

A Publication of the Friends of Forsythe

Summer 2021



TAKING ACTION THROUGH EDUCATION

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW FRIENDS OF FORSYTHE BOARD MEMBERS



Lisa Dedrick

I grew up in Maryland, went to school in Pennsylvania and moved to New Jersey in 2014, and got married to my husband in 2017. I am a former high school science teacher turned IT professional, currently living in Bordentown and working at the Rutgers Business School.

I have always had a love of nature and photography. My husband and I also share the love of travel and have had the pleasure of being able to visit many national parks across the US as well as many of the state parks and wildlife refuges right here in New Jersey. I have visited Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge numerous times to take pictures and unwind from the week. I thought the opportunity to serve on the Friends of Forsythe board was a great way to give back to the refuge. I look forward to helping out and working with everyone.

Susan Ricciardi

It is a pleasure to be joining the Board of Friends of Forsythe. I have enjoyed the wildlife for many years and go quite frequently. I only wish many

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/>

more people would relish it as I do. I hope my career skills in public relations and marketing will help to enhance visitorship. I look forward to assisting with the diversity program, special event planning and various other programs which will successfully fulfill the important mission of Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge.

Sabrina T. Simpkins

Currently, Sabrina is still acting as Site Director for the Holly City Family Success Center of Millville; her new position will be Volunteer Community Partnership and Donations Coordinator for Gateway Community Action Partnership and Holly City, Greater Bridgeton and Salem Family Success Center's in Cumberland County.

Sabrina loves being outdoors and spending time in nature, and one of her professional goals is to help others realize the true peace and love that can be found within outdoor spaces. Sabrina has volunteered her time to help preserve the natural world with the Nature Conservancy in Millville and CU Maurice River LLC. She is very proud to be a part of the Forsythe Refuge Diversity & Inclusion Action Committee and the External Diversity Committee with Rowan University, she is also a member of the Bridgeton Lions Club and sits on various other committees within her county. Some of her hobbies include; kayaking, hiking, swimming, boxing and taking her young son and nephews on amazing adventures around the world!

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO TALENTED BOARD MEMBERS

After over two years of service to the Friends of Forsythe group, we are sad to say good-bye to Mike Becktel and Mary Ann Branciforti. Mike's skills in finance aided the Friends with tax preparations, shop management and donation

processing during his tenure, and his technology skills were invaluable as we navigated Covid closure. Mike set up the online gift shop, which allowed visitors to purchase popular Refuge merchandise online through Shopify, and helped the Friends maintain a stream of income while the Visitor Information Center was closed during the pandemic. He was also instrumental in all aspects of the new Media Wall in the VIC, from initial fundraising to coordinating all the installation of the hardware and software. We are indebted to Mike for his leadership on these projects and wish him the best in his new business ventures.

Mary Ann Branciforti joined the Board in 2018 and most recently volunteered to manage the Membership program for the Friends upon the departure of long-time Board member, Bill Harclerode. Mary Ann also took on coordination of the popular boardwalk planks, and we are very thankful she will continue helping out with the planks. During her time on the Board, she also served on the Evenings at Forsythe committee to help organize and find speakers for that popular evening educational series. One summer, she held a tabling event at the Brigantine Green Fest to raise awareness of both the Refuge and the Friends of Forsythe. Thanks for all your contributions and good luck in the future Mary Ann!

FRIENDS HOLD ANNUAL MEETING

On Thursday, June 10, 2021, the Friends of Forsythe held their annual meeting after missing it in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. Ten Board Members, 11 Friends members and Refuge Manager, Virginia Rettig, joined together virtually via Zoom to discuss the activities of the Friends group since the last meeting in May 2019. Current Board President, Rae Griffiths, highlighted the projects that the Friends have initiated and funded in the past two years, including the

Teacher Ranger Teacher program last summer, the installation of two wildlife cameras around the refuge and the development of the nature story time program, Refuge Readings with Rae this past fall/winter. She also talked about the success of the two photo competitions the Friends have run in 2019 and 2020 and continuing to connect with people through Facebook, Instagram, our Newsletter, and the newly created Friends YouTube channel.

