

Palisades

NATURE NOTES



Swainson's Thrush

Photo: Karl Soehnlein

Notes from the Naturalist

TIMING, AS THEY SAY, IS EVERYTHING. SOMETIMES IT WORKS IN YOUR FAVOR. ON FEBRUARY 28TH, I RECEIVED an email from long-time Greenbrook member, Kurt Soderman. At 12:40 PM, while he was standing at Picture Point, he “heard and witnessed a sizable rock slide” just a few yards north of where he was standing, which he described as very loud and “quite scary.” The result was a couple of gigantic boulders, one at least 7 feet high, lying on the Henry Hudson Drive below the sanctuary (see photo). I was immediately jealous. What are the odds of being in precisely the right place at precisely the right time to witness such an event; the geologic forces that have been gnawing away at the Palisades cliffs for millennia, oblivious to and reminding us that we are, in fact, in control of nothing (I suppose I would be less enamored of the power of Mother Earth if my house was covered in volcanic ash at the base of currently-erupting Mount Etna).

And then timing runs amok and works against you. Following a warm rain on the night of February 25 (the last week of February was unseasonably warm), the spotted salamanders emerged from their underground burrows to begin their breeding activity, as evidenced by the presence of spermatophores in one of the vernal pools. I observed 2 adult salamanders and more spermatophores on March 1st, just in time for the first evening

walk on March 4th, at which we were treated to a 21° temperature with a brisk (to put it mildly) north wind. The good news is that any creature that breeds in water at this unpredictable time of year is, by definition, cold tolerant and by March 8th, we started to see some egg masses. It got better; three inches of snow on March 10th, just in time for the second night hike on March 11th, with a temperature of 24° and 2 very sluggish-looking spotted salamanders observed under the ice. And then winter's lid clamped back down on us with ten inches of heavy wet snow on March 14th. The vernal pool remained covered with ice until March 24th, which meant that the spotted salamanders had been in the pool under ice and snow for exactly one month. It is hard to say what effect this weather had on our already declining population of early spring amphibians. Certainly being interrupted exactly in the middle of the breeding cycle had a negative impact and some of the individual eggs within the masses appeared to be non-viable. Yet to my amazement, I saw one adult salamander and several additional egg masses in the newly thawed vernal pool on March 25th - a testament to the resilience and adaptability of these remarkable creatures.

Resilience, however, is not a word you can use when talking about American woodcocks. Newly arrived from their southern U.S. wintering grounds, they were stranded by the March 14th snowstorm. The diet of the woodcock consists almost entirely of earthworms and other invertebrates, which they probe for in soil using their long, sensitive bills. It is not uncommon for them to encounter a late winter snowfall, but what made this storm unusual for a March storm was that the deep, ice-crusting snow remained on the ground for well over a week with very little melting due to the cold temperatures. The birds were physically unable to reach their food source. Many starving, emaciated birds were rescued and brought to rehabilitators, but doubtless, many more perished. That is why I was gratified to observe 2 survivors probing for earthworms in the soft, sun-warmed soil near the cliff edge on A trail on March 22nd.

Three days later we recorded the first eastern phoebe, osprey and northern flickers of the spring season with the first pine warbler arriving a day later. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME ALL THE NEW MEMBERS WHO JOINED AT VISITORS' DAY IN APRIL. I HOPE YOU ENJOY GREENBROOK AS MUCH as I have over the years. What I have found is that the best way of learning about Greenbrook and nature is to go on the walks our Naturalists give most Saturdays and Sundays. Details of the walks can be found in the Almanac section of the Newsletter. Another way to be notified online about details of events at Greenbrook (including Volunteer Days) is to join the Greenbrook Meetup group — www.meetup.com/Greenbrook-Nature-Sanctuary. You can also see (and post) photos taken at Greenbrook on Facebook — www.facebook.com/Greenbrook.Sanctuary.

