

Field Notes

From Schiff Nature Preserve



339 Pleasant Valley Road, Mendham, New Jersey 07945-2922 • 973.543.6004 • www.schiffnaturepreserve.org

Schiff Celebrates It's 40th Anniversary at USET in Gladstone

Marissa S. McDonnell, M.D., President and Chair of the Farm to Table Subcommittee

Glorious weather set the stage for our 6th Annual Farm to Table Benefit Dinner at the USET Stables and Carriage Barn in Gladstone on September 21st. Attendees were treated to equestrian-themed cocktails in the stunning Rotunda, a dressage exhibition by Kim Herslow and her magnificent horse Feymar OLD, a lively historical talk given by our trustee and event co-chair W. Barry Thomson, and a fabulous dinner created by Chef Anthony Bryant from local farm ingredients donated by our partners Alstede Farms and River Bend Farm. The

grand floral decor provided by Laura Clare Floral Design of Far Hills and Melinda Paige Hopkins of Chester, established the tone for a sophisticated fall meal, while Alice Minnich, owner of Larger Cross in Oldwick, created the perfect space for cozy conversation using her natural tabletop items and foraged centerpiece materials at our VIP tables nestled in the historic corner stalls.

In honor of our 40th Anniversary and in support of our mission of environmental education and stewardship of over 760

acres, an appeal was made by trustee and co-chair Robert Osner-Hackett. Our members and guests responded generously, donating a total of \$40,000 at our largest fundraiser of the year. We would like to thank all of our sponsors for their partnership and commitment to Schiff. You enabled our most successful fundraising year yet!

Would you like to take part in this fun evening next year? Members of Schiff receive advance notice of the Farm to Table Benefit Dinner, please consider joining as a member today, watch for our event announcement in May, and go to our website anytime for more information and photos from the 2024 event at <https://www.schiffnaturepreserve.org/farm-to-table.cfm>



SCHIFF NATURAL LANDS TRUST

Thank You to our Farm to Table Sponsors!

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Pictured from left to right: Guests visiting in the Trophy Room, one of the VIP Tables, our current, first, and previous Presidents, the floral decor of the tables, our sponsors, and Kim Herslow Dressage

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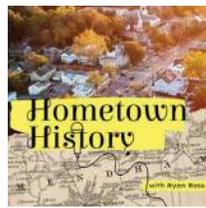
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Hometown History, Mendham Podcast About Schiff

W. Barry Thomson

In connection with Schiff Natural Lands Trust's 40th anniversary celebration "Hometown History," a podcast about historic places and events in Mendham — hometownhistory.substack.com — interviewed two of Schiff's founding trustees, Louis Farrelly and John Hayden, to discuss the history of how the Schiff Natural Lands Trust came to be.

The interviews primarily covered the years following the 1979 decision by the Boy Scouts of America—which had operated the Mortimer L. Schiff Scout Reservation and National Training Center in Mendham for nearly 50 years—to relocate the BSA's headquarters and training center to Texas.

The BSA soon sold the Scout Reservation to AT&T, which announced plans to develop the property into a large-scale management training and conference center, replete with a helicopter pad. AT&T's plans provoked much public opposition. As Farrelly recalled, the ultimately successful challenge to the powerful and deep-pocketed AT&T was fueled in part by the opponents' simple, direct, yet very effective message: "Love Mendham, Keep It Residential." A longer-term benefit of the grassroots fight against AT&T was the ongoing support and involvement of the community to preserve as much of the land as possible through the establishment of the Schiff Natural Lands Trust.

After deciding to abandon its project, AT&T in 1983 sold

the property to the Trust for Public Land, which intended to be only an intermediate owner. As no governmental entity stepped forward to acquire the entirety of the property from TPL to preserve it as open space, alternate plans were made to sell the land to a private entity that would develop a portion of the land for residences with the balance to be dedicated as preserved open space for the public.

