

Demarest Nature News



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

www.demarestnaturecenter.org
Summer 2023 Vol. 49, No. 2

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer is now in full bloom, and the Demarest Nature Center is a great place to witness nature's splendor! There are many trees, flowers, birds, deer, ducks, turtles, foxes, and other wildlife to observe. The trails are clean, beautiful, and well-marked. As always, entry is free.

Over the past several months, a lot has been happening in the Nature Center. We chartered Boy Scout Troop 20 in January, and it is growing quickly. We had the first-ever Maple Syrup event in February, which allowed kids to identify maple trees and see how maple syrup is made. We have sponsored birdwatching tours, guided walks by naturalists, field trips for the kindergartners, and beekeeping demonstrations. These are paid for by the Nature Center, supported by your generous donations. We also now have an Arborist, Ray Slaman, who helps to look after the health of the forest and educate the public about the trees.

On October 14th from 10:00 – 5:00PM at the Demarest Duck Pond, we will have our Oktoberfest & Craft Show. This will include canoeing, free square dancing, a nature exhibit, birdhouse building, and of course all the crafters who will offer their creations for sale. Many thanks to Veolia for letting us use their canoes for this event.

On Oct 15th at 10:00AM, we will also have another guided birdwatching tour, led by the Bergen Audubon Society. Meet at the Imagination Playground near Wakelee Field.

We provide a refuge for nature, and for the community. We do not receive financial support from the Borough of Demarest. We are all volunteers, and we rely on your financial support to maintain the trails, keep the birdfeeders stocked, support nature programs for the community, etc. Please consider supporting these efforts. You can donate through the envelope that is attached in this semi-annual newsletter, via the membership page on our website (<https://www.demarestnaturecenter.org/become-a-member/>) or also by contacting us directly. Thank you for your support!

See you on the trails, *Stephen Tillack, President, Demarest Nature Center*

2023 JOHN C. GOODWIN PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

Grand Prize in Adult Category

CHARLOTTE CLARK

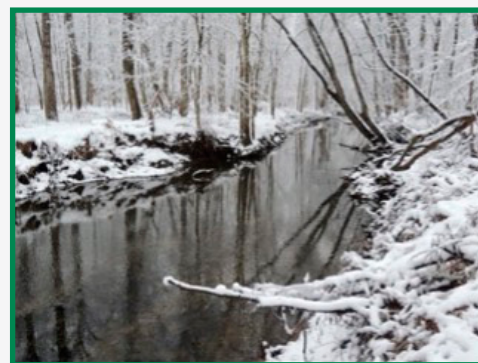
"Nature is a Bridge Over Troubled Waters"



Grand Prize in Children's Category

ALEXANDER SHAARI

"Winter Solace"



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.

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY RECAP

On Saturday, June 3rd we had our first Trails Day event at the DNC, and it was a huge success. National Trails Day is an annual event observed by hikers of all walks everywhere, spearheaded by the American Hiking Society. Adults and kids from our community showed their support, and several projects were completed within the three-hour timeframe that otherwise would have taken days. Among them:

- Emerson Meadow was cleared of overgrown grass and invasive plants, as were the trails leading up to it.
- Multiple trails were cleared of tall grass that was encroaching on the footpaths.
- A section of unused wooden walkway was removed from the diverted green trail adjacent to Emerson Meadow.
- Bridge and walkway repairs were made throughout the Tenakill Brook Trail.
- Garbage in the brook and along trails was removed.
- Best of all, kids were entertained while learning about nature with a scavenger hunt and other fun activities.

There are always projects to be undertaken on the grounds and trails. In addition to the National Trails Event each spring, we also plan to have smaller events in the summer and fall, so keep an eye out on our website. Want to help? Become a member of the Demarest Nature Center and let us know that you are interested in volunteering!

– Jeff Shaari, *Trails Committee Leader*



PBS.ORG

Nature Cat | Pesky Aphids! | PBS

Uh oh, there is big trouble in Daisy's rose garden!

NATURE CAT – Nature Cat is Fun and Educational for Kids and Adults

A few months ago I stumbled upon a show called “Nature Cat” on PBS. It was impressive how this show was so cute, entertaining and educational all at the same time. The first episode I watched was called “Pesky Aphids.” Here is the link to the PBS website: <https://www.pbs.org/video/nature-cat-pesky-aphids/>

I had heard of other damaging small creatures like spider mites and jumping worms, but never heard of aphids. They all can do quite a bit of “under the radar” damage to plants that we might never notice. Biological control using an insect’s natural enemies is one of the simplest and most effective strategies gardeners use to keep pest populations under control. The ladybug beetle is one of the most popular beetles used to control the population of insect pests.

That groundhog, squirrel, rabbit or deer might not be the one eating your garden after all. It could be something smaller that we don’t see with the naked eye. As humans we need to do the right thing and truly understand what’s happening in each situation. I encourage everyone whether you have kids or not to check out Nature Cat. I also encourage you to take some time to research everything that impacts our gardens and our woods and how we can best coexist.

