

Beaver Tales from Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, April 2023

From the porch of Headquarters, the change of seasons is joyfully announced by the multitude of resident birds at UWR. It is a happy mix of sounds as nests are made and families prepare to expand. The beavers have been busy over the winter as a new and very large lodge appeared on the trail passing over the main pond. If one is standing at the edge of the pond at just the right moment, it is possible to catch a glimpse of one or more beavers quietly making their way to and from the lodge, playing, gathering food, or simply enjoying a swim.

This is also a busy season for the UWR humans as we prepare for visitors and attend public education events. In March, we attended the hugely popular *Lines on the Pines* at Stockton State University. You can read more about this in our **Educational Events** section.

UWR Celebrates Earth Day – Every Day

This annual event to demonstrate support for environmental protection is now acknowledged in an estimated 193 countries by over 1 billion people. This year's theme is *Our Planet*. At UWR, we work to protect the environment every day. By preserving 767 acres in southern New Jersey, we work to ensure that all wildlife will have a safe place to call home. Thousands of species of wildlife live peacefully at UWR thanks to our founders, donors, and volunteers!

Visiting UWR

The Refuge is open year round for hiking, birdwatching, and photography. If you would like to visit, call 856-697-3541 or send an email to manager@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org to let us know you are planning a hike. We welcome visitors!

Be Kind to Animals Week - May 7-13, 2023

Be Kind to Animals Week was first celebrated in 1915 and continues to bring our attention to the plight of animals suffering worldwide. How will you celebrate kindness this year?

National Trails Day – June 4th

Would you like to hike the beautiful woodlands and wetlands at UWR? Would you like to help maintain the trails? Spend this day with UWR! As the spring foliage begins to grow, trails need to be cleared for hikers and other visitors. This is an ongoing

maintenance need so we welcome volunteers any time of the year. *National Trails Day* is sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program in which Unexpected Wildlife Refuge participates. Please email manager@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org or call 856-697-3541 if you are interested in assisting.

Educational Events

Lines on the Pines

Unexpected Wildlife Refuge is located within the Pine Barrens in southern New Jersey. On March 12th, we provided an educational table at *Lines on the Pines*, an annual event celebrating authors, artists, and other Pine Barrens enthusiasts. Our table, staffed by Trustees, provided information about the Refuge, as well as a children's table where young people (and some adults!) were able to make a beaver mask. Trustees Dave Sauder and Janet Romano presented a slide show and discussion about UWR at a dinner later that evening for participants.



Beaver mask making table Trustee Janet Romano staffing the information table. (Trustee David Sauder not pictured.)

ACUA Earth Day Celebration



Trustee Janet Romano staffing the educational table. (Trustee David Sauder not pictured.)

Upcoming Events

UWR will be attending several more educational events this spring to provide information about UWR.

Folsom Green Day - May 6th, 2023

Hamilton Township After Earth Day - May 13, 2023

Naturefest 2023 at Galloway Middle School - June 1, 2023

Waterfest at Scotland Run Park - June 4, 2023

Beavers - A Keystone Species

Beavers have been an integral member of local wildlife for thousands of years and are a Keystone Species. The ponds and wetlands they create provide necessary habitat for other wildlife such as waterfowl, songbirds, otters, frogs, turtles, amphibians, and mammals, all of whom need the water and wetland to survive and comprise a healthy and functioning ecosystem.

Beaver dams help stabilize stream flow and reduce soil erosion. If beavers are removed, waterways will flow faster possibly causing flooding and reducing ecological diversity.

The ponds absorb water during storms which slowly clean and filter out pollutants as the water is absorbed by recharging aquifers. In New Jersey, we have the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer which lies directly beneath UWR. In addition, the wetlands created provide a safeguard to the surrounding area during periods of drought, possibly preventing forest fire.

Wildlife Education at Home

Journal. Keep a wildlife observation journal of the wildlife (both plants and animals) that live around your home. A simple copy book will do or staple plain sheets together to create a book; and/or, start a digital journal using an online platform of your choice.

Write, illustrate, photograph, and record your (or your child's) observations. Include the date, time, place, and weather conditions. Observe quietly and without disturbing the area and animals. What do you see/hear/smell? Watch for signs of wildlife. Who lives around you?

Research those species to find out more. Leave a place in your yard for wildlife to flourish.

Do you or your student have particular wildlife questions? Send them to UWR at manager@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org and our wildlife biologist will provide an answer. Your particular question may be featured in an upcoming newsletter.

