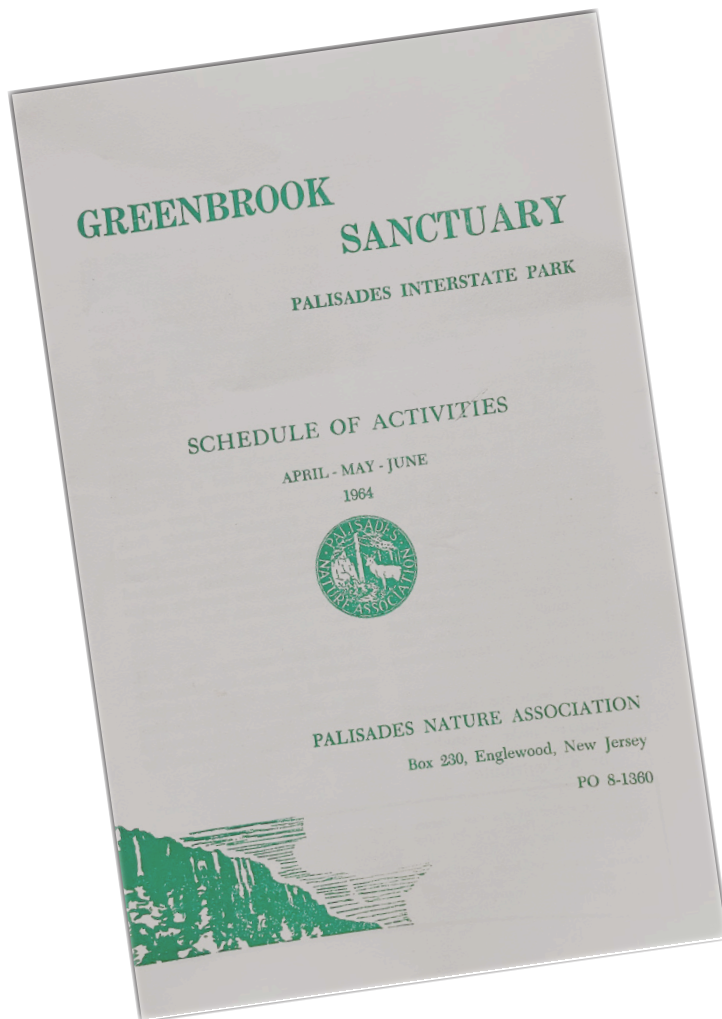


Palisades NATURE NOTES



Celebrating sixty years of the Greenbrook Sanctuary Newsletter

The above picture evinces how far we — along with technology — have come with our very own seasonal publication. As you can see, comparing the front page from our very first issue, above, with the image featured on the cover of this past winter's edition (reappearing at the top of Page 2), we've come a long way since 1964. Happy Anniversary, Palisades Nature Notes.

Notes from the Naturalist

Winter was practically non-existent this year. Yes, the days were shorter. We even had some snow in January and February. So why was it practically non-existent? You probably have noticed that temperatures during this winter were well above average. It felt more like March through most of December and January. El Nino, a warming of the equatorial waters in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, began in June and was very strong November through January. This warming pushes warm air further north from the equator creating warmer weather in the north. It also disrupts or changes the direction of the jet stream, causing rain patterns to shift and relocate. This produced higher than average precipitation during December and January. In fact, over twice as much precipitation fell during December and January than what is considered normal. Overall, the winter has been wet and warm. But it has been a winter regardless. At the time of this writing, the temperature has finally dropped to near normal cold levels and the rain has decreased. There is also a blanket of snow on the ground. However, I am sure that most of us are eager for warmer weather, and if the groundhog is right, we should see spring very soon.

