

Demarest Nature News



Demarest Nature Center Association
Box 41, Demarest, N.J., 07627

www.demarestnaturecenter.org
Winter 2026 Vol. 52, No. 1

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We hope you enjoyed another year of learning and recreation in the Demarest Nature Center!

We started the year with a demonstration of how maple syrup is made. We continued with our **Community Walks**, which are guided tours of the forest the first Saturday of every month at 10 a.m., usually led by Jeff Shaari. Our annual **Clean-Up Day** brought the community together to keep our beautiful forest pristine and litter-free, demonstrating a shared commitment to environmental stewardship.

In April, we put on our annual **Canoe Day**, and we thank Veolia for providing the canoes. As we do every year, we underwrote the cost of 11 **field trips** (led by Marc Gussen) for elementary students to visit the Closter and Demarest nature centers. Twice per year, we partner with Don Torino of the Bergen County Audubon Society to lead a **guided birdwatching tour** (photo below).

At the annual **Oktoberfest**, we partnered with many crafters, and enjoyed great food by Brasserie Memere restaurant in Closter. Many thanks to Rosetta Arrigo of Flat Rock Brook Nature Center for bringing a live owl and falcon. We also appreciated Beryl Skog for bringing the Bergen Ukulele Group to perform.

We continue to serve as the charter organization for Scouting America Troop 20, which will become co-ed starting in January. We appreciated the Eagle Scout project of Amanda Bramley (Troop 163), who refurbished a boardwalk and installed decorative gnomes. Many thanks to Blair Gardner and Eva Yezekian for the Fairy Houses, which was their Silver Award project. Dave Emerson skillfully restored our semi-circular bench, and together with Ray Slaman, transformed a large log into a magnificent **trough for flowers**. Dave and Ray partnered with children from the Demarest Library to plant an array of beautiful flowers. The Demarest Library further enhanced our experience by creating an engaging **Book Trail** through the forest, blending literacy with nature exploration. Anthony Coscarello made a beautiful **birdhouse**, which was installed at the DNC entrance. We thank the board members, volunteers, members, and partners for making all of these things happen!

Join us on Saturday, Feb. 7, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. for our **Maple Syrup Demonstration** in the woods. We will demonstrate how to tap maple trees, and how to turn their sap into maple syrup. The kids can also roast s'mores, drink hot cider, learn how to count rings on a tree, and practice tapping a tree themselves. Meet by the Imagination Playground near Wakelee Field.

We are all volunteers. We use the funds we raise to maintain the trails and support programming that benefits the community. Your memberships and generous donations help to support these efforts. We hope you will consider becoming a member, as we try to build our local community through wholesome activities that everyone enjoys. We hope to see you soon in the nature center!

– *Stephen Tillack*
President, Demarest Nature Center



Photo by Peter Coy
Bergen County Audubon Society birdwatching tour on Oct. 12


Your membership dollars allow us to continue to give back to the community and preserve and protect DNC's 55 acres of meadows, forests and wetlands.

DEMAREST NATURE CENTER SPOTLIGHT


'TIS THE SEASON...EVERY SEASON

By Teddy Loubas (Photos by Teddy Loubas)

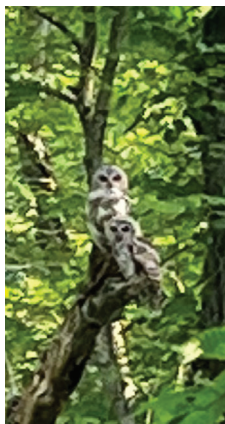
It is not a place only for the summer and fair weather but also for those cloudy, cold days when peace and light are needed. It is where we can meet deer, fox, raccoons, muskrats, frogs and turtles and all the many birds and ducks that make it their home, and where you can see the changing landscape as the seasons change.


 In the spring, the peepers come out and create a stereophonic chorus that carries over the vernal pools. Although they are as small as a quarter, together the peepers use their mighty chorus to herald the beginning of the spring season. Peepers are highly sensitive to pollution, so their presence indicates good environmental health. They are a welcome sound. Soon after the peepers are heard, the daffodils and irises and flowering trees can be found throughout the nature center. Irises can be seen in the middle of ponds, surprising us after the long winter with their striking colors. A muskrat may also surprise us as it pops out from beneath the banks and swims up and down the Tenakill Brook.



 In the summer, the dragonflies and damselflies appear. The damselflies mesmerize us with their emerald greens and electric blues. Dragonflies are similar in structure to the ancient insects called the Meganisoptera or griffinflies, and rely on wetlands for their existence. Dragonflies are from the Early Jurassic period and damselflies are from the Late Jurassic period.

As the dragonflies and damselflies hover, the cicadas offer their own chorus of music, reminding us that it is summer. Walking over any of the bridges over the Tenakill Brook, you may see turtles swimming, or a great blue heron wading, or a green heron searching for fish. There are mallard ducks and wood ducks that also call the Tenakill Brook their home. Pairs can often be seen swimming lazily together on a hot summer day. A pair of barred owls have also made the DNC their home, and they can often be found between the Emerson Meadow and the Tenakill Brook.



