

Outdoor Advocates



CU Maurice River gives special recognition to seven volunteers.

The 15th Annual Ah Why Knot Awards

By J. Morton Galetto CU Maurice River

This year marks the 15th year that the local watershed protection organization CU Maurice River has celebrated its outstanding volunteers, who contribute over 10,000 hours each year. They monitor a host of species like purple martins, bluebirds, osprey, eagles, and wood ducks. They lead nature walks, save horseshoe crabs, create wildlife habitat, maintain nature trails, clean natural areas, conduct surveys for air and water quality, teach children, feed the International Shorebird Recovery Team, help with fundraisers, restore wetlands, offer stewardship, and so

much more. CU has ambassadors who represent the organization, set up activities, and/or help to organize local festivals like the Eagle and Purple Martin Festival, WheatonArts ECO Fair, and Outdoor Artists' Day in Mauricetown. CU is fortunate that so many of its volunteers are professionals who contribute a vast array of expertise toward its mission of raising awareness about the natural and cultural resources in the Southern NJ Region – what is called “Down Jersey.”

Seven outstanding volunteer contributors were recognized, five of whom received an Ah Why Knot Award. The award's name derives from members' response when asked to help out - “Ah, Why Knot.” The ‘knot’ is a play on words because the award is a wood carving of the nationally threatened shorebird species called the red knot, which the group is working to protect. A sixth person received the Sanderling Award for youth achievement while a seventh was chosen for the Presidential Award.

Normally this ceremony is held in May at a large picnic where the achievements of the Shorebird Recovery Team are celebrated as well. Some of the team are selected to get an Ah Why Knot because of their contributions to shorebird recovery.

This year CU took the awards on the road because of the pandemic. Each individual's ceremony was videoed and a bit of fun was added to make up for the need to socially distance. If you know any of the winners please give them warm congratulations.

Meet the Knot Awardees:



Cindy Berry - As a teacher in the Millville Public School System she was an enthusiastic advocate for Wild About Cumberland. Approximately 25-30 volunteers help with this program each year. Annually, since 2006, teachers, students, and chaperones have been treated to sessions that emphasize "a sense of place," along with

environmental programming that focuses on local habitats and species. Approximately 350 students are given indoor lessons for half a day and outdoor field studies the other half of the day. Since retiring Cindy has been dedicating time and experience to the Dragonfly Mercury Project and the Bluebird Trail Monitoring, while also participating in other outdoor opportunities. Cindy is part of Allen Jackson's CU team spearheading an amazing success story in bluebird recovery! They banded about 2116 chicks in 2019.



Steve Glynn - CU is fortunate to have a team of naturalists with diverse knowledge sets who are willing to share their appreciation for the great out-of-

doors with others. As leaders they grow stewardship of natural resources by promoting an appreciation for all creatures great and small, as well as connecting participants with the work and resources of the conservation world. Steve is one of these leaders. While he is also an avid birder, his current interests have expanded to include butterflies and dragonflies. Steve's volunteerism has allowed CU Maurice River to provide outings showcasing some of the best butterfly and dragonfly sites in the Maurice River Watershed. Steve has also brought volunteer opportunities to CUMR's calendar, most notably a survey of Cumberland County's rare sleepy orange butterfly population.



Tom Glynn has been involved with CU Maurice River for the past two years. He was instrumental in replacing the spindles on the bridge's handrail along the Maurice River Bicycle and Walking Trail. Tom is always well prepared for the task at hand and has proven to be a true force for accomplishment. He put many hours into the installation of raised plant boxes at the Neighborhood Wildlife Garden in Millville, which will serve as new outdoor learning tool. Tom also volunteers for a host of other programs including the Dragonfly Mercury Project, rebuffering initiatives, ReTurn the Favor (a horseshoe crab rescue effort), Wild About Cumberland, clean-ups, Elevate (a Vineland-based summer enrichment program for youth), wood duck box maintenance, and osprey conservation. He has a keen interest in wildlife photography and donates images to the CU photo collection. (Steve and Tom are not related.)

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Bert Hixon has been part of the Purple Martin Spectacular Event's team of naturalists for several years now. He shares his knowledge of local wildlife with the tour-goers. In the last two years Bert has also begun leading outings for CU Maurice River in the Delaware Bayshore and Atlantic Coast areas. He is a fantastic teacher who conveys his appreciation for the natural world in a calm yet enthusiastic manner. Bert leads every outing with an appreciation of the diverse levels and backgrounds of the attendees. He has a unique way of making every bird sighting thrilling and always has interesting facts to share about even the most common birds and trees. Some leaders ignore these sightings but Bert revels in the ordinary, recognizing that nature is always extraordinary.



Carol Sibley is one of CU Maurice River's most dedicated ambassadors, representing it at numerous activities including almost all of the community events we attend. Her ability to communicate the organization's mission and the importance of its work in a relatable way has been of great assistance. She connects well with people of all ages and experiences. At the table, Carol is especially wonderful with the youngest visitors. She helps staff lead outdoor learning opportunities designed to turn kids on to nature, including Elevate and Wild About Cumberland.

Sanderling Award



Luka Villani is from Vineland, having grown up on the shores of the Maurice River there. Currently he is an Environmental Studies major at Colby College in Maine. From October 2019 to January 2020 Luka volunteered well over 100 hours in assisting our Program Manager, Karla Rossini, in establishing a partnership with the Wetlands Institute in order to tailor their diamondback terrapin conservation project to the Delaware Bayshore region. Luka coordinated indoor volunteer trainings, helped lead on-site walks, and conducted outreach with local partners. Luka's approachability and eagerness helped

to get the public engaged, which was instrumental in getting the program off the ground. His contributions were high quality and well beyond his years.

Presidential Award



Wendy Walker has been involved with CU since around 2013/2014. She really hit the ground running in that she won an Ah Why Knot in 2014! Wendy enjoys all of our programming, from walks, volunteer work events, trips, and presentations. Her list of attendances

and participation is like the what's-up of CU happenings: 2nd Friday walks, campfires, Chili Bowl prep, bi-monthly meetings, Eagle Trail walk, duck caravan, trash hunt, clean-ups, 4th Saturday walks, Tuesdays on the Fly, set up for Ah Why Knot, ReTurn the Favor, Play Streets at the Neighborhood Wildlife Garden, butterfly surveys, Elevate, feeding the International Shorebird Recovery Team, Wild About Cumberland docent, Derelict Crab Trap removal, office work, prep for CU Socials, and volunteering for the National Fish Wildlife Foundation grant wetland restoration project. She is always an amazing ambassador for CU and filled the role at the Eagle Festival, Barn Day, Neighborhood Wildlife Garden, Mauricetown's Outdoor Arts Day, WheatonArts Spring and ECO Fair. Everyone knows and enjoys Wendy's wonderful spirit.

On YouTube:

Watch recipients get their awards on the CU YouTube channel [using this link](#).

If you would like to learn more about CU or to join, check out their website at CUMauriceRiver.org