



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM GREEN HERITAGE

The Newsletter of Monmouth County's Open Space, Parks & Recreation Agency

Vol. 45 No. 1

Spring 2011

OFF-SPRING

It's the season of renewal. Buds and blooms finally reappear to lighten the landscape and as the weather gradually warms up, wildlife seem especially busy building new families. Meet some of the species who have chosen to do so in your county parks.



A peek into the rafters of the Carriage House during a late spring visit to Historic Walnford, Upper Freehold, might reveal this. Often found on farms, the **Barn Swallow** makes a conspicuous nest and its flight pattern (swooping/darting back and forth) and deeply forked tail make it easy to ID.



Interestingly, **Bald Eagle** chicks look nothing like the parents. They have black head feathers, not the striking white head feathers that make this species so instantly recognizable. When breeding is successful, chicks can be seen in the nest March and April (fledging in early May).



By contrast, this second year juvenile **Yellow-Crowned Night Heron** seen in March looks very much like the adult.



Goslings, the offspring of geese, do not have the same tell-tale features as duck chicks. As most readers probably know, **Canada Geese** have become quite a nuisance, and population control efforts reveal they can reproduce more than once a season.



Usually know for being stealthy, the adult **Red Fox** has grown more visible in recent years at Thompson Park, Lincroft.

Perhaps it's the bright red coat? However, this baby peeking out of its foxhole was a rare treat in April, 2008.



Lambs are born each April at Historic Longstreet Farm in Holmdel Park. Visit during Sheep Shearing Days, held this year on Easter Weekend, April 23-24 from 12-3pm, for an in-depth introduction to this gentle species.



One of the most iconic spring species is the **Eastern Bluebird**, seen at parks throughout the county. But did you know? This bright bird with the sweet song is with us year-round--chicks don't appear until spring. The month of May is when the light blue eggs, and then the not-so-pretty chicks, finally emerge.



The chicks of this **Mallard Duck**, with their distinct facial stripe, look like little bandits. This family was seen during Earth Day in April at the Manasquan Reservoir, Howell.



Don't let this innocent look fool you! **Baby skunks** can spray soon after birth, reportedly even before their eyes are fully open!

Continued, next page

**Monmouth County
Board of Chosen
Freeholders**

*Robert D. Clifton, Director
John P. Curley, Deputy Director
Lillian G. Burry
Amy A. Mallet
Thomas A. Arnone*

**Board of Recreation
Commissioners**

*Edward J. Loud, Chairman
Fred J. Rummel, Vice Chairman
Michael G. Harmon
Violeta Peters
N. Britt Raynor
Kevin Mandeville
Thomas E. Hennessy, Jr.
David W. Horsnall
Melvin Hood
James J. Truncer, Secretary-Director*

Green Heritage Staff

*Editor/Writer: Lisa Bonelli
Photographer:
Maribeth Gardner
Graphics: Laurie Marswillo
Questions/Subscriptions:
732-842-4000x4336;
lbonelli@monmouthcountyparks.com*

Off-spring, cont.



Though it may not look like it now, this cute baby **groundhog** will soon learn how to dig tunnels that tear up park lawns and shrubs; a torment to Park Rangers (farmers and homeowners) across the county!



Visitors to Historic Longstreet Farm last May enjoyed an extra surprise as this **male bull calf**—offspring of Laurel the former milking cow—was on display.



When **White Tailed Deer** give birth to their offspring, called fawns, the little ones have distinct white spots in the fur on their backs. This trio was “spotted” in Huber Woods Park, Middletown in June. Like Canada Geese, the deer population has also grown to troubling proportions destroying the forest understory in some parts of the county.

“GREEN” Your Garden

It’s growing season again, and here’s something to consider in terms of selecting plants for your garden. Choose a few that can do double duty: they look nice AND attract beneficial insects/repel detrimental ones. Select plants such as scented geraniums that attract ladybugs, praying mantises and spiders that prey on garden pests. Also, select plants that repel insects such as mint, marigolds and garlic.

