

Field Notes

From Schiff Nature Preserve



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

PLEASE CONSIDER GIVING
TO OUR EARTH DAY APPEAL

Natural Lands Trust Celebrates its 40th Anniversary!

Dr. Marissa S. McDonnell, *President and Development and Outreach Committee Chair*

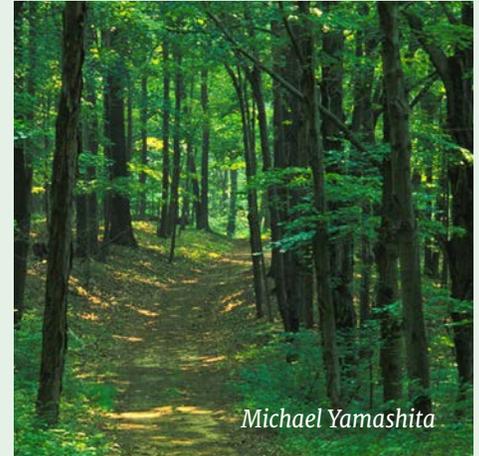
Schiff Natural Lands Trust will celebrate its 40th Anniversary in August. For forty years, the Schiff board has embraced its responsibility for the land that has provided food and shelter to indigenous people, farmland to raise food and dairy products, habitat for countless species, training opportunities for Scout leadership, and support for public health by providing access to open space in nature.

Schiff's mission continues this legacy: to foster an understanding and appreciation of the natural world through land preservation, environmental stewardship, education, and passive recreational activities. The 768 acres of open space in our preserves support clean air, water, and soil for our area, ensuring a healthier environment for resident wildlife and for us and our children to live and play in.

With the coming of spring, we hope you will experience the preserves and take advantage of the many activities offered at Schiff. If you prefer a self guided day visit to enjoy a leisurely hike, birdwatching, dog walking, or nature photography, our 12 miles of trails provide a variety of views, flora, and

fauna to enjoy. Alternatively, we offer a wide array of educational and passive recreational programs such as Full Moon Hikes and an Environmental Book Club or some of our seasonal programs such as Maple Sugaring, Environmental Film Fest, or Music in the Woods. Address your mental and physical health needs by attending a Singing Bowl Meditation or our Sunday Morning Fitness Hike. Lastly, we offer children a reprieve from the fast pace of a technological laden culture with nature immersion programs such as Fledglings and Schiff's Summer Nature Program. Both of the programs provide children with plenty of time outdoors and hands-on experiences in nature.

In this anniversary year, please reflect on the contributions Schiff offers to our community and local wildlife at large, to our contiguous neighbors by way of the ecologically sound land management strategies we employ, and to you personally as you enjoy the many trails and locations open to the public. There are many ways you can personally engage with and become involved here at Schiff: attend a program, come for one of our Volunteer Work Sessions, volunteer



Michael Yamashita

on a committee, or attend our Farm to Table Dinner benefit, our largest annual fundraiser. There are as many ways to fiscally support Schiff as well: join or renew your membership, donate to one of our appeals, become a Business Partner for a Greener Community, and, lastly, consider Schiff as you engage in legacy planning, knowing that each of us can make an impact by supporting SNLT's conservation and preservation efforts.

Forty years of stewardship are layered over a millennia of natural balance and growth. Shoes for the forest may have changed in design from deer hide to Gortex, but we hope the impact of our footsteps are just as light, leaving the land to flourish for generations to come.



Join Me in Supporting Schiff Natural Lands Trust

Tracy Budnik, Schiff member, Summer Nature Program parent alumni, and current volunteer on Schiff's Development & Outreach Committee

I am thrilled and honored to express my unwavering support for Schiff Natural Lands Trust. Since settling into Mendham in 2018, my family and I have been proud members of this incredible organization. Our journey with Schiff began when our

daughters participated in the Summer Nature Program, where they immersed themselves in hiking, animal discovery, nature crafts, and simple yet joyful games, reminiscent of a time before the constant pull of social media and technology.

Our curiosity and inclination to engage came by way of our neighbor and former Schiff Board President, Alex Battey, whose passion for the preserve was contagious. From the moment we first set foot on the trails, we were capti-



Budnik Summer Nature Kids



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vated by the beauty and tranquility of the preserve. However, we have come to love that Schiff offers much more than just outdoor experiences. It serves as a beacon for the stewardship of our precious land and hosts a myriad of cultural and educational events.

One particularly memorable experience for us was our first farm-to-table dinner at Wendover Farm, hosted by Schiff Trustee, Alan Weinsten and his wife, Judy. It was a unique, inviting, and intimate event, allowing us to make genuine personal connections with other Schiff members and supporters. The seasonal hyper-locally harvested farm to table meal not only delighted our senses but also made us immediately fall in love with everything Schiff has to offer.

