



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM GREEN HERITAGE

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

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Projects in Profile

TRAILS, GOLF COURSES & NEW TRAILS AT GOLF COURSES

Visitation to the County parks and golf courses topped 5.5 million in 2010; this number reflects an increase of almost 20% in just the past 5 years. To maintain the high standards that visitors expect and enjoy, the Park System has been making regular improvements.

IMPROVED! Bel-Aire Golf Course

Public golf courses offer a high quality, affordable golf experience to area residents and among the county courses, Bel-Aire in Wall Township stands out as a particularly user-friendly and accessible site. It offers walk-on play (no reservation needed), two executive courses at one location (18-hole and 9-hole), and a welcoming atmosphere for beginners, children, seniors, and those with a higher handicap. Plus, it is open year-round.



Construction of the new irrigation pond (above) is shown here nearing completion in July 2011. The pump station for this pond was recycled from another golf course and the irrigation lines (right) for all the new golf holes were completed by park staff.



Two of the challenges this course faced in the past were the aging irrigation system (dating back to when the course was first built in the early 1960s) and close proximity to several neighboring homes. When the Park System made a few critical land acquisitions in recent years, they provided enough extra space to update the irrigation system and make changes to the course.



A golfer contemplates a tee shot over the new irrigation pond, an added feature on the newly built #7 hole (par 4).

The new irrigation pond is now a challenge feature on the 7th hole, and thoughtful design of the new 7th and 8th holes created refreshing landscape features such as hills, mounds and grassy buffer zones. Extension of the 10th hole also created a challenging new length of play (305/245 yards) not formerly seen at this course.



Golfers walk past new hills that obscure the view of Campbell Rd., located along the new hole #7.



At the new hole #8, this grassy embankment (left) blocks the view of a neighbor's pool.

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NEW! Union Transportation Trail (UTT)

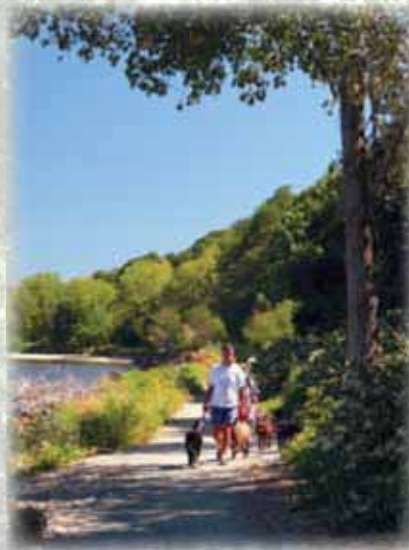
Trails are the Park System's most popular feature. In 2010, Monmouth County opened the first 2 miles of its second converted railway, the Union Transportation Trail in Upper Freehold. Miles 3 and 4 will open this fall. Read all about it on pages 4-5.



NEW & IMPROVED! Henry Hudson Trail (HHT)

The county's first converted railway, the Henry Hudson Trail, received these recent upgrades:

- **Popamora Point:** A scenic 1 mile trail section along Sandy Hook Bay in the Highlands leads to a new area with parking, bathrooms and a beautiful beachfront.



The HHT North is particularly scenic along the water near Popamora Point.

- **Share the Road:** A signed, on-street bicycle route that connects two sections of trail between the Activity Center in Leonardo and the Highlands Marina.
- **New Trail Access:** Parking is now available at Big Brook Park, Marlboro.



This new parking area for the HHT is also the first formal public access point into Big Brook Park, which may already be known to birders for its abundant grassy fields, and to local residents for sharing an entrance with YMCA Camp Arrowhead on Route 520/Newman Springs Road.

NEW! A Trail at Hominy Hill Golf Course

The Park System recently opened a new trail and parking area so visitors can enjoy a walk, run or ride horses in the woods next to Hominy Hill Golf Course in Colts Neck. Now, people who do not play golf can still enjoy this beautiful property. By the way, this is the Park System's second multi-use trail adjacent to a golf course; the first is the 2 mile Stone Bridge Trail at Charleston Springs in Millstone, on Stagecoach Rd./Rt. 524.