Try natural or low-toxicity pesticides such as insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils and diatomaceous earth, which is a natural pest control that can be sprinkled around the garden or home. Mix four tablespoons of liquid dish soap to each gallon of water to make a spray to control insects.



Marigolds are a natural insect repellent.

For more ideas, visit www.epa.gov/p2week/ or www.p2.org/p2-week/get-involved/
Source: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. www.nj.gov/dep

GET ACTIVE WITH THE PARKS IN 2011

If you anticipate some free time in 2011, why not make this the year to volunteer. Community support is more important now than ever as agencies face continued cutbacks. Here are a few ways to lend a hand.

Sign Up and Celebrate as the Friends Turn 20!

Since their founding in 1991, the nonprofit Friends of the Parks organization has become a vital and highly successful Park System partner, now with well over 500 supporting members. To date, they have funded more than \$2 million dollars worth of projects, helping send children to camps, creating educational displays, building accessible playgrounds, purchasing unique historic materials and costumes, and funding special projects such as the county's 9/11 Memorial, and so much more!

Volunteers, who stand out in their bright yellow t-shirts, are energized by the crowds and festive atmosphere at the County Fair, and knowing the 50/50 Raffle is one of the Friends most successful events.



Volunteers are needed for multiple fundraisers held throughout the year. Sell raffle tickets at the Fair or help out at one of many annual events in the parks. Either way, know that your time and energy will come right back to benefit the county's beautiful natural resources. Visit www.friendsofmonmouthcountyparks.com for more information. If you prefer, speak with someone in person. The Friends staff would love to hear from you, call 732-975-9735.

Many Ways to Volunteer, Doing What You Love

Do you like to hike? Can you garden? Are you a wildlife watcher or history buff? Put your green thumb to good use and/or engage your skills for a good cause while volunteering for the parks. Training classes are available soon to get you started this spring. Contact Melissa Kelly, Coordinator of Volunteers at 732-842-4000, ext. 4283 or mkelly@monmouthcountyparks.com.



The trails at Hartshorne Woods Park in Middletown receive attention from Trails Team volunteers. This group has an impressive array of technical skills, which they employ to re-route trails, prune branches, install water bars and complete other feats of nature engineering.

Sign Up to Volunteer!

Pruning Workshop

Help staff keep the parks beautiful! Many gardens, shrubs and trees need regular care and grooming.

Tuesday, April 5, 2011 9am-12noon or Thursday, April 14, 2011 9am-12noon
Thompson Park Visitor Center, Lincroft
(only one session needed)

Beach Nesting Bird Monitor Training

The endangered Piping Plover nests at one of the most populated parks. Help Park Rangers track and protect this vulnerable species.

Sunday, April 17, 2011 12noon-2pm or 2pm-4pm
Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park Activity Center, Long Branch

Volunteer Docent/Receptionist Training

Environmental and Activity Centers throughout the parks need friendly, knowledgeable volunteers to greet visitors and answer phones and questions!

Saturday, May 14, 2011 2pm-4pm
Thompson Park Visitor Center, Lincroft

Trails Team Training

Help keep more than 120 miles of trails clear and in good condition. This is very rewarding, results-oriented work, integral to park operations.

Saturday, May 14, 2011 9am-12pm
Please call for park location

Also, see page 9 for additional volunteer opportunities at Deep Cut Gardens in Middletown.

Open Space Grants Break The “CENTURY” Mark; 13 More Towns Receive Awards In 2010

With the announcement of open space grant awards to thirteen Monmouth County municipalities on December 21, the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders has now awarded over 100 grants since the inception of the County’s Municipal Open Space Grant Program. Since 2003, 45 of Monmouth County’s 53 municipalities have applied for grant funding from this popular program. A total of 43 towns have been awarded over \$17.6 million for 103 local park acquisition and development projects to date.