SPRING 2023 EVENT SUMMARY

April 23rd Spring Birdwatching Walk.

Don Torino of the Bergen County Audubon Society again led us on a beautiful day of birdwatching. Many of the common local birds such as cardinals, blue jays, song sparrows, American crows, robins, tufted titmouses, and Carolina wrens were sighted though others were more elusive. A special treat was that we saw a den of adorable new fox cubs wrestling and enjoying the day in our nature center. Don will return in the fall on October 15th at 10am to lead us on another birdwatching walk during the Fall migratory season. Be sure to check our website or sign up to be on a member email list to be notified!

May 13th Honey Beekeeper’s Visit.

Frank Mortimer, the Master Beekeeper, visited to teach us all about the honeybees. Frank is a certified Master Beekeeper, an adjunct instructor of the Cornell University Master Beekeeping Program, the President of the Northeast NJ Beekeepers Association, and a book author. He showcased an observational beehive where we could safely observe all the busy bees in action as well as beeswax candles and delicious honey made from beekeeping. A copy of his book, the “Bee People and the Bugs They Love” was purchased, signed, and donated to our Demarest Library so be sure to check out it out to learn more about the bees!

Native Wildflower Garden.

The Demarest Nature Center has started our first Native Wildflower Garden! If you have been to the nature center entrance lately, you might have noticed our fenced off garden, to protect the young plants from nibblers. It now has a brand-new sprinkler system and a detachable water pump installed by our board member Dave Emerson. We plan to expand our native species garden by helping a future Eagle scout plant another one on the opposite side of the bridge. A plan is also underway to increase the number of milkweeds to support more monarch butterflies and pollinators in our meadows. Stay tuned to learn more about native and invasive species in our upcoming DNC programs.

– Jin Kupperman, *Vice President, Demarest Nature Center*

– Mark Nagelhout, *Former Trustee, DNC Website Maintenance*

MANY FACTORS SHAPE OUR FORESTS

As someone who works with wildlife, I feel it is important to be educated on the different issues wildlife face in our world or ecosystem. Too often members of the media or public put blame on deer for forest issues without knowing all the facts. Major contributors to our forest issues include invasive plants, insect outbreaks, soil acidity, tree diseases and human impacts. White-tailed deer are often blamed for their browsing. This is an important study that I felt needed to be shared as there is a complex of environmental factors at stake.

A Penn State-led research team discovered evidence that browsing by white-tailed deer had relatively little long-term impact on two tree species in a northern forest. The research is important because deer herbivory has a reputation for suppressing tree seedling development in northern hardwood forests, noted research team member Marc McDill, Penn State associate professor of forest management. For two decades his lab in the College of Agricultural Sciences has been studying forest management planning and economics, forest growth and yield modeling, and oak regeneration.

“In this study, deer had no discernible influence on height growth or survival of either sugar maple or ash seedlings,” he said. “The truth is that seedlings in northern hardwood forests respond to a complex of environmental factors in addition to deer herbivory, such as light availability, soil quality and competition from understory vegetation like blackberry.”

“Our study showed that seedlings were more greatly influenced by light availability, size attained before gaps were created and soil nitrogen than deer browsing,” Jones said. “Seedling growth was slow under even the best circumstances — as is typical in a northern forest — and gap capture was attained by saplings that responded more vigorously to gap creation.”

<https://www.psu.edu/news/research/story/deer-browsing-just-one-many-factors-shaping-north-american-forests/>

– Kim Nagelhout, *DNC Newsletter Editor*



Deer browsing is just one of many factors shaping North American forests



MONARCH BUTTERFLY

Monarch butterflies are an amazing species. A beautiful insect recognizable to many, the monarch has an incredible life cycle and is an important native pollinator. Each fall, adult butterflies east of the Rockies migrate from Canada and the northern U.S. to specific areas of central Mexico, where they spend their winters in a semi-dormant state. By late February / early March, these adults mate and begin their journey north, reaching regions in and around Texas. It is there that they lay their first eggs on milkweed, and their metamorphosis begins. These eggs then develop into caterpillars, then butterflies over several weeks. After repeating this cycle 3-4 times (egg, caterpillar, adult) while traveling north, they reach their final destinations in the northern U.S. and Canada.



This journey culminates in an adult that lives 5-10 times as long as the previous adults (as long as 8 months for the final adult generation). These butterflies have several advantageous adaptations, such as larger wings, in order to make the nearly 3,000 mile journey back down to central Mexico for the winter. This cycle then repeats itself the following year. The monarchs that we see in New Jersey in the summer are the descendants of the original butterflies that migrated down the continent and spent the previous winter in Mexico.

