



SCHIFF NATURE  
PRESERVE

Spring 2022 – Earth Day Edition

# Field Notes

From Schiff Nature Preserve



**SAVE THE DATE**  
Environmental Film Festival  
June 4, 2022

339 Pleasant Valley Road, Mendham, New Jersey 07945-2922 • 973.543.6004 • [www.schiffnaturepreserve.org](http://www.schiffnaturepreserve.org)

## Updated Land Management Plan Steers Stewardship Efforts

Janis Slusky, Trustee

As visitors enter Schiff Nature Preserve, enjoy the 12 miles of trails, and pass by the structures on the property, few appreciate how a small non-profit is able to maintain these 768 acres, infrastructure, and buildings. Schiff has been working with Jennifer Santoro, Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and the Environment, Villanova University, to update our land management plan. This plan seeks to preserve the vision of Schiff.

Just like hikers realize the benefits of maps and trail markers, we at Schiff know that the well-being of our land depends on a strategic plan/vision. Last summer Ms. Santoro was tasked with developing our new Land Management Plan, which creates short and long-term goals for the organization and our Conservation and Stewardship Committee. It prioritizes protecting our diverse and native forests, meadows, and ecosystems

while also preserving rare species of plants and animals. It values public access and environmental education. It is the ultimate trail map that guides our staff and volunteers, while simultaneously protecting the financial investments from our generous members and donors who make this possible.

How does one care for such a large property? With so many acres to consider, limited funding, and multiple seasonal priorities, we employ a number of financially sustainable methods to reduce invasive species and regenerate the soil. The use of prescribed burns, a deer management program, and the regular removal of invasive species are some of the most efficient methods of maintaining our flora and fauna. One day, week, month, and year at a time and with our new land management plan, we remain dedicated to stewarding these lands for the public to enjoy.



## Why Should You Consider Giving to Local Environmental Organizations?

Pat Charney, Trustee

With appeals regularly arriving in your inbox and mailbox, you already know that many worthwhile causes abound. I want to stress why it's important to give to local preserves and/or environmental nonprofits. While there are some commonalities among the nonprofits, the focus of each might differ. For example, one might specialize in protecting birds, yet another might hone in on water quality, and another might work to maintain native species. Some provide education, others do testing, and still others create inventories or execute plans for action. So whatever your concern is, there's likely an organization working on it.

These organizations are also likely to have something in common – not enough resources to reach all of these goals. Here at Schiff, our three part-time employees' hours equate to a single full-time employee. Yes, you read that right. And even with a very active Board of Trustees and fantastic volunteers, juggling the demands of building and trail maintenance, research and grant applications, invasive species, fundraising, and regular programs can prove to be difficult. However, the benefits are real.

Beyond the obvious bonuses of providing space to enjoy nature and being a boon to mental health, preserves help provide clean air to breathe and water to drink, help mitigate road congestion, provide volunteer opportunities, and enhance the feel of community. Having more of these nonprofits in your area multiplies the benefits. Even if the specific focus of the Schiff Nature Preserve does not speak directly to you, remember that open space also protects your property value. With so much to gain, consider donating to any (or many) of these local organizations today!



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## Maple Sugaring Demonstration is a Sweet Spot of our Winter

Schiff's Maple Sugar Open House is one of a handful of Maple Sugaring demonstrations available for the public in Morris County. This past spring, we hosted two days of Maple Sugaring events, one for our local Scout Troops and one for the public. With over 100



guests here at the preserve over the rainy March weekend, our trustees, staff, and volunteers provided a family friendly, hands-on educational and recreational program. Guests enjoyed learning how to identify and tap the trees, observing the

sap boiling process, and tasting some of Schiff's own maple syrup. Many of our guests opted to take the hike to the maple grove, while others enjoyed a variety of handmade treats. With over 30 maple trees tapped on the property, we collected 50 gallons of sap

to boil down resulting, in 12 pints of precious syrup. We thank our guests, our partners at The Maple Shop in Chester, and our volunteers for helping us provide this fun and informative program for our guests.



## Garden Club of Morristown Funds Native Planting Effort at Schiff Nature Preserve

Schiff Natural Lands Trust is grateful to our local friends and members who helped Schiff obtain a grant from the Garden Club of Morristown's Community Fund. As part of our recently updated land management plan, Schiff is working to increase the number of native species replanted following invasive species removal. We sought funding for the purchase of these native plants, seedlings, and tree saplings, and the Garden Club of Morristown provided. With the grant, Schiff is positioned to purchase a variety of native plants and the necessary supplies to keep the newly planted trees and shrubs safe from deer browse. The mission of the Garden Club of Morristown Community is to promote interest in gardening, preserve and encourage plant and bird life, and encourage civic beautification and conservation of our natural resources. We thank the Garden Club of Morristown and encourage our members to support their organization by considering membership and/or attendance at one of their many educational programs.