RECIPIENTS OF 2010 COUNTY OPEN SPACE GRANT AWARDS

Aberdeen	Freneau Lands (Acquisition)	\$250,000
Asbury Park	Springwood Avenue Park and Recreation Area (Development)	\$250,000
Avon-by-the-Sea	Riverfront Park and Marina (Development)	\$250,000
Fair Haven	McCarter Park and Pond Improvements (Development)	\$90,000
Manalapan	Vauxhall Property (Acquisition)	\$225,000
Marlboro	Smith Farm (Acquisition)	\$250,000
Middletown	Ideal Beach Park Improvements – Phase 1 (Development)	\$200,000
Millstone	Millstone Park Improvements – Phase 1	\$200,000
Neptune Township	Wesley Lake Wall Reconstruction (Development)	\$250,000
Oceanport	Maria Gatta Community Park – Phase 1 (Development)	\$25,000
Red Bank	Count Basie Park – Phase 3 (Development)	\$250,000
Union Beach	Scholer Park – Phase 3 (Development)	\$35,000
Wall	Community Park Addition (Acquisition)	\$225,000



Last July, Freeholders Lillian Burry (far left) and Robert Clifton (far right) recognized Keyport Borough Administrator Lorene Wright and Council President Joseph Sheridan for completing 2 of 4 grant projects awarded County funding since 2003.

Get Grant Funding for Projects in Your Town

The annual competitive matching grant program is funded by the County Open Space Trust Fund. Each municipality may file one application a year and is eligible for up to \$250,000. State-designated Urban Aid Communities are responsible for a minimum of 25% of the total eligible project costs; all other municipalities are responsible for a minimum of 50% of the total eligible project costs.

Applications for the 2011 round of County grants for municipal open space projects will be mailed to each Mayor, Clerk and Administrator in May. A September 21 deadline is anticipated.

For more information on the program and copies of the current application form and Policy and Procedures Manual, visit the Park System’s website www.monmouthcountyparks.com and click on Municipal Open Space Program on the homepage “About Us” directory. If you have questions or would like a hard copy of the Manual, please contact the Program Administrator at 732-842-4000, ext. 4472.

ASBURY PARK'S RENAISSANCE: COUNTY HELPS FUND NEW PARK ON SPRINGWOOD AVENUE

Asbury Park is a city in renaissance. The downtown area features an eclectic group of businesses and restaurants that attract customers from throughout the region. There is a buzz about the restaurants and entertainment available in the boardwalk and beachfront area. And now, the Springwood Avenue corridor will be enlivened by a new park, the Springwood Avenue Park and Recreation Area, conceived by local residents to meet the recreation needs of the surrounding community.

Conceived by local residents and funded in part by a county grant, this park project hopes to revitalize a neighborhood in Asbury Park.

The City's grant application describes the Springwood Avenue area as "the most impoverished and densely populated area of the city...plagued by a significant lack of jobs, adequate housing, and recreation facilities." The City Council established the Springwood Avenue Advisory Committee to develop recommendations to address these conditions. After an extensive public process that included multiple community meetings and stakeholder participation, the Springwood Avenue Redevelopment Plan was generated.

THE CONCEPT PLAN FOR SPRINGWOOD AVENUE PARK INCLUDES AMENITIES THAT RESIDENTS SAID WERE IMPORTANT.