The Schiff Natural Lands Trust was incorporated in 1984 to serve as the steward for what would eventually be the undeveloped portion of the former Scout Reservation. The first property to be acquired by Schiff, however, was a generous donation made in 1985 of 27 acres adjoining the Scout Reservation that had long been owned by the family of one of Schiff's founding trustees, Louis Farrelly. Lou's mother, Mary-Catherine Ritchie Farrelly, when updating her estate plan, recognized the benefits to her family, to Schiff, and to the Mendham community of permanently preserving a portion of her land.

In 1997, following years of uncertainty and complex negotiations, plans were finalized among Schiff Natural Lands Trust, Mendham Township, and the developer, Jackson Homes Inc., and 310 acres of the former Scout Reservation were conveyed to Schiff, thereby forming the bulk of what is today the Schiff Nature Preserve.

Schiff's Impact Through the Years

In celebration of our 40th Anniversary, we've gathered a few heartfelt quotes from longtime members, Summer Program for Kids alums, neighbors, and friends to highlight Schiff Natural Lands Trust's impact over the years. As the community has evolved—families move, children grow up and become active adults—Schiff has remained a steady presence, offering open space and programs. Here are a few heartfelt reflections as Schiff celebrates 40 years of education, preservation, and stewardship.

"I want to let you know what an impact Schiff has made on our family. My wife and I have lived here for 27 years and with our (now) 21 and 19 year old children have taken many walks and had exploratory adventures over the years through the Schiff grounds. Our kids were campers, CITs, and counselors over the summers. Our eldest will be working in the Summer Nature Program with Jenny and Christy this summer. We have been lucky to be so close to such a wonderful place. Our dog Molly loves Schiff too!" *Ted and Staci Christian, neighbors to Schiff Nature Preserve and parents to SNP alumni turned counselor*

"Schiff has given our family the chance to celebrate the land and connect with and give back to our community. Our children grew up attending Schiff's summer camp which fostered a love of the natural world and taught the importance of stewardship.

They later became camp counselors which provided them the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. Schiff has had such a profoundly positive impact on our family and we hope they continue their work for many years to come." *Greg Barna and Niki Tsalikis, members of Schiff since 2005 and parents to two SNP alumni turned counselors*

"We moved to the area a few years ago and quickly discovered Schiff Nature Preserve. We have been fortunate to meet the dedicated staff and Trustees who steward this beautiful preserved land. We enjoy the hiking trails, family events, and also try to never miss their Music in the Woods series! Being a part of Schiff has positively impacted our lives in so many ways!" *Patrick and Juliette Collins, neighbor to Schiff Nature Preserve*

"We so valued our time living with the Schiff Nature Preserve all around us. We felt fortunate in knowing our neighborhood was free from pending development. We could walk right out our door and enjoy peace, beauty, and sometimes a friendly wave from a friend up on the trail. Our children grew up valuing nature and the ability to run right up the trail and enjoy the great meadow. The kiddos attended Schiff Nature Program for Kids as long as they possibly could and we recommended others to the wonderful Schiff program. Our son, a member of Troop 150, completed his Eagle Service Award at Schiff. Our daughter gained enormous confidence while exploring the natural world via Schiff Nature Preserve. Her experience at Schiff influenced her well into college and beyond. Schiff Nature Preserve and the outstanding stewards of the land played an important role in our lives for over 20 years in Brookrace. Although we no longer live in the neighborhood, we continue to support their mission, understanding the value to the community that gave us so much value." *The Skirzenski Family, former neighbors, currently living in South Carolina*

Summer Nature Program Recap & Plans for 2025

Schiff's 2024 Summer Nature Program ignited a spark of wonder in a new generation of nature enthusiasts. Our twenty-first season of "where wild things happen naturally" cultivated a thriving community of young explorers who will carry forward Schiff's legacy of preservation, education, and stewardship.