As with all the county parks, brown road signs will guide drivers past the entrance to Hominy Hill on their way to the new 1 mile trail.



The trail beckons... just pass the main entrance and turn right on Matthews Rd.



One of two wooden bridges over scenic local streams.

Horses? Of Course! At Sunnyside Rec Area, Lincroft

Looking for a unique way to appreciate nature? Why not get to know the horses at Sunnyside? Home to the Park System's Therapeutic Riding Program, this facility now offers formal and informal opportunities to get you started--whether you are a horse-owner or just wish to learn more.

Stop By for a Casual Visit (Open to All)

With 20 horses on-site, friendly staff, an indoor riding arena and outdoor ring, it is a relaxed site to get to know this elegant species. Watch as staff and volunteers groom the equine residents and prepare them for their "work." Visitors are welcome weekdays 8am-4pm; weekends 8am-3pm.

Get to Know the Horses

Of course, riding lessons are available—including a new Silver Spurs class for the 55+ crowd. But there are also programs to simply learn more about horses, such as Herd Observation and Equestrian Experience.

And, did you know? Staff recently offered a "Paint a Pony" craft where children actually got to paint a horse? (using a safe, non-toxic wet chalk of course!)

Learn New Training Techniques

Natural Hoof Care and Horsemanship programs are just some of the recent offerings for horse trainers, owners and riders. This past summer, the site offered a series of Parelli Natural Horsemanship Demonstrations, using methods based on the way horses relate in the natural world. Workshops were held to help people better understand a horse's instincts, strengths and sensitivities, using that to develop a calm and productive relationship. Two-way communication skills between rider and horse were practiced through a series of seven games, and other techniques.



Visitors are welcome to stop by and meet the horses.



Parelli Instructor Bekah Koutsos demonstrates some skills she has mastered employing the principals of the Parelli method in her training.



Programs at Sunnyside include Equestrian Experience, where visitors get to groom and interact with the horses.



The Equestrian Facility at Sunnyside Recreation Area. Sunnyside was the first park site to install solar panels for energy, visible in this aerial photo.



Sunnyside is home to the Park System's Therapeutic Riding Program—Special People United to Ride (SPUR)—and other equestrian programs for all levels of interest.

NEED ANOTHER REASON TO VISIT SUNNYSIDE? THE SITE RECENTLY ADOPTED TWO AMERICAN MUSTANGS

In June, a three year old mustang named RU Shy Anne and her almost two month old foal, RU Skylark arrived from Rutgers University. Shy and Sky, as they are known, will act as educational ambassadors for their kind, allowing park visitors to learn about "wild" horses that are a symbol of the American West.

Shy Anne was one of the mustangs acquired by Rutgers to be part of the Young Horse Teaching and Research Program. Students cared for and trained them for later auction to approved homes. Shy, who surprised everyone by being pregnant, was not auctioned and her foal, Sky, was born on April 12, 2011 at Rutgers. Sky's sire is unknown but is certainly a mustang that she came in contact with while in the care of the Bureau of Land Management, possibly in Wyoming.

While these mustangs were not acquired as therapy horses, time will tell if they might work in the SPUR Therapeutic Riding program some day. Already they are a topic of conversation during lessons, and young Sky finds playing with the toys and objects to be great fun. Staffers feel it is never too early to expose a young horse to unusual objects so that she does not grow up to fear such things, employing natural principals of the Parelli method to their training.

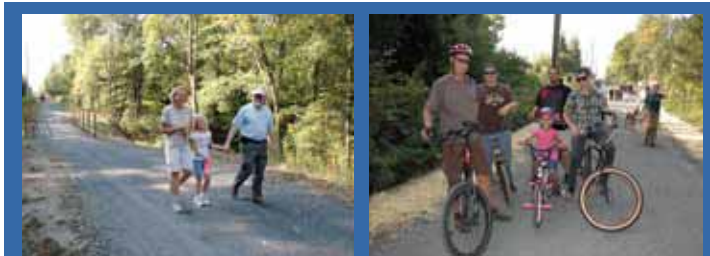


Sunnyside's newest additions, Sky (left) and Shy.