## Dogs Must Be Leashed When Visiting

We thank the majority of our visitors who walk their dogs responsibly, but recently we have witnessed an increase in unleashed dog encounters and resulting complaints.

Not all visitors appreciate or desire a visit with an unknown dog, no matter how friendly. In addition, some visitors have had very unfriendly/scary experiences recently involving being jumped on and barked at by several off leash dogs. The habitat destruction that occurs when dogs are off leash is also a concern. The risk of an encounter with a resident bear, coyote, and/or

fox are common here at SNP.

Maintaining dogs on leash allows for all visitors to feel safe while helping reduce damage to various habitats from off trail, free-range dogs.

Our Land Steward will continue to patrol the trails thanking those who walk their dogs responsibly. We may, however, be forced to partner with our local police and begin issuing verbal and written warnings, or restricting access to dog owners who fail to abide by these rules. We remain thankful to the many Schiff members, neighbors, and friends who respectfully

visit Schiff Nature Preserve and look forward to the public's full cooperation.







## Amphibians arise from their winter slumber



As the days get longer and the nights warmer, amphibians rise from their

winter slumber and begin their quest for a mate. Among the most vocal are the Wood Frog and Spring Peeper. The Wood Frog is one of the first to appear because it can tolerate colder temperatures. The Northern Spring Peepers are smaller tree frogs with x-marks on their back. Both are identified by their mating calls, whose start is weather dependent. With a mild winter, you

can hear the first songs in February, or, they can start as late as April. Rainy nights in the mid 40's offer the ideal backdrop for these frogs to mate, so this year it was early.

What should you listen for? The Wood Frog has an unmistakable voice, which sounds like a duck, singing day and night. In contrast, the Northern Spring Peeper utilizes a rapid, high-pitched whistling song.

Our local amphibians breed in vernal/ephemeral ponds, created when the snow melts and the spring rains build up. These temporary pools offer safety from predators, but dry up as summer progresses. Newly hatched amphibians must quickly progress through metamorphosis to escape from their temporary pool before it dries. How many can you find in the ponds at Schiff?

## 13th Annual Environmental Film Festival Focuses on Land Conservation in the Suburbs

Schiff Nature Preserve is a successful example of how residents can band together to save land from development. Yet those development pressures have not disappeared. Today, the Mendhams and surrounding communities remain challenged with ensuring a balance between community growth and conservation.

On Saturday, June 4, all are invited to our 13th annual Environmental Film Festival to explore this balancing act with well-known local nature photographer Chris Neff. The event features an hour of films followed by a lively talk with Neff, who is the Communications Director for NJ Audubon.

Neff will lead a discussion on the importance of land stewardship in the suburbs. As a longtime Mendham Borough resident, Neff offers a unique insight into the fragile ecosystem of the suburbs. He will describe the critical importance of protecting native plants, wildlife species, and the river headwaters that supply water to tens of thousands

of New Jersey residents.

The evening begins with a hay ride or short hike to Wood Badge Lodge, where guests can gather around a fire pit for picnicking in the woodland "theater." Guests are welcome to bring their own food, drinks, and snacks to enjoy prior to the movies. Then, around dusk, an hour of films starts with two short films.



The feature, "Giants," tells the story of a neighborhood's relentless fight to save majestic sequoia trees from being taken down to build a house. The power of community and everyday residents is showcased in this moving film. Advance tickets are available online. Don't wait until the last minute to purchase, as this outdoor event may sell out!

## Music in the Woods Concert Series Expands This Season

To remain open for hiking during the pandemic, we were forced to make some adjustments here at Schiff. Like many, we also discovered a few silver linings that we have now embraced. One such silver lining was moving our Music in the Woods (MITW) concert series outdoors.

The MITW concerts were conceived as an alternative way to attract a new and different set of visitors to Schiff Nature Preserve. While previously held in the Nature Center, the pandemic offered us an opportunity to begin hosting these music events within the woods of the preserve, in the Amphitheater. The Amphitheatre is an open air theater featuring wooden stadium seating, allowing for lots of fresh air and social distancing. Building off the success of the 2021 season, Schiff will expand and host six concerts this year. Throughout the spring and summer, MITW will be held monthly on various Sundays, from 4- 6 pm. The season will kick off this Sunday, April 24 with a concert inside the Nature Center featuring the World Beat Concert with Chuck Wood & Friends. The indoor venue will be used at the start and end of the season to provide a comfortable environment for our visitors, the musicians, and their instruments.

