



A Periodic Publication of the Friends of Forsythe
Summer 2020

TAKING ACTION THROUGH EDUCATION

MESSAGE FROM YOUR FRIENDS' BOARD



Dear Friends,
Remember last year, when Forsythe facilities and programs were shut down for three months because of the government closure over the budget? Well, this year it's the coronavirus, and we are shutdown once again. This makes our life challenging, and we need to adapt.

Luckily, Wildlife Drive and the hiking trails are still open, as well as a public restroom facility. Park passes are also being sold on some days. So please come on out to the refuge, while practicing social distancing and wearing face masks, and enjoy the sights on Wildlife Drive. But roll up your windows and turn on your air conditioning, because the greenheads are back!

Friends of Forsythe is impacted by the shutdown in various ways. Our in-classroom Environmental Education programs are all postponed. Our gift shop and the Visitors Information Center are closed. We can no longer offer our free Saturday Jitney tours of Wildlife Drive. Evenings at Forsythe events cannot be held in the multi-purpose room. And we don't know when these programs can open up once again.

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This newsletter is a publication of the FRIENDS OF FORSYTHE, a non-profit, 501(c)3, tax-exempt corporation that works closely with the Refuge. Friends are the bridge between the Refuge and the community, and contribute to its future by helping people understand that their actions today determine the legacy we leave for tomorrow.

Our mission is to support the purposes for which the Refuge was established and includes the following:

- For use as a sanctuary for migratory birds and non-migratory animals
- For protection of natural resources
- For the conservation of non-game, threatened and endangered species
- For promoting environmental education and experiences for children and adults
- For the development of other wildlife-oriented experiences that do not interfere with the primary mission of the Refuge.

We invite you to join. You can serve on the Board of Directors, assist as members of Advisory Committees, work in the Visitor Information Center and Nature Store, or provide your support by being a member. Please share your interest and experience. For more information, please email friendsofforsythe@gmail.com or go to <https://friendsofforsythe.org/>

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But there is some good news. Membership is up and donations are up (thank you everyone)! Your Friends Board continues to adapt and to get things done, to support our mission of connecting people with nature. We are hosting our second annual bird photography contest, this time virtually. The Live Osprey Cam is still available on our website. Evenings at Forsythe started offering on-line events. Friends is sponsoring a Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program that will develop curricula around Forsythe to give to for teachers for their classrooms. Board members just completed a self-guided audio tour of Wildlife Drive. And we finally found a good home for outdated Forsythe Explorer electric tram.

Oh, and did we say the greenheads are back?

MUGWORT: AN UNWELCOME VISITOR IN THE REFUGE GARDEN

Article by Patti Cassidy

The Forsythe Native Garden was installed shortly after the VIC was completed. Only native plants have been introduced by the Forsythe gardeners, however invasives have popped up periodically, often growing from seeds dropped by passing birds. Recently one plant has taken over as the biggest bully in the garden.



Mugwort, or *Artemisia Vulgaris*, is a native of Europe. The leaves appear similar to chrysanthemum; however, this plant is much less desirable in the garden. Growing to 4 feet tall, it spreads aggressively through rhizomes, its root system. Even a small piece of root left behind will produce an entire new plant. This makes it virtually impossible to eliminate by tilling, pulling or mowing. This highly invasive plant most likely found its way into our garden in a load of fill dirt, topsoil or mulch. We were able to keep it under control in the garden beds, however in the last year or so it took over a large patch of ground between our beds and the Purple Martin houses.

This area has been mowed recently and the Refuge Staff and the garden group will be working together to prevent further spread, as well as controlling the patches that already exist in the established beds. Wish us luck, we'll need it!

The Garden Group is made up of Rutgers Master Gardeners of Atlantic County and Friends of Forsythe volunteers. We are on hiatus in July and August but hope to be back at work in September. We meet on Thursdays at 10 AM, no gardening experience necessary 🌱

GET YOUR BOARDWALK MEMORIAL PLANKS HERE

When visiting the Edwin B. Forsythe Refuge, it is always a quality time to take a short walk on the boardwalk. You can enjoy the spectacular view of the salt marsh and some of the species that habitat there. In the middle of the boardwalk you can easily zoom in on the Great Blue Herons, Egrets and Ospreys through the high-powered viewer mounted next to the plaque that is dedicated to Ed Jones, who was a refuge volunteer for more than 10 years.

