

NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Wednesday, May 8, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

The Authority
745 Lebanon Road, Millville, NJ 08332

Join us at the next Bi-monthly Membership Meeting on Wednesday, May 8th at 6:30 p.m. to learn about upcoming opportunities to get involved and out-of-doors. This gathering is public and will be held at The Authority on Lebanon Road in Millville. Afterward, stay on for a presentation about American oystercatchers by Emmy Casper, Wildlife Biologist with Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey.

The Delaware Bay is well-known for the spectacular concentration of horseshoe crabs and migratory shorebirds that converge on the Bayshore beaches each spring; however, little is known about the activity of another Delaware Bay visitor, the eye-catching and charismatic American oystercatcher. Breeding populations of this species of special concern have been well-monitored along ocean beaches in New Jersey since 2003, but American oystercatchers nesting on Delaware Bayshore beaches have been understudied...until now.

Learn how biologists from Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, The Wetlands Institute, and the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service are working together to unravel the mysteries of this relatively new population. Emmy will share stories from the field and discuss how on-the-ground monitoring, trail cameras, and bird banding are all being used to learn more about the American oystercatchers that call the Delaware Bay home.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

STORYMAP RELEASE

2023-2024 - Waterway Access Interactive Map

CU Maurice River has been partnering with Princeton Hydro to develop an online ArcGIS Story Map of the recreational resources along the Maurice River and within the watershed. The visitor will be able to use this tool to explore water and hiking trails or find a place to picnic, dine, crab, or fish. We hope this instrument will ease barriers in accessing *Down Jersey's* hidden gems. To accomplish this, CU Maurice River's Karla Rossini has been gathering mapping data, providing images and audio files, drafting text, and much more; however, she has surely overlooked some of the best places in the watershed. So, we are calling on your expertise as a Maurice River Watershed resident and/or explorer. Can you lend us a hand in improving the Maurice River Watershed Explorer? Let's make this interactive...

Our first ask is for help in improving the list of local eateries, grape and grain distilleries, and other destinations you frequent after a good day in the wilds of our watershed. Currently, our map boasts a plenitude of chain restaurants, the type of places that the late Anthony Bourdain often accused of turning regional cuisines and landscapes into "Anywhere-America." We want to offer a list of eateries that pulsate with *Down Jersey* vibes and flavors. You can help us develop this list by adding your favorite diner, bistro, brasserie, cafeteria, pizzeria, beanery, cafe, vineyard, crab shack, and grill to this GoogleForm:

<https://forms.gle/hTxChN5hF3DwfZFL6>. You can put in as many places as you would like. We just ask that – *for now* – the information provided be limited to local restaurants, artisanal distillers, and other regional places to enjoy a bite to eat or locally-crafted spirits.

CU'S BIG DAY & AH WHY KNOT AWARDS

Join us for a day of birding, paddling, and fellowship on land and water! In the early morning, walk Hansey Creek Road (7:00 a.m.) to take in the dawn song in hopes of spotting warblers as they migrate through southern New Jersey. Then in mid-morning (9:30 a.m.), unload your kayak or canoe for a paddle on the back creeks that should be lined with shorebirds. Finally, join us for CU Maurice River's big celebration of eco-volunteerism at the Pig Roast and the Ah Why Knot Awards (starting at 4:00 p.m.). You can participate in one, two, or all three activities.

Meet the Ah Why Knot Award Winners of 2024 -

Roger Asselta

Hails from South Harrison Township. Roger has a long history of involvement in CU Maurice River; be it bringing his grandchildren to band osprey or going frog diving at the Frog Slog, Roger is all in. He has been a Chili Bowl Chef and guest for many years. Most times he fills a table with people, makes chili, liberally donates items to the event, and participates generously in the auction. He has often purchased the osprey banding experience or a Congressional Tour.

Roger founded Auxilium Packaging Advisors and is a world-class expert in packaging and closure systems for glass, plastic, and elastomers. He is well known in the pharmaceutical packaging trade and holds a number of patents in his field.

Cindi Berry

Lives in Millville. In recent years she retired from Holly Heights Elementary School, where she was a fourth-grade teacher. As a teacher, Cindi recognized the need for outdoor education and used her classroom time to connect students with principles of environmental science and stewardship. She would take her classes on nature walks to the Menantico River just behind the school where she would interpret what they saw. At the school, she managed a bluebird trail. She engaged the children with this project and would often host Allen Jackson as a speaker when it was time to band the chicks. Allen erected a birdfeeder next to Cindi's classroom so the kids could observe all the feathered visitors it attracted during the winter months.

Cindi has always been an advocate for Holly Heights participation in Wild About Cumberland, clearing barriers out of her school's way to make sure that the students got to explore the wilds of *Down Jersey* with CU Maurice River. Since retirement Cindi has never missed an opportunity to lead walks – to lead Holly Heights kids – at Wild About Cumberland. And, she dedicates 100s of volunteer hours to managing bluebird trails within the Wild and Scenic Maurice River Watershed.

Steve and Michele Borek

For a number of years Steve and Michele of Vineland have been involved in the Chili Bowl. Not only do they help with set-up but also tear-down, and this year even afterwards by delivering things to the CU Maurice River shed that needed to be removed from the hall. Michele came to each of the Chili Bowl prep meetings and photographed all the auction items. As everyone can attest, she makes working fun; her sense of humor and good spirit propel those around her forward. While Michele is a pharmaceutical corporate consultant, Steve is an electrician and detail guy, and no one will forget his approach to measuring the table distances – and it worked!

Steve has become involved in osprey pole erection and repair. He also worked on trail preparation prior to the Wild About Cumberland school event.

Linda Finch

Linda of Millville - Be it contributing at Chili Bowl, Raise the River, and Autumn Dinner event Committees, working in the wildlife gardens, co-leading exploratory field trips for youths, or cleaning up natural spaces, Linda is enthusiastic about the task at hand. She has been an invaluable member of fundraising committees, arranging flowers, picking up tablecloths, putting together auction baskets, engaging volunteers, organizing paddle events, and giving the halls a special look. When Linda shows up at a work group you know things are going to get done and friendly chitchat is going to ensue, making the experience all that much more enjoyable for all. For a number of years, she has been coordinating a meal with a crew for the Shorebird Recovery Team.

