

New Volume 4 Edition 2  
THE RANCOCAS CREEK  
ASSOCIATION

The New Creekside News



**The "New" Creekside News** is an e-newsletter for, about, and by the Rancocas Creek Association - free to all, published quarterly (**January, April, July, October**). The Creekside News was previously distributed weekly (1930's) to all residents free of charge - for the first copy - any additional copies were sold for 2 cents per copy!

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Creekside News April 2020

## The Ornithologist Corner



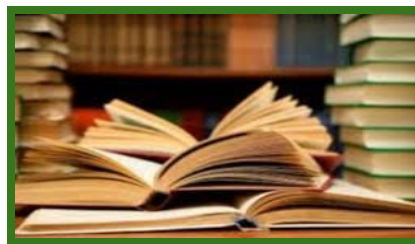
### Prairie Warbler

The Michael Huber Prairie Warbler Reserve is in the heart of the New Jersey Pine Barrens. It is named for the late Michael Huber, a dedicated conservationist who served on the Board of Trustees of New Jersey Conservation Foundation until his death in January 2009. The pitch pine/scrub oak forests are prime breeding habitat for the Prairie Warbler, a migratory songbird that winters in the islands of the West Indies. I wish I were a Prairie Warbler!

Prairie warblers have yellow bellies with dark streaks on the flanks. Their backs have rusty streaks on the back and a yellow line above the eye, a dark line through it, and a yellow spot below it. The brushy areas of our creek are a favored breeding habitat. Their nests are open cups, which are usually placed in a low area of a tree or shrub. Incubation period is 12 to 13 days. Prairie warblers forage actively on tree branches, and sometimes fly around with the purpose of catching insects, their main food source.

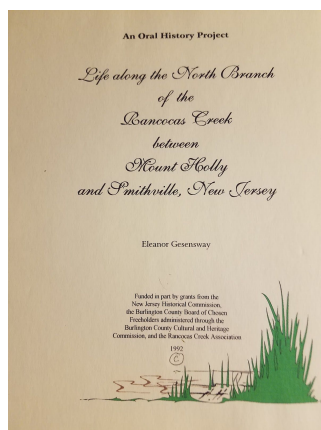
A great tell is that these birds wag their tails frequently.

The numbers of these birds are declining due to habitat loss; this species also suffers from nest parasitism by the brown-headed cowbird.



## Ellie's Corner

*"To me it is important not to live in a throwaway society...that you respect what came before." Eleanor Gesensway.*



the Rancocas Creek between Mount Holly and Smithville, New Jersey".

The banks of the Rancocas Creek has in its residents a remarkable membership of truly talented and interesting persons. Please enjoy another excerpt from Ellie's book - "An Oral History Project: Life Along the North Branch of

*Excerpts from the interviews with Edward and Evelyn Derowski.*

Edward L. Derowski, a former president of the Rancocas Creek Association, was introduced to the area around 1935-1936 when he was between 15-17 years old. "The thing I remember most was whenever we'd paddle down the creek there was always a lot of people at the different places and they were having parties."

In January of 1964, Ed and his wife Evelyn purchased their property along the creek, paying \$68 per year in taxes!!

Here is an interesting fact - "My brother and sister-in-law named it Rabbit Run because there used to be quite a few rabbits running around here..so they said - we'll name it Rabbit Run. Of course, nobody had a dog then so rabbits could survive. The place across the creek is named Beer Run because they always had a half a keg over there and they were always drinking it when they came for the weekend!"

When asked about the canal's history, Mr. Debrowski stated "...about 10 years ago (which would have been 1979) they had a meeting ... I said 'why not fill it in?'. The only answer I got was a lot of hard looks ... and ... 'no, because it's historical'. ...Evidently, they ran barges along the canal from the Mansion down through Mount Holly into Delaware."

Debrowski, in his capacity as president, "wanted to see the creek restored to its original beauty - that is, for it to be clear of fallen trees and people could go in without any fears.' He mentioned and thanked Bea Rosenthal for her works toward that goal.

Evelyn Debrowski also loved the creek. Although she was very involved in Camden life, she made it work here on the creek. "I had my choir here every year - about 40 people. They just loved it." "That was one of the great things about this place, that we were able to share it with our friends. ... We would have family gatherings here."

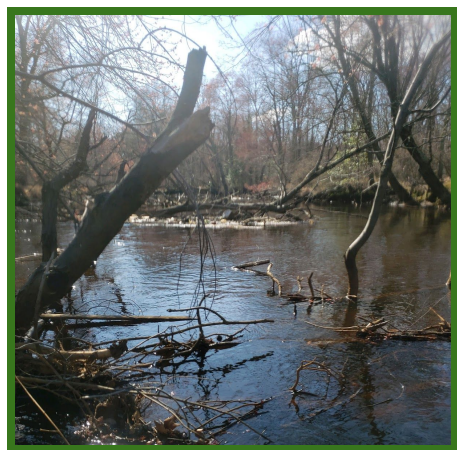


**Thank You** to Claudia McNamara and Sharon Astorino for submitting our first grant proposal.

This grant deals with habitat preservation and erosion control as the primary objective, along with preserving open flow for recreational use. There is a further goal that documenting this 3-year project will provide a model for other small community organizations.