Introducing...

THE UNION TRANSPORTATION TRAIL

There was great local turnout for the September 2010 official opening of the first two miles of the Union Transportation Trail (UTT) in Upper Freehold Township. And during this past year, the trail developed a dedicated group of regular users seeking a safe and scenic corridor to walk, jog, bicycle and ride horses.



Walkers, bicyclists and many others enjoyed the official opening of the UTT.

The first 2-mile section of the gravel trail begins just off Rt. 537, the dividing line between Monmouth and Ocean County near Lahaway Creek. Since portions of the trail pass over some local streams and tributaries, the UTT features a number of small bridges and culverts (tunnels for water to pass under), including a 120 foot long rehabilitated wood trestle that passes over Lahaway Creek.



These photos of the trestle bridge rehabilitation over Lahaway Creek hint at the trail's past use as a railroad.

The "overnight success" of the Park System's second rail-trail, which will double to four miles in length, has been over 20 years in the making and we're not done yet!

Looking Back: Success of First Rail-Trail Spurs Another

The county's first rail-trail, the Henry Hudson Trail (HHT), was in the works when the Park System recommended converting the 8.6 mile "Old Union Railroad" in the 1991 Monmouth County Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan.



The county's first converted railway trail, the HHT is primarily paved, while the UTT is gravel-surfaced.

This short line railroad provided local dairies and farms with access to larger railroads at junctions in Pemberton (Burlington County) and Hightstown (Mercer County) from 1868 until 1977. Formerly owned by the Pemberton & Hightstown Railroad, the majority of this railroad right-of-way was purchased by Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L).

The instant popularity of the HHT when it first opened in phases in the Bayshore from 1992 to 1995, confirmed the desirability of converting another right-of-way in a different part of the county. The Park System first contacted JCP&L regarding this objective in May 1995 and within a month, JCP&L expressed its agreement to the concept. The actual conveyance of a permanent easement did not happen until October 1998. It was then added to the Park System's roster of park areas and formally named the Union Transportation Trail by the Board of Recreation Commissioners.

Improvements to the JCP&L right-of-way were placed on the back burner for more than a decade as the Park System focused on extending the HHT. This involved constructing a 9-mile extension from Aberdeen to Freehold Borough and acquiring several adjacent parcels of land for parking and trail access.



Besides bridges, another major construction project when converting railways are rehabilitating the culverts, shown here for the HHT (left in 2002) and UTT (right in 2009).

UTT Work Begins After HHT Nearly Complete

With the HHT project substantially complete in 2005, the Park System began the process of funding to convert the UTT into a usable trail, a multi-year project which was to occur in phases. Allocations for design, permitting, survey and title work, and construction were included in the agency's capital budget requests for four straight years, 2007-2010.

The experience of developing the Henry Hudson Trail proved valuable to this project, but linear trail development is inherently a very complex process.

