BCNSC go visit: <http://oldsquaw.tripod.com/index.html>

Gloucester County Nature Club and the Wenonah Environmental Commission presents the 2007 Vulture Festival, Wenonah, NJ. March 4th 6:00pm to 9:30pm. The festival features a vulture flyover, educational presentations, food and live music. It will be a fun, educational evening event spotlighting nearly 200 turkey and black vultures that have made Wenonah, New Jersey their winter home, returning each evening to form a communal roost in town. Festival profits will be used to support environmental education. For more information: 856-468-6536 <http://www.eastcoastvulturefestival.org/>

Nature Programs on TV:

Nature: Supersize Crocs

Airs on WHYY Sunday, February 11 at 8:00pm. Reptile expert Rom Whitaker searches for giant crocodiles (over 20 feet) in Australia and Ethiopia's Lake Chamo, and on the Indian-Nepalese border. Along the way, he finds a 4-footer, a 16-footer, an 18-footer and what might be a 22-footer. To view a preview go to:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/preview.html>