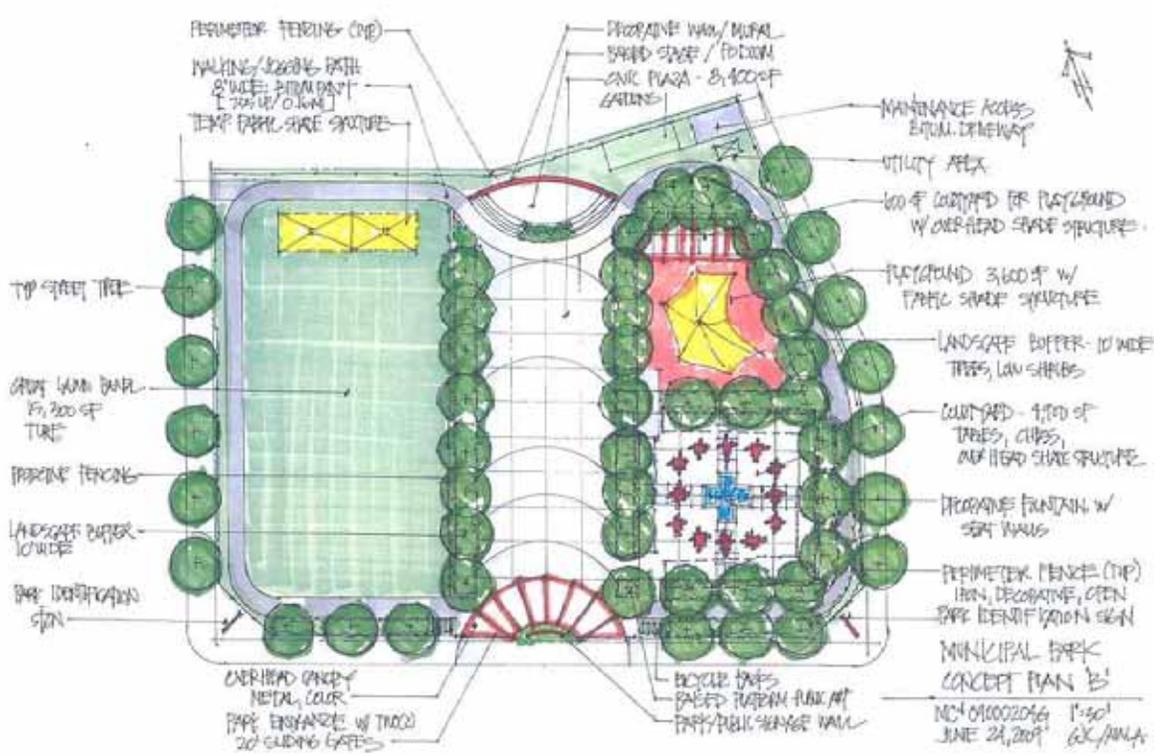
"The Springwood Avenue Recreation Area is the centerpiece of the community redevelopment plan and key to the future of the West Side. Strong funding support from the County for both site acquisition and now development has played a vital role in moving this project forward."

- Asbury Park Mayor Ed Johnson

Echoing a finding of the City Master Plan that cites the "lack of sites for active recreation, pocket parks and playgrounds" as a significant issue, the Redevelopment Plan included a new park as an essential element. The Plan recommended a location along Springwood Avenue to provide easy access to adjoining residential districts, opportunities for active and passive recreation and to serve as a public gathering space. The Advisory Committee and others, working with professionals in the field, developed a design that includes amenities based on community needs and interests.

The final park plan takes full advantage of every inch of the 1.35 acre site. A central plaza with a stage as the focal point at the far end will be used for theatrical performances, farmers' markets and other events. The "great lawn" can support active recreation and community gatherings. Children will love the playground, seniors will gravitate to the courtyard, and people of all ages will use the walking/jogging path that encircles the park. Numerous trees and shade structures will provide welcome relief from the sun on hot summer days and add color to the neighborhood streetscape.

One of the cornerstones of the Monmouth County Municipal Open Space Grant Program is the goal of expanding recreation opportunities to the residents of Monmouth County. Factors considered in evaluating the applications include whether the project is included in an adopted plan, whether it addresses documented local needs, whether it has community support, and whether it serves a State-designated Urban Aid Community. For the City of Asbury Park's 2010 grant application for the development of the Springwood Avenue Park and Recreation Area, the answer was Yes, Yes, Yes and Yes!





Rose hips...what remains after the rose flower has bloomed. Most growers cut this portion off to force the plant to flower again.

HAVE YOUR GARDEN, AND EAT IT TOO

With increasing interest in living “greener,” the economy, food quality and safety, people are seeking to make their yards more productive. There is no need, however, to hide the vegetable garden in a back corner, or sacrifice an attractive landscape. Remember that many of the ornamental plants in our gardens - such as nasturtium, daylily, rose, violet and lavender - were initially cultivated for their medicinal, aromatic or edible qualities. Increasingly today, people are integrating food-producing plants into their other landscape plantings.