The boardwalk is not only an engineering marvel, it also consists of 450 engraved planks with names of volunteers who unselfishly helped preserve the Refuge's natural resources. It is

continually maintained by skilled craftsman Bob Levy and his wife Randy and Tom Tuohy, who are FOF Volunteers. A plank can be donated via our website in memory of loved ones, in honor of a volunteer or as a gift from an organization. We presently have 50 blank spaces available for purchase. We would like to thank everyone who has donated a plank, and we appreciate anyone who may be considering donating in the future. All donations go to supporting the refuge.



Boardwalk at Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge

FLOCKS OF BIRDERS HEAD TO FORSYTHE FOR RARE AVIAN VISITORS

By Susan Puder, Board Member, FOF

During this strange time of lockdowns and social distancing, birders and people who just want to get outside have been making the Wildlife Drive at E. B. Forsythe National Wildlife Drive a place to visit during the past few months. The Visitor Information Center is closed and until recently, there were no bathrooms available (porta-sans are now there).

This spring has had the usual suspects in the way of waterfowl and shorebird migrates passing through; e.g., Snow Geese, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails, Dunlin, sandpipers of all kinds, plovers, eagles, Black Skimmers, terns, and a perennial favorite, nesting Ospreys. However, for a few weeks some rarer visitors came to the

Refuge, some perhaps to stay the season, bringing many more travelers along Wildlife Drive.

Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets are in



the family Recurvirostridae, which has a total of eight species world-wide. But here in North America, there are only two, and both decided to visit us at the same time. According to the National Geographic Field Guide of North America, stilts and avocets are “sleek and graceful waders with long, slender bills and spindly legs”. Black-necked Stilts have stylish plumage of black cap, neck, and back with a black bill with white underparts and long pink legs. They are a rare and accidental visitor to Forsythe, usually in May and June. Along the east coast wetlands, they can be found foraging for small aquatic prey, and their breeding range is moving north.

On the other hand, American Avocets are rarely seen at Forsythe during breeding season, but eight



avocets decided to pay us a visit in June and some have stayed it appears. Avocets in breeding plumage sport a classy rusty color on their head and neck that turns grayish white later in the season. They feed by sweeping their elegant upturned bills side to side through the water. Our usual views of them at Forsythe are during the fall migration.

So, cameras were clicking like mad along the Wildlife Drive and great photographs were taken, many posted to Facebook; hopefully, they will be entered into the Friends of Forsythe 2020 Photographic Competition.

It just goes to show that it pays to visit E. B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge often as you will never know what may drop by.



TEACHER-RANGER-TEACHER PROGRAM:

Partnership with the Refuge

Article by: Joshua Baker, Park Ranger, Cape May/Edwin B. Forsythe/Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuges

We are very excited to announce the selection of Heather Pagano and Lesley Thomson as our first ever Teacher-Ranger-Teachers. Both candidates have done extensive work in the field of education and in the Atlantic county area; and are very excited to make the stories and lessons of the refuge available to all via our websites. Lesley has been an educator at Barnegat High school for over a decade and had conducted virtual education to

students throughout the world for many years before that. Heather has taught 7th and 8th grade throughout NJ in Mount Laurel, Ringwood, and Wayne. She also assisted in the creation of curriculum for LBI Foundation's Arts & Science Camp.

The **Teacher-to-Ranger-to-Teacher program** is an extended professional development opportunity started by the National Park Service to connect teachers to public lands through a summer internship experience, which introduces them to the work that the different divisions do. Teachers then develop curriculum-based activities and lesson plans that can be downloaded and used by other teachers throughout the country. Forsythe is using this model to provide lesson plans based on refuge resources that meet state and national standards.

Educators selected this year as Teacher-Ranger-Teachers will spend a total of 140 hours over a 10-week period learning about the agency, the refuge, and reviewing existing environmental education materiel for their final projects, which will focus on New Jersey middle school science standards. At the culmination of the program, teachers will receive a \$1400 stipend generously provided by the Friends of Forsythe NWR.

Once they return to their schools, teacher-rangers bring their refuge knowledge and experiences into the school and classrooms throughout the school year to engage students, faculty, and staff in lessons and activities that relate to the USFWS' themes, stories, and mission.

I would personally like to thank the Friends for making this possible and am looking forward to a very successful summer program.

LIVE OSPREY CAM



Photo taken July 11, 2020 at almost one month old

This year Mr. and Mrs. Osprey had a tough time. A severe April windstorm literally destroyed their first nest along with their first egg. The sight of Mrs. Osprey hunkering down through that terrible storm, trying to save her precious egg, was very sad. The next day there was no nest, it was all blown away, as were a few other nests at Forsythe. But within a few days they started rebuilding the nest, and soon she laid her second clutch of two eggs. One of our astute osprey live cam watchers grew very concerned about some ribbons and a mylar balloon in the nest, afraid that the birds would get all tangled up in it (they didn't, fortunately). Only one of these two eggs hatched, on June 15 (last year they had three chicks).