 In the fall, the changing colors of the trees take our breath away. From the Emerson Meadow, many woodpeckers can now be seen in the trees, including the pileated woodpecker, which is considered the largest woodpecker in North America. A great horned owl may also be heard from a pine tree. A hiker may come across a group of wild turkeys grazing on the wild greens. There is also often a belted kingfisher that can be found racing up and down the Tenakill Brook, looking for fish. In addition to its great diversity of birds, the nature center has a great diversity of native trees, such as the Eastern cottonwood, the white ash, and the tulip tree. Often a fox can be found running through these woods.



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With winter come brilliant light, long shadows, and a time for reflection. The trees have lost their foliage, and the view of the sky is clearer. Many sunsets during the winter are just as beautiful as a summer sunset. After a snowstorm, the nature center becomes a place of peace and tranquility. You can see footprints, revealing the wildlife activity that takes place when we are not there.

The nature center is an invaluable place not only for the flora and fauna that live there but also for us. Come and visit throughout the year and reconnect with all that nature has to offer for every season.



WIN A PRIZE IN OUR 'NAME THE MASCOT' CONTEST

By Dave Emerson

Great Blue Herons have patrolled the Tenakill Brook since before 1972. That was the year some of us in Demarest began taking steps to create a preserve of 85 acres in the heart of the borough, a parcel that today encompasses the Demarest Nature Center, the Wakelee Field ballfields, the Demarest Swim Club, and the Imagination Playground. We had the land designated by the state as Green Acres, protecting it from development.



Photo by Dave Emerson

We put the Great Blue Heron into our logo half a century ago. This year we decided it was high time to name a mascot, and what better mascot than the Great Blue? So I carved a life-sized Great Blue Heron out of wood and realistically painted it.

Now is your chance to name the mascot. The winning entrant will get a DNC baseball cap, a bird identification chart from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and a bird identification book from the Audubon Society. The winner will be announced at our birdhouse and birdfeeder building day in early spring. Mail your submission to Demarest Nature Center, P.O. Box 41, Demarest, N.J. 07627, or email us at info@demarestnaturecenter.org.

MEMORIES OF OKTOBERFEST 2025

Photos by Christopher Jones





LEARNING ABOUT NATURE

by Jeff Shaari

FRUITS AND SEEDS

Flowering plants, known as angiosperms, develop their seeds inside fruits. Seeds form when pollen from a male flower fertilizes the ovules of a female flower. (Gymnosperms, in contrast, produce “naked” seeds that are not enclosed in a fruit.) Although we often think of fruits as soft and edible, like apples or plums, the botanical definition is much broader. A fruit can be the dry, papery samara of a maple (the familiar “helicopter” seed), the hard nut of an acorn, the bright red berries of a holly, or the bean pod of a honey locust. The purpose of the fruit, which is derived from the ovary of the female flower, is to protect the seed inside and aid in its dispersal.

Some people wonder why their trees aren’t producing fruit. Some trees are dioecious, meaning they have separate male and female flowers on different plants, like ash, ginkgo, and holly. Other trees are monoecious, with both male and female flowers on the same tree, such as oaks, walnuts and most maples. Only female flowers can produce fruit, so if you have a male tree of a dioecious species, like holly, it won’t bear fruit. It’s also possible that your tree is simply too young. Many trees take several years to mature enough to produce fruit, and this age varies by species. Alternatively, your tree might be under stress from disease, poor nutrition, or other environmental factors, which can prevent it from producing fruit. Making fruit and seeds requires considerable energy, so stressed trees may prioritize survival over reproduction.

IN THE WOODS

The nature center hosts the Bergen County Audubon Society for a semi-annual birdwatching hike each spring and fall. In past hikes, we’ve spotted bald eagles, American kestrels, belted kingfishers, pileated woodpeckers, and a variety of other species. Be sure to check our website and social media for details on the next event.

On the first Saturday of every month (except July and August), the nature center hosts trail hikes through the forest. Led by board members and occasional guest speakers, each hike focuses on an educational theme that is geared towards both adults and kids. In September, Ray Slaman shared insights into how trees and plants prepare for fall and winter. In October, Jeff Shaari explored the various fruits and seeds found in nature, and in November, Jeff discussed the science behind the seasonal changes of autumn. We meet at the entrance adjacent to the Imagination Playground at 10 a.m.

And don’t forget to come to the Maple Syrup Demonstration on Feb. 7. There’s more information on it above in the President’s Letter.

WE THANK OUR GENEROUS MEMBERS

Your support is invaluable. We can’t thank you enough!
We hope you will be with us again in 2026.

(Contributions received from Jan. 1 through Dec. 4, by membership level.)