This backyard is a mixture of wildflower and vegetables beds, with some beds serving as both. The one bed dedicated primarily to vegetables is located in back to the right underneath the arborvitae.

Edible Ornamentals: Easier Than You Might Think

First, plant what you enjoy and start small, possibly with herbs, which are very easy. To allow for easy access, keep beds to a maximum of three feet. Group plants with similar needs together, and avoid plants that re-seed heavily (tomatillo and fennel). With the exception of acid-loving blueberries and herbs that prefer lean, dry soil (such as rosemary, lavender and thyme) most edible plants will be happy in the same soil as common ornamentals: a well-drained loam rich in organic matter, just slightly acidic to neutral (pH = 6.2-6.8).



These Mediterranean herbs thrive in full sun and a fast-draining soil: (clockwise from 12:00) rosemary, ornamental oregano, lavender, Greek oregano, thyme, and germander. NOTE: The flower in the middle is the non-edible geranium.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT PESTICIDE USE...

Many pesticides are not labeled for use on food crops; do not use these products near your edibles. Fortunately, mixed plantings discourage the spread of pests and disease while encouraging beneficial insects and birds. You can also minimize problems by:

- Selecting disease-resistant varieties
- Providing good air circulation
- Planting in the correct location (soil type, sun, etc.)
- Using companion plants

Be vigilant for early symptoms so you can take quick action. Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies, tried-and-true home remedies, and, when necessary, organic pesticides. If you are not familiar with these, visit Deep Cut Gardens Horticultural Library.

Fruit and Nut Trees

Fruit and nut trees provide cooling shade in summer, structure in winter, and a splash of color with spring blossoms and fall foliage. Dwarf varieties are well-suited to smaller spaces and make pruning and harvesting easier, while full size trees provide more shade. Fruiting shrubs can be mixed into foundation plantings or shrub borders. Blueberry and serviceberry (amelanchier) are good choices because they are native to this region and are relatively free of pests and diseases.



Beautiful white flower clusters precede the deep blue blueberry fruit.

Incorporating Edibles

There are some edible perennials such as asparagus and rhubarb, but most regional favorites are annuals that must be replanted every year.



The All-America Selections at Deep Cut Gardens is a beautiful demonstration of how edible ornamentals look mixed into the landscape. Leafy zucchini, eggplant, and spiky onions grow along the fence. Volunteers are weeding a bed with chives, flowers and crisp lettuces.

Low-growing, compact plants can be used to edge beds and walkways. Those that can tolerate some shade, such as alpine strawberry, sweet woodruff and creeping thyme make a good groundcover beneath trees, shrubs or taller herbaceous plants.



The white flower of a wild alpine strawberry. That yellow center will eventually mature into the red berry.

Traditional Vegetables

Carrots, beets, onions, leeks, and leafy crops like lettuces and kale, will leave “holes” in the garden when harvested. Prepare seedlings of succession crops (sow seeds 2-3 weeks after your vegetables) to fill in the void. Dwarf nasturtium, alyssum and lobelia are a few excellent candidates. All-time favorites like tomatoes, peppers and eggplants on the other hand, will remain in place throughout the season.

Vine plants like peas, beans and cucumbers trained on a trellis make an excellent backdrop or screen. Peppers and eggplants are beautiful plants, with the bonus of colorful fruits. Brighten your garden with peppers in yellow, orange, purple or chartreuse, as well as red or green. Eggplants come in all sizes and shapes: tiny round green ‘Kermit,’ slender purple ‘Ichiban,’ pure white ‘Gretel,’ and the heirloom ‘Rosa Bianca’ with a satiny white skin brushed with mauve-purple.



These red peppers mix beautifully with the yellow rudbeckia, in the garden pictured on the previous page.

“When gardeners garden, it is not just the plants that grow, but the gardeners themselves.”