Some of our longtime members may not realize that our Newsletter is now available on-line. If you would like to view Palisades Nature Notes online in living color, rather than getting the paper version in the mail, please send an Email to Greenbrook@njpalisades.org with a subject line of 'Newsletter' and your full name in the text. This has the advantage of saving Greenbrook postage and printing costs. Please be assured that your Email address will only be used for Greenbrook matters and not shared with anyone else.

Finally, a special "Thank You" to our volunteer Joe Bonardi for repairing the deck — with help from yours truly — at the Visitors' Center. The large hole, where once stood a tree, no longer invites accidents. — ALEC MALYON



Repairing the Visitor Center deck

NOTES FROM THE NATURALIST CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The parade of spring sightings continued through April: garter snakes, palm warblers, eastern towhees, and more spring beauties in bloom along some of Greenbrook's trails than I have seen in many years.

The warm weather of April 27th thru 30th resulted in the following observations: ovenbird, blue-headed vireo, black-throated green warbler, Savannah sparrow, scarlet tanager, Baltimore oriole, parula warbler, gray catbird, warbling vireo, spotted sandpiper, yellow warbler, black & white warbler, worm-eating warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, northern waterthrush, rose-breasted grosbeak, hermit thrush, veery, wood thrush, many yellow-rumped warblers and blue-gray gnatcatchers, northern watersnake, black rat snake, painted turtles and a rarely-seen-in-Greenbrook, orange sulfur butterfly. The wild pinks bloomed in abundance along C trail just below the cliff edge as did the diminutive dwarf ginseng near the bog. In addition, there have been several sightings of a red fox during the day, presumably hunting for food for its hungry kits.

Thanks as always to our volunteers who helped out with various projects and programs in the sanctuary or lent a hand at the Northern Valley Earth Fair and Visitors' Day: Joe Bonardi, Meg Browar, Chris Connolly, Louis Discepola, Mike Gallo, Robert Helder, Nancy Hoffman, Leslie Kraus, Conny Lee, Alec Malyon, Chris Murphy, Meira Pomerantz, George Reskakis, Peter Schmidt and Karl Soehnlein.

Today, as we were returning to the office after doing some trail work in the north end of the sanctuary, we stopped to observe a few birds on the trail ahead of us. Turns out they were all veeries - five of them foraging for food right in front of us and none too disturbed by our presence either. It occurred to me that I have never seen 5 veeries in one spot, ever, and probably never will again. What are the odds of being in precisely the right place at precisely the right time to witness such an event? Timing is, indeed, everything.

— SANDY BONARDI *Naturalist/Director*

SUMMER 2017 ALMANAC

NO PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED FOR PROGRAMS UNLESS NOTED.

Call 201-784-0484 for weather-related cancellation information.

Guided nature walks in Greenbrook **Sundays** at 2:00 PM (except where noted). All other walks will be led by Sandy Bonardi unless otherwise stated.

Please note: This season there will be no scheduled Sunday walks from July 16th up to and including August 6th.

Saturday, June 10 — 7:00 – 8:30 PM

Evening Walk

Saturday, June 17 — 8:00 – 9:30 AM

Breeding Birds of Greenbrook

This year we are conducting our biennial breeding bird survey in the sanctuary. Join us for a leisurely walk and learn how this is done.

Saturday, June 24 — 10:00 AM – NOON

First Weekend of Summer Hike

Start your summer with a morning hike in the sanctuary.

Saturday, July 8 — 9:00 – 10:30 AM

Early Morning Walk Around the Pond

Get out early and beat the heat on an easy hike at this quiet time of year.



Snow-stranded American woodcock

Photo: Lori Finn



Rock slide debris (see Notes from the Naturalist) Photo: Karl Soehnlein

Saturday, July 15 — 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Annual Butterfly Count

Help us count butterfly species in Greenbrook.

Sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association.

Saturday, July 22 — 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Rain date for butterfly count

Saturday, July 29 — 10:00 AM – NOON

Summer Wildflowers

Saturday, August 12 — 10:00 AM – NOON

Trees in Summer

Identifying trees using leaves, bark and fruits

Saturday, August 19 — 10:00 AM – NOON

Milkweeds & Monarchs

Learn about the important relationship between these species.