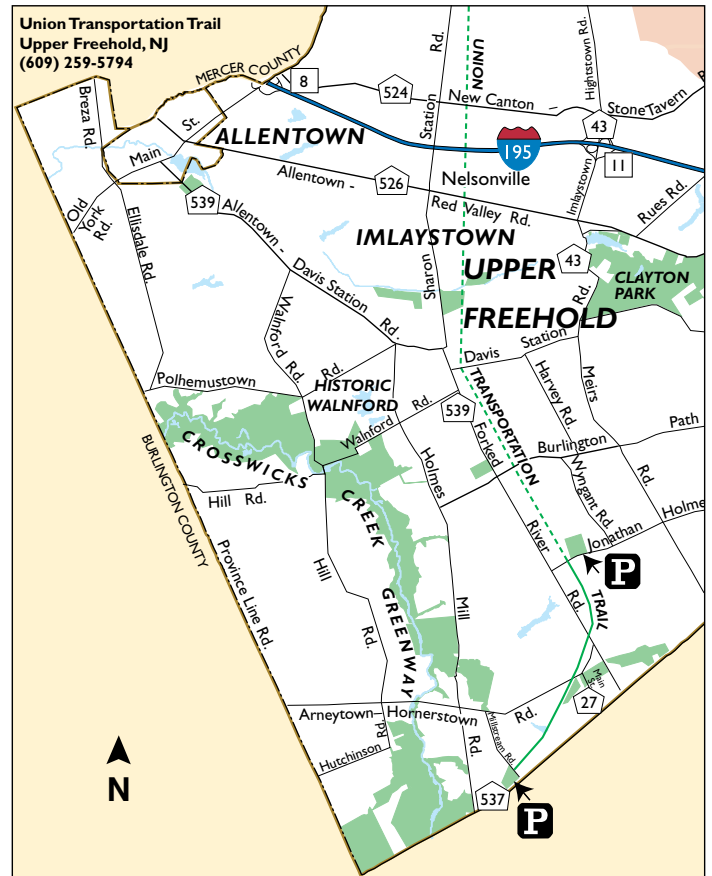
In addition to building the trail itself, the UTT will require repair/replacement of 10 bridges and culverts, and construction of 4 new parking lots and 11 marked street crossings.

In addition to the ten bridges and culverts that will be replaced or repaired along the entire Union Transportation Trail, there are four new parking areas

and eleven marked street crossings. These projects are in addition to clearing and improving the trail surface itself and resolving pre-existing encroachments by neighboring land uses.

Looking Ahead

By the end of 2012, the entire 8.6 miles stretching from Monmouth County's border with Ocean County to its border with Mercer County should be complete. The existing parking lots/access points at Millstream Road and Jonathan Holmes Road will be joined by two additional lots at Doctors Creek and Herbert Road.



The first 2-mile section of the UTT opened in September 2010, miles 3 & 4 scheduled to open in September 2011 with the remainder of the trail opening by the end of 2012.

Long range plans, still in the conceptual stages, include trail connections to Clayton Park, Historic Walford and Crosswicks Creek Greenway. *As a final note, the Park System would like to give special thanks to JCP&L and its parent company FirstEnergy Corporation for their generosity in granting the easement that made this beautiful trail possible.*

For the most up-to-date trail news and trail maps visit: www.monmouthcountyparks.com



The UTT has an elaborate crossing over Route 539 involving plenty of signage, pavement markings, and solar powered crossing lights.

Diane Allen, Staff Horticulturalist

GARLIC!

The description for many of the newly available, so-called “gourmet” garlics reads like an entry for a fine wine or cheese, with references to a *top-note* and *finish*. With flavors from mild to very strong, and even hot, there’s a garlic suited for every taste and most every style of cooking.



Garlic bulbs

USDA Hunts Garlic in Former Soviet Bloc

Historic references to garlic date back as far as 4,000 years, from Egypt to China. And while garlic may have grown in an area extending just as far, its place of origin is Central Asia – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, etc.

Garlic originated thousands of years ago in Central Asia –Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, etc.

For many years, requests from the US Department of Agriculture to search out new varieties from this region were denied, as this area was also home to many Soviet missile bases and the spaceport. But when the political climate in the Soviet Union began to change in 1989, the USDA received an unexpected invitation to conduct their search. Traveling at night and under guard, they combed the countryside for different varieties of garlic, often naming them after the villages in which they were found.

Back in the US, since there were no USDA sites available for growing the garlic, the agency made arrangements with several growers to grow out the found varieties on a sharing basis. After the USDA took the portion it needed, the rest was left for the grower to use or distribute as desired.

Growing Your Own Garlic



Break the bulbs apart. Leave the skin on, and plant pointy side up.