—Ken Druse

Hummingbirds At Home In Your Garden

In January, the ruby throated hummingbird, fattened on insects and spiders, begins its northward migration from Central America. It usually arrives in NJ in early April.

The easiest and best way to attract these fascinating little birds is to provide them with a natural diet and suitable habitat. Although they follow a regular route, usually returning to the same place each year, they are inquisitive and will investigate any new source of food.

A variety of flowering annuals, perennials, vines, shrubs and trees that provide a succession of bloom will improve your chances for having hummers throughout the season. Like most other birds, they have no sense of smell, so fragrance not important. Rather, they are attracted to tubular flowers, those that produce plenty of nectar, and the colors red, pink and orange.

Hummingbirds are attracted to tubular flowers, those that produce plenty of nectar, and the colors red, pink and orange.

Avoid using pesticides on or near your hummingbird plants; pesticides will eliminate the small insects and spiders these tiny carnivores rely on for protein. (The nectar they seek provides energy for their high level of activity.) Furthermore, if ingested, the pesticide could harm the bird.

If you wish to put out a hummingbird feeder, replace the nectar every day and empty the feeder every 4-5 days, thoroughly clean it with hot water and a little vinegar (then rinse), to prevent mold. In addition to food, the birds will appreciate a source of fresh water and tree branches/thickets for perching and, if you're lucky, nesting.

As the days shorten the hummers follow the sun southward, since they are not well-adapted to cold temperatures. This can begin as early as mid-July, peaking between late August and mid-September. By mid- to late-September, your garden may be visited by hummers from farther north as they journey southward.



A female ruby throated hummingbird at a feeder in NJ. (The "ruby throat," after which this bird is named, is visible only on the male.)

Each spring the northward migration of the ruby-throated hummingbird is tracked online at <http://www.hummingbirds.net/map.html>. Following are some good choices to lure them into your garden:

- Anise hyssop (*Agastache*)
- Beardtongue (*Penstemon*)
- Bee balm (*Monarda*)
- Canada lily (*Lilium canadense*)
- Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
- Native honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)
- Red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)
- Spotted jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*)



Bee Balm (Monarda).

It's Deep Cut's Open House, FREE!

Everyone is Welcome

Sunday, June 12, 10am-3pm

A day of horticultural delights for the family - free guided tours, lectures, demonstrations, activities for children, gardening advice and more.



It's Time To...

April ✓

- Work compost and manure into beds as soon as soil is friable. If you aren't composting, check out the Home Composting Demonstration Site at Deep Cut to learn more.
- Prune roses when the buds begin to swell. Cut back blue mist shrub, red twig dogwoods, and ornamental grasses almost to ground level.
- Set out supports where needed before plants get too large.
- Set out hardy annuals such as pansies, violas and alyssum. Harden off plants started indoors or under cover.



Can you recognize this hardy, early spring flower? It is making an appearance here in a less-well-known color than usual. A visit to the Horticultural Library at Deep Cut Gardens can help you find the answer.

- When applying granular fertilizer, don't let it touch plant foliage (it will burn).
- Overseed lawn; prepare poor spots by loosening soil.
- If using pre-emergent weed-killer, use early this month.
- Plant trees, shrubs and perennials and water for 30 minutes 2-3 times a week now through June.
- Most annual and perennial seeds can be started late this month.
- Begin weeding where necessary and continue throughout the growing season.

May ✓

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs as soon as flowering is finished.
- Leave bulb foliage until it has died – green foliage is making food for next year's bloom.
- Chemical controls will be ineffective against grubs now; wait until Mid-July or August.
- Begin planting annuals outside after the last frost. Wait until the soil warms to transplant heat-lovers like tomatoes, peppers and dahlias.
- Transplant seedlings on a cloudy day or provide temporary shade.
- Pinching off flowers and buds now will encourage a stronger root system.
- Remove any finished cool weather crops to make room for warm season vegetables.
- Directly sow seeds outdoors for basil, beans and other warm-weather plants.
- Mulch plants to conserve moisture, stabilize soil temperature and reduce weeds.
- Acclimate houseplants to outdoor conditions and keep them in light shade.

