

BEAVER TALES SUMMER 2021, UNEXPECTED WILDLIFE REFUGE

Since the arrival of warm weather the Refuge has been a bustle of activity. Around Headquarters we see turtles, frogs and toads, and dragonflies daily, and the orange flowers of the trumpet vine are blooming. The mated pair of black vultures has nested again in the barn attic next to Headquarters. We are looking forward to their activities and are hopeful for a couple of fledglings this season.



Restrictions regarding COVID-19 are lessening statewide, but there is still a need to be cautious; that's where Unexpected Wildlife Refuge can help. One can safely socially distance on our 767 acres of pristine forest, fields, bogs, and waterways. Schedule an appointment today to visit and hike our trails by calling 856.697.3541 or emailing manager@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org.

Running a wildlife refuge is not only physically and emotionally demanding, there are always expenses with which to deal. Although we are frugal in how we spend Refuge funds--having only one employee and an all-volunteer Council of Trustees--we need your help in ensuring the continuation and longevity of the Refuge. We hope you will take the time to make the most generous donation you can...*now*. And, know that we--and the wildlife--are grateful for your continued support.

Starbucks Employee Volunteer Cleanup Event at UWR

In April, Jackie Johnson and Stacey Sperbeck volunteered at UWR, helping to remove trash and debris from the roadside along Piney Hollow Road. Together with our manager, they removed about 10 large bags worth of trash and debris, along with some larger dumped items, including TVs and tires.



Unfortunately the littering and dumping of trash and other items on or near Refuge property is an ongoing issue, and we can always use your help. If you would like to set up a volunteer event for your group or workplace (cleanups, trail maintenance, etc.), or if you would like to help out on your own, please call 856.697.3541 or email manager@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org.

Miller House update

We have made repairs to the roof and septic system of the Miller House after a tree fell on the house during a tropical storm last summer. Following the repairs, we have since begun to transition the Miller House into an education center. Hope's collection of books, manuscripts, and artwork (as well as artwork from her father, Edmund J Sawyer, a



renowned ornithologist) is being moved to the library of the Miller House. If you would like to volunteer out of the elements, and with less physical demands, perhaps a day helping to organize the Refuge library would be for you. If you are interested, reach out and let us know.

Protect our waters and wildlife from plastic waste



Plastic pollution harms wildlife. It's easy for a bird, fish or turtle to mistake small pieces of plastic for food--especially when there are millions of pieces of it floating in our waters, forming enormous garbage patches in our oceans.

Saying no to single use plastic and polystyrene foam containers is something we can do now to help wildlife. Please make the pledge to avoid these plastic products; your personal action and commitment will be vital in this campaign.

Please also call Governor Murphy (609.292.6000) and politely urge him to ban plastic foam take-out cups and containers in NJ.

Take action to ban gestation and veal crates in NJ

The pictures are graphic and disturbing. Mother pigs are confined in small, metal cages where most are immobilized with no room to turn around. Their muscles and bones deteriorate because they cannot move or extend their limbs. Some pigs chew the metal bars out of boredom and misery. Taken from their mothers at birth or shortly after, calves are confined to a crate which prohibits most movement including turning around.



A5236/S3401, which would ban cruel gestation crates and veal crates in New Jersey, has unanimously passed both Assembly and Senate committees and now awaits a full floor vote in each chamber of the Legislature. If you live in New Jersey, please call your State Senator and two Assembly representatives today and tell them you support A5236/S3401 being posted for a full floor vote as soon as possible!

Contact mindbodygreen and urge them to refrain from promoting slaughtered emu parts as health and beauty aids

In March, UPC posted the following letter to a wellness/mindfulness business at www.mindbodygreen.com that in 2019 featured an article boasting the health and beauty benefits of emu oil. Emu oil, touted by emu exploiters as a virtual cure-all for whatever ails you, is obtained by slaughtering an emu. The oil is then derived from a thick pad of fat on the back of the flightless bird, which was provided by nature to protect them from the extreme temperatures of their homeland.



We encourage you to contact support@mindbodygreen.com and politely urge refraining from promoting slaughtered animal parts as health and beauty aids. When you encounter promotions of emu oil or other slaughter products, please educate and advocate for the birds.

Common tumblebug, one of nature's recyclers



This common tumblebug (or tumble beetle), a small species of dung beetle, was seen traversing the gravel near our cabin barn. Found on all continents except Antarctica, dung beetles break down, bury, and consume animal waste, thereby recycling nutrients

and helping plants thrive. After locating a dung pile, they grab pieces of the dung which they then roll (or tumble) into a ball. They may be found in pairs, with one member rolling while the other rides on top of the ball, as if navigating. After rolling the balls, they bury them for safekeeping using their strong front legs with outward-pointing spines. The balls will be used as food or as brood balls in which the female will lay her eggs.

More to ant mounds than meets the eye

We had to be extra careful when traveling in and out of Miller House when this group of 20 or so ant mounds was present, making sure we did not disrupt them. Although we can't be sure, they may all lead to one nest as there can be many entrances and exits to a single nest. An ant mound has 3 major purposes: it serves as the entrance to the belowground nest, it helps control the nest's internal temperature, and it helps protect the nest from predators or other intruders. They are built by worker ants who remove belowground soil they excavate during tunneling and nest chamber construction. The soil is then deposited aboveground, forming a mound.