Because of the warmer weather this winter, there have been some very interesting sightings. On December 9th during a winter nature walk, attending members were treated to a Mourning Cloak Butterfly soaring effortlessly through the trees in Lambier Gulch. Mourning Cloaks are one of the few butterflies that hibernate during the winter. To see one actively flying in December is very rare. A Hermit Thrush was seen in the American Holly trees by the parking lot through most of December, no doubt feeding on the Holly's abundant bright red berries. Also in December, possibly due to the warmer than average temperatures, Crowded Parchment mushrooms were everywhere in the Sanctuary. A soft orange colored leaf fungus that gets its name from growing in very thin, sheet-like shelves that can actually fold over each other when crowded. They are very common and can be found year-round on dead hardwoods. However, during warm wet winters, like this one, the population can explode, because it grows really well in wet conditions.



Greenbrook Pond in Autumn Photo by Evan J. Zupfer

Notes from the Naturalist CONTINUING

On January 1st, Sandy counted over sixty Canada Geese on Greenbrook Pond. They were probably using the unfrozen pond to roost overnight. She also recorded a Bald Eagle at Bald Eagle Point. Other Bald Eagle sightings this winter were an adult over the pond and two perched south of Picture Point, both on January 13. Ken observed a Golden-crowned Kinglet while walking along “F” trail on January 24. That same day, I observed twelve American Robins darting in and out of the American Holly trees in the parking lot eating the bright red berries. Then on Saturday, January 27th, I witnessed a spectacular event; an estimated one hundred American Robins in a feeding frenzy inside the same Hollies next to the parking lot. In one day, they stripped the trees of their berries. I wrote an article about it, which follows the “Notes from the Naturalist” in this Newsletter. Also, on the same date, and in the same place, I observed four Cedar Waxwings eating the remaining berries from a Winterberry bush. The last day of January produced an impressive sighting, a flock of more than three hundred Common Grackles scavenging the leaf litter around the parking lot for anything they could find. They were there for several minutes and must have turned over every leaf on the ground looking for food. I scanned the entire flock for any rarities, but was unable to find any.

February sightings were few. On February 8, Sandy found a Skunk Cabbage in bloom on “B” trail, which is quite early. The only earlier record for Skunk Cabbage in bloom was February 2. On February 17, twenty American Goldfinches were observed eating the seeds from the plentiful Birch trees by “M” trail. Lastly, a Common Raven was heard calling over the Parking that same day.

EVAN J. ZUPFER *Naturalist / Director*

Turkey Warning!

Everyone please be aware that the parking lot in Greenbrook Sanctuary is frequently inhabited by two male Wild Turkeys. They can at times appear antagonistic and agitated. Most of the time they are harmless but as the weather gets warmer, they may become more aggressive. If they charge you, wave your hands up and down and yell loudly. This should make them back off. If you have any concerns or questions, please ask the Naturalist when at the Sanctuary or call 201-784-0484.



Northern Saw-whet Owl Photo by Evan J. Zupfer

SPECIES IN FOCUS

A series of articles focusing on specific species of flora and fauna within Greenbrook Sanctuary. This article covers The American Holly and American Robin, because they have a very special relationship.

The American Holly *Ilex opaca*

The American Holly is a very attractive evergreen that grows naturally throughout the eastern United States from Florida to New York and west to Texas and Missouri. It is a very popular ornamental and is planted in many other places beyond its natural range. The thick leathery leaves are evergreen and stay on the tree all year round. The trees usually grow to between 25ft – 40ft tall, but can reach heights over 60ft in the warmer parts of its range. The leaves are tipped with sharp spines, providing great protection for roosting birds, especially in the winter. Small owls, such as the Northern Saw-whet Owl (see page 2) and the Eastern Screech-Owl, will use Hollies as a safe haven for roosting during the day. Many other smaller passerines will also roost in the dense green foliage at night.

Unlike most trees, Hollies are dioecious, which means there are separate male and female trees. Only female trees produce berries or drupes, and there must be both male and female trees to have berries, or at least have the opposite sex growing wild somewhere nearby. Most of the trees in Greenbrook are female and every autumn they produce a plentiful crop of berries. The drupes are usually bright red and are a valuable food source for migrating and wintering birds.