Griffiths went on to highlight the biggest Friends project over the last two years, the installation of a state-of-the-art media wall in the Visitor Information Center. This project was spearheaded by board member Mike Becktel, who wrote a grant to the National Wildlife Refuge Association for half of the funds and ran the Go Fund Me campaign to raise the other half (list of donors shown below). Mike also served as the point person for gathering quotes from local audio/visual companies for the wall components, and for the eventual installation of the wall in the VIC by Total Video Products. We are extremely excited to use the wall to highlight the osprey camera, trail camera videos and other videos of interest to refuge visitors.



We also touched upon an ongoing initiative that started with the roundtable discussion, *Becoming a Place for All: Improving Diversity and Inclusion for Visitors at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge* on May 25, 2021. The

refuge and the Friends will continue to address creating a welcoming environment at the refuge for all people in our surrounding community in the coming years.

The meeting continued with recognition of two outgoing Board Members, Mike Becktel and Mary Ann Branciforti, and the introduction of three new board members, Lisa Dedrick, Susan Ricciardi and Sabrina Simpkins (see related articles in this issue). The meeting concluded with a presentation by Senior Refuge Biologist, Joe Smith entitled *The Baymen's Calendar: How Understanding Historical Use of Coastal Resources Can Help Guide Modern Conservation Strategies*. Joe highlighted how these circular calendars, made by early users of the lands that make up and surround the refuge, help inform people today of best practices for understanding and preserving coastal resources. Thank you to all who attended and we look forward to holding next year's meeting in person. Stay safe and enjoy the summer!

Contributors to the Visitor Information Center Media Wall Project:

\$0-\$49

Meryl Baer
 Robert Beaton
 Deborah Burger
 Kenneth Copenhaver
 Robert Dukes
 Sharon Furlong
 Christina Garafolo
 Lorena Johnson
 Yong Kong
 Kimberly Lambert
 Susan Lee
 Cheryl Lees
 Virginia Lyon
 Betsy Mortensen
 Jean S. Nelson
 Lynn Padwee
 Robert Reo
 Peter Scardilli

Brandi Scardilli
 Christine Smith
 Michael Stanton
 2 Anonymous

\$100-\$499

Christopher Allieri
 Diane Allison
 Richard Basner
 Michael Becktel
 Raymond Classen
 Christine Dewahge
 Bill Gordon
 Laurel Gould
 Rae Griffiths
 Charles and Jean Lawless
 Georgene Lockwood
 Kate Mechanic

Jeanne Scardilli
Alison Senter
Harry Wahl
Elizabeth Winkler
2 Anonymous

\$50-\$99

Debra Aniano
Douglas Arrants
Eileen Bennett
Marc Chelemer
Karen Christiana
Mike and Jean DiGiore
Suzanne Marx
Andy Opperman
David Reilly
Jacqueline Sarner

Christina Merton
Debra Pavignano
Matthew Ratcliffe
Stephanie Sanchez
Neil Schmerling
Jacquelynne Tarves
Tony Della Vecchia
6 Anonymous

\$500+

Chuck and Martha Becker
Den Dimarco
The Klem Family Foundation

THE NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

By Patti Cassidy

The hardworking gardeners at Forsythe's native garden are taking a break for the summer due to the arrival of the dreaded green heads. While the coreopsis, prickly pear cactus and baptisia (blue false indigo) put on a stellar show this spring, other species such as the lupines and columbine had an off year. We spent quite a bit of time removing invasive plants to allow the goldenrod, milkweed and other late summer/fall plants a chance to thrive. Autumn should be beautiful in the garden, and we are always looking for new volunteers to help us. You don't need to be a gardening expert; we can show you what needs to be done. We meet Thursday mornings from 10:00 -12:00, April through June, and September through November. If you enjoy warm autumn



breezes, migrating songbirds, and helping out the Refuge, join us!

A WALK IN THE WOODS WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

By Mar-Jo Atack

On Saturday, May 22, the Environmental Education Committee of Friends of Forsythe had the joy of showing a group of 12 special needs adults some nature at Forsythe.

They went for a walk on Akers Woodland Trail. We showed them white oak, black oak, sassafras, holly, pitch pine and we identified poison ivy. We even looked for Fowler's Toads but couldn't find any that day. We did see where the Diamondback Terrapins come up out of the water to lay their eggs.