For my family, Schiff has become an integral part of our lives, ingrained in our very being. As such, it was a natural progression for me to become involved as a volunteer on Schiff's Development & Outreach Committee. I am proud to contribute to an organization that not only provides enriching experiences in nature but also works tirelessly to preserve and protect our environment for future generations to enjoy.

I invite you to join us in supporting Schiff Natural Lands Trust and Schiff Nature Preserve. Come explore the wonders it has to offer, immerse yourself in nature, and become an active part of a community dedicated to preserving our natural world. Together, let's continue to make a difference and ensure that places like Schiff continue to thrive for years to come.



15th Annual Film Festival Reminds Us of the Power of Local Activism

Take a fascinating journey that starts in a small pond nestled in the quiet woods of Mendham Borough and ends 80 miles later, among massive container ships in busy Newark Bay. This journey follows the meandering path of the Passaic River, as chronicled in a book by writer Mary Bruno, who grew up on its banks, and later captured in the beautiful film, *An American River*.

Schiff is excited to present this cinematic adventure at our 15th Annual Environmental Film Fest on Saturday, June 1, and offer an opportunity to meet the filmmaker, Scott Morris. As always, Film

Fest challenges us to think about how to protect natural resources that we often take for granted.

An *American River* documents Mary Bruno and her river guide, Carl Alderson, as they embark on a four-day, 80-mile kayak trip from the Passaic's headwaters to its toxic mouth in Newark Bay. They explore the river's beauty, navigate its many twists and turns, pass through cities, including Paterson and Great Falls, and visit Mary's hometown, as they head towards the industrial disaster that poisoned the Passaic for decades. Along the way, candid conversations with residents, experts and advocates reveal the Passaic's extraordinary history, geology, and ecology.

Join us for a hayride, courtesy of Backer Farm, or take a leisurely hike to the outdoor "woodland theater" by Wood Badge Lodge. Guests are encouraged to pack a picnic dinner or snacks, refreshment or BYOB. We provide fresh popcorn, water, and supplies to make "s'mores." While waiting for evening to fall, movie goers are invited to play a special 40th Anniversary edition of "Schiff Trivia" to celebrate and share the preserve's storied past.

Thank you to our sponsors for making this event possible: Backer Farm; Summit Soundz; and Mikula Web Solutions.



Welcome NEW part time year round staff member, Christi Lorenson

Schiff Natural Lands Trust has increased its staffing capacity ever so slightly to allow for programs and special events to be developed, overseen, and promoted by a dedicated staff member. We are thrilled to announce that Christi Lorenson, who has worked for Schiff Natural Lands Trust since 2017 as one of our Summer Program Directors will now be working in a very part time capacity on

our educational, recreational, and special events. Christi graduated from the University of Delaware in 2006 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Ecology and Wildlife Conservation. Since then, she has worked for the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation as a Grants Manager, Woodlands Wildlife Refuge as a Development Assistant, and at Trailside Nature & Science Center as a Park Naturalist. Subsequently, she stopped working full-time to be home with her children. Christi's strong respect for the environment and desire to preserve its natural habitats has encouraged her to dedicate her career to environmental education and outreach. Christi's love for the environment has also shaped the hobbies she has taken up, including hiking, rock climbing, skiing, and throwing pottery. What she loves to do most is spend time with her family. Please join us in welcoming Christi to Schiff. She can be reached at programsandspecialeventscoordinator@schiffnaturepreserve.org.

Summer at Schiff

Co-directors Christi Lorenson and Jennifer Chmura believe it is very important to foster an appreciation for the environment in the hearts and minds of children. Once instilled, their appreciation for the environment may flourish into a long lasting desire to protect and preserve these natural places for generations to come.

Schiff's Summer Nature Program is excited to announce a change to our program. This year, we will be offering a Monday- Friday program running from 9:00-2:00 each day. Although the hours of Schiff's Summer Nature Program have changed, our program content remains the same, always integrating science, sustainability, the



environment, and art. SNP's nature-based summer program offers a healthy dose of fresh air to children ages 6-16, while also building confidence, creating friendships, and instilling an appreciation for the great outdoors. We are excited to announce this summer's program themes include, "Sounds Like Summer", "From the Ground Up", "Who Turned the Lights Out?", and "Nature's Grocery Store". Children get to enjoy the wonders of nature through daily hikes, stream exploration, animal tracking, shelter-building, wineberry picking, and nature inspired games and crafts, including Schiff's signature tie dye t-shirts! We hope to see you this summer; please visit our website to learn more.

<https://www.schiffnaturepreserve.org/summer.cfm>



Black Bear (*Ursus Americanus*)

Spring Animal Emergence in New Jersey

Understanding Wildlife Activity and Bear Safety Tips

As the winter frost begins to thaw and the days grow longer, the signs of spring emerge across New Jersey's landscape. With the changing season comes a vibrant awakening of wildlife, from birds returning to build nests to mammals emerging from their winter dens. Amidst this natural spectacle, it is crucial for residents and visitors to understand and respect the wildlife that shares our environment, particularly when it comes to encounters with bears.