The American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

The American Robin is a very common bird throughout North and Central America. Almost everyone is familiar with its chestnut-red-colored breast, gray back, and black head. Many people associate the arrival of robins with the start of spring. However, some Robins do not migrate and stay the entire winter throughout their northern range as long as there is a plentiful food supply. Also, during the winter, their behavior changes and they form large nomadic flocks, which can consist of hundreds to thousands of birds. These flocks usually appear where there are plentiful fruits on trees and shrubs, such as crabapple, hawthorn, juniper, and of course, holly.

American Robins and American Holly

As noted earlier in this Newsletter, on Saturday January 27, I was fortunate to witness and photograph a large flock of American Robins flying in and out of the berry laden American Holly trees in the parking lot. They were there all day, and when I returned the following day, the trees were almost devoid of berries. Sandy and Ken noted that this happens about this time every year, but not always on the same date. I will certainly keep an eye out for it next year.



American holly Photo by Evan J. Zupfer



American Holly leaf Photo by Evan J. Zupfer



Robin amid the holly Photo by Evan J. Zupfer



Robin with holly berry Photo by Evan J. Zupfer

President's Report

This past winter season was a time for the Administrative Council to look back and plan forward. While inspecting the ceiling panels of the Orientation and Education Center for needed repairs, Council members and the naturalists discussed possibilities for reconfiguring the Center to set aside space for indoor meetings and programs. These discussions will continue at future Council meetings. Perimeter fence repairs included the installation by our contractor, Bergen Fence, of a new fence section over the Lost Brook stream crossing. This fencing is far superior and sturdier in enclosing stream crossings and will be incorporated for other stream crossings in years to come.

Planning for the future will need to take account of the power of water, in particular, the intense rainstorms that have become the new meteorological norm for our region and fell often during early winter. These downpours run down the slopes of the Sanctuary's deer-denuded understory and scour low-elevation soils. Several of our trails turn into drainage channels during these rain events, and the resulting erosion has been accelerating. All surrounding parks have reported and expressed concern over this phenomenon. The Council is considering how to prioritize the trails on which to expend Greenbrook's limited resources.

I spent several gray rainy days looking back at Greenbrook history as recorded in our member newsletters. Indeed, this Spring marks the 60th anniversary of the distribution of the very first newsletter. I was struck by the many ecological changes that have occurred during this relatively short time span. One significant loss I had wondered about when I first walked through Greenbrook 20 years ago was encountering the ghosts of hemlock trunks. Greenbrook ravines once hosted dense, moist hemlock groves that provided a cool haven for hikers and, more important, a home for species such as ruffed grouse, broad-winged hawks, barred owls and red squirrels. In the early 1980s, a one-two punch of florinia scale and woolly adelgid insects destroyed the groves in our area. Hemlocks were already dying by 1985 and only husks remained in Greenbrook by the early 1990s. Also lost were the species reliant on the hemlock habitat – broad-winged hawks last bred at Greenbrook in 1991 and the last ruffed grouse was seen in 1994. Yet, the same decades also witnessed gains in the reappearance of species. Turkeys were first observed in Greenbrook in 1993 and were breeding there by 1998. Now we take their presence for granted. At the same time, eagles and peregrines were

recovering from the DDT debacle and staged successful comebacks. Ravens appeared at the end of the 1990s; apparently, they had been absent in our area for a century or more.

“White-tailed deer, now endangered on N.J. Palisades” – It is hard to believe that Greenbrook naturalist John Serrao published that statement back in 1986. But it is a fact that deer sightings in Greenbrook were not common after 1966 and were not regularly reported again until 1992. This “gain”, however, resulted in ecological havoc. Deer overabundance has devastated so much of the habitat in our state, including Greenbrook, that nature preserves have erected fencing to save native flora and fauna threatened by over browsing. What changes will newsletter readers be pondering 60 years from now?