This endeavor is so important to the RCA, residents, and all that traverse the creek - this year's whacky weather has wreaked wonders on our waterways!

Keeping fingers crossed that we are awarded this grant so that we can begin with the much needed tree removal!



## Native Plants for our Region

Members of the Rancocas Creek Association have shown an interest in Native Plantings for our area; therefore, we have done some research and for the next few newsletters, will include some of the more common natives for your review and perusal.

There are 4 grasses that are native to our area<sup>1</sup>. Each attracts varying species of birds, and may assist in keeping our banks shored!

Here they are (in alphabetical order, no preferences)

1 - Freshwater Cord Grass (*Spartina pectinata*) a perennial, which is also known as prairie cordgrass or slough grass. It would adapt well to our banks as it does well in moist to wet, rich soils and spreads quickly. It grows 5 to 6 feet tall in full sun and is upright and rigid with coarse leaves and stiff seedheads that turn yellow in the fall attracting many birds.



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2 - Little False Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) is an ornamental perennial bunchgrass that grows up to 2 feet tall forming dense mounds of slender, blue-green stems. The stems become a

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<sup>1</sup> "Native Plants." *Audubon*, [www.audubon.org/native-plants/search?zipcode=08060](http://www.audubon.org/native-plants/search?zipcode=08060).

deep brownish red by September, and produce white seed tufts that last 1 to 2 weeks in the fall. The bunchgrass grows in full sun to partial shade and in a variety of dry, well-drained soils - like our banks!



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3 - Wand Panic Grass (*Panicum virgatum*) is a clump-forming, perennial grass that grows 3 to 6 feet tall. The bright green leaves sprout along the stem, and turn bright yellow in fall. Open, delicate sprays producing small seeds attract many birds and butterflies - allegedly resistant to deer - and provides great cover for others of our natural fauna. This plant grows in full sun to partial shade, and in a variety of dry to moist soils including sandy, sandy loam, clay, and limestone-based soils.



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4 - Yellow Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) is a tall, perennial, sod-forming grass with broad blue-green blades and a large, golden-brown, plume-like seed

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head. Growing 3 to 8 feet makes it tend to remain erect providing a perfect nesting habitat and protective cover for fauna. In the fall, the seed head turns deep orange to purple. It is drought tolerant, growing in full sun to shade, and in dry to moist soil, including sandy, loam, and clay soils. Again, wonderfully adaptable to our locale!



## RCA SUNSHINE



Birthday Greetings and Happy Anniversary to our members celebrating in April, May, and June! Continued good health and happiness to each of you.

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## RCA Creek Maintenance

The Rancocas Creek Association is very grateful to our youth volunteers, Mason and Royce, for the diligent work put forth thus far regarding our creek maintenance.

We are paddling along taking pictures of the trees that are blocking paddlers from enjoying our waterway. There are a few tree companies that are providing estimates for the removal of these trees. We are hoping to have a grant to provide for this project.

From there, we will continue with erosion remediation and addressing invasives.

Assistance of time, talent, and funding is always welcome!

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## RCA OUTREACH

The Rancocas Creek Association, in an effort to connect our organization's ideas or endeavors to the public is focusing on educational initiatives in our community.

Our first event on Rain Gardens was a tremendous success - sponsored by RCA, it was held at the Rutgers Extension office in Westampton in March. There were approximately 30 people in attendance - shy of the 40 registered; could COVID-19 be responsible? We were fortunate to be able to get this in just before the restrictions were put in place.

Dr. Christopher Obropta gave a most informative, creative, and entertaining talk on every aspect of rain gardens.



The RCA has a long history. - from 1934! It was originally a "camper's association", formed by families summering along the creek.

This year we are doing a concerted effort to get substantial work initiatives going to solidify our beautiful environment. A major endeavor is mapping our section of the creek. Claudia M and Morgan A have already made great strides in outlining the needed tasks.

A special thank you to Jenna, Craig, and Sharon for supplementing the wonderful refreshments.

April 7, 2020 - What is a Master Gardener has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 situation.

May 19, 2020 - All About Bees

June 16, 2020 - The Spotted Lanternfly

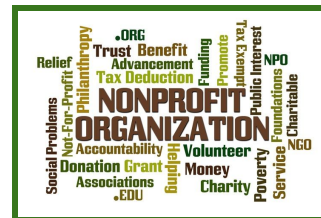
July 21, 2020 - Invasive Plants

August 18, 2020 - Birds of Prey

September 15, 2020 - to be announced

October 20, 2020 - to be announced

Anyone interested in assisting by providing refreshments, facilitating an educational topic, or locating topics, please contact Sharon.