The eggs of monarchs are only laid on milkweed (of which there are multiple types), and the caterpillars only eat milkweed. Milkweed contains a chemical (a cardiac glycoside) that is harmlessly sequestered by the monarch (both caterpillar and butterfly) but is toxic to any predator that should eat them. Predators associate the characteristic pattern of the monarchs with this unpleasant outcome and therefore avoid eating them. An interesting form of mimicry is exemplified by the viceroy butterfly; it looks nearly identical to the monarch but is not lethal to its predator if eaten.

While caterpillars only eat milkweed, the adult butterfly relies on a variety of nectar-producing flowers for sustenance, many of which are native to New Jersey.

Monarch numbers have declined in recent years due to a number of factors, including environmental changes and the destruction of natural milkweed habitats. You can help this fascinating species by planting milkweed and other natural pollinator plants in your yard.

– Jeff Shaari, *Trails Committee Leader*

WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT THESE ANIMALS?

They are natural gardeners and habitat creators, but these creatures don't get much respect. It's time for that to change.

1. GROUNDHOGS ARE NATURE'S HOMEBUILDERS.
2. ANTS MAKE MORE PLANTS.
3. WASPS CREATE NESTS FOR THE BIRDS AND THE BEES.
4. MOLES TILL AND PROTECT THE SOIL.
5. SQUIRRELS HELP TREES AND BEES.

www.humangardener.com/why-should-i-care-about-these-animals/



DEMAREST NATURE CENTER ASSN.

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THANK YOU DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS!

Recently we discovered that debris, downed trees, and branches were blocking the flow of the Tenakill. We saw this as a huge task beyond the capabilities of our volunteers.

Jason Gangi and the DPW professionals stepped in and cleared every stick, branch, and tree that was blocking the brook. And they did it without fanfare or ceremony.

Thanks for the professionalism and hard work of Jason and the whole crew!

– Ray Slaman, *Arborist, Demarest Nature Center*

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

-  facebook.com/people/Demarest-Nature-Center/100091316019265/
-  twitter.com/DemarestNature
-  instagram.com/demarestnaturectr/

A special THANK YOU to all of our donors, members and community support. It takes a team and we are happy you are a part of it.

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UPCOMING PROGRAM:

The first Demarest Nature Center summer educational program will be taking place on July 26th!

The summer Demarest Rec campers will visit to learn about basic outdoor skills, native and invasive plants, trees and history of the nature center followed by a scavenger hunt!

2023 DNCA MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

Meetings are held at 7:30pm on the second Thursday of each month at the Demarest Train Station.

JOIN US!

- SEPTEMBER 14th**
- OCTOBER 12th**
- NOVEMBER 9th**
- DECEMBER 14th**

www.demarestnaturecenter.org

email: info@demarestnaturecenter.org

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.

A PAIR OF PILEATED WOODPECKERS WERE SPOTTED AT OUR DEMAREST NATURE CENTER THIS SPRING!

A big, dashing bird with a flaming crest, the largest woodpecker in North America (except the Ivory-bill, which is almost certainly extinct). Excavating deep into rotten wood to get at the nests of carpenter ants, the Pileated leaves characteristic rectangular holes in dead trees. This species became rare in eastern North America with clearing of forests in centuries past, but has gradually increased in numbers again since about the beginning of the 20th century. Where unmolested, it even lives in parks and woodlots around the edges of large cities.



Photo by Jeff Shaari, a board member

DIET

Mostly ants and other insects, also fruits, nuts. Carpenter ants may be up to 60% of diet; also eats other ants (rarely digging into anthills on ground), termites, larvae of wood-boring beetles, other insects. About one-quarter of the diet may be wild fruits, berries, and nuts.

NESTING

Territory is defended with loud drumming and ringing calls. Courtship displays include spreading wings (showing off white wing patch), raising crest, swinging head back and forth, gliding display flight. At prospective nest site, both sexes may tap or drum on wood. Nest site is a cavity in a dead tree or in dead branch of a live tree, sometimes in utility pole, usually 15-80' above ground. Generally makes a new cavity each year, with both sexes helping to excavate.

Read more about the Pileated Woodpeckers here:

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/pileated-woodpecker>

– Jeff Shaari, Board Member




BALTIMORE ORIOLES












Baltimore Orioles can be seen this time of year in our area as they migrate from the south to breed in New Jersey. The males are a brilliant orange and black, and are unmistakable once spotted. Their nests are also impressive, resembling a basket woven from grass and hanging high up in the branches of a deciduous tree. I recently came upon two separate nests in the DNC and snapped this photo of an oriole with a worm in his mouth perched up in a cottonwood tree above his nest. This is just one of many examples of the wondrous things hidden in plain sight in and around our nature center!

– Jeff Shaari, Board Member

TRAIL MAP

Demarest Nature Center and Closter Green Acres Trail Map

250 feet 

-  bench
-  forest
-  field/park
-  road
-  trail
-  railroad
-  bridge
-  stream/pond
-  trail entrance
-  town border
-  notable building

surveyed and drawn by Dave Emerson 2009
 additional surveying by Kevin Riley 2020
 design updated by David Goodwin 2020

