



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM GREEN HERITAGE

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

Vol. 45 No. 4 Winter 2011-12

THE PATH LESS TRAVELED: WINTER NOVELTIES

There's no need to be bored this winter; plan for something completely different and discover these activities "off the beaten track" in your county parks.

Visit the Farm During Winter

People are often surprised to learn that animals remain as part of Longstreet Farm year-round, just the way they did over 100 years ago. Stop by the farmhouse on New Year's Day to learn about Victorian traditions for this special holiday. And, if you ever wondered how people kept their food from spoiling before refrigeration, visit in February for the Ice Harvesting Demonstration.



Mules help Longstreet staff complete their winter chores.



Staff cut and pull blocks of ice from the pond for the ice house, weather-permitting of course.

Need More Info?

www.monmouthcountyparks.com

For park locations, directions and maps.

You will also find birding, hiking and cross-country ski programs—if you want some guidance and company as you tackle that new winter hobby!



Go For Golf at Bel-Aire when the weather is mild.

Warm Up With a Round of Golf

Weather permitting, golfers can walk on and play a round during mild weather at the newly renovated Bel-Aire executive 18 hole course for just \$12 and executive 9 hole course for \$8.

Take Up Birding

Without all the extra foliage and different species competing for our attention, winter is a great time to really get to know the area's winter birds. All you need is a pair of binoculars and a bird guide.



Woodpeckers 101: Look for the way this bird clings tightly to the tree and inches its way up. Then note the black and white contrast on its back. Here are two examples: the Downy (left) is smaller and has a flecked pattern, the Red-bellied (right) is larger with a barred pattern. Photos are not to scale.



In 2010, the rare Crossbill (white wing and red species [shown]) appeared reliably at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park throughout January and early February. Can you see how it gets its name? Its bill tip is crossed in front, a feature ideally suited for feeding on cones of the Japanese Pine. The big mystery this year is... will they return?

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And, If It Snows Like Last Year...

Cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing may be "old hat" to more outdoorsy area residents, but to many native-Jerseyans, it is still a novel activity. Those who would like to try for the first time can rent all the necessary gear—boots, cross-country skis and snowshoes—at the "ski hut" in Thompson Park, Lincroft. Please call 732-842-4000 x4312 first to reserve equipment.

Where to Walk When it Snows

Park trails are NOT plowed, so you will need to dress accordingly if you plan to walk your dog or go for a hike in the snow. However, major roadways and walkways are plowed so visitors can access parking lots and facilities.



As soon as the roads are plowed/sanded and the snow melts, runners hit the roadways at Holmdel Park.



A hiker braves the snow at the Manasquan Reservoir.

Relax Somewhere Cozy

A few parks offer shelters with fireplaces and picnic tables to enjoy a packed lunch, as well as comfy indoor nooks to tuck in with a cup of coffee and newspaper. Environmental Centers at Manasquan Reservoir and Huber Woods Park are stocked with hands-on activities, and the Deep Cut Gardens library is stacked with books, so bring your children over to play (see page 8 for details!)



Fireplace shelters are available at Shark River (pictured), Holmdel and Turkey Swamp Parks, and the Manasquan Reservoir.



Wheel! Cross-country skis (shown) and snowshoes can be rented in Thompson Park.



The sunroom at the Visitor Center in Thompson Park.

Did You Know?

Many parks have scenic rooms & shelters available for rent. Visit us online or call 732-842-4000.

Note the Vibrant Colors and Shapes of Winter

Certain colors become especially bright against a backdrop of snow and ice, and shapes are frozen in place—pure poetry for photographers and artists.



The bluest blue sky at Shark River Park (left), or behind a snow-covered sycamore tree (right), found throughout the parks.



Oak leaf veins stand in prominent relief when outlined by frost, and spruce needles appear even more prickly when covered by snow.