Stake your lilies in June and if they thrive in July, consider entering them in the Home & Garden Competition at the Monmouth County Fair, Wed-Sun, July 27-31, 2011.



June ✓

- Continue to plant warm-weather flowers, vegetables and herbs. Water-in thoroughly and make sure they are well mulched.
- Check squash vines for borers and remove any you find.
- Keep after plants that need staking, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, tall annuals, dahlias and lilies.
- Save the date for the Deep Cut Gardens Open House, Sunday, June 12, 10am-3pm. Free garden tours, lectures, demonstrations, activities and more.

Volunteer Drop-in Days Begin April 13th

Wednesdays & Saturdays, 9am-12 noon
April 13 - October 29, 2011

Stop in at Deep Cut Gardens to assist on these dates and times.

Daylily Day at Deep Cut Gardens

Saturday, June 25, 10am-2pm

Free horticultural advice,
displays & garden design ideas

CORNER

NATURE



Brrrrr....winter at the Manasquan Reservoir

HOW BIRDS SURVIVE THE HARSH WINTER

Tanya Dinova, Park Naturalist

Life certainly slows down in winter. While most human visitors retreated back into the coziness of their homes for a cup of hot cocoa or the warmth of their fireplace, a few hearty birds hung around despite the cold weather, freezing water and strong winds. Not all birds fly to warmer grounds in winter.

For many species, the picturesque Manasquan Reservoir was a popular spot even during the most frigid days of the year. The 770 acres of open water provided migratory water fowl such as Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Redhead, American Wigeon, Common Goldeneye, and Hooded and Common Merganser with food and shelter for several months.

Some Common Birds of Winter...



Hooded Merganser



Red-throated Loon



American Coot



The American Wigeon is pictured right. That's a Eurasian Wigeon on the left.

So how do these birds cope with the freezing winter temperatures? Many visitors to the Reservoir ask that question every day, after seeing the flocks of birds floating in the partially frozen reservoir.

Bird Body Temperatures

Birds are warm-blooded animals with a higher metabolism than people, and thus a higher body temperature: on average 105° F (40° C). We humans require many layers of clothes, boots, hats and mittens to keep warm, and we only have to get our temperature up to 98.6° F. Imagine a little chickadee outdoors in winter! His system has to work super fast to stay at 104° F. The cold winter environment can make life very challenging for the birds, and smaller birds are particularly at risk since they have a proportionally larger surface area on their bodies to lose heat, but a smaller core volume to generate it.

Even the smallest birds, however, have several ways they can efficiently keep warm. Survival drove animals to evolve, adapt and cope. As a result birds are equipped with a number of physiological and behavioral adaptations to help them survive the harsh winters and freezing temperatures.

Feathers—Nature's Coat

There is no doubt why birds have feathers. Because of them, birds stay warm and dry. Feathers provide a remarkable insulation against the cold and many birds grow extra feathers during the fall as a part of the new molt. It is vital, however, that feathers stay dry. I have seen birds

spend hours bobbing around in water barely above freezing temperature. You know I am talking about ducks, of course. Their coats are waterproof. But what about their legs and feet? These have no fat storage and no feather coat. You may think they get very bad frostbite, but do they?



Northern Shoveler Duck pair, male (back) and female

Rete Mirabile—Nature’s Snow Boots

Birds with webbed feet have an advantage against the cold, a special blood circulatory system called Rete mirabile to help them limit body heat lost to the cold environments in which they live. The term rete mirabile is Latin for “wonderful net” and it is wonderful indeed. This system of veins and arteries is packed very close together in the legs and feet. Heat is transferred efficiently from the outgoing (hot) blood in the arteries to the incoming (cold) blood in the veins. The net effect is that the internal temperature of the feet is much closer to the warm temperature inside the body, thus reducing heat loss to the colder environment outside. Remember, heat flows naturally from from a hotter to colder environment.