You will often catch Linda at CU Maurice River's cultural outings. She is a regular participant at events designed to highlight the connection between natural resource integrity and historical developments. Her enthusiasm for local history is contagious.

Linda is a Down Jersey gal, having worked in municipal government at Millville City Hall for years. Recently

she donated a dinner experience on the Lake along with her husband Dale and the Geigers. Linda is a role model of gracious manners and good spirit.

Bill Garwood

Bill is a resident of Millville. If we have a workgroup coming up we call up Bill. While he is a quiet guy, he always comes bearing a smile and his distinctive chuckle. Put him together with Jeff Johnson and Tom Glynn and you know that they will be indulging in ornery banter while also getting the good work of stewardship done right. Bill lends a hand in many of CU Maurice River's fieldwork opportunities like wetland vegetation mapping, osprey platform installation, and waterway clean-ups. He has been a leading figure at the urban wildlife and rain gardens, so much so that at times staff has shown up at a garden to fix an existing issue only to find that the problem has already been solved. We always know right away that it must have been Bill.

Greg Staman

Greg comes to us from Williamstown. He and Stacey have only been active with CU Maurice River since 2020; however, they have been making waves since arriving. We are excited for this opportunity to recognize Greg for his volunteerism and stewardship.

Greg's contributions to the continued natural integrity of southern New Jersey's natural areas come in many forms. In habitat stewardship he has helped mapped native wetland plant communities, collected biota for mercury sampling, managed bluebird trails, installed osprey platforms, cleaned beaches in preparation for the spawning and shorebird season, ReTurned the Favor by rescuing horseshoe crabs from all sorts of impingements, and participated in the removal of major debris from freshwater tidal wetland habitat. Greg volunteers to share his appreciation for the great out-of-doors with others. He has manned observation decks during the Cumberland County Eagle Festival and has led outdoor education programming for CU Maurice River, including field trips at the Bayshore Center as well as climate change awareness activities for school children at the Bluffs Preserve.

Sometimes staff just needs a hand to pull a program together. Just recently Greg helped Julia and a volunteer team prepare 25 rain barrels for a make-n-take property stewardship workshop that will promote the percolation of over 32,000 gallons of rainwater back into the aquifer per year. Greg is also an active member of the Raise the River Fundraiser Planning Committee, which sets out to get people on the river while fundraising in support of CU Maurice River's watershed stewardship and education work. Greg's small acts of kindness and stewardship have big impact – he is a RiverRaiser! We are truly thankful for both Greg's and Stacey's contributions.

Mary Watkins

Mary, a former CU Trustee and a Presidential Award Winner, resides in Bridgeton. In recognition of her continued support of CU Maurice River's educational programming and her volunteerism we are excited to present Mary with her first Ah Why Knot decoy.

She leads a plethora of outings including the Duck Waddle, What It Is Like to Be a Bird, 4th Saturday Walks, Purple Martin Cruises, among many others. She works to build awareness of southern New Jersey's rich avian diversity as an Eagle Festival naturalist on walks and at observation decks. She tunes children in to the wonders to be found outside of their doors at Elevate, Wild About Cumberland, and other educational programs. You can also find her interacting with the broader community at festivals. At the WheatonArts Eco Fair she leads the Scavenger Hunt and at the Mauricetown RiverFest she has manned observation stations and led walks. To top it off, Mary is an active member of the Chili Bowl Planning Committee and a regular Chili Chef. But, hold on to your hat. Her volunteerism doesn't end there!

Mary also manages bluebird trails. And, she is the Captain of CU Maurice River's World Series of Birding Team, The Fish Hawks. Go Fish Hawks! Each year Mary dedicates over 100 hours to growing CUMR's reach in the community, capacity to build stewardship, and ability to protect the area's natural integrity for the next generation of stewards.

Stultz Taylor

Stultz Taylor, who hails from Newport, works quietly behind the scenes for CU. This year his company STS Sheet Metal cut and donated all the osprey guards. These prevent predators, ie. raccoons and snakes, from accessing the nest from below. The day before the Chili Bowl in 2023 the kitchen was not up to standard. Stultz took it upon himself to solve the physical and emotional emergency by sending a crew of people to set things right. When our biota dip nets began to fall apart, rather than replacing them his welding team, who can “weld a broken heart or the crack of dawn,” fixed them. He has been more than generous at fundraisers, providing the beverages a number of times. He is not only an auction item donor but also a generous bidder. When asked to bring something, he and his wife Sandy always provide more than ample amounts of the needed items. At the Ah Why Knot event he has been pitching in with Tony at the oyster bar. His Bayshore knowledge has also proved invaluable on a number of occasions as he hooks us up with needed contacts.

Meghan Martin - Executive Award Winner

Meghan lives in Bridgeton with her husband Tom and their daughter Tyler. You might remember Meghan as CU Maurice River’s Assistant Office Manager. She left CU Maurice River during the uncertain times of the pandemic. Since her time with us she has married and become a mother. As Meghan now dedicates herself to one of the most demanding jobs, without a start and end time, she has also been in the background helping us all to steward more efficiently.

Meghan over the last years has been a great asset to our staff. She provides input and guidance whenever requested. She eases the lift during training by volunteering to instruct new staff on the ins-and-outs of the membership tracking software that she set up for CUMR during her tenure. Office staff maintains a working relationship with Meghan and they enjoy her pleasant, laid-back manner.

Recently she has taken up a new role. Working with Greg Kears and Suzanne Olah, she volunteered to help iron out the wrinkles of new auction software that provides the Chili Bowl Committee with a bigger toolkit. This took many meetings, many hours, and a lot of data entry. Did you not see Meghan at the Chili Bowl? Well, she was locked away with Suzanne and Greg processing auction items and payments, creating receipts, making sure that all “i’s” were dotted, “t’s” were crossed, and keeping the checkout line moving. This year she has also signed up to help plan and orchestrate Raise the River. Meghan never asks for acknowledgement and does not strive to be in the limelight, but her contribution to CU Maurice River’s mission from behind the scenes deserves special recognition.

