

Beaver Tales from Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, Fall 2017

New Trustee appointed to Refuge Council

We are pleased to announce that David Sauder has agreed to serve as a Trustee. Dave brings with him many decades of experience in non-human animal advocacy. He has been a long-time supporter of the Refuge and has spent time patrolling with Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci, co-founder.



Another plea for your E-mail address

If you have an E-mail address or are going to be getting one, please let us know so that we can place you on our electronic newsletter list. Not only will you get news that is more timely (bi-monthly), you will be helping us save costs and reduce negative impact on the environment.

Fall on the way

Although you would never guess by the deafening sounds of cicadas and crickets in the evenings, it is beginning to feel a lot like fall at the Refuge. As I walk through the Refuge, a few fallen red leaves from sarsaparilla plants or deep orange ones from maple trees are scattered on the ground. The nights are cool and the gray squirrels have covered the land adjacent the trails with holes for their food caches. The beavers are still taking it easy, but soon they will be busy getting food ready for winter. After many days of cold rain, Muddy Bog (pictured) and the white cedar swamp are full of water and covered in myriad leaves.



Volunteers needed for annual deer patrol

Join us for our 2017-2018 deer 'season' patrol to keep hunters out of the Refuge. Our dedicated volunteers are what make it a success every year. Although the critical period is the six-day firearm 'season', 4-9 December 2017, we need volunteers from 30 September 2017 through 31 January 2018. Please E-mail or call the Refuge to sign up for as many shifts as you can do: 856.697.3541; director@unexpectedwildliferefuge.org



Annual Earth Day Cleanup

Our Annual Earth Day Cleanup event this past April was another success even though it rained (seems to be a yearly 'feature'). Our intrepid volunteers (Paula Dean pictured) braved the weather with giant bags (one for trash, one for recyclables) in hand to clean up a couple of miles of roadway adjacent our trails. Cleaning the roadside prevents trash from migrating into the Refuge, keeping the habitat safe for all wildlife. Single-use plastic cups and bottles were abundant, but we also found many intact plastic beverage-holding rings. The latter are lethal for animals. They strangle or maim birds, mammals and others. They should be outlawed; in the meantime, never dispose of them without cutting through all areas so that no openings of any size remain. This year's vegan lunch was provided by Tofurky and volunteers and enjoyed by all.



YMCA Camp kids spend a day at Unexpected

In July, we enjoyed a volunteer day with the kids from YMCA Camp Ockanickon (Medford Township, New Jersey). The youngsters came out for hours of trail work and a small group repainted our wooden trail-map sign. Visitors who wish to conserve paper take a photo



of the trail map with their cell phones and use the photo to navigate our trails. Years of weathering had faded the paint indicating the trails. The paint is now bright and the trails easy to read. Thanks to Camp Ockanickon for spending the day with us!

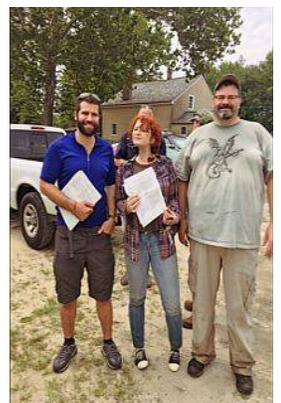
One great trail-protections push

As you may remember, we have problems with off-road vehicle use on the Refuge. People on dirt bikes and all-terrain vehicles illegally drive through sensitive wetland areas, tearing up vegetation, topsoil and the substrate of the water. Along with other impediments, we decided to use some of the trees which were felled during last year's small wildfire. Volunteers came from as far as two hours away to help haul downed trees and brush into the trail, leaving it accessible to pedestrian and wildlife traffic, but making it difficult for vehicles to go through or around. During our work, we found some recently-hatched turtle eggs on the ground next to the trail – a vital reminder of why we work so hard to keep these trails safe.