TRAIL BENEFACTOR

Mike and Charlotte Clarke, Arthur P. Hays,
Theodore and Marianne Martens

TRAIL STEWARD

Wilson and Gloria Aboudi, Peter Coy, Marian Hayden,
Michael Hubschman, Melina J. Iannuzzi, Klaus Kretschmer,
Laura and Lewis Nelson, John Reinke and Lourdes Francisco,
Gary S. Shoolis, Demarest Korean PTO

TRAIL RANGER

Stuart and Rosalind Alpert, Ronald K. Barr, Richard Bower,
Stacey Braff, Gerald and Edith Escala, Ruthellen Fried,
Jane and Richard Fried, Frank and Barbara Galtieri, Emily Grad,
Masaaki and Kumiko Ishikura, Noyemi Isnar, Peggy Kabakow,
Deborah King, the LePree Family, Teddy Loubas, Karen Maloof,
David and Jamie McLain, Patrick Merryman, Linda Nociti,
Tom and Zamira Pirie, Yadid Ramot, Larry and Lori Ross,
Maureen Sanz, Deborah Senese, Raymond Slaman,
the Sugarman Family, Charles and Myra Wrubel

TRAIL HIKER

Gladys Astorga, Vincent Babakitis, Joanne-Dianas Brunnell,
Jordan and Laura DeFlora, David Emerson, Naomi Epstein,
D.J. Felton, Fred and Donna Giannetti, Rob Goldstein,
Robert Helder, Shelby Hyde, the Fried-Jones Family, Peter Kandel,
Karen Mabery, Nina and Jonny Mattana, Michael and Viola Nemeth,
Matthew and Christine Nicholas, Ann Robbins, Jeff Shaari,
Marisa Shaari, Heather Shimokawa, Elaine Silvia,
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Donald and Judith Stavis, Mark and Janice Stucki,
Richard and Clair Van Buren, Kathe Whitney, Audrey Winograd,
Mark T. Wright, Rachel Yakubov, Ebby Zacharian, Robert Zenorini,
Robert Zimick, Andrew Zimmerman

TRAIL WALKER

David Aboudi, Barrett Abramow, Teddy Alevrontas,
Marianne Bolduc, William H. Christian, Elleen and Robert Corrado,
Antoinette K. Coscarello, Sue DeSimone, the Glassman Family,
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Noah Osher, Ethel Reitsema, Kaushal Shah, Cynthia Soroka,
Joan Steinel, Jean Strickholm, Stephen Tillack, Alexander West,
Peter and Patricia Zampieri

LIFETIME MEMBERS

In addition to our 2025 contributors, the Demarest Nature Center wishes to thank again those who have contributed at the lifetime membership level.

Steve Chen, Patricia Chen, Steve and Diane Conti,
Jin and David Kupperman, Dave and Marilyn Robertson,
Angela G. Rodin



DEMAREST NATURE CENTER ASSN.

Borough of Demarest

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SUMMER CAMP

It's time to register for SOAR Summer Camp at the nature center! SOAR Education Inc., based in Fair Lawn, is a nonprofit that uses outdoor and science-based programs to inspire children, families, and communities to care about wildlife, sustainability, and equitable education.

The camp week is Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to noon. The fee is only \$280 per week; the drop-in day rate is \$65.

Each day your child will have a cool take-home project that shows off their talent and is just the best, personalized, nature memento ever!

GRADES 1-3

Nature Art (Aug. 3-7) It's true -- Earth without art is just "Eh." Kids will connect nature's wonders with their imaginations during a week of exploration and inspiration.

GRADES 4-7

Feathered Friends (Aug. 10-14) Using binoculars, birding apps, and observation skills, campers will learn how to identify birds, their behaviors, their hunting and hiding skills, and much more!

GRADES 6-8

Who Lives There (July 27-31) From obvious to hidden, animal homes can be unique and even gravity-defying. Learn about how specific animals build homes to meet their needs.

To register for a camp session, go to <https://www.soar.science/book-online> or use this QR code:



BOY SCOUTS

Starting in 2026, Scout Troop 20 will be co-ed and will be meeting regularly with Ship 139 on Sundays. Learn lifesaving skills and leadership skills! In the winter months, we will meet at the Hackensack Yacht Club and in warmer weather in the Demarest / Alpine area.

Our scouts have climbed the Alps, honored veterans, and helped needy families by organizing food and blood drives. We plan to go on multiple camping and fishing adventures in the new year, including exploring Puerto Rico. The troop is sponsored by the Demarest Nature Center.

Email us at: dnc.troop.20.demarest@gmail.com to learn more. You can also reach us at 201-771-0359.



--- CHECK US OUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA! ---



facebook.com/people/Demarest-Nature-Center/100091316019265/



instagram.com/demarestnaturectr/

www.demarestnaturecenter.org

email: info@demarestnaturecenter.org

Edited by Peter Coy

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The Demarest Nature Center is proud to be the charter organization for Boy Scout Troop 20.
For more information, please contact them at dnc.troop.20.demarest@gmail.com.

We are a 501(c)3! There is no greater feeling than supporting a worthy organization. The Demarest Nature is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. This means that your donations are tax deductible. Your donations support all of our educational programs, scholarships, events and the continued preservation of our green space. Consider a gift to the Demarest Nature Center as an investment in the future of our community. Of course, it goes without saying, or with saying in this case, that we are not offering tax advice by the above statement. Contact any of our trustees if you would like more info.