Sue Milner – Presidential Award Winner

Sue Milner of Bridgeton has a long history of community service. She has made meals for the shorebird recovery team and for a number of years has been on CU Maurice River’s Events Committee. A retired hospital administrator who handled logistics as Director of Construction and Renovation at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Sue brings to CUMR’s table a commitment to professionalism. She always notices omissions and areas in need of improvements, and then follows through to address them. She takes it upon herself to continually monitor the Event Committee’s lists and minutes for necessary revisions and has added capacity to the Chili Bowl. Sue is an organizer extraordinaire.

FUN-RAISERS

Past Fundraisers

10.05.23 - Union Lake Sailing Club, Fall Fundraiser

Many volunteers on the event committee worked together to make the lift lighter. The menu was delicious and homemade; only the company and the sunset could rival the food. A special thank-you to Skitch Manion of Working Man Handmade Studio for donating glass pumpkins to event. These were purchased by event goers and a silent auction took place where \$12,365 was raised. It was a full house! Eighty-eight guests attended this event.

03.09.24 - Mauricetown Firehall, the 18th Annual Chili Bowl

Thirteen different types of chilis, desserts, live music, and silent and live auctions made for a very successful Chili Bowl. Sixty-two volunteers and CUMR staff worked together to host this event, which was completely sold out (250 tickets bought). Two hundred people were in attendance. This year marks our most successful Chili Bowl yet, with \$49,645 raised in support of CU Maurice River.

Upcoming Fundraisers

05.11.2024 - World Series of Birding

Support the CU Maurice River Fish Hawks competing in the World Series of Birding on May 11th, 2024. Hosted by NJ Audubon, this is the world's largest birding competition. The money raised by the Fish Hawks supports CU Maurice River's avian surveys and management projects. Your contribution also powers CUMR's educational programming which promotes appreciation for the diversity of bird species that rely on the integrity of the Wild and Scenic Maurice River and its watershed.

**We would like to extend a big THANK-YOU to this year's team of seasoned birders:
Captain Mary Watkins, Tony Klock, Kathy Michel, and Jim Blumenstein.**

July 27-29 – Raise the River, Save the Date

The Raise the River Planning Committee has already had their first meeting and the dates for this year's event have been set. We will be paddling on July 27, 28, and 29, 2024. On Sunday, July 29 the committee will host a RiverDinner complete with crabs, oysters, and farm-to-table dishes (ingredients purchased from local farm stands). The lunch/dinner will be hosted at the Union Lake Sailing and Tennis Club starting at 2pm. More to come soon on the paddle schedule!

PUBLIC OUTREACH, VOLUNTEER COORDINATION & VISITOR MANAGEMENT

PAST PROGRAMMING

Bi-Monthly Membership Meetings and Presentations

11.08.23 - The Cumberland County Improvement Authority End of Year Bimonthly Meeting

CU Maurice River held its final bi-monthly meeting for the year. There we celebrated the dedication and hard work of our members by distributing Presidential Service Awards and CU Youth Awards. Program Coordinator Julia Wiberg gave a presentation about CU Maurice River, and CU Executive Director Karla Rossini presented the End of Year Reports that outlined the year's achievements in participation, outstanding resource management, outreach, outdoor education, land conservation, programming, and more. Environmental Education and Outreach Coordinator Kimberly Spiegel presented on past events, and CU Board President Jane Morton Galetto tallied the proxy votes and updated the delegate list. Thirty people attended this event.

BUSINESS CONDUCTED:

TRUSTEES ELECT OFFICERS – All officers returned and were voted on by board members in attendance.

Jane Morton Galetto – President
Suzanne Olah – Treasurer
Corresponding Secretary- Sue Fenili
Recording Secretary- Sandy Taylor

ELECTION OF 2026 COHORT- Delegates approved the 2026 Cohort

Jody Cararra, Gary Moellers, Mary Steinacker, Tom Talalaj, and Kenneth Strait

- a. Dennis Palmer stepping down as CU Trustee
- b. ELECTION of Kenneth Strait to CU Maurice River’s Board of Trustees

THE 2024 COHORT

Jane Morton Galetto, Sue Fenili, Anthony Klock, Mary Ann Russell, and Kristen Meistrell

THE 2025 COHORT

Ethan Aronoff, Suzanne Olah, Sandy Taylor, Vicky Tomlin

VOLUNTEER AWARDS:

<i>Recognition of Youths with Their Volunteer Hours</i>		
Stephen Jr.	Modzelewski	16
Mackenzie	Modzelewski	16
Vera	Rossini	31
<i>Presidential Service Award – Adults with over 100 volunteer hours</i>		
Olah	Suzanne	100
Geiger	Kathy	100.5
Masarek	Marika	102
Fenili	Sue "Sioux"	108
Staman	Greg	109
Watkins	Mary	111
Homan	Doreen	129.25
Walker	Wendy	132.5
Manzelmann	Peter	137
Sutton	Clay	141
Homan	Carl	157
Berry	Cindi	208
Klock	Tony	212
<i>Presidential Service Award – Silver Adults with over 250 hours</i>		
Kerlinger	Paul	250
Priest	Jim	315
Lifetime Awardees		
Ficcaglia	Leslie	360
Jackson	Allen	1018
Galetto	Jane	2080

01.10.24 – The Cumberland County Improvement Authority, Bimonthly Meeting & Presentation

The first Bi-monthly Meeting of the year provided members with an overview of the 2024 Calendar of Events and an update on recent goings on. Afterward, Clay Sutton presented on 35 years of research on wintering waterfowl and raptors on the Wild and Scenic Maurice River. Forty-six people attended this event.