This year's line up includes The Joe Cirrotti Trio in May, James Calleo in June, Pyrenesia in July, Alex Radus in September, and Tom Rice and Friends in October. All proceeds of the concerts directly support the musical talent and Schiff Nature Preserve. Please join us for Music in the Woods.



Chuck Wood

[www.schiffnaturepreserve.org](http://www.schiffnaturepreserve.org) • 973-543-6004





Schiff Nature Preserve  
339 Pleasant Valley Road  
Mendham, New Jersey 07945

## Come Out & Play

April 30, 2022 (Saturday) 9:00 - 11:00 am  
**Woodpecker Wonders**

May 8, 2022 (Sunday) 8:00 - 10:00 am  
**Sunday Morning Fitness Hike**

May 15, 2022 (Sunday) 7:30 - 9:00 pm  
**Full Moon Hike**

May 27, 2022 (Friday) 5:30 - 7:00 pm  
**Family Fireside Fun**

May 28, 2022 (Saturday) 9 - 11:00 am  
**Volunteer Day**

June 4, 2022 (Saturday) 7:00 - 10:00 pm  
**Environmental Film Festival**

June 12, 2022 (Sunday) 8:00 - 10:00 am  
**Sunday Morning Fitness Hike**

June 12, 2022 (Sunday) 7:30 - 9:00 pm  
**Sunset Hike**

June 18, 2022 (Saturday) 10:30 - 1:30 pm  
**Father's Day Historical Hike**

June 20, 2022 (Monday) to  
June 24, 2022 (Friday) 9:00 - 12 pm  
**Spring Fledglings Camp: Fuzzy and Furry**

Please check our website for current calendar offerings@ [www.schiffnaturepreserve.org](http://www.schiffnaturepreserve.org)

## Scouting Heritage Merit Badge Program

Given its rich historical connection to scouting, Schiff has long offered programs for Cub and Girl Scouts in their pursuit of nature-related badges, as well as assistance to individual scouts in pursuit of environmentally-themed Gold Award and Eagle Award projects.

On Sunday, October 2, Schiff is proud to host a new event for middle- and high-school-age boy and girl scouts who wish to earn their Scouting Heritage Merit Badge. Few, if any, places are more central to the heritage and history of scouting in this country than Schiff. The event, to which current and former scouts and their families are invited, will include exhibits and an illustrated historical presentation in the Brookrace manor house—once the headquarters of the Schiff Scout Reservation—followed by a hike across the Schiff Nature Preserve focusing on sites and structures central to Schiff's scouting history.

For nearly 50 years, from 1932 to 1979, what is now the Schiff Nature Preserve formed the largest part of the Schiff Scout Reservation, the first permanent National Training Center for the Boy Scouts of America.

Formally dedicated in 1933 at a ceremony co-chaired by the governors of New Jersey and New York and featuring the reading of remarks from President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the scouting movement, the Reservation was named in honor of Mortimer Loeb Schiff, one of the founders of the Boy Scouts of America. Mortimer Schiff was elected president of the Boy Scouts in 1931, only months before his untimely death. In her son's memory, and to fulfill his dream of establishing a permanent, professionalized national training program for scout leaders, Therese



Loeb Schiff donated the money to buy what had been the Brookrace country estate of Richard Henry Williams Jr. and his wife, Julia Lorillard Edgar, and fit it out to serve the scouts' needs.

The long and rich history of scouting at Schiff—including the establishment of the American Wood Badge leadership program and the important roles played by William "Green Bar Bill" Hillcourt, James E. West, Sir Robert Baden-Powell, and many others—is essential to an understanding of scouting heritage. We hope and encourage many current and former scouts to sign up for this important event on October 2.

## WHERE'S SCHIFF?

40° 45' 48.332" N / 74° 37' 15.641" W



## Support Schiff with a Recurring Membership

There are SO many fun and educational events being offered at Schiff for all ages. Please help us spread the word about Schiff by:

- **Telling your friends and neighbors**  
why you chose to become a member of Schiff. Ask them to support Schiff. We rely heavily on revenue from membership.
- **Showing your friends and family**  
our new and improved website, Facebook and Instagram posts. Please share our posts and events.
- **Taking pictures when you visit.**  
Use the hashtag #schiffnaturepreserve OR #supportschiff.
- **Bringing friends to the preserve**  
to check out our trails, nature center, and programs.
- **Attending our Special Events,**  
like our Environmental Film Festival, our Annual meeting, Music in the Woods Concerts or one of our Historical Hikes.