— CHRIS CONNOLLY *PNA Council President*

Nature Photography Workshop Co-hosted by Greenbrook Sanctuary and Bergen County Camera April 21 and October 27, 2024

📍 Greenbrook Sanctuary and Bergen County Camera will be hosting a photography workshop at Greenbrook Sanctuary this coming Spring on Sunday April 21, and again in the Fall on Sunday, October 27.

📍 The Workshop is open to both existing Greenbrook members and the public to introduce the Sanctuary to non-members. The participation fee is \$15.00 for Greenbrook members and \$25.00 for non-members.

📍 Bergen County Camera staff along with Camera lens representatives from Sigma USA will be present during the workshop to allow participants to use loaner lenses, ask questions, and receive advice on how to take better pictures.

📍 Attendees are also invited to participate in a future Photo Contest as well. More details about the photo contest will be announced later.

📍 Anyone interested must register online through Bergen County Camera's website:

<https://bergencountycamera.com/classes-trips-event-calendar>

You can also call 201-664-4113 for more information.

• Greenbrook Members only, to get your discount code email matt@bergencountycamera.com

WINTER 2024 ALMANAC

Programs subject to cancellation ■ Information: 201-784-0484

Saturday, March 2 — 7:30 – 8:30 PM

Early Spring Amphibians 1

A chance to observe Spotted Salamanders and Wood Frogs emerging from hibernation to breed in Greenbrook's vernal pools. Bring flashlights. Light rain does not cancel this program.

Saturday, March 9 — 7:30 – 8:30 PM

Early Spring Amphibians 2

Another chance to observe Spotted Salamanders and Wood Frogs emerging from hibernation to breed in Greenbrook's vernal pools. Bring flashlights. Light rain does not cancel this program.

Saturday, March 16 — 7:30 – 8:30 PM

Early Spring Amphibians 3

See March 2, 9 for details

Saturday, March 23 — NOON – 2:00 PM

First Weekend of Spring Hike

Saturday, March 30 — 10:00 AM – NOON

Volunteer Day

Help clean up unsightly trash and debris within the Sanctuary. Bring work gloves and wear strong hiking shoes.

Saturday April 6 — NOON – 2:00 PM

Hike to Greenbrook Falls

Sunday, April 7 — NOON – 2:00 PM

Greenbrook Perimeter Hike

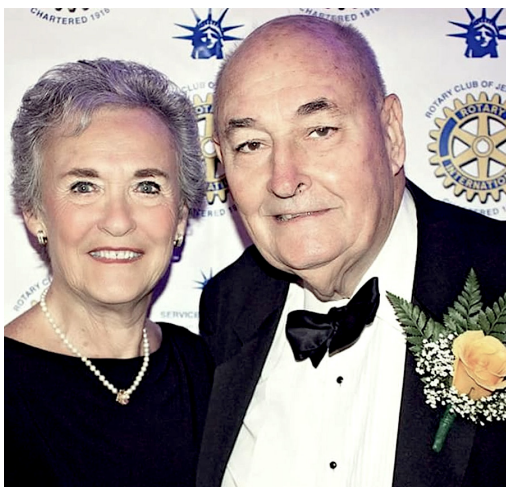
Hike the entire perimeter of Greenbrook using the outer trails. This will be a brisk hike. Participants should be in good condition and wear good hiking shoes/boots. Bring water..

Saturday, April 13 — 8:00 – 10:00 AM

Early Spring Bird Walk

Look for early migrants and unique resident birds of the Sanctuary. Beginning birders welcome.

FAREWELL TO HOWIE



Howard Parish with his wife, Sofia

Saturday, April 20 — 10:00 AM – NOON

Greenbrook History Hike

Hosted by Eric Nelson, PIPC Historian. Learn about the history behind the Sanctuary and the land that it occupies.