A Real Winter Novel-TEA

You don't need an excuse to enjoy a warm beverage on a cold day; especially when it's a Tea Party at Historic Walnford. In a cozy hearth kitchen more than 200 years old, you and friends or family can taste authentic baked goods and sip tea—just as residents did at this site from the late 1700s through early 1900s. This program includes a tour of the facility followed by a talk about the site's restoration, period recipes and cooking customs. Not just for women—men have enjoyed the event as well!

This season, two "Open Registration" Walnford Teas, \$10 per person, will be offered on the following dates from 2-3:30pm. Please sign up online at monmouthcountyparks.com or call 732-842-4000.

• Wednesday, January 25 & Saturday, February 11

If you would like to meet your alumni group for a reunion, your friends or family for a birthday, Mother's/Father's Day, or any other 4-12 person group for a special occasion, private tea parties are always available by reservation, call 732-842-4000 ext. 1, \$80 per group.



Site Supervisor Sarah Bent hosts a Tea Party in the hearth kitchen at Historic Walnford.

PRESERVING MONMOUTH COUNTY'S RURAL SCENERY

A “pleasantly situated plantation” is how a sales advertisement in 1750 described the land in Western Monmouth County that we now know as Historic Walnford. The County acquired this beautiful 36-acre site, (which is on the National Register of Historic Places), in 1985 as a donation by Edward and Joanne Mullen.

Before the ink was dry on the deed for Historic Walnford, work had begun to acquire surrounding property.

Recognizing that some of Walnford’s best qualities—its rural historic character, minimum of modern day intrusions, and tranquility—could only be maintained by preserving surrounding land, the Park System designated 3 surrounding zones of interest. Acquiring land within these zones, through direct ownership or preservation via easement, would help preserve these qualities.

Zones of Interest Buffer Historic Parcel

The purpose of the 350-acres immediately surrounding Historic Walnford, called the **District Support Zone**, was to protect the setting and views around the site. It also accommodates the modern support facilities needed to operate the property as a park (maintenance areas, etc.).



Walnford is “pleasantly situated” next to Crosswicks Creek, nestled among the woods, surrounded by pastoral farmland.



Scenic vistas like this one are prevalent in and around Walnford and Crosswicks Creek with preserved adjacent farmland.

The area beyond the District Support Zone, called the **Park Zone**, protects the natural, cultural and scenic resources of the larger Crosswicks Creek stream valley, and accommodates recreational activities where appropriate.

Finally, an **Outlying Rural Zone** encourages public policy and private action to “preserve the active agriculture, historic structures, and scenic resources which contribute to the rural quality of both the park and the larger community.”

To date, over 6,100 acres around Historic Walnford and Crosswicks Creek have been permanently preserved:

- Agricultural preservation program easements protect 3,460 acres of private farmland. (Light yellow areas on map)
- Monmouth County Park System owns over 1,500 acres of public parkland. (Light Green areas on map)
- 1,200-plus acres of open space are preserved by the State-owned Cream Ridge Golf Course, municipal parks, etc. (Light purple areas on map)

In 2011, through an unprecedented cooperative effort by multiple agencies and private entities, Monmouth County is scheduled to receive an additional 1,500 acres of open space from the former Princeton Nurseries property (see related article below).

- Agricultural preservation programs will protect another 650 acres of farmland. (Orange areas on map)
- The Monmouth County Park System will acquire about 400 acres of parkland. (Dark green areas on map)
- About 500 acres of land will be preserved as open space by the state. (Dark purple areas on map)

With this large, recent acquisition, as well as many others through the years, the objective of protecting Historic Walnford as a centerpiece surrounded by preserved land has been met, ensuring that not only Walnford, but the entire western corner of Monmouth County will remain “pleasantly situated” in perpetuity. For more information about visiting Walnford and the programs available there, please visit www.monmouthcountyparks.com or call 609-259-6275.

MULTI-AGENCY EFFORT PRESERVES FORMER PRINCETON NURSERIES

In one of the state’s most complicated land deals ever, the following funding partners were able to successfully preserve over 1,900 acres spanning three counties in central NJ.