Prepare the soil to plant individual cloves, 4-6” apart

All you need is a small plot of ground in full sun, with loose, well-drained soil, rich in nutrients and organic matter. A raised bed can help with drainage (and make planting/cultivation a lot easier on one’s back!) The best time to plant garlic is mid-October. Just like the familiar spring-flowering bulbs, each clove will begin putting out a root system before winter sets in, and may even send up a green shoot which may show additional growth during mild spells in the winter.

After the soil has been prepared, carefully break the bulb apart and plant the individual garlic cloves 4-6” apart and about 1-2” deep, then gently water in. Leave the papery skin on the cloves, and plant them pointed side up, flat side down.

Apply a winter mulch after the first hard frost. Aside from ensuring that the soil does not get overly dry and the bed remains weed free, the garlic will require little care until spring, when you will see those shoots beginning to grow with vigor. At this time, a side-dressing of compost and/or fertilizer is advisable. Pest and disease problems are few, but be sure to continue to remove any weeds and water as needed.



Spring garlic

Some varieties of garlic will send up a scape, or flower stalk, which you should cut off so the plant will put all its strength into the developing bulb. These scapes are prized in Asian cooking and make a nice addition to salads, stir-fry, and many other dishes. Rinsed and placed in a bag, they will keep for a week or more in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator.

Depending upon variety and the weather, the garlic will be ready to harvest between June and July. When the leaves have turned yellow or brown, it is time to harvest. Withhold water for a week before harvesting, then gently remove the plant, leaving the stalk attached to the bulb.

Planted garlic in mid-October should be ready to harvest in June-July. Allow 2-4 weeks for drying.

Tie the stalks securely and hang to dry in a well-ventilated area out of direct sunlight. Once dry and the outer skin is papery (about 2-4 weeks), remove the stalks and store the garlic in a well-ventilated, dark location until use. You may wish to set aside the largest bulbs to plant next year for your next crop.

This method works with ordinary garlic of course, but if you are adventurous, check through seed catalogs and online sources for some of the rare garlics and give them a try. As interest in garlic has increased, so have garlic festivals. The one closest to our area is the Hudson Valley Garlic Festival in Saugerties, NY held every September. For more information, check their website at <http://hvgf.org/>



Cut off the garlic scape, to ensure the bulb develops.



Garlic Facts & Folklore

As one of the oldest and most widely cultivated plants, garlic has acquired a folklore rich enough to match its characteristics.

- Medicinal applications of garlic are as old and as varied as its culinary uses; it has been recommended for a host of ailments from the common cold to cardiovascular disease. Our ancestors may not have been so far off, as garlic has been shown to have antiviral, antibacterial and antifungal properties, and research is confirming its general health benefits and efficacy in treating many disorders.
- Various forms of garlic, from a single clove to a braid or wreath, are credited with benefits, from bringing courage or good luck to keeping evil spirits away.
- Gardeners have found many uses for garlic as a companion plant. Believed to repel aphids, Japanese beetles, borers and moles, it is often recommended as a companion to roses, lettuce, peas, and fruit trees, or as a border around the garden.
- There are two main types of garlic – the hardneck varieties, which are generally better suited to cooler climates, and the softneck varieties, which generally prefer warmer climates with mild winters.
- Elephant garlic is not really garlic, but is actually a type of leek.
- Garlic will become milder the longer it is cooked. However, it burns easily, so either very brief cooking or long and slow cooking is recommended.
- **When making homemade herb-and-garlic infused oils, be sure to refrigerate the oil and use it within 1-2 weeks.** Commercial products contain an acidifying agent to prevent the growth of the bacterium that causes botulism.



Shrimp Scampi, a classic garlic recipe.



Homemade, herb-and-garlic infused oil must be refrigerated and used within 1-2 weeks.

WHEN AUTUMN ARRIVES



With its cooler temperatures and shorter days, most people reluctantly put their gardens “to bed” and return to the indoors in the fall. But there is no reason why gardeners can’t bring some of their beloved plants inside with them.