The RCA is a non-profit organization.

Tax deductible donations may be forwarded to RCA at 36 West Railroad Avenue, Eastampton NJ 08060;

OR you may donate through Facebook;

OR you may identify Rancocas Creek Association as your charity of choice when purchasing through **Amazon Smile** ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)). RCA will receive 0.5% of your purchase courtesy of the vendor;

OR you may use PayPal - [rancocas@gmail.com](mailto:rancocas@gmail.com) is our identifier.

So many options!



HELP WANTED!!!!

We are looking for GRANT WRITERS!!!

Anyone love to play on FaceBook? Social Media authors are needed!

Enjoy digging through archives? We are looking for someone to go to the library and download old copies of newsletters.

Please let the President know if you would be willing and able to volunteer your time - thank you!

### **We are Walking!**

Claudia McNamara and Bill Bolger have been diligently walking along Hand Lane, Shreve Street, and West Railroad Avenue collecting trash. Thank you for your dedication to keeping our little bit of paradise clean!

Should anyone wish to join in their walks, please contact Claudia - bring your trash-bags and complete your pre-walk tick prevention routine!



### **2020 Meeting Schedule**

*10:30 am - refreshments*  
*11:00 am - meeting*  
*Noon - adjourn*

- Sunday, April 26 - Astorinos
- Sunday, May 24 - Katz
- Saturday, June 20 - Joiner/Barber
- Sunday, July 12
- Sunday, August 9
- Sunday, September 13 (Nominations)
- Sunday, October 11 Potluck (Elections)
- Sunday, November 8 Support-Local Gathering
- Sunday, December 13 Winter Gathering

Venue to be finalized.

## Dues



Dues remain at \$20 per household! Please forward your dues to our Treasurer, Tom Kempton at 1 Hand Lane, Eastampton NJ 08060 or, you may mail them to the RCA at 36 West Railroad Avenue, Eastampton NJ 08060.

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## Our Newsletter

Anyone interested in writing an article for our newsletter, or have news that they would like to share, should contact Sharon Astorino, Teri Montgomery, or Claudia McNamara. You may use our personal emails or our WebMaster will forward mail to us that is sent to [Rancocas@gmail.com](mailto:Rancocas@gmail.com).

***For those of you who read this newsletter and are not members of the RCA, we would like to tell you what it is! The Rancocas Creek Association is residents' association for people who live on or near the Creek between the Smithville Spillway and the Mount Holly Dam. We are a non-profit organization. Although RCA is not primarily an environmental organization, our location and relationship to the Creek means that many issues that we take up on behalf of residents have to do with preserving the quality of the environment and ecology of the Creek.***

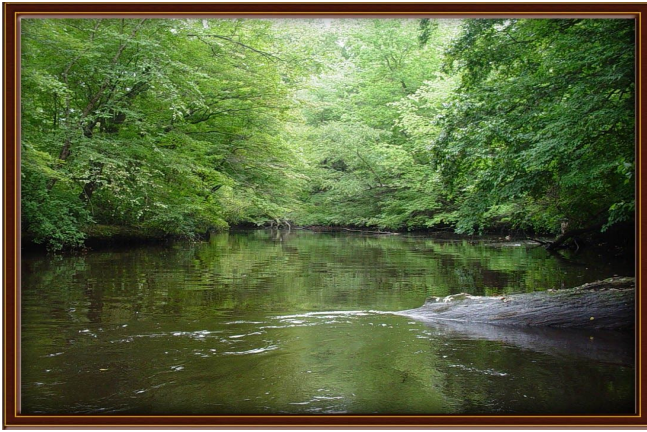
## ***We welcome new members!***

The more subscribed members we have, the stronger our voice to protect our environment and neighborhood and the quality of all lives along it. Dues are \$20 per year per household - not a high price to support an association that looks out for our small community and is also a source of information about local activities and development. So come on in! Join up and be part of this not-for-profit neighborhood association!

To join, simply mail your dues along with your name, address, email and telephone number to RCA at 36 West Railroad Avenue, Eastampton NJ 08060. We look forward to hearing from you and working together for a beautiful, clean creek!

## **Like us on Facebook!**





**President:** Sharon Astorino  
**Vice President:** Richard Astorino  
**Secretaries:** Judy Loane  
Claudia McNamara  
**Treasurer:** Tom Kempton  
**Parliamentarian:** Kerry Sharps  
**Editors:** Sharon Astorino  
Claudia McNamara  
Teri Montgomery  
**Webmaster:** Kerry Sharps