03.13.24 – The Cumberland County Improvement Authority, Bimonthly Meeting & Presentation

March's Membership meeting was led by CU Maurice River Executive Director Karla Rossini. After she spoke on recent programming and business, NJDEP Pathologist Patrick Connelly and NJDEP Assistant

Biologist Megan McCafferty presented on the health of the white-tailed deer population in Cumberland County and southern New Jersey. Their presentation covered the current diseases that are threatening the local herds, current numbers, and NJDEP management efforts. Thirty-four people attended this event.

Tuesdays on the Fly

10.03.23- Tyndall Island Trail

For October's TOF, the group enjoyed a walk along Tyndall Island Trail. In addition, the group visited various historical locations in the Greenwich area including Quaker meetinghouses, old schoolhouses, and the marina. CU Maurice River Board President Jane Galetto acted as our nature guide and CU Culturalist Lisa Garrison acted as the historian. 11 participants.

11.07.24- Millville Historical Society/Dunn House/Wood Mansion

Millville Historical Society's Robert Francois and Ray Hahn led the group on tours of three historic properties in downtown Millville: Dunn House, Wood Mansion, and "Millville Bank." The group enjoyed experiencing history come to life, exploring the connection between natural resource abundance and historical developments, and the opportunity to trace genealogies. 23 participants.

The 2024 Edition of TOF focuses on southern New Jersey farms, the resources that support them, and the practices they put into place in order to reduce their footprint and use their lands in stewardship of wildlife species and their habitats.

02.06.24 - Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society

For the first Tuesday on the Fly of 2024, CUMR orchestrated a visit to VHAS. The VHAS Board President Valerie Nueber gave a presentation on Charles K Landis, the origin of the City of Vineland, and Vineland's deeply rooted farming tradition. Afterwards, participants toured the museum, Vineland's first house, and the Mary Treat exhibit. 28 participants.

03.05.24 - Elephant Swamp Trail / Appel Farm

Despite the rain, a small group gathered to walk along Elephant Swamp Nature Trail, a Rails to Trails Project within the Maurice River Watershed. Christine Brown led the nature walk. Afterward additional participants gathered at Appel Farm to learn more about the University of Stockton's test project, evaluating whether maple syrup and sugar production is viable in southern New Jersey. Participants witnessed how maple sugar is extracted from maple tree species that are native to this region. A presentation on maple sugar was given by Heather Yelle. 24 participants.

CU Saturdays

10.21.23 - Peek Preserve, Fungi Walk

CUMR Executive Director Karla Rossini led this mushroom walk at the Peek Preserve. She interpreted the important roles fungi play and the diversity of their functions in a forest habitat. It had recently rained, so there was a wide variety of plants to explore and key out. 13 participants.

11.04.23 - BayshoreCenter/Hansey Creek/Heislerville/East Point/Thompson's Beach, Raptor Walk

For the Raptor Walk this year, the day was split into a morning and afternoon session. This outing was based on the 35-year study that has been conducted on the Wintering Raptors of the Wild and Scenic Maurice River. Throughout the day, the group saw bald eagles, harriers, clapper rails, Cooper's hawks, to list a few. CU Naturalist Jim Blumenstein led the walk, offered facts about the study, and interpreted the lifecycles and habits of the species spotted. 27 participants

11.18.23 - Edwin B Forsythe NWR, Take a Hike with Jane

The group gathered for the final outing of 2023 and headed to Edwin B Forsythe NWR to enjoy the eight-mile driving tour. CUMR Board President Jane Galetto led the event and encouraged participation by

having guests read fun facts about waterfowl from pre-prepared index cards. The groups saw over forty species of birds and ducks. Thirty-seven people attended this event.

02.10.24 - Eagle Trail, Eagle Trail Walk

Rescheduled from January 20th due to snow. As per usual for the traditional first walk of the year, this outing had an excellent turnout. Highlights were seeing a male and female bald eagle at their nest and hunting through a huge pile of owl pellets to find a variety of rodent skulls that were compared and identified. Many traces of nature were found and interpreted including skat, pellets, bones, and more. Forty-nine people attended this event.

02.17.24 - Bayshore Region, Duck Waddle

CU Naturalists Tony Klock and Mary Watkins led the group on a tour of the Bayshore that visited some of the most active waterfowl sites in the region. The Wild and Scenic Maurice River is a migratory stopover for many species of waterfowl. The group saw red breasted mergansers, buffleheads, wood ducks, surf scoters, long tails, and many more species. The day was extra special due to the fresh snow that coated the region and to a notably large flock of green-winged teal feeding on the exposed mudflat. Multiple stops were made including at Cedarville Lake, Tat Star Trail, Fortescue, Bivalve, Lake Audrey, Matts Landing, and East Point. 23 participants.

CU Speaking Series

10.19.23 - CU Maurice River Cruises, Maurice River Cruise with Captain Dave

For the final CU Speaking Series of 2023, the group enjoyed a fall evening complete with a Maurice River sunset. Six bald eagles, a flock of ruddy ducks, green-winged teal, and multiple kingfishers were spotted. Captain Dave of Maurice River Cruises shared local history on the use of the river, while CUMR Executive Director Karla Rossini discussed the river's natural history and designation story. Twenty participants attended this event.

02.15.24 - Trinity AME Church, Bridgeton, Underground Railroad in South Jersey

CUMR kicked off the first installation of a 2024 four-part Film Series that is designed to celebrate the character, abundance, and integrity of our region's natural resources and how they affected cultural developments over the ages. The first documentary was selected to celebrate Black History Month and was hosted at the historically significant Trinity AME Church, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1995 for its importance in religion and African American history. The film *Treasures of New Jersey: The Peter Mott House Underground Railroad Museum*, produced by PBS, was shared. Following the film Ellen D. Alford gave a wonderful presentation on the topic of her recently published book *Abolition and the Underground Railroad in South Jersey: Not Without a Fight*. Ellen is a southern New Jersey resident and local historian who researches and writes about the Underground Railroad, slavery, abolition and Harriet Tubman in South Jersey. Bridgeton Mayor Albert B. Kelly followed with a presentation on research he has conducted about a community of freedom seekers that lived in Gouldtown.