This is the perfect time to explore ways of using plants in cooking, crafts and home décor. Plus, hand-made gifts using herbs, flowers or foliage from one’s own garden can make upcoming holidays very special.



Among the crafts you can make from plant materials are these woven figurines from straw and raffia (right) or this wreath of dried flowers and grasses glued to a grape vine (above).



The Elvin McDonald Horticultural Library at Deep Cut Gardens specializes in resources for using your plants in countless ways. Some books give step-by-step instructions while others simply inspire with beautiful illustrations. Still others suggest the best plant materials and how to preserve them.

From herb-infused vinegars to rose potpourris to evergreen wreaths there is a project for everyone and a book to guide you along through completion. Here’s a selection of library resources to get you started, a more complete list is available at the library.

Herbal Treasures: Month-by-Month Projects

The Potpourri Gardener

The Complete Book of Garlands

Gifts and Crafts from the Garden

How to Arrange Dried Florals if You Think You Can’t
Enchanted Circles

Martha Stewart’s Flower Arranging

Nature Printing



Plan a visit to Deep Cut Gardens during fall, when blooming landscapes like this can be appreciated through October.

It's Time To...



October ✓

- You can plant grass seed the first two weeks of this month. Apply low-nitrogen lawn fertilizer.
- Prepare new beds for spring planting: have soil tested for fertility and pH, then work in amendments.
- Plant new trees and shrubs now so they can develop new roots before soil temperatures drop; mulch and water well.
- Lift corms and bulbs of begonia, caladium, calla and gladiola; lift dahlia and canna after blackened by frost.
- Clean up gardens and discard foliage of any disease-prone perennials, but leave those that provide winter interest and seeds for the birds.
- This is a good time to be sure plants are labeled.
- Plant pansies/ornamental cabbages for fall color, bulbs for next spring.
- A sheet will protect the last fruits in the garden from a light frost.
- Plant garlic about 4-6" apart in a rich sandy loam.
- Water lawns, beds, shrubs and trees only if needed to ensure they go into winter well hydrated.
- Apply compost over beds to improve the soil for next season



October—Plant garlic

November ✓

- Apply mulch or leaf mold to gardens after the first hard frost.
- Turn your compost pile after frost hits to deter over-wintering rodents.
- Do a final clean-up of beds and lawns. Set aside interesting pods and such to incorporate in seasonal décor.
- Plant any remaining bulbs.
- Clean and store tools until spring. Store fertilizers and other materials where granulars will stay dry and liquids frost-free.
- Pot amaryllis bulbs every few weeks beginning mid-month for blooms through the winter.



November—Clean Tools

December ✓

- Apply a winter mulch of shredded oak leaves around azaleas, rhododendrons, pieris and other acid-loving plants.
- Ventilate cold frames when the weather is mild.
- Keep houseplants dust-free by gently spraying with tepid water. Fertilize at half-strength until active growth resumes.
- Feed the birds, especially when the ground is snow-covered.



December—Clean and “half-fertilize” houseplants

CORNER

NATURE

OUR WILD COASTAL WATERS

Joe Reynolds, Park Naturalist

Coastal parks in Monmouth County include Bayshore Waterfront Park in Port Monmouth, Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park in Long Branch, and Fisherman's Cove in Manasquan. From any of these sandy spots, you can experience a variety of wild birds, fish, crabs, and marine mammals, such as whales and dolphins, which have been returning to our shores in greater numbers each year.

The Elusive Dolphin & Abundant Seal

Throughout summer, the Bottlenose Dolphin has been observed swimming in the ocean or in shore waters of the Navesink River, Shrewsbury River, Sandy Hook Bay, or Raritan Bay. Dolphins may be a bit trickier to see from land. Look for them entering the bays or rivers following fish, or at Seven Presidents as they swim along the coast to forage for food.



A pod of dolphins in the Navesink River.



A bottlenose dolphin in the Navesink River.