Sunday, April 21 — 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Nature Photography Workshop 1

Learn to take better pictures of Nature. This Program is a joint venture with Bergen County Camera. Photography Reps will be present to answer questions, give advice and loan photography equipment. Cost to members \$15.00, Non-members \$25.00. Details on page 4.

Saturday, April 27 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

Early Spring Hike

Sunday, April 28 — NOON – 3:00 PM

Visitors' Day

This open House is an opportunity for non-members to visit the Sanctuary. Call 201-784-0484 for more information.

Saturday, May 4 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

A Big Sit – Birding the Cliffs of Greenbrook

Sit and watch spring migrants as they move along the tree tops from specific vistas in the Sanctuary. Beginning birders welcome.

Saturday, May 11 — 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Big Day Bird Count (Global Big Day)

Join us to help us spot as many bird species as we can in the Sanctuary. Lunch break at Arboretum point. Beginners always welcome.

Saturday, May 18 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

Early Morning Bird Walk

Look for late spring migrants in the Sanctuary. Beginning birders welcome.

Saturday, May 25 — 8:00 – 9:00 PM

Sunset Hike

Hike through the Sanctuary during sunset, as day changes to night.

Greenbrook mourns the loss of Howard Parish, a prominent member of the Administrative Council who died on January 2. After a teaching career as a Professor of Geosciences at New Jersey City University, Howie became a noted labor arbitrator and mediator with the State of New Jersey. He was involved in numerous professional and philanthropic activities, including the New Jersey Education Association and a 16-year stint as board chair of United Way of Hudson County, and was a two-time Rotarian of the Year.

It was fortunate that Howie chose Greenbrook as an outlet for expressing his love of nature. He was a Council member for over 20 years and served as Treasurer, among other roles. However, it was Howie's wide experience of the ways of the world that made him an invaluable counselor in advising the Council in its dealings on matters large and small. In his later years, Howie enjoyed employing his inimitable folksy manner in greeting the public on Greenbrook Visitor Days.

The Palisades Nature Association expresses its condolences to Howie's beloved wife Sofia and his family, as well as gratitude for Howie's guidance over so many years. Howard Parish was a true pillar of Greenbrook on the Palisades!



Bald Eagle in Flight Photo by Evan J. Zupfer

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS: CYCLE 4 2023 — Kyungmin Kim, Janet Mayer, David Jo, Myra Gatchalian, Cheri Moskowitz, Thomas Cooke, Jonathan Krieger, Zoltan Fedor, Amy Oliff, Barry Stein, Michael Goldstein, Mark Ramirez, Maria Zdroik & Maribel Guerrero, Christopher Campanelli, Leigh Ann Cusack, Jean Cusack, Susan Trippe, Mary Anne Lamasney, Michael Ladlow, Amy Trochanowski & Regis Haines, Danielle Bronner Albrizlo, Gilad Yaari

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS: CYCLE 1 2024 — John F. Tweddle, Isabel Rivers (rejoin), Benjamin Barrall, Tom Barbagallo, Vik and Monika Sikand, Jeffrey Russell (Life), David Brandl, Michele Strauss & Craig Levinsohn, Zarine Sagar, Christopher Kelly (rejoin), David Schmerler, Jeremy Shapiro, Jiaxin Feng

Membership entitles you to join Greenbrook's online community on Meetup.com. View pictures, calendar of events and more.
Email 2greenbrook@gmail.com or call Membership Director Mike Gallo with online questions: 201.280.0160.

Palisades NATURE NOTES

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Asst. Naturalists: Sandy Bonardi

Kenneth Habermann

Join Us.

THIS FORM IS FOR NEW MEMBERS ONLY.

Yes, I want to become a member of Greenbrook Sanctuary.

- | | | | |
|---|--------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$ 40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship | \$ 250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household | \$ 60 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member | \$ 1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor | \$ 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization | \$ 50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>This is a gift membership given by:</i> | | | |

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please make checks payable to: PNA, PO Box 155, Alpine, NJ 07620, or join on our web site.