As our young naturalists immersed themselves in the symphony of nature, their senses awakened. From deciphering the ancient stories etched within tree rings to unraveling the mysteries of the night, each discovery kindled a deeper connection to the environment. Through hands-on adventures like tie-dye creations, berry picking, and owl pellet dissection, they developed a keen appreciation for the intricate web of life. As they navigated trails, identified trees, and explored aquatic ecosystems, a profound sense of curiosity and belonging flourished.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making SNP what it is today. Four weeks of exploration flew by, leaving us eager to share the magic of nature with even more young minds next season. As we begin to develop curriculum and program content for SNP 2025, please know that we will continue to offer the 9-2 pm

schedule and have many exciting plans in store, including new scavenger hunts, guest speakers, a misting tent, and so much more!

The success of Schiff's Summer Nature Program is a testament to the unwavering dedication of our staff and the invaluable support of you, our community. Looking forward to summer of 2025!



Fall Brings an Animal Emergence in New Jersey

Red Hawk



As the leaves transform into a vibrant tapestry of red, orange, and gold, Northern New Jersey comes alive in the fall. This

season offers a unique opportunity to witness nature's wonders, especially in open spaces like those Schiff Nature Preserve provides.

The Great Meadow at Schiff and surrounding woodlands are home to white-tailed deer, frequently seen foraging as they prepare for winter. Northern New Jersey also hosts other wildlife like black bears, gray squirrels, eastern cottontail rabbits, and the elusive eastern coyote. Observing these creatures in their natural habitats provides insight into their seasonal behaviors and adaptations.

In fall, the region's plant life also shines, with an abundance of acorns, nuts, and berries sustaining wildlife through the colder months. Monarch

butterflies are a special sight as they migrate through the area; milkweed providing an essential habitat for their caterpillars. Birdwatchers can enjoy the migration of raptors, including hawks, eagles, and falcons, as the scenic overlooks at Schiff offer spectacular views of these birds journeying south.

Schiff plays a vital role in preserving this vibrant ecosystem through habitat restoration, land conservation, and education. Visit us in Mendham to explore the beauty of our preserve and experience all that nature has to offer this season.



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

Come Out & Play

Discounts for Members. More Info @ www.schiffnaturepreserve.org

SINGING BOWL MEDITATION

December 27, 2024 (Friday)

7:00 PM- 8:15 PM

VOLUNTEER WORK SESSION

December 29, 2024 (Sunday)

10:00 AM- 12:00 PM

SINGING BOWL MEDITATION

January 10, 2025 (Friday)

7:00-8:00 pm

SUNDAY MORNING FITNESS HIKE

January 12, 2025 (Sunday)

9:00 - 11:00 am

What is Happening To All The Beech Trees?

If you have walked through the Schiff Nature Preserve recently, you have probably noticed that the Beech tree leaves are either missing or misshaped. Unfortunately, you are witnessing the effects of Beech Leaf Disease (BLD). The disease is caused by *Litylenchus crenatae mccannii* (LCM), a microscopic nematode that has infected the Beech trees.

The impact of this disease was first noticed in the McVicker Brook Preserve section of Schiff. Dark colored banding was found between the veins of the leaves on a number of the trees there. This can be observed by holding the leaf up to the light to see the dark colored banding instead of the light green color that is normal for a healthy leaf. Sadly, the impact of the disease has been noticed in all of the Beech groves around



the property. Forestry experts have determined that the nematode infestation of a Beech tree will kill that tree within two to six years, depending upon the age and size of the individual tree. While there is treatment available for single or small groups of Beech, there is no treatment regimen that has been recommended for large stands of

Beech trees in a forested property.

While we continue our research into possible treatments, the area of our biggest concern is the Beech grove in McVickers Brook Preserve. This grove has been providing a shade canopy cover over McVickers Brook. Canopy cover helps moderate the temperature of the brook which allows the small fish population to thrive. This fall we'll plant other tree saplings there to help protect the brook ecology in the future. As always, volunteers are

welcome to join us in our land stewardship work by registering to attend one of our monthly Volunteer Work Sessions.