The Spring Awakening: Wildlife in New Jersey

New Jersey boasts diverse ecosystems, ranging from dense forests

to coastal marshlands, providing habitat for a rich variety of wildlife. With the arrival of spring, many animals become more active as they search for food, mates, and suitable nesting sites.

One of the most iconic animals in New Jersey's wilderness is the black bear (*Ursus Americanus*). After a period of winter dormancy, black bears emerge from their dens, hungry and eager to replenish lost fat reserves. Their emergence typically coincides with the warming temperatures and budding vegetation of spring.

In addition to black bears, other wildlife species also become more

visible during this time. White-tailed deer, raccoons, foxes, and various bird species are among the many animals that increase their activity levels in the spring months.

Understanding Bear Behavior and Safety Measures

Encounters between humans and bears are not uncommon, particularly in regions where human development encroaches upon bear habitat. While black bears generally try to avoid humans, they may become more bold in their search for food, especially if attracted to residential areas by easily accessible garbage or bird feeders.

To mitigate the risk of negative encounters with bears, it is essential for residents and visitors to understand bear behavior and implement safety measures:

• Secure Garbage and Food Sources:

Bears are attracted to easily accessible food sources such as garbage cans, bird feeders, and outdoor pet food. **Store garbage securely in bear-proof containers and bring bird feeders indoors during bear-active months.**

• Yard Maintenance:

Keep yards clean and free of attractants. **Avoid leaving food scraps or pet food outside, and regularly clean outdoor grills to remove food.**

• Be Bear Aware:

Consider carrying a bear bell, when enjoying time outdoors in bear habitat. **Remain vigilant and make noise to alert bears of your presence.** When alerted, bears will often scurry away. **Carry bear spray as a precautionary measure, and keep children close by and pets on leash.**

• Respect Wildlife:

Maintain a safe and respectful distance from bears and other wildlife. Never approach or attempt to feed wild animals, as this can habituate them to human presence and increase the likelihood of conflicts.

• Know What to Do in an Encounter:

If you encounter a bear, remain calm and avoid sudden movements. Back away slowly while facing the bear. Do not run. In the unlikely event of a bear charging, stand your ground and use bear spray if available.

As spring breathes new life into the landscapes of New Jersey, it's a time of both wonder and responsibility. While the emergence of wildlife adds to the beauty of the season, it's important to remember that we share our environment with these creatures and must take steps to coexist peacefully.



Come Out & Play

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

- Sun, April 27 **Volunteer Work Session**
- Sun, May 19 **MUSIC IN THE WOODS** The Joe Cirotti Quintet
- Sat, May 25 **Volunteer Work Session**
- Sat, June 1 **ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL** American River
- Sat, June 22 **Volunteer Work Session**
- Sun, June 23 **MUSIC IN THE WOODS** Maribyrd & The Wooden Nickel Band
- Sat, July 27 **Volunteer Work Session**
- Sun, July 28 **MUSIC IN THE WOODS** The Outcrops
- Sun, August 11 **MUSIC IN THE WOODS** Cold Hill
- Sat, Sept 21 **FARM TO TABLE BENEFIT DINNER**
- Sat, Sept 28 **Volunteer Work Session**
- Sun, Oct 6 **MUSIC IN THE WOODS** Chuck Wood
- Sat, Oct 26 **Volunteer Work Session**
- Sun, Nov 24 **Volunteer Work Session**



Pearl Crescent (Phyciodes tharos)

DID YOU KNOW? Leaf litter is best kept undisturbed until late spring.

One valuable thing you can do to support pollinators and other invertebrates is to provide them with the winter cover they need in the form of fall leaves and standing dead plant material. The vast majority of butterflies and moths overwinter in the landscape as an egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, or adult. In all but the warmest climates, these butterflies use

leaf litter for winter cover. Beyond butterflies, bumble bees also rely on leaf litter for protection. At the end of summer, mated queen bumble bees burrow only an inch or two into the earth to hibernate for winter. An extra thick layer of leaves is welcome protection from the elements. There are so many animals that live in leaves: spiders, snails, worms, beetles, millipedes, mites, and more—these then support chipmunks, turtles, birds, and amphibians that rely on these insects for food.

Many organic gardeners opt for shredding their fall leaves for use in compost piles. While this is certainly a more environmentally friendly practice than bagging leaves and sending them to the landfill, shredded leaves do not provide the same cover as leaving them whole. Experts suggest that leaves in garden beds and lawn edges be left whole until late spring. Alternatively, at least 15 feet from any flammable structures, consider creating a leaf pile and allowing the leaves to break down naturally, or add the leaves gradually to your compost pile over time. Such efforts will keep critters safe and allow you to benefit from the rich garden gift that falls from the trees above. Another reason to leave the leaves is for the many benefits they provide to your landscape. Leaves provide valuable organic matter and build up healthy soil. Fallen leaves have the same weed suppression and moisture retention properties of shredded wood mulch—and they're free!