White-spotted sawyer beetle at Headquarters

Since construction was completed, the front steps of Headquarters have been trafficked by many visitors, including this white-spotted sawyer beetle. Common wood-boring beetles in North America, they can be clearly identified by the white spot, for which they are named, at the top center of the elytra (the hard, outer wings).



They have very long antennae; in males they can be up to twice their body length but in females they are only slightly longer than body length. White-spotted sawyer beetles are a saproxylic species, spending at least part of their life cycle dependent on dead or dying wood. Both adults and larvae feed on conifers, breaking down the fibers of decaying trees, helping to add nutrients back to the soil. And coincidentally, this species shares the name “Sawyer” with our co-founder Hope’s family!

First-time photo op with northern redbelly snake



It was a first-time photo op for us when this northern redbelly snake recently crossed our path, as this secretive and small species--measuring between 8-11 inches--is not often observed. Redbelly snakes are typically found in moist habitats, including woodlands, swamp forests, open fields, and bog borders. They spend most of their life hidden under logs, rocks, brush piles, and leaves, typically staying under cover during the daylight hours, and emerging in the evening. Although these snakes

are sometimes confused with the northern brown snake, northern ring-necked snake, and/or eastern worm snake, we clearly saw this individual's bright red ventral scales, characteristic of the northern redbelly snake.

Northern red-bellied turtle hatchling emerges after overwintering

Last summer, as construction of Headquarters was wrapping up, we observed many female turtles laying their eggs in the areas surrounding the new building. This spring, we were lucky to see many hatchlings emerging from their nests, making their way to the pond. Most turtles hatch in 2-3 months, and while some emerge from the nest after hatching, others spend their first winter in the nest cavity, a process called overwintering. This red-bellied turtle hatchling, approximately 1 inch in diameter, was seen in the driveway of Headquarters in late March, making his/her way to the main pond.



A look at the mantis life cycle



Last spring, Trustee Dave Sauder photographed these mantis egg cases, which were likely deposited there during the previous fall. In the fall, female mantises produce eggs, deposited in a frothy secretion that hardens to protect the eggs from predators and winter climates. Egg cases are typically attached to twigs, leaves, and fences, and several egg cases may be laid before cold weather sets in. When warm weather returns, the mantis nymphs will hatch. They will molt about six times as they grow into mature adults, at which time they will repeat the process. By

summer's end, mantises can reach several inches in length, like the individual pictured here, photographed outside of Headquarters last August.

Beavers build scent mound to mark territory

Our resident beavers are active once again. After they spent the winter inside their lodges, we caught our first glimpse of them swimming in the main pond in late March. Beavers do not hibernate during winter, though they do stay in their lodge, where



they have stored enough food to last until spring. For young beavers, around 2 years old, it is time to leave the family lodge and make one of their own. Beavers are exceptionally territorial, so in the spring resident beavers build scent mounds around their territory to deter new individuals from moving in. The mounds (like the one pictured here on the edge of our main pond) are built with mud, leaves, and pond debris, then scent marked with urine and castoreum, a substance that comes from their castor sacs.

Wheel bug nest and emerging nymphs

While out doing trail maintenance last spring, our manager observed this unique wheel bug nest with emerging nymphs. The wheel bug is a member of the family of insects known as



assassin bugs--about 7,000 species of insects in the 'true bug' order. Like most members of the family, wheel bugs are predacious on other insects--caterpillars and beetles in particular. Once per year they lay anywhere from 40 up to 200 barrel-shaped eggs, which are cemented together in a mass resembling a honeycomb. The eggs hatch in May and June, and nymphs soon begin hunting for prey. They molt several times, growing in size through the season, and by late summer they are adults, ready to mate and lay eggs.

Winter then and now

The construction of our new Headquarters building was completed last summer and our manager experienced her first winter in the new building. When going through some pictures of the old cabin, we stumbled upon this snapshot from a snowy winter day in 1984. It is quite a change compared to the new Headquarters photographed in the snowstorm in early February, 37 years later! Although there are many fond



memories associated with the old cabin, the updates were necessary to keep the Refuge protected by providing adequate housing for an on-site manager. As we share old memories, and make new ones, we continue to be grateful for everyone who has helped to make the new Headquarters possible.

Helping wildlife and Unexpected Wildlife Refuge today



The Refuge is home and sanctuary for hundreds of animal and plant species, some highly endangered, and ensures their best chance for survival. We depend on the support of our donors to keep the Refuge

safe. We – and the wildlife – could not exist without you. May we rely on your continued support? A donation today – no matter how small – will help us to continue our important work and secure the future of the Refuge. We care for these 767 acres with a small operating budget, one paid staff and a voluntary Council of Trustees.

Help us and the environment

Please send us your Email address so that we can reduce the number of paper newsletters and the waste that entails. Send to info@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org, stating you would like to be placed on the electronic newsletter list.

This issue of our newsletter is brought to you by a grant from Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics.

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