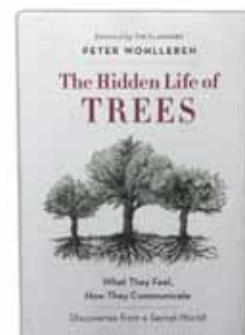
Sunday, August 27 — 10:00 AM – NOON

Summer Nature Walk

Leader: Ken Habermann. This replaces the 2 PM hike.

Summer Reading

It's hard to believe that we are now in the fourth year of our annual book discussion program. Each summer we try to come up with a book that will be both enjoyable and informative for our members. This year's selection certainly fills the bill. It's The Hidden Life of Trees, written by a German forester named Peter Wohlleben. The subtitle on the dust jacket reads, "What They Feel, How They Communicate" and provides a good hint about the narrative within. Purposely written in an anthropomorphic style - which garnered criticism from some scientists - the author seeks to connect to our emotions and awaken our curiosity about nature. Of the book, one reviewer wrote: "Wohlleben's book is at once romantic and scientific, beautifully articulating his personal relationship with the trees he has dedicated his life to." Greenbrook members who read the book can join us for a discussion at the sanctuary in the fall. Look for details in the autumn newsletter.



GREENBROOK SANCTUARY



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Nature Notes is now available online

Send your e-mail address to Greenbrook@njpalisades.org.

WELCOME, NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS: Joseph Buxbaum, Brian Dolch, Brian Tilston Smith, Laura Meyer & Joseph Casper, Maria Dvorozniak, Lebson Prigoff Tricoche, G. Steck, Monica Murgia, Rosy Dixon, Gina Franzino, Thomas Schuchaskie, Steven Villani, Jon Skarimbias, Barbara Krasnoff, Wilma Goldenberg, David Diaz, Ronald Kolbinger, Nanfung Yu, Marcia Wilson, Jeff Tucker & Beth Gantz, Jason Ray Brown, Thomas Peterson, Imrank Khaja, Joseph Baldacci, Elizabeth Falkenstern, Richard Chambers, Paula Aurbach, Alix Grubbs, Robert Carroll, Michele Gillies, Laura Zanuso, Irina Glushenok, Eric Rosen, Jackie Oh, Zacharias Rieck, Jeff Wickliffe, Beth Schrope, Hyung Lee, Inshirah Overton, Merry Yue Cai, Suzanne Bush, Linda Sherman, Elizabeth Warms, Daniel Valentin, Elaine Dalto, Renee Ramirez, Israel Rodriguez, Anna Descartes & Ronen Cohen, Hayirye Bacaz, Alan & Jennifer Eisberg, Kathy & John Scordato, Elaine Ernst & Miguel Merida-Nicolich, Seth Handler, Ikuma Tabata, Robert & Rosa Kleinman, Christine Fitzpatrick, Ray Sesin, Youngmo Jung, Jessica Wielinski, Marc Evangelista, Gary Parkinson, Ann Breeswine, Beth Schnall & Paul Gauthier, Rajiv Krishnamuathy, Cynthia Jay, Kathy & Roger Sobeck, Rob Schultz, Eric & Jan Bahnsen, Karla Norfleet, Pamela Simancek, Michelle Delatorre

Membership entitles you to join Greenbrook Sanctuary's online community on Meetup.com.

View pictures, calendar of events and more. Email 2greenbrook@gmail.com or call Membership Director

Mike Gallo with any online questions, 201.280.0160. Also, Like Greenbrook on Facebook and Twitter.

Palisades NATURE NOTES

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Join Us. THIS FORM IS FOR NEW MEMBERS ONLY.

Yes, I want to become a member of Greenbrook Sanctuary.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$ 35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship | \$ 250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household | \$ 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member | \$ 1,000 |
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