Snapshots of Life at the Refuge

Beaver Lodge 2023

A new beaver family has taken up residence on a trail through UWR. The lodge is one of the largest seen at the Refuge in recent memory. A beaver was observed busily swimming toward their new home. Breeding occurs in midwinter with a gestation period of 100-110 days. The lodge will be home to spring beaver kits. Beavers often have 2-3 generations of family living in the same lodge, so the extra-large lodge will accommodate everyone including possible muskrat visitors.



Great Blue Heron

One of the UWR trail cams photographed a great blue heron enjoying a quiet moment preening and drying her feathers.



Barred Owl

The same trail cam photographed a barred owl during the night in search of a meal.



Beavers in the News

Frequently, we receive calls from residents throughout New Jersey seeking information about how to protect beavers in their area. Sometimes, it is a matter of life and death for the beavers as township managers seek to have them removed. We (and the beavers) are fortunate to have a friend in Mike Callahan of Beaver Institute. Their mission is: "To provide technical and financial assistance to public and private landowners experiencing beaver conflicts, support scientific research, train mitigation professionals, and increase public appreciation of the beaver's critical role in creating healthy wetland ecosystems." For more information, contact Beaver Institute at <https://www.beaverinstitute.org/>

Relocating beavers in New Jersey is not as simple as trapping and relocating the animals. Beavers establish their territories and may not welcome new beavers to their area. Not only do ecological issues need to be considered, but also there are state regulations in place. For more information on relocation, see the Beaver Institute website and check out your state wildlife regulations.

Visitor Spotlight - Navin Sasikumar, UWR Trustee

I've been a Trustee of UWR for nearly three years now, but I hadn't had a chance to visit the refuge in all that time. I live in Philadelphia and do not drive so getting to the refuge hasn't been easy. Add the COVID-19 pandemic to the mix and that made it even more challenging. So when my friend, Lauren, who loves beavers and drives, told me that she had not seen a beaver in the wild, I jumped at the chance to visit the refuge and hopefully get a lifer (an organism one sees in the wild for the first time) beaver for Lauren. I love beavers, too (well, all animals and plants, really) and even though I've seen one in Philly before, I'm not going to say no to seeing another one.

Fellow Trustee, Dave Sauder, very graciously agreed to meet us and show us around the refuge. We had planned to meet him at 1 pm, and we were going to be there with time to spare, but GPS led us astray at the last mile and we ended up at the wrong end of the refuge. A quick call to Dave, and we were back on track and only 30 minutes late!

Dave met us at the headquarters' parking lot and showed us multiple beaver lodges in the pond right in front of the building. We scanned with binoculars for beavers, but we couldn't spot any. Pine Warblers and Carolina Chickadees were singing in the background keeping us company. After about 20-30 minutes of scanning, Dave wanted to show me other areas of the refuge. There was a huge flock of Dark-eyed Juncos as we made our way out. We went to the Joe's Garage area where we saw a single Eastern Bluebird perched on a tree. We then walked the trail along Miller pond - it was

beautiful with Ring-necked Ducks on the water and Tree Swallows feeding in the air above.

We finally went back to the Main Pond and scanned for beavers again. Unfortunately, the beavers didn't show up for us that day, it was getting late and we had to head back to Philadelphia. While we didn't see any beavers, it was still a fun trip and I'm sure we'll try to see beavers again soon.



Education Center

The UWR Education Center is a work in progress. The library is slowly being cataloged and organized. This month we needed to replace the decades-old furnace which was not functioning. Donations toward helping UWR pay for this are welcomed.

Volunteers

We always need humans to assist in trail maintenance, patrols, and other activities. If you are able to volunteer, send an email or call the Refuge. Be a part of the team that keeps UWR running! Do you have computer skills? Organization of photos? Education Center assistance?

Support Wildlife Right Now

Preserving the Refuge takes human effort, time, and money. The all-volunteer Council of Trustees oversees every expense and is extremely frugal with all expenditures. Financial assistance is needed to ensure the continuation and longevity of the Refuge. We hope you will think of the history of the Refuge, the land preservation, and most importantly – the plants and animals who live on the Refuge, and make the most generous donation that you can to help continue Hope and Cavit's mission of the beautiful Unexpected Wildlife Refuge. Thank you!

Support Wildlife in the Future

As you plan your will and estate, please remember Unexpected Wildlife Refuge. When speaking with your estate planner, provide them with the Refuge name, address, and tax identification number (23-7025010). This is one of the most important gifts you can make and will ensure that wildlife will have a home free from hunting, fishing, trapping, and encroachment for years to come.

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.

Unexpected Wildlife Refuge

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