Daily Torpor, A Kind of Hibernation for the Birds

Some birds cope with the harsh winter temperatures at night by lowering their body temperature. Going into daily torpor is common for many small birds. This condition is very similar to hibernation, but it only lasts for a few hours at a time as opposed to several months. During torpor, birds reduce their body temperature and slow their rate of metabolism, thus saving energy that would normally be used to maintain a high body temperature.

Snuggling Conserves Heat

Roosting together in a flock helps protect birds from the wind and conserves their body heat for a longer period of time. Many small birds, including the Chickadee and Titmouse, will gather in flocks at night and crowd themselves together in a small, tight space to share body heat. Their preferred roosting sites are tree cavities, empty birdhouses, shrubbery, and evergreens. It is not uncommon for birds to select roosting sites that will have accumulated and stored sun energy from that day, near dark surfaces (such as paved parking lots) for example.



The Caroline Chickadee is one species that likes to flock together at night to stay warm.

“Tucking” (It Explains Certain Bird Postures)

Have you ever seen a bird standing on one leg? Or standing with her beak stuffed into her feathers? To stay warm often birds will stand on one leg or crouched to cover both legs with their feathers to shield them from the cold. They can also tuck their bills into their shoulder feathers for protection from the cold winds.



This Robin (left) is crouched over both legs to stay warm while the Cedar Waxwing (note the bright yellow tipped tail!) doesn't seem bothered by the weather.

Sunbathing for Warmth

Even though winter can be very cold, there are times when the sun’s direct rays can provide warmth. It is during these days that you can see our feathered friends sunbathing. They will sit with their backs to the sun and feathers slightly fluffed, so the warm sun can get to their skin. Having their backs warmed up is not a coincidence, it is the most efficient way to heat up since the back is the largest surface area of their body.



This Peregrine Falcon has its back to the sun.

Smart Foraging

To preserve energy and to achieve maximum efficiency, birds forage for food during the warmest time of the day. In addition to selecting the best time to feed, birds will also select their type of food. It has been suggested that given a choice of different grains, birds will feed on the larger ones, thus spending the least amount of energy to gain the most calories.



It looks as though this Robin HAS selected the largest berry!

References

Wetmore, Alexander. “Water, Prey, and Game Birds of North America” National Geographic Society 1973
 Rand, Austin. “American Water and Game Birds” E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc New York 1956



GREEN HERITAGE

805 Newman Springs Road, Lincroft, NJ 07738-1695

Volume 45, No.1 Spring 2011

G11033-2/11

PRSR.T. STD.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MONMOUTH CO.
PARK SYSTEM

EAGLE UPDATE!

In November 2010, our resident pair of Bald Eagles at the Manasquan Reservoir worked on their nest. In December, they perched in trees near the Environmental Center (a territory usually occupied by ospreys during summer) and were seen locking talons in mid air, offering each other fish, and mating. Their main meals were Coots, a small black duck-like bird, freshly caught from the reservoir. (They were rarely observed catching fish). The New Year brought new life when it was discovered on January 5th that the pair were incubating at least one egg. They took turns sitting diligently in the nest to keep the egg warm and protect against squirrels, crows, and gulls—who would try to break open the egg and eat it. Threats continued when a juvenile Bald Eagle was spotted frequently flying over the nest, gradually getting closer, to challenge the current mother.



These two Bald Eagles make a striking pair.

OSPREY UPDATE!

During late fall, the top of the tree with the Osprey nest fell into the reservoir! These trees have now been under water for almost 20 years; time enough to rot and die. Naturalists expect the Osprey pair who have been using this nest for the past few years to return. When the male reappears (usually around St. Patrick's Day) he will be challenged to find another suitable territory to build his nest.



Time takes a toll at the Manasquan Reservoir.

Did the eagle egg (or eggs???) survive the winter? Did the ospreys find a new nest? Visit the Manasquan Reservoir in person or the Natural Resources/ Nature Now page of the Park System website at www.monmouthcountyparks.com to find out.



Visit www.monmouthcountyparks.com