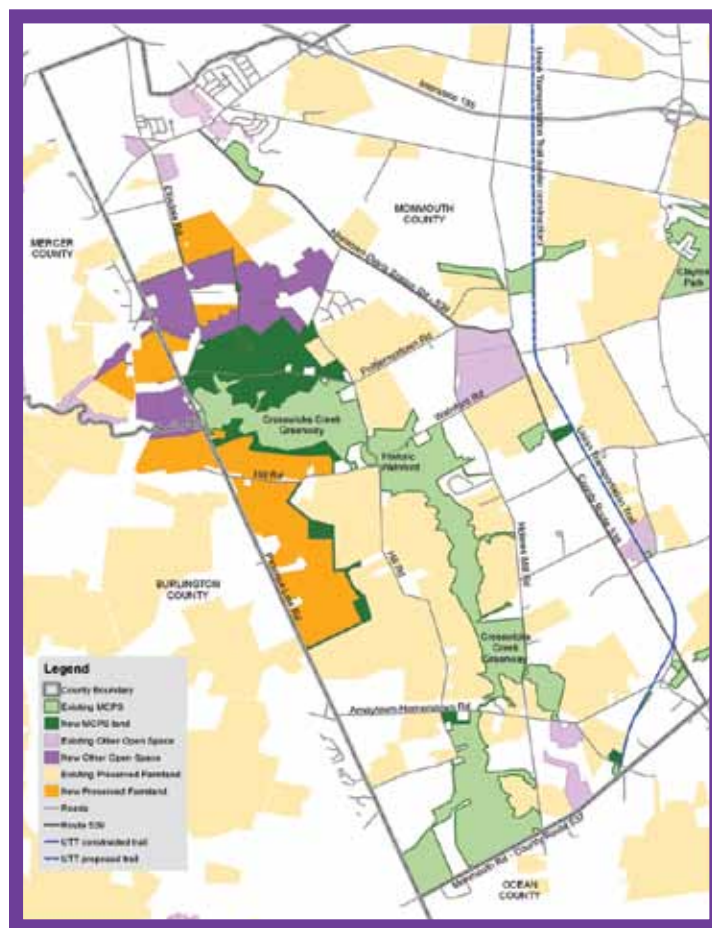
- Upper Freehold Township
- NJ DEP Fish & Wildlife Division
- NJ DEP Green Acres Program
- State Agriculture Development Committee
- Mercer County
- Burlington County
- Monmouth Conservation Foundation
- Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board
- Monmouth County Park System

When a Large Landowner Plans to Sell

In 2007, Flemer Entities doing business as Princeton Nurseries, announced plans to shutter its business after 90 years. The company (once one of the nation’s largest commercial nurseries) along with various Flemer family members controlled over 2,500 acres in the region.

This single business decision had the potential to drastically alter the regional landscape.

The company organized public forums to float the concept of a Village Center development. This aroused some concerns, and various land preservation agencies and groups began to talk. All were in agreement that the property’s sheer size, the quality of the farmland, and the grasslands, lakes, and pockets of forested area made it an attractive preservation target. But this would be a bigger deal than any one agency or group could handle.



The D&R Greenway Land Trust, a central New Jersey non-profit, stepped up to serve as a broker between the many parties.

Complicated Purchase Yields Great Rewards

It took almost 4 years to appraise the more than 25 individual parcels and work out all the details of funding and division of property among the partners. The landowners preferred to see the land preserved, and were patient with negotiations involving all the different parcels of land and 9 funding partners.

With 400 acres slated as parkland for the Crosswicks Creek Greenway, Monmouth County plans include a trail so that visitors may experience and enjoy this new land.



A GARDENER'S STYLE: ENCOURAGING WILDLIFE

Diane Allen, Staff Horticulturalist

Sometimes, in our quest for a beautiful or productive garden, we forget its importance in supporting a healthy ecosystem. All living things require habitat: food, water, cover and places to raise their young. Here are some basic tips on how to plan and maintain a landscape as a healthy wildlife habitat--particularly for birds and insects.