Sixty-two people attended this event.

4th Saturday Walk

10.28.23 - Waltman Park, 4th Saturday Walk

The group met to walk the Maurice River Bicycle and Walking Trail for the final monthly 4th Saturday Walk of the year. It was an unseasonably warm autumn day and a larger than normal number of birds were active. Goldfinches, yellow rump warblers, downy woodpeckers, phoebes, and more were all viewed. Fifteen people attended this event.

What It Is Like to Be a Bird

02.08.24 - The Bayshore Center at Bivalve, What It's Like to Be a Duck

This is a new series that was inspired by Sibley's newer book *What It's Like to Be a Bird*. This four-part series aims to give participants a beginner's look into the differing worlds of the avian orders. The first of this programming series started off strongly with CU Naturalist Tony Klock teaching about local duck species that rely on the Wild and Scenic Maurice River's stopover habitat. This interactive beginning birder class boasted pictures, videos, workbooks, interactive quizzes, and games. Some participants even brought homemade snacks. Twenty-three people participated in this event.

Maurice River Paddles

10.14.23 - Cumberland Pond, Autumn Paddle

A chilly, rainy Saturday morning forecast kept many paddlers indoors, but a small group went out on the water and enjoyed fall foliage. Seven participants attended this event.

Other Miscellaneous Programming

02.28.24 - Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts, Pat Sutton's Dragonfly Primer

Naturalist, Author, and Educator Pat Sutton led attendees on a visually stunning tour of the dragonflies and damselflies that are native to southern New Jersey. Her presentation included a collection of photos gathered from her fieldwork over the last 30 years. She interpreted the lifecycles and habits of the Odonata order. Forty people attended this event.

2.22.24 - The Merighis' Home, Book Circle

CU Member and Former Librarian Suzy Merighi led us in a lively discussion of *Vesper Flights* by Helen Macdonald. This book of Helen's essays explores the human relationship to the natural world. Attendees shared what their favorite stories were, what they learned from the book, and how her writing may have changed their ideas or perceptions. Twelve people attended this event.

10.11.23 - Cape May Point State Park, Southbound Migration

CUMR enjoyed a fall day at Cape May Point State Park to view migratory birds. Led by CU Naturalist Bert Hixon, the group walked along dunes and trails and spotted a number of birds and butterflies. One special highlight of the day was watching the raptors kettle in the sky above the group. Twenty participants attended this event.

2024 Spring Programming

APRIL

Tues. 2, 9:00 a.m. Tuesday on the Fly

Tour Cedar Rose Vineyards in Millville to learn about past and present wine practices in South Jersey.

Sat. 6, 10:00 a.m. Plant Anatomy Class & Walk

Learn the basics of plant anatomy and then take a nature walk to test some of your new knowledge!

Thurs. 18, 6:00 p.m. CU Social Film Series

A double feature showing documentaries on the glass industry and glass art, followed by a panel with Paul Stankard, director Dan Collins, and producer Phil Surdam.

Sat. 20, 9:00 a.m. CU Saturday: Down Jersey Cemeteries Historic cemeteries and churches tour

Tues. 23, 9:00 a.m. Neighborhood Wildlife

Garden - Lend your hands at the 3rd St. Garden Spring Cleanup.

Wed. 24, 5:30 p.m. Make-N-Take Workshop

Construct your very own rain barrel.

Fri. 26, 5:30 p.m. Nature Journaling

Karla & Vera Rossini team up to lead this experiential outing where observations are captured on paper.

Sat. 27, 9:00 a.m. Fourth Saturday Nature Walk

Peek Preserve with Mary Watkins and Tony Klock.

Sat. 27, 3:00 p.m. River Cleanup, Campfire &

Potluck - Are you ready to get muddy? Help remove washed-up debris from this pristine area on the Manumuskin River. Stay after and join us to celebrate a job well done! Campfire & Potluck hosted by the Tomlins at 6:00 p.m.

Tues. 30, 9:00 a.m. *WheatonArts Garden Days*
Garden prep for the Eco Fair. Other days
include: 5/23 & 6/13.

MAY

Tues. 7, 9:00 a.m. *Tuesday on the Fly*
Cassady Farms grows their stewardship with NJ
Audubon.

Wed. 8, 6:30 p.m. *Membership Meeting &
Presentation* - Conserve Wildlife Foundation's
Emmy Caspar presents on American
oystercatchers

Wed. 11, 10:00 a.m. *Flowering Plant Families
Class & Walk* - Learn to I.D. the most common
Down Jersey flower families.

Tues. 14, 9:00 a.m. *First United Methodist
Church Garden Day* - Volunteer to spruce up
the FUMC Serenity Garden.

Fri. 24, 6:00 p.m. *Family-Friendly Friday: The
Frog Slog* - Get wet as we look up-close at
tadpoles & frogs and learn about their life cycle
& how to ID species by their markings and calls.

JUNE

reTURN THE FAVOR

CU Maurice River Training Session:

Saturday, April 13, 9:00 a.m.

CU Maurice River Guided Walks:

May 21, 11:30 a.m.

May 28, 5:00 p.m.

June 4, 11:00 a.m.

June 11, 5:00 p.m.

June 15, 8:00 a.m.

**A permit is not needed when reTURNing the
Favor with CU Maurice River leaders.*

Sat. 8, 9:00 a.m. *Parvin State Park BioBlitz*
Join a biological inventory of flora & fauna at
Parvin State Park

Thurs. 20, 6:30 p.m. *CU Social Film Series*
Showing *Birds of May*: a short film discussing
oyster farming and shorebirds on the Delaware
Bayshore.

Fri. 21, 6:00 p.m. *Family-Friendly Friday:
Outdoorsman's Night* - Try your hand at outdoor
skills like archery with Dave Scheffler.

Sat. 22, 9:00 a.m. *Fourth Saturday Nature Walk*
Nature walk at Peek Preserve with Mary and
Tony.

TOUR PAT SUTTON'S BACKYARD HABITAT
Saturday, June 29 - 9:30 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.

