

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS



*Many of CU Maurice River's excursions involve exploring the intersections of natural and cultural history, such as the Cohansey Meadows Salt Hay Farm where farming involves using the challenges of rising waters to raise salt hay as*

*well as provide habitat for native wildlife. Photo: J. Morton Galetto*

## **Fitting Right In**

*This CU member travels far to experience the sense of community and wellness she receives upon joining CU outdoor excursions.*

By Pam Hull, CU Maurice River member

*The out-of-doors never belongs wholly to the owner of the land. It is the possession of all who pass by and find something that appeals to their inner sense.*

**E. Drusilla Ford - The Environment of a Country Home, The Craftsman, June 1908**

Like the birds that migrate to the Delaware Bayshore for sustenance on their 10,000-mile journey to their Arctic nesting grounds, I, too, must come to the Bayshore for my well-being. A one-way trip for me is about 100 miles, or one percent of the one-way migratory miles flown by the birds. But it never seems like a long for me. When my alarm goes off on a Saturday morning sometime before 5, I can't wait to get in the car to head south.

I take different routes from my home in Central New Jersey but really the longest is my favorite – Route 206 to Hammonton, then on to Millville or another destination in Cumberland County to meet up with other CU members for a terrific time outdoors, whatever we're doing. The CU Calendar wows with its offerings each month, providing opportunities to learn, to help, to have fun—and to be part of an amazing organization/community.



*Each winter CU takes a field trip to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge "wildlife drive" to witness the*

*wonders of waterfowl migration and its year-round-resident birds. In 2024, participants took turns reading interesting fun facts about waterfowl, donning retro cat eyeglasses to denote they are the "current" expert. Photo: J. Morton Galetto.*

CU's uniqueness is what beckoned me to become a member and keeps me heading Down Jersey as much as time allows. I think of CU as its own ecosystem within the larger network of the Maurice River Watershed, which it has preserved and continues to protect actively through the work of the membership, scientists, experts, volunteers, and many others. It is an uncommonly active, diverse community that works together and socializes together and strives to make and keep the Delaware Bayshore as viable as possible, given climate change and the rising seas. I have never known or heard of any other organization like CU.

I am very familiar with two of the watershed organizations in my area which also do terrific work, but they are nothing like CU with its participatory community-building components of experiential learning trips, volunteer cleanups, boat excursions

highlighting both ancient and local culture, plus natural science field trips and fundraisers like "Raising the River" and "The Chili Bowl," – this list could be a mile long.

Many members' deep roots in Cumberland County, together with their long and rich histories working in different ways on the land and sea and Bayshore, contribute to CU's success; they help to keep the perspective of how the past and present are shaping the future of the Bayshore and the watershed. CU's programs continually develop this fascinating history and the importance of its knowledge. I have learned so much through CU about an area of New Jersey that is only a car ride away and about which I knew very little.

And CU is a very welcoming group! The chronology of my first adventure with CU is a bit hazy—I do know it was at least 10 years ago. It may have been on a Purple Martin Spectacular boat trip. Knowing no one, I called the CU office to inquire about getting a ticket and was transferred to Doreen Homan. She answered all of my many questions,



chatted a bit about the event, sold me a ticket, and was so nice that I knew right then that I would become a member - and did shortly thereafter. The Purple Martin trip, of course, was breathtaking. I couldn't believe what I was seeing and wondered why I had never gone on this tour before!



*Each August CU Maurice River runs cruises to witness the purple martin staging at dusk on the Maurice River as they prepare to migrate to their wintering grounds in Brazil. CU File Photo*

*(Please scroll down)*



*Kayakers look skyward during the Purple Martin Festival.  
Photo: Leslie Ficcaglia.*

Not long after that I took another birding-by-boat trip; this time it was on the Meerwald on the Cohansey River where I met member Wendy Walker. I was so surprised when she and her sister asked me to have lunch with them at The Bait Box. The warmth and kindness of the CU Community sealed my desire to be part of this excellent group. Even though I live farther away than most members, everyone has always welcomed me and not questioned why I drive so far to be part of CU. Since then there have been many trips, programs, and dinners, and they

all have fed and sustained me in different ways. I can't wait for my next adventure!

**To find out more about CU Maurice River...** and explore how you might get involved, visit the website [CUMauriceRiver.org](http://CUMauriceRiver.org). The organization's calendar offers many free field trips and ways to help enjoy and protect the regional environment.

For those who are not familiar with CU Maurice River:

Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc. (CU Maurice River), founded in 1979 and a non-profit corporation since 1986, was pivotal in the designation of the Maurice River as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System.

The watershed organization is dedicated to promoting the well-being and quality of life in the region known as "Down Jersey." Citizens United sponsors a variety of educational, fieldwork, and research initiatives that contribute to greater understanding and appreciation of the region's natural treasures.

The organization also creates opportunities for the public to enjoy the ecological, cultural, and recreational aspects of the area.

Its hallmark is the number of volunteers who actively engage in projects that make a difference in the natural world, together achieving over 10,000 service hours annually.

### **About this week's writer: Pam Hull**

For the past 20 years Pam Hull has served as the U.S. agent and sales representative for a



UK-based manufacturer of fiberglass planters and water features sold to the design trade. She noted that she got the position by a very lucky fluke and really enjoys the industry.

Prior to that Pam lived and worked in Boston in magazine publishing, and then left to study at the University of Florida. While there she decided that she really wanted to return to New England, but she decided she would first take a "two-or three-month break" with family in Central New Jersey where she grew up. During the "break," much to her surprise, she met the man whom she married—they were both raised in the same town but had not known each other previously.

One day she and her late husband were looking casually at an inn book and turned to the New Jersey section to see what places were listed. And there was The Charlesworth, Fortescue, NJ. They decided to take a drive! Shirley and Jim Fonash had just purchased it and the Charlesworth became a fairly regular destination for Pam and Dick. And that opening of the book was the start

of Pam's love for and curiosity about Cumberland County and the Delaware Bayshore.

Around the same time, Pam began volunteering for Conserve Wildlife Foundation in their speakers' bureau, and in 2003 she was hired to create CW's Traveling Exhibit to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the New Jersey Endangered Species Act. The exhibit moved from North to South Jersey for six months on public display. In more recent years she has served on the Friends of Forsythe Board and scripted the audio tour of the Eight Mile Drive around the impoundments.

When she is not outdoors or working, Pam is pursuing her interests in music, art, and books.