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT OUR FRIENDS, THE INSECTS

Admittedly, some insects are a nuisance, but they too are a vital component of the ecosystem. All animals get their energy either directly or indirectly from plants. Insects are the means by which this energy is transferred to non-plant eating animals like birds, reptiles and amphibians. In a healthy, well-balanced environment, there will be some pests ... and natural enemies to control them.

Flowering plants will attract a wide range of predatory and parasitoid flies and wasps as well as pollinators like native bees, honeybees and butterflies. Allowed to fruit or go to seed, they will provide a valuable food source for birds and other wildlife in the fall and winter. These predatory and parasitoid flies and wasps are key players in the biological control of insect pests. Many, in fact, are reared in laboratories and dispersed into crops, forests and neighborhoods **on purpose** to control exotic insect pests.



Healthy habitat in action: the bee on a daisy.

PROVIDING FOOD...

A feeder provides pleasure and educational value while providing supplemental food for birds during the winter.

However, a selection of plants that will provide seeds, nuts or fruit in winter will achieve the same end, and these need not be cleaned and refilled. Some good plant choices include black-eyed susan, coneflower, birch and red chokeberry.



Berries are a well-known winter food, as this Western Kingbird is about to demonstrate.

PROVIDING WATER...

Unless there is a water source on or near your property, you will want to be sure that water is available at all times of the year. Running or dripping water is especially attractive to birds. Remember that different types of wildlife will be attracted by different means of offering water.

A birdbath on a pedestal will serve birds and squirrels, while a ground-level basin will serve animals like turtles and rabbits.

Try to position your bird bath near a thicket to which birds can retreat quickly – their ability to fly is compromised when their feathers are wet.



A baby Blue Jay in a bird bath



A frog on a lily pad in a pond.

PROVIDING COVER...

At some point, all creatures seek shelter from weather and predators. Evergreens and thickets provide year round cover. A brush pile, if there is space in your yard, can be a haven for chipmunks, rabbits and foxes. Even the nooks and crannies of a dry-stack stone wall offers shelter for insects, toads and chipmunks.



A song sparrow on a pine tree, a type of evergreen.



A chipmunk on a rock wall.

PROVIDING PLACES TO RAISE YOUNG...

Needs will vary depending on the species and point in their life cycle. Dense plants, thickets, and stone walls all serve as possibilities. Did you know? Caterpillars require a host plant for the larval stage and a nectar plants for the adult stage. Milkweed satisfies both needs for the Monarch butterfly.



Monarch on milkweed

MORE PLANTS FOR WILDLIFE

Native plants are critical because they are well-adapted and may support up to 10-50 times more species than exotics.

- Woody plants: oaks, river birch, native dogwood, blueberry, serviceberry, winterberry and inkberry hollies (fruit-bearing shrubs and trees are an important winter food source), atlantic white or eastern red cedar, white pine
 - Vines & groundcovers: Native honeysuckle, creeping phlox, tiarella
 - Perennial shrubs and flowers: columbine, goldenrod, aster, black-eyed susan, coreopsis, monarda, and milkweed. Roses provide dense, thorny branches and many have hips in winter (rugosa and old shrub roses)
 - Annuals such as bachelor button, cosmos, sunflowers and zinnias
 - Ornamental grasses, sedges, and ferns
 - Herbs such as dill, fennel, lemon balm, parsley, cilantro and chamomile.
- The tiny pollinators, and predatory and parasitoid insects, are drawn to tiny, composite flowers such as those found on herbs that have gone to flower.

If you would like to know more, come visit the Horticultural Library at Deep Cut Gardens, or call to schedule a presentation for your group.



A healthy habitat for all. Note the chairs, gazebo and hammock stand for humans, as well as the pond and a dense variety of trees, shrubs and groundcover for the animals.

WINTER EYE-CANDY

Even on the dreariest winter day, a tropical oasis can be found in the Display Greenhouse at Deep Cut Gardens.

Originally built by former owner Vito Genovese for tropical ornamentals and tender citrus trees, the greenhouse has been restored twice. After purchasing the property in 1952, the Wihtols renovated the structure to house a collection of cacti and succulents acquired over the years from the US and overseas. Many of those plants are still living in the greenhouse.

