

Beaver Tales from Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, Fall 2016

Unexpected Wildlife Refuge welcomes new Trustee



The Refuge recently appointed Janet Romano Schubert to their Council of Trustees. Janet is a long-time animal activist and supporter of the Refuge.

Working cooperatively to solve beaver 'problems'



In June, we were contacted by a representative of Vianini Pipe in Whitehouse, NJ, who had been tirelessly reaching out to many resources for help. Two months previously, a family of beavers had moved into a holding pond behind the company's concrete pipe manufacturing facility. The pond was scheduled to be drained and dredged due to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection regulations and the company wanted to protect the beavers. We are grateful to Vianini for contacting us for advice. When we spoke last, Vianini had agreed to hire a licensed, experienced person to use humane live traps to relocate the beaver family to an organic apiary in northern New Jersey. Though moving beaver families is not ideal and can cause considerable stress to the animals, relocation appeared to be the only solution in this situation. This is a great example of how businesses, homeowners and townships can be better neighbors to wildlife.

In May, a Mullica Hill, NJ, homeowners association called us about a family of beavers who had moved into a pond behind a housing development. Homeowners were concerned that the beavers would cause problems, but we went to the site and found that nothing needed to be done. In June, the president informed us that the beaver family had moved out of the area. People should not overreact to the presence of beavers because they may leave on their own due to lack of food or to seek a better home. Some young beavers and others are 'transient', settling down briefly before finding a 'permanent' home. Regardless, animals other than human beings belong here as much as we do. They need the same things we need: a home, food and security for their families. And, most of the time, if we stop interfering, relax and wait, they work things out just fine on their own, in ways that no longer pose a 'problem' for us.

Great egrets at the Refuge



We were thrilled to see this great egret perched on a tree stump in the main pond recently. Breeding pairs have come to the Refuge this season, adding to the richness of the bird life present. If you look closely, you can see the long, wispy feathers that are the egret's breeding plumage. We are always in awe of the wonderful

diversity of fauna (and flora) who consider the Refuge their home.

Northern cricket frog



This tiniest frog, the northern cricket frog, was proclaiming his territory in a disproportionately (to his size) LOUD call from a lily pad in the main pond at the Refuge.

Endangered and a species of concern in three states, these frogs are small enough to fit on a silver dollar with room to spare. Sensitive to environmental pressures, they are harbingers of good water quality. We took this photo at night using a flashlight. (Photo by Cliff Compton.)

Update on invasion of the Refuge by people on all terrain vehicles and dirt bikes



We thank all who contributed to our GoFundMe campaign to protect the Refuge from all terrain vehicle and dirt bike intrusion. Our plan was to build or install natural trail barriers to protect the Refuge. We initially anticipated using boulders because of their immovability. These are very expensive to purchase and place. We learned later that we might be able to obtain large tree stumps from agencies dealing with their removal – without cost to us. We are currently researching this potential source of help. It may be, however, that we will still have to resort to boulders at some point. In the meantime, we and volunteers like Mary Ann Gurka (pictured) are using deeply embedded T-posts in an attempt to thwart transgressors. If you are interested in donating to this campaign, learn more or share on social media, you can do so at gofundme.com/unexpectedwildlife.

Pinelands Commission and off-road vehicles

I recently attended the Pinelands Commission meeting where an impassioned public focused nearly entirely on the destructive use of off-road vehicles on New Jersey public lands. I added our strong objection to this type of intrusion that results in massive damage to habitat, animals and plants. After the meeting, I met with members of the Pinelands Protection Alliance, an energetic and involved group of volunteers dedicated to protecting the Pinelands. They have pledged to help us patrol more actively for trespassing vehicles and to help us put into place more defenses for the trails.

Endangered northern red-bellied turtle at Refuge



I was delighted to find this northern red-bellied turtle (*Pseudemys rubriventris*) at the Refuge. It was the first time I had ever seen one in nature. Due to habitat fragmentation, including loss of wetlands, this

species is now on the United States Fish and Wildlife Service endangered species list. This turtle was a poignant reminder of why we work so hard protecting the Refuge's unique habitat.