Whale Sightings on the Rise

Within the last decade, the number of whale sightings near the parks has increased noticeably. On Thanksgiving Day in 2010, a Humpback whale was seen foraging for food in the mouth of the Manasquan River, not far from Fisherman's Cove. The year before, local residents observed a Humpback Whale for several weeks from Sea Bright to Long Branch, not far from Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park. And there have been numerous sightings up and down the coast this past summer. (Check out some of the sightings online by searching "whales of New Jersey" on YouTube).

Whale species off the coast of Monmouth County include the Humpback, Minke, Sei, Blue and Fin.

Wildlife experts estimate that other whale species can be seen swimming just a few miles off the coast as well.

Since 2008, Cornell University Professor Chris Clark has been researching marine life near the entrance of Lower New York Bay. Using acoustic monitors in and near the bay, he discovered Minke, Sei, and Blue whales swimming close to Monmouth County. Whales have been seen a mile or more off the shore as they migrate northward on their way to summer feeding grounds near Cape Cod or Canada, or southward to winter breeding areas in the tropics. Moreover, Professor Clark has estimated that as many as 30 to 50 Fin whales may be found year-round as close as 10 miles past Sandy Hook in the Atlantic Ocean.



A dolphin jumps in the Shrewsbury River.

Marine Mammal Fun Fact

Whales and dolphins sleep with one eye open, it is said that half their brain stays conscious so they can maintain their breathing.



The tail of a Fluke whale.



The fin of a Minke whale.



One Humpback and two Fluke whales, spouting.

As fall settles in, seals begin their trek from breeding locations in Cape Cod, the coast of Maine, or points further north to the Jersey shore. Here they will find remote beaches, piers, or sand bars to use as haul-out sites - land bases to rest, relax, and find refuge during the non-breeding season. Harbor seals, Grey seals, and Harp seals can routinely be seen from November through April, from Raritan Bay down to the Manasquan River.

Seals can be seen from November-April from Raritan Bay to the Manasquan River.

If conditions are right, large seal groups can be spotted as they haul out to bask under the sun during low tide. Sometimes, you may see just one or two seal heads popping out of the water between dives for food. Although they are the most abundant marine mammal in Monmouth County, seals are still just rare enough to make the sight of them a very special occasion.

Why So Many Marine Mammal Sightings?

Why are marine mammals returning to the Jersey shore? First and foremost, cleaner waters have helped many sea creatures make a comeback. Although local waters are still polluted, especially with plastic litter and fertilizer run-off from towns and neighborhoods, the Clean Water Act of 1972 set the policies that have noticeably improved water quality over the years.

Second, federal regulations such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 which protects marine mammals in U.S. waters from hunting, capture, and/or harassment; and the Endangered Species Act of 1972 which protects endangered or threatened species and their habitats. Taken together, these regulations have greatly helped bring back whales, dolphins, and seals after being largely absent for a century.

The Clean Water Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act helped the whales, dolphins and seals recover.

Threats, however, still exist to the long-term survival of marine mammals. One of the greatest stresses on marine mammals is the desire of people to touch or feed a wild animal. Although it is tempting to try to get close enough to interact with wild animals, it's important to remember that their behavior can be unpredictable and aggressive. Whales, dolphins, and seals are wild animals that can bite or cause serious injury.



Harbor seals at a haul out site at Sandy Hook.



A juvenile, female Gray sea.



A young Harp Seal.



GREEN HERITAGE

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PARK SYSTEM

IN THIS ISSUE: Bel-Aire & Hominy Hill Golf Course; Henry Hudson & Union Transportation Trail, Horses at Sunnyside Recreation Area, Growing Garlic & Marine Mammals in the parks.

This Harbor Seal appears to be enjoying a very relaxing swim. DID YOU KNOW? Seals use their long whiskers to detect vibrations underwater. Learn more about seals and other marine mammals inside at the NATURE CORNER, page 10.



Visit www.monmouthcountyparks.com