In 1990, the Park System replaced the frame and glazing with energy-efficient double-walled polycarbonate. The base, made of the same peanut stone seen in other structures throughout the park, has withstood the years and is even home to a variety of small plants.



The Park System's 1990 greenhouse update.

Continues, next page

The greenhouse is divided into three sections, each with slightly different growing conditions. The first contains bromeliads, palms and a host of other tropical plants. The second section contains the collection of orchids, which are at peak bloom from late February into March, and the tender bonsai.

The last section houses the cacti and succulents and a collection of plants native to the Mediterranean region.



Strange bromeliads



Many kinds of orchids



Staghorn Fern

A SPECIAL KIND OF BOOK

Susan Henschel, Horticultural Librarian

A child's picture book is special. It tells a story by drawing in the reader and the one who is read to through illustrations that enhance, and often substitute for, the written word.

Children's book styles range from soft to bold, detailed to broad, realistic to fanciful.

At Deep Cut, books have been selected to make a positive connection for the young reader to gardening and/or nature. You might think it difficult to find entertaining books about nature to engage young readers. But judging by the oft-filled couches in the library's solarium, where these books reside, this is not the case. Staff and visitors alike are enthused about these latest finds:

- ***Big Yellow Sunflower**** – explores what a seed will become; fun, bright, shaped pages.
- ***The Curious Garden**** – creative and persistent, Liam nourishes a beautiful garden in a drab landscape; acrylic and gouache illustrations.
- ***The Gardener**** – Lydia, who loves gardens, is sent to live with her uncle in the city during the Depression; pen and ink with soft watercolors complement this gentle story told through Lydia's letters home; A Caldecott Honor Book.
- ***Mother Earth and Her Children: a Quilted Fairy Tale**** – a folktale about the changing seasons told with vivid details from a handmade modern quilt.
- ***Nibbles**** – a guinea pig finds the last dandelion...what should he do? A "green" tale in mixed-media art.
- ***A Seed is Sleepy**** – lovely watercolors illustrate scientific facts for young and old. Snowballs – bright collages suggest fun ways to build a snowman using found objects; a simple seek-and-find book.
- ***Stranger in the Woods*** – the author/photographer shows an encounter between wildlife and a snowman; Benjamin Franklin Award for Best Picture Book.
- ***Sunflower House**** – in watercolor and pencil, tells of a young boy growing a fun play space among the flowers.
- ***Tops and Bottoms**** – a humorous trickster story, based on folktales and slave stories; big, bold pictures; A Caldecott Honor Book.

* American Horticultural Society "Growing Good Kids - Excellence in Children's Literature" Award



Library Hours are 10pm – 3:30pm, Monday through Saturday.

It's Time To...

January ✓

- Throughout winter, check for winter mulches and plants displaced by the weather.
- Don't forget the birds – fresh water is essential; seeds and suet will provide nourishment.
- Start a garden journal; it will prove to be an invaluable asset.
- Increase humidity around houseplants by setting them on pebble trays or grouping together.
- Plan for 2012 – browse catalogs, sketch out plans, make up your seed list.
- Test leftover seeds for viability; place several between moist paper towels or coffee filters, keep warm and moist, see how many sprout.
- Clean and oil your garden tools; it will add years to the life of your equipment.
- Pot up paperwhite narcissus – these will bloom within 3-4 weeks and don't require the chilling period most other bulbs require. Start every couple of weeks for winter-long display.



Gently remove snow from evergreens to prevent damage.

February ✓

- If possible, turn the soil in your vegetable/annual beds to expose insect eggs to foraging birds and the ravages of winter.
- Dust houseplants, and look out for insects. Feed any that are actively blooming or showing new growth.
- For a taste of spring, force branches of flowering trees or shrubs like forsythia, pussy willow, cherry, apple, quince.
- On a mild day, begin pruning trees and shrubs, starting with damaged branches or stalks.
- Insect & disease control is important for fruit trees – pesticide recommendations/spray schedules available from the Cooperative Extension 732-303-7614.
- Once the snow has melted, you can sow an early crop of spinach.