After the woods trail, they all went over to the boardwalk. Les Murray had some hands-on props. He had a replica duck egg, goose egg and an eagle's egg. Also, a duck's foot and a duck's head without the feathers so they could see the bill and the "teeth". In addition, everyone got to see the Osprey's nest thru the telescope. The visitors watched the fiddler crabs running around in the mud. We even tried to guess the different bird tracks in the mud. They also enjoyed watching the barn swallows flying around eating insects.

As they got back on their bus to go home, each person was given a coloring book I had made of the things we saw that day and Les had pencils and a little notebook for everyone. Everyone had a wonderful visiting and learning about nature at Forsythe.

FRIENDS OF FORSYTHE LEAD DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PANEL

On May 25th, the Friends of Forsythe and the E.B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge hosted a panel entitled: ***Becoming A Place for All: Improving Diversity and Inclusion at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR.*** President Rae Griffiths joined Refuge Manager Virginia Rettig and invited panelists that included members of the public and staff from Mid-Atlantic Audubon and the Holly City Family Success Center.

The conversation was held on zoom and the public was invited. The purpose of the panel was to begin the conversation about what the refuge needs to do to ensure all people feel welcome. The conversation was kicked off with a pre-recorded conversation among refuge managers from a variety of refuges. Links are found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0Hzhqt2XU> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tS_Y170Rsaz8.



PADDLE FOR THE EDGE: BARNEGAT BAY PARTNERSHIP

In support of the NJ Bay Islands Initiative (NJBII) to collect information about the hundreds of wetland islands scattered throughout New Jersey's coastal watersheds, Murray Rosenberg is

seeking kayakers, canoeists, paddleboarders, and other small boat operators to participate in a "Paddle for the Edge" (P4E) monitoring event focused on Absecon Bay islands during the month of July 2021.



Like all coastal wetlands in New Jersey, marsh islands are threatened by the impacts climate change (e.g., increased storm intensity and frequency, sea level rise) and anthropogenic disturbances (e.g., nutrient pollution, shoreline hardening). Marsh islands also provide many benefits, such as nesting habitat for water birds, storm surge and wave protection for developed coastal communities, and maintenance of water quality.

Paddle for the Edge is a monitoring and stewardship program developed by the Barnegat Bay Partnership, an EPA-funded National Estuary Program, in which citizen scientists collect information about the edges of wetlands, including marsh islands, to help monitor and assess the condition of these islands and to identify and prioritize potential wetland restoration projects.

The monitoring activity involves the use of a geographic information system (GIS)-linked cell phone app, which collects photographs and marsh edge survey information every 100 feet along 2,000-3,000 feet of a marsh shoreline.

Training for the use of the app and collecting survey information will be provided virtually; training notifications will be provided following registration for the event. The monitoring activity typically takes 4-6 hours to complete, including getting to/from a shoreline launch site. The following link- <https://www.barnegatbaypartnership.org/protect/restoring->

barnegat-bay/volunteer/paddle-for-the-edge/ provides more information about the program but note that there are a few minor changes for the program in Absecon Bay.

This Absecon Bay monitoring event is being organized by Murray Rosenberg in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Rutgers Environmental Stewards (RES) program. Since 2005, the RES program has trained volunteers in important environmental issues affecting New Jersey so they can help solve environmental problems in their communities. The RES program is funded by the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station; more about the program can be found at <https://envirostewards.rutgers.edu/>.

Please **register** for the P4E event directly via the Absecon Bay link - [Paddle for the Edge Absecon](#) If you have any questions, please contact the P4E host at P4EAbsecon@gmail.com. After registration, a follow-up email will be sent to you with more information related to both the Absecon P4E program and training. Feel free to forward this email to others who may be interested in participating in P4E in Absecon Bay. Thank you!

SUMMER REBIRTH AT FORSYTHE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

By Susan Puder

Visiting Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in the late spring and summer can be a trip to have greenhead flies attacking you and your car. But for the birds, it is a time of mating and raising young. It starts when male Ospreys arrive in late March to fix up their nests by repairing damage from winter storms and getting some new curtains to jazz up the place. The females arrive in early April and as they usually mate for life, the getting reacquainted time doesn't take long. Their success at partnership is probably helped by

spending the winters apart, which might not be such a bad idea. But I digress off topic.