Two tours of Pat Sutton's Home Gardens.
Reserve your spot now! Tickets tend to sell out
quickly. Advance registration required.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

CU Ambassadors needed!

Sat., April 6: Barn Studio Spring Extravaganza

Sat., May 4: WheatonArts ECO Fair

Sat., May 11: Downe Twp Horseshoe Crab Fest.

Sun., June 2: Barn Studio Outdoor Art Day

OUTSTANDING RESOURCE VALUE MANAGEMENT

BIODIVERSITY

August – March, Waterfowl and Raptor Papers

Environmental consultants continue to dedicate pro-bono time to the revision of the waterfowl and raptor papers that summarize the data and knowledge gained from the 35 Year Maurice River Winter Raptor and Waterfowl Study. CU Executive Director coordinates with the consultants and connects them with resources to assist their development of the papers. CU Volunteer and former NJDEP ArcGIS Specialist has worked with consultants to produce maps that help illustrate the authors' arguments.

02.17.24 - Galetto residence and Money Island, Osprey Platform Construction and Raising

A team built three platforms and erected one at Money Island. The other two will be raised later this year. Twelve people were involved in this project.

10.06.23 + 10.27.23 + 03.28.24 – WheatonArts and Cultural Center Urban Oasis

10/06 Volunteers worked on edging and weeding the garden beds in preparation for the Festival of Fine Craft which attracts thousands of visitors from the tri-state area. This festival explores the local traditions of glass art and crafting. 10/27 The Fall Planting Day at WheatonArts took place. 11 species (550 plants) were added to the rain gardens and uplands pollinator spaces. Species planted include: blazing star

(*Liatris spicata*), wild blue indigo (*Baptisia australis*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), smooth blue aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*), swamp mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*), spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohioensis*), blue verbena (*Verbena hastata*), and New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*). All of these were purchased from Pinelands Nursery in Columbus, NJ. Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*), beebalm (*Monarda bradburniana*), and beardtongue (*Penstemon calycosus*) from New Moon Nursery were also planted. These gardens are promoting the recharging of the overstressed Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer and supporting wildlife species. Fourteen people attended this event. 03.28.24 WheatonArts hosted us again for this germination session to benefit the WheatonArts Pollinator Gardens. CU Program Manager Kimberly Spiegel led this educational germination session that taught participants about native flora species (common milkweed and senna) and their anatomy and wildlife benefits. Volunteers collectively sowed enough seed to grow over 800 plants for these public wildlife oases. Twelve people participated in this event.

12.5.23 – Neighborhood Wildlife Garden and WheatonArts Gardens

For the final work group of the year, the volunteers refilled the Hügelskultur beds at the Neighborhood Wildlife Garden with logs, twigs, and leaves and then topped them off with soil (10:00 am-12:30 pm). Then they went to WheatonArts where one of the garden beds was expanded to include the NPS style interpretative sign adjacent to WheatonArts' entrance (12:30-2:30 pm). Eleven people helped revitalize these otherwise forlorn, vacant spaces as wildlife habitat.

November – December – 2024 Recovery Challenge Grant

CUMR partnered with USFWS, NJCF, PPA, and NJDEP to submit a grant application to protect and enhance the sensitive joint vetch stand with the Wild and Scenic designation from new threats.

HABITAT AND WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

October - March - A Rutgers Environmental Stewardship Program Intern, Ian Borgo, has been working with CU Maurice River toward reinvigorating and modernizing CUMR's water quality program with the objective of installing water quality meters at essential locations within the Wild and Scenic designation area. As sea level rise affects wetland health, the end goal of this project is to collect data on conductivity, temperature, and depth upstream. New data sets will allow CUMR to compare current conditions with the data collected by CU Community Scientists on the Manumuskin. This data will be helpful in understanding the status of freshwater wetlands within the system as well as informing future restoration projects. Over the last summer, the intern developed educational outreach materials in order to better approach the homeowners whose properties will host the meters. Then in autumn and winter, Ian coordinated with riverfront property owners Vicky and Rob Tomlin to install a meter at their dock. A meeting was held onsite to flesh out the details of installation, data gathering, and maintenance.

October – March - Watershed Stewards' Wildlife-Friendly Designations

CU Maurice River continues to promote improved property stewardship within the Wild and Scenic Maurice River Watershed through its Wildlife-, Stream-, and Eco-Friendly designation program. Staff is encouraging these property stewardship efforts by awarding the owners with Wildlife-Friendly designations. Each of these members has taken significant measures towards creating support systems for wildlife and water quality, including green areas enhanced with native species, rain gardens, rainwater conservation, compost receptacles, wildlife habitat, and more. From extreme property transformations to cleverly designed backyard gardens, each of these members improved upon their best management practices in support of local water and

habitat quality.

Make-n-Take Stewardship Workshops:

03.28.24 – Vineland Public Library, Spotted Lanternfly Workshop

Kaylynn from Rutgers Cooperative Extension presented on the invasive spotted lanternfly, which only in recent years established a population in the southern end of the Maurice River Watershed. CU Program Coordinator Julia Wiberg then led the group in the construction of the circle traps that are safe for native wildlife species. Thirteen people attended this event.

03.07.24 - Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts, Natural Cleaners Workshop

Jamie Warner, proprietress of The Great Full Garden, led us in a workshop where participants learned how to make natural cleaners in order to reduce their chemical footprint on water resources. Seventeen people attended this event.

October to March – Centerton Dam Feasibility Study

CUMR Executive Director Karla Rossini continues to work with the Centerton Lake Homeowners' Association to move toward the removal of their dam which has been listed as a potential community hazard by the NJDEP Dam Safety Program. During this period the feasibility study was completed by Princeton Hydro. A grant proposal was submitted to the NRCS. Unfortunately, upon review the NRCS decided that they would be unable to fund the project. However, with the help of TNC's Beth Styler, NRCS has agreed to give the project proposal another review.