March ✓

- Fertilize trees and shrubs, after soil temperatures have reached 40° F, but before new growth begins.
- Repot and fertilize houseplants.
- Indoors, start seeds for broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, lettuce, parsley, peppers and tomatoes.
- Weather is uncertain, so be cautious about uncovering beds. Clean up the garden gradually, removing leaves and winter mulch in layers rather than all at once.

CORNER

NATURE

THE TRUTH ABOUT VENOMOUS SNAKES

By Chris Lanza, Senior Park Naturalist

Only 2 of 23 snake species in NJ could be considered potentially dangerous, and neither is found in Monmouth County. However, just the idea that venomous snakes can be found in Monmouth County is a powerful fear that has been hard to dispel. A better understanding of NJ's main venomous species may help set this idea to rest.

Timber Rattlesnake, Endangered Species

Of the 32 rattlesnake species found in the Americas, only the Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) is found in the northeastern US. Rattlesnakes belong to a group called pit vipers. They have two heat-sensing facial pits midway between the nostrils and eyes, on each side of their triangularly shaped head.

A larger head in comparison to the body is unique to venomous species in the state. The vertical, elliptically shaped pupils are also unique. Dark brown or black blotches behind the head connect to form chevrons by the midsection.



Note the pits next to the nostrils and the wide head (vs body) of this Timber Rattlesnake.

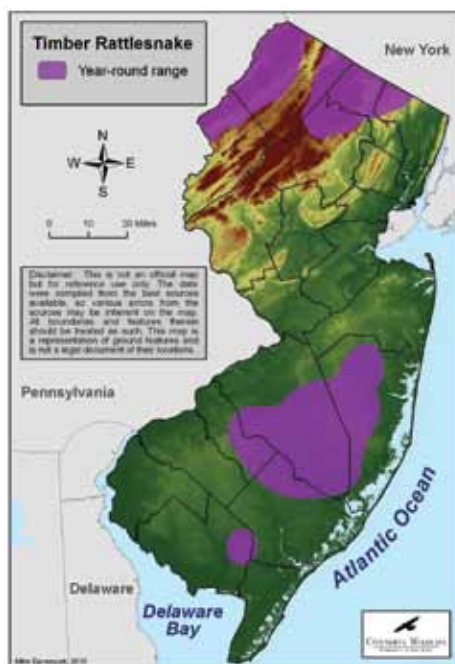


For comparison, note features of the non-venomous Pine snake: the smaller head, absence of facial pit, and shape of the eyes. The pine snake is nonetheless often mistaken for a rattlesnake and killed as a consequence.

Rattlesnakes, of course, are best known for their rattles and the ominous warning noise they produce. Certain non-venomous snakes actually copy this noise by vibrating their tail in leaves or brush.

The current range of the Timber Rattlesnake is greatly reduced from statewide to unconnected populations in northern New Jersey and the southern Pine Barrens. The northern population is found from the Kittatinny Ridge to Delaware Water Gap and in the Highland Ridges. The southern population is mostly centered in Ocean

and Burlington counties, but small populations also exist in Atlantic and Cumberland counties.



NJ Range of the Timber Rattlesnake, courtesy of Michael Davenport/Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ.

Habitat in the south consists of pine-oak forest in summer and cedar swamps and stream banks in winter. No known breeding populations exist in Monmouth County and have likely not existed in the county for decades or even longer. These snakes do not repopulate new areas with ease, and human attempts to repopulate have met with failure.

Along with an increasingly fragmented habitat, other factors have pushed the Timber Rattlesnake to its current endangered status. They return to the same winter dens and summer foraging areas, making them an easy target for illegal collection. They react badly to human contact and often retreat even from limited human encroachment.¹ Females do not mature until eight to nine years and only breed every 2-5 years, so a female may breed only one to two times in her life. The loss of mature females can be devastating to the population.