Alliance with local groups for wetlands protection

I recently joined with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the Pinelands Commission and the Pinelands Protection Alliance under a grant given to the Commission to study the health of vernal ponds (image at left shows one study area) in the Pine Barrens. Also known as intermittent ponds or pools, vernal ponds are an essential wetlands habitat. Containing water only part of the year, these pools cannot support populations of animals or plants dependent on a year-round supply. They are, however, a vital mating, nesting and hatching site for a host of obligate species – species that can survive only in vernal ponds, including a variety of invertebrates and amphibians. We met with a group of dedicated volunteers, including Jason Howell and Mike Kaliss (shown with me in the other image), to start an extended study of the impact of off-road vehicle use on the ponds and to make general health assessments of these important areas.



Threatened eastern box turtles at the Refuge

While volunteering recently, Chris Tlapa took this photo of an eastern box turtle at the Refuge. A threatened species due to habitat loss and fragmentation, affected turtles have difficulty finding food and mates – already a slow-breeding species, these factors have greatly reduced numbers. Eastern box turtles spend their entire lives in a single, small, limited geographical area. As with all turtles, if you find one crossing the road, please stop and help them along their way. Pick them up by the sides of their shell and move them to the other side of the road in the same direction of travel. Never try to “help” turtles by relocating them to another area – they are loyal to their home and can die trying to find their way back.



Cattails at the Refuge – a popular nesting material

Once cattails have gone to seed, the fluffy remains become highly coveted by birds as soft and insulating nesting material. This spring, I set up a chair by the outcrop of cattails and was delighted in the early evenings by the comings and goings of avian visitors. Here are two of my favorites from those evenings, a blue-gray gnatcatcher and a female ruby-throated hummingbird, each pulling at the downy fluff of these popular wetland plants.



Wood duck babies make an appearance

Wood ducks are famously shy. Although I try to get close enough to photograph the local families, I am rarely successful. I usually have to depend on our trail cameras to capture images of these colorful and elusive birds. One afternoon, however, I was surprised by a group of babies swimming right past me as I sat at the edge of the main pond. Luckily, I had a camera and quickly got this photo as the little ones fled. Note the baby in the lead who thought it more prudent to make her or his way on top of the lily pads rather than swim around them!



Great blue heron dries his wings in the sun

I awoke early one morning to this beautiful and sometimes curious-looking sight: A great blue heron sunning his damp wings in the warmth of the rising sun.



A beaver opines on my presence

I thought I was unobtrusively photographing the local beaver family in the main pond. Apparently, one of the beavers thought differently and gave a loud warning slap with her tail before disappearing beneath the surface of the water. I was fortunate to be able to catch the brilliant splash she created.



Help the Refuge by donating your vehicle

Your used or unwanted vehicle can provide funds to us through the CARS vehicle donation program. CARS will accept any vehicle, running or not, and offer free towing throughout the US. Once the vehicle is processed and sold, CARS will donate a majority of the proceeds directly to the Refuge. Call toll-free 855.500.7433 or visit the Refuge CARS page at <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/unexpected-wildlife-refuge> to participate. Rid yourself of an unwanted vehicle and help wildlife at the same time!

Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics newsletter grant

This edition of our newsletter was funded by the cosmetic company Lush (<https://www.lush.com/>). Lush has also provided funds for other finite projects, which we will announce when relevant, but you will need access to our upcoming electronic newsletters, Facebook and Web site if you want to learn about these prior to the next paper newsletter.

Helping wildlife and the Refuge today

Unexpected Wildlife Refuge continues to be an inviolate home and sanctuary for hundreds of animal and plant species; some of these species are highly endangered and our Refuge ensures them the best chance possible for survival. Although we were fortunate this year to receive a small grant from Lush to help with some urgent projects, *this is not the norm and we still depend on the support of our donors to keep the Refuge safe.* 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. *Although we say this in each newsletter, we do desperately need your support right now; we are far short of funds this year.* 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 continue to exceed 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**). I cannot stress enough: This is one of the most important gifts the Refuge can receive. If you have already included us in your future plans, thank you!

For wildlife everywhere, thank you!



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