Returning the favor



Every year between May and June, the sandy Atlantic beaches are visited by thousands of horseshoe crabs who climb ashore looking for mates and to lay their eggs in the sand. Due to climate changes, human detritus

on the beach and other reasons, many of these crabs become stranded above the high-tide line. This year, we worked alongside reTURN the Favor, one of the groups that patrol miles of beach to help these individuals. We found three crabs stuck under concrete rubble on one beach and it took almost 30 minutes to free them. These ancient little guys are essential to the ecosystem and we are grateful to be able to help free them from human impediments.

Bullfrogs at the Refuge



In the nightly chorus of frogs and toads, the bullfrog is our basso profundo. The bullfrog and the green frog have very different songs, but are frequently visually confused with each other. The easiest way to distinguish them is to

look at the glandular fold, the ridge running right by the eye down to the frog's tympanum ('ear drum'). In bullfrogs, like this one crossing one of our boardwalks, it is curved around the ear drum. On green frogs, this ridge goes straight down the back. Our ponds are rich with bullfrogs, green frogs and many others, a real treat to see during the daylight and hear at night.

Funnel-web spiders



The family of spiders known as "funnel-web spiders" comprises about 700 species. Here is an example seen at the Refuge this summer. Typically, females will hide in their burrows during the day, but the males will wander from their webs to hunt. We are not sure of the species of the spiders who built this particular web, though

we suspect it is the grass spider.

Laetiporus cincinnatus fungus



We do not get excited just about animals who live at the Refuge. There are many aesthetically pleasing (to the human eye) plants, as well, like this fungus we recently saw near one of the trails. It is a saprobic fungus that prefers oak trees.

Northern water snake



One of the most common snakes in and around our ponds is the northern water snake, like this juvenile we saw basking in the sun while wrapped around a branch near shore. Though all snakes can bite if sufficiently threatened (the result being minor scraping of the skin), out of the 22 species of snake native to New

Jersey, only two are venomous. It is easy to identify the latter because you only have to choose from copperheads (distinctive coloring) or rattlesnakes (obvious rattle). Also, these individuals have vertical pupils and 'pits' (heat sensors) between the eyes and nostrils, not that we

recommend your getting that close to verify. Although the chance of running into a venomous snake in New Jersey is highly unlikely, if you are unsure, then just leave the individual alone. In fact, you should leave any alone so as to respect their privacy!

Watercolor prints by co-founder Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci



We have prepared prints of several of the wonderful watercolor illustrations by Refuge co-founder, artist, writer and naturalist Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci. These can be purchased through

Zazzle (zazzle.com/unexpectedwildliferefuge/products), which fulfills orders from the public on our behalf.

Helping wildlife and the Refuge today



Unexpected has grown from its humble 85-acre beginnings 55 years ago to nearly 800 protected acres today. This Refuge is home and sanctuary

for hundreds of animal and plant species; many of the animal species have been here for generations. *We depend entirely on the support of our donors.* We – and the wildlife – could not exist without you. We know that you have limited resources and need to consider which of numerous worthwhile causes to support. We hope, however, that you can find it possible to give us a donation – today – of any amount. *We desperately need your support right now.* We care for these 767 acres with a very small operating budget and with a paid staff of one and a completely voluntary Council of Trustees. Despite this, even our small operating costs are exceeding our donations. In addition to donations, we have other ways to support us which can be found on our **Help Us** page on our Web site.

Helping wildlife and the Refuge in the future

Please remember Unexpected Wildlife Refuge when planning your will and estate. It is an easy, effective and lasting way to help the Refuge... and wildlife. When talking with your estate planner, just provide them with our name, address and tax identification number (**23-7025010**). This is one of the most important gifts the Refuge can receive. If you have already included us in your future plans, thank you!

Finally, another plea for your E-mail address in order to reduce costs for the Refuge and the environment.

We are able to provide bi-monthly newsletters to those on our E-mail list, so you would receive more timely information.

For wildlife everywhere, thank you!

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