Northern Copperhead, Species of Special Concern

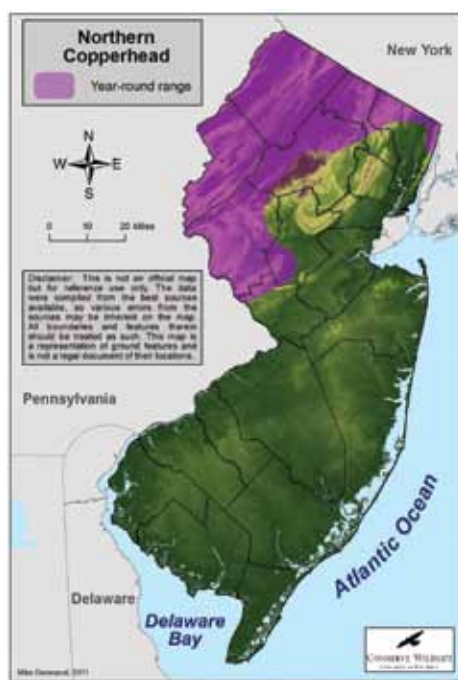
The Northern Copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen*) belongs to the same pit viper subfamily as the rattlesnakes. As such, it has the same facial pits on a triangle-shaped head with vertical, elliptically shaped pupils. The main coloration (ground color) is red-brown, interrupted by darker hourglass-shaped crossbands.



Note the wide orange (copper) head, and reddish-brown band pattern of this Copperhead; facial pits not visible.

Although it lacks a rattle, the Copperhead will rapidly vibrate its tail in the leaves and producing a similar sound when disturbed. They are known for being rather lethargic and slow to bite (no deaths have been attributed to them). But like all snakes, they should be treated with great caution.

The Northern Copperhead is found only in northern NJ; most commonly in Sussex, Warren, Hunterdon and Passaic counties. It is fond of rocky talus slopes (broken rock at the base of mountains), upland woods and forested wetlands, but could be found closer to humans as well. In winter they will den (often in large numbers and with other species) in rocky areas and even old mammal dens. Between 6 and 17 young will hatch August-October, but like rattlesnakes, they have a low level of reproduction and the death of a mature female can devastate the population.



NJ Range of the Northern Copperhead, courtesy of Michael Davenport/Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ.

The Importance of Snakes

All snakes, even venomous ones, play a vital role in controlling rodent populations. When gone, their loss may create a dangerous void filled by animals of even more concern such as disease-carrying rodents or crop-destroying insects.

Some Tips in Snake Country

Like most wild animals, snakes prefer to be left alone and do not go out of their way to harm humans. However, rattlesnakes and copperheads are potentially dangerous and people should be aware of them when hiking in their known range.

- Always remain on marked trails, do not put your hands into shrubs, under logs, or in rock piles where snakes and other animals may be hiding.
- Keep dogs leashed at all times.
- Keep track of children and teach them to tread lightly (remove nothing from the landscape, and leave only footprints behind).
- To keep snakes at a distance from your home, remove brush piles or any food that might attract rodents.
- Make sure to fix any holes in your foundation or walls that could allow snakes to enter your home.

¹ Even NJ Fish & Wildlife studies have ended with the snakes vanishing from the study area.

Sources:

Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey Endangered and Threatened Wildlife of New Jersey Ed. Beans, Bruce E., Niles, Larry New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2003
Schwartz, Vicki, PhD., Golden, David M. Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of New Jersey, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, 2002
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Kris Schantz, Div. of Fish and Wildlife, Personal Communication, September 26, 2011
Dr. Rulon W. Clark, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology, San Diego State University, Personal Communication, September 26, 2011



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PARK SYSTEM

It's a Scaup Convention!

If you were anywhere near the Navesink River/Oceanic Bridge in Rumson last February, you couldn't have missed this unusually large gathering of Greater and Lesser Scaup, (a duck species), that also included some Ruddy ducks.



Visit www.monmouthcountyparks.com