Osprey young are full grown at six weeks and leave the nest at about eight to ten weeks of age taking their first flights. Like all raptors, ospreys have a high mortality rate in the first year of life. Ospreys are migratory, mate for life, and travel long distances south – as far as Central and South America, where they over-winter until spring. Reaching sexual maturity at three years, ospreys live an average of about eight years with the longest recorded age of about 25-32 years. The Osprey is the only hawk that eats almost exclusively live fish.

INSTAGRAM SPOTLIGHT

The Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge is a world-renowned backdrop for wildlife photographers. Each year, thousands of amateur and professional photographers utilize our 47,000+ acres of protected New Jersey coastal habitat to snap millions of bird, landscape, and other wildlife photos. On the Friends of Forsythe Instagram Feed [@friends_of_forsythenwr](#) we feature amazing photography captured by our visitors and followers. In this feature, [Instagram Spotlight](#), the Friends of Forsythe highlights the re-posted image (and photographer) that has received the most “likes” since the previous publication of our newsletter. In this edition we are featuring [@jerseytidbits](#) with a vibrant yellow warbler singing up a storm!

Featured Photo



Caption: Singing His Little Heart Out

Profile

Handle:	@jerseytidbits
Original Image Likes:	418
FOF Re-post likes:	126
Total Posts:	403
Followers:	655

Typical Location:	Southern New Jersey
Typical Subjects:	Birds, Flowers, Insects

Description: Lisa's feed is packed with a diverse array of local (and some non-local) bird species, many with a portrait-like quality. She balances it all with beautiful flowers and various critters. A genuinely great find and a must follow!

Additional Examples



NEW

Wildlife Drive Audio Tour

Did you know that the Edwin B Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge stretches 50 miles along New Jersey's south coast from Brick Township to Brigantine?

Or, that on part of your drive you will be on a former railroad track bed?

Or, that in winter you might see a real Blue Goose in one of The Refuge's impoundment ponds?

And--- you will learn much more as you listen to a newly-produced 23-minute audio tour during your drive through the Refuge.

The tour is accessible, via your smartphone, on the Friends of Forsythe website www.friendsofforsythe.org. There is a button on the right side of the Homepage that says Audio Tour as well as a listing for it on a drop-down menu along the top of the Homepage under Visit.

The tour starts before Wildlife Drive so you can start listening to it as you leave the parking lot and head past the Visitors' Center on the left and down a small hill to the first stop at Leeds Eco Trail. Eventually, once you are on Wildlife Drive, the sights and sounds described on that portion of the audio tour are coordinated with the numbered Blue Goose markers along the eight-mile dirt roadway.

Because the Refuge's jitney tours had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, the Friends of Forsythe Board decided that an audio tour would be a good and user-friendly substitute for everyone.

During the late Spring and early summer, a script was written and then recorded along with sound effects appropriate to locations both on the Wildlife Drive as well as to other points before and after the Drive. We believe, whether you're coming visit to the Refuge is your first or your 101st, the audio tour will enhance your enjoyment of and knowledge of the Edwin B Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and its importance for migratory birds and coastal New Jersey.

2nd ANNUAL 2020 JURIED

Photographic Competition

The days are dwindling down to August 8th, which is the last date to enter the 2020 Juried Photographic Competition, sponsored by Friends of Forsythe. There has been a change in the Prospectus, so we recommend everyone check it out on our website.

Due to the Coronavirus, there will **NOT** be an exhibition of finalist photographs or reception at the Visitor Information Center this year.

Instead, award winners and honorable mention photographs will be displayed on the Friends of Forsythe website and their Facebook page on August 29, 2020. Awards will be mailed at that time.

Again, photographs may have been taken during the past three years, but must have been shot at one of the E.B. Forsythe NWR units. There were many great photos taken of the Avocets this spring/summer, so think about entering them, along with the other wonderful wildlife, insects, reptiles, scenics, flowers, sunrises, sunsets, and birds that can be found at the Refuge.

2020 Juried Photographic Competition
Celebrating E.B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge



Open Submissions: Open to general public
Student Submissions: Open to students age 21 and under

Supporting the mission of the
Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge

Cash Awards
Date for entries begins March 14, ends August 8
Go to <https://friendsofforsythe.org>
for fees, categories, and award information



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