11.11.23 - Sharp Street Park & Maurice River Bicycle & Walking Trail, Trash Cleanup

CU Maurice River picked up 18 bags of trash from the shorelines and forested buffers along the Maurice River. The volunteers also collected trash from an abandoned homeless camp in the woods. Notable items we found were four bike tires and a vacuum cleaner. Twelve people attended this event.

03.16.24 - Landis Ave. Vineland, Trash Hunt

CU Maurice River teamed up with the Vineland Environmental Commission for the Annual Trash Hunt, which is sponsored by the Cumberland County Clean Communities Program. Volunteers collected up a total of 26 bags of trash plus a tire from the area of Landis Avenue between Lincoln Ave. and Panther Rd., near the Panther Branch stream. Twelve people participated in this event.

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

August – March, Wetlands Restoration

CUMR Executive Director is working with Restore America's Estuaries to fulfill necessary requirements in order to secure the project funding that was awarded in June 2023. CUMR and RAE aim to sign contracts by May. Pending final approvals, the proposed project will remove *Phragmites australis* from the Wild and Scenic Manumuskin.

ACCESS

August - March - Waterway Access Map

Princeton Hydro has developed an online ArcGIS Story Map of recreational resources on the river: a paddle trail for the Maurice River Watershed. CUMR Executive Director gathered mapping data, providing images and drafting text. CUMR has also provided audio files to be included in a self-guided river tour within the StoryMap. With this Quarter's Newsletter, CUMR is going with a "soft opening" of the map and calling on its members for their input. This grant was awarded to CUMR by the Mohawk Canoe Club.

OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT, AND COVERAGE

10.20.23 - Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts, Associate Artist Show

Five volunteer Ambassadors hosted a CUMR booth at this event. There they promoted the CUMR mission and aimed to connect the broader community with the organization's mission and offerings.

02.03.24 - Mauricetown Firehall, Eagle Fest

CUMR orchestrated the programming for the Cumberland County's Annual Winter Eagle Fest, organizing guided walks, manning the observation decks, and planning the speaker series. CUMR also provided a table for this event and offered an activity where children could create bird feeders out of pinecones, peanut butter, and bird seed. Over 500 people attended the presentations alone. The walks had between 30-70 attendees each. The overall attendance at the event was high. The coordination of the day's events benefited from the service of 41 volunteers.

02.22.2024 – State of the County Brunch

CU Executive Director and Program Manager attended the State of the County Brunch where elected officials provided the audience, consisting mostly of business representatives, with an update on recent ongoings as well as insight into their vision for improvements and growth.

October – March, SNJToday

CU Board President continues to submit articles to the local newspaper, SNJToday which are published on a weekly basis. These are included in the Feature Section under *The Great Outdoors* which explores the region's natural and cultural wonders.

PARTNERSHIPS AT WORK

National Park Service's Wild and Scenic Partnership Program –

CUMR has been contracting with the National Park Service on implementing aspects of the Maurice River Wild and Scenic Rivers Management Plan since c. 2004. Prior to this, CUMR was awarded NPS Partnership grants beginning in 1996. Proper administration of the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan remains a cornerstone of our work. In the fourth quarter of 2023, CUMR continued work with the River Manager, Paul Kenney, to meet new reporting expectations and modify formats successfully.

FORUMS, COALITIONS, ADVOCACY, AND THE LIKE

South Jersey Bayshore Coalition – CUMR continues to coordinate the meetings of SJBC.

Wild and Scenic Coalition - CU Maurice River has attended the Coalition's meetings; these have been helpful in connecting our team with available resources as well as updating us on current activity within the program.

NJ DEP Division of Fish and Wildlife, Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee Meetings- CU Maurice River Board President has during this period served on her last committee session due to the implementation of term limits.

Delaware Bayshore Council – CU Maurice River has been functioning as the interim SJBC representative on the Bayshore Council.

Association of New Jersey Environmental Educators – Programming staff continues to interact with this association benefiting from the community’s knowledge, skills, and resources.

CU also continues to serve on the *Aquaculture Stakeholder Committee* for the State and Federal conservation measures that involve the oyster harvest and its impacts on shorebirds. This is specific to the federally-endangered red knot and its migration on the Delaware Bayshore.

Since June 2023 - South Jersey Transportation Organization

CUMR has been participating on an Advisory Group to inform a study being conducted to improve the eco-tourism experience in the Wild and Scenic Maurice River area. The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPPO) is partnering with Cumberland County to develop a Corridor Study for the Maurice River. The goal of this effort is to identify opportunities for ecotourism, trails, and economic development while continuing to protect, enhance, and enjoy the river, as well as to gather input from stakeholders about the needs and opportunities within the Maurice River Corridor. During this period CUMR has attended another meeting to view the draft plan. CUMR reviewed and issued its recommendations for said plan.

09.28 – 09.29.2023 - Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed

CUMR Executive Director, Outreach & Education Coordinator, and Program Coordinator attended this regional forum to build working relationships, gain insight on funding resources, and share conservation perspectives as they pertain to protecting the ORVs of the Wild and Scenic Maurice River.

March – March – New Beginnings Variance Proposal

CUMR Executive Director advocated for the denial of a use variance application that would allow for the installation of a 70-person rehabilitation center on the Wild & Scenic Maurice River where the local zoning only permits 1 family per 25 acres and the River Conservation Plan, signed by five municipalities, does not allow for this use.

March – Cumberland County Tourism Board

In March CUMR Executive Director accepted a seat on the Cumberland County Tourism Board. She hopes to assist in building ecotourism in the region while ensuring that use is responsible and sustainable.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING / OUTDOOR EDUCATION FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Summer Camp

Upcoming... Month of August – Nature Journaling

CU Maurice River Staff has been working with WheatonArts and Cultural Center to coordinate the details of 2024’s edition of the Nature Journaling Summer Camp.

Family-Friendly Friday

10.23.23 + 10.27.23 - Sharp Residence & Manumuskin Preserve, Jersey Devil Hunt

CU Naturalist and History Enthusiasts Russell Juelg and Tom McKee serenaded the group with piney

music as participants roasted hot dogs and s'mores. Russell then shared folklore and tales surrounding the Jersey Devil. Finally, the group took a dark trek through the woods in search of the Jersey Devil, with ears perked to identify the nocturnal wildlife calls. Twenty-one participants attended this event.