Following around the same time are Piping Plovers, with the males arriving first at Holgate and Little Beach; however, they have no nest fixing to perform as their homes are just scrapes in the sand with a shell or two for decoration. Other beach nesters, such as Oystercatchers, Black Skimmers, and terns are also arriving in late spring. And let's not forget the Bald Eagles who have been raising young for several years at the Refuge.

Springtime is a time when love is in the air, whether it be Black Skimmers, Least Terns, or Great Egrets.



American Oystercatchers are making nests and eagle young have already hatched.

Purple Martins, Tree Swallows, and Bluebirds are in their houses and preparing for a new family.



Barn Swallows are making nests under the Leed's Eco Trail and boardwalk, and Marsh Wrens are making several nests nearby, while Clapper rails are in the marsh grasses, being heard but rarely seen. Of course, Canada Geese and Mallards are able to swim soon after hatching and are found in the impoundments. It is a time of rebirth at the Refuge.

But there are also dangers lurking, with snakes, raccoons, foxes, gulls, raptors, and weather all conspiring to take advantage of eggs and young who cannot fly yet. Life is not easy for wildlife, especially with climate change bringing heavier rains and winds, timing differences for food supplies, and reconfiguring sandy beaches. It takes experience and perseverance to raise young in today's changing world. But these animals are up to the task.

Though success doesn't come easy, in summer the Refuge is alive with new life.

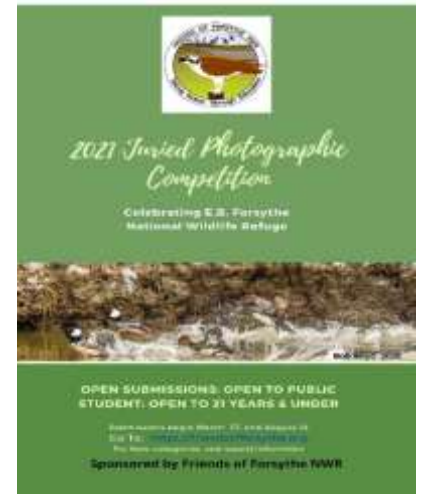


Clapper Rails, American Oystercatchers,
Mallards, Osprey, Bald Eagles

So come to Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge during July and August to see a new generation of avian visitors who make Forsythe their summer home.

2021 JURIED PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The days are dwindling down to August 14th, which is the last date to enter the 2021 Juried Photographic Competition, sponsored by Friends of Forsythe. The Prospectus is up to date, so we recommend everyone check it out along with the submission information on our website, Friendsofforsythe.org.



Due to the Coronavirus, there will **NOT** be an exhibition of finalist photographs or reception at the Visitor Information Center again this year. Instead, award winners and honorable mention photographs will be displayed on the Friends of Forsythe website and their Facebook page on August 28, 2021. The cash 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 have been many great photos taken of the wonderful wildlife, insects, reptiles, scenics, flowers, sunrises, sunsets, and birds that can be found at the Refuge. So, we hope that you will get those photos submitted before the deadline of midnight August 14, 2021.

interest and resume/qualifications to our email: friendsofforsythe@gmail.com.

KEENA'S FAREWELL PARTY

by Virginia Rettig



We recently said farewell to Visitor Services Manager Keena Graham, who was with the refuge for 4 years. She has returned to the National Park Service and is the first Superintendent of the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument. See this site for more information about this important history: <https://www.nps.gov/places/mississippi-medgar-and-myrlie-evers-home-national-monument.htm>. We miss Keena but are so happy with what she accomplished for the refuge.

PART-TIME POSITION AVAILABLE FOR FRIENDS OF FORSYTHE

The Friends of Forsythe are looking for a part-time accountant to help out with our quarterly tax filings. These are: WR30, NJ927, Federal Forms 940 and 941, plus employee W-2s and W-3s. We currently do these ourselves and happily have not gotten into any trouble, but we would feel more confident with professional (retired or still working) help. We are hoping for a qualified volunteer from among our friends and members, however, we are able to pay a fair amount for these services. Please send your



WILDLIFE LIKES US AT

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofForsytheNWR/>

Cover Photo:

SUMMER AT FORSYTHE

By Susan Puder