10.13.23 - WheatonArts, Shaws Mill Pond, Money Island Marina, Impromptu Butterfly Walk

The group traveled to Bayshore meadows, full of fall blooms, to experience the butterfly migration. Common buckeyes, sulphurs, cabbage whites, and a handful of monarchs were spotted and interpreted. Fourteen participants attended this event.

Outdoor Classrooms and Partners in Education

August – December

CU Outreach and Education Coordinator partnered with the Levoy Theater to implement an after-school program that marries science education with the performing arts. Students from Millville, Bridgeton, and Salem were introduced to climate change topics and explored how these specifically affect natural and urban areas in Cumberland and Salem County. Then the students created climate-themed stories through performance art.

10.07.2024 – BioBlitz, Parvin State Park

The group divided up and surveyed several categories of organisms: fungi & lichen, birds, plants, and macroinvertebrates. 18 participants.

Wild About Cumberland

03.12.24 - Berrytown Road, Wild About Cumberland Training for Leaders and Co-Leaders

CU Program Coordinator Kimberly and Board President Jane Galetto led volunteers on a walk at Berrytown Road to prepare them for CUMR's biggest outdoor education days, Wild About Cumberland. The group discussed signs of wildlife that can be expected on the trails and the habitat types to interpret. Thirteen people attended this event.

03.19.24 + 03.20.24 - Berrytown Road PSEG and The Bayshore Center at Bivalve

500 students from eleven local elementary schools participated in Wild About Cumberland 2024 over the course of two days. A team of volunteers, including several PSE&G staff, led the fourth graders on nature walks. The students were treated to a day exploring the natural resources found along the nature trail and to a series of educational stations at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve. Other partners led workshops at the Center; these include Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge and the AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassadors Program. Thirty-nine volunteers made this indoor/outdoor exploratory program possible.

Outreach and Planning with Schools

The Programming Team is currently organizing educational activities including Earth Day celebrations, in-class activities, and field trips with the following schools: St. Mary's School of Vineland, Maurice River Township, Millville Child Family Center, Holly City Family Center, and Woodbury's Gateway Regional High School.

Connie Jost Scholarship

Longtime Scholarship Coordinator Tricia Dufford has stepped down from her role in leading this program. CUMR is forever grateful for Tricia's volunteerism and dedication over the years.

WheatonArts' Pam Weichmann has agreed to see that this scholarship continues into the future and Tricia remains on the review committee. Pam has secured new review committee members characterized by talent, creativity, and various artistic skill sets. The first applicants have already been submitted for the 2024 award.

OPERATIONS AND OFFICE SUPPORT

Personnel

August – March, CUMR’s Retired Office Manager Doreen Homan assisted in the office with administrative tasks, hiring, and training as a 1099 employee. As of April Doreen will be working five hours a week to continue training the new administrative hire.

September - January 6th, New Hire – In September, CUMR published the Administrative Assistant job vacancy with the organization. Interviews were conducted during the months of October, November, and December. On January 6th Gregory Kears started his position in the role of Administrative Assistant at CU Maurice River. Greg is responsible for the back-office work that keeps our “I’s” dotted and “T’s” crossed.

August - Holly City Development Corporation Internship Program ended. Intern Amy Hemple stayed on for an extended period to finish out the 2023 year with CUMR. Since March 2023, Greg and Karla have been coordinating with Cumberland County Workforce Development to host another summer student intern for 2024.

October – January. Programming staff planned and confirmed the 2024 Calendar of Events. During the winter they updated all of CUMR’s online platforms to reflect the upcoming year’s volunteer opportunities and outdoor activities.

October – December – CU Staff worked on tally participation and volunteer data for end of the year reporting.

02.26.2024 – CU Staff and select regular volunteers attended a CPR and First Aid training course that will help us provide more safety in the field.

October – March. CU Executive Director and Board Member Gary Moellers have been working on developing an employee handbook for the organization.

TRAINING

Association of New Jersey Environmental Educators - CU's Program Manager and Coordinator continue to take advantage of ANJEE's training and networking opportunities.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resource Management Training for Professionals CU's Environmental Education and Outreach Coordinator is attending Rutgers's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Champion Course. She has received her training certificate and continues to attend workshops and lectures.

River Management Society’s Wild and Scenic Speaker Series – As part of her position’s training process, CUMR Program Coordinator has been accessing these webinars to learn more about the history and functioning of the National Park Service’s Wild and Scenic Program.

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK

National Park Service - Administrative reporting to the National Park Service is an aspect of our functioning beyond the actual carrying-out of the contracted deliverables. CU continues to

meet reporting requirements as it waits to be put on the semi-annual reporting schedule from which other partnership rivers benefit. Staff continue to work with NPS River Manager to implement new reporting procedures. In the first quarter of 2024, staff compiled the documents needed to renew the five-year Cooperative Agreement with NPS's Wild and Scenic Partnership Program. CUMR is expecting final approval in July. The new contract will go into effect August 20th, 2023.

Office

Administrative staff works to maintain an efficient, welcoming, and safe work space for the whole CUMR team. They also manage organizational documentation, supply inventory, service contracting, and purchasing.

Board of Trustees

February 2023 – Trustee Emeritus Kristen Meistrell was offered a position with the NJ DEP. {2024 or 2023?} Due to her new role, Kristen needed to step down from the CU Maurice River Board.

Volunteer, Participation, and Financial Tracking - The programming and administrative staff continue to track many aspects of CUMR activities, including but not limited to NPS billing, volunteer hours, participation/attendance, volunteer recruitment, bookkeeping, corporate support, birth, deaths, illnesses - all the details that make CU a community.

Social Media – CU Maurice River's Facebook page is more active than ever. You can view videos, see pictures from outings, read volunteer stories, and much more. By following CUMR and liking our posts, you not only stay better connected but you also help us get more information out to more people in the community.