



Celebrating Diversity in Nature: Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge Joins Black Birders Week

By Jorge Azcona



On June 6th, Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge proudly participated in Black Birders Week for the first time, marking a significant milestone in fostering diversity and inclusion in outdoor recreation and conservation efforts. An annual event dedicated to celebrating and highlighting Black naturalists, birders, and outdoor enthusiasts, Black Birders Week aims to promote diversity and inclusion in outdoor spaces, particularly in fields where Black individuals have historically been underrepresented.

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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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Partnering with the City of Atlantic City, alongside the offices of Senior Services, Youth services, and Multicultural Affairs, as well as Friends of



Forsythe and volunteers from Stockton University, the refuge hosted a vibrant array of activities. Participants embarked on bus tours along the refuge's scenic 8-mile wildlife drive, guided walks through the refuge's trails, and engaged in crafts and learning sessions that

highlighted the refuge's crucial conservation initiatives.

Participation in Black Birders Week serves as a beacon of unity and opportunity for all individuals to connect with the natural world. As the refuge continues to expand its outreach efforts, it remains committed to creating meaningful experiences that celebrate biodiversity and inspire conservation efforts. By fostering a welcoming environment for all, Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge sets a powerful example for parks and refuges nationwide.



Save Stockton Joins Garden Renovation

By Patti Cassidy

On a beautiful October day several members of the Save Stockton Group joined us in the Refuge



native garden to remove unwanted weeds and invasives, and to plant a few hundred native seedlings. The students



worked hard digging out large clumps of invasive grasses, one of the most challenging tasks for the regular garden volunteers. Then came the fun part, planting spring and summer blooming perennials! The seedlings included *Monarda fistulosa* (Bee Balm), *Agastache foeniculum* (Anise hyssop) and *Phlox paniculata* (Garden Phlox). The group had fun identifying the insects and invertebrates they came across while working.



The highlight of the afternoon was when one of the students dug up a turtle nest. I have been volunteering in the Refuge Garden for over 15 years, and to my knowledge this has never happened before. We see several different turtle species laying eggs in the garden in the spring, and we try to mark where the nests are. Many of the nests are raided by foxes and raccoons. These baby turtles had hatched but were remaining in the nest until the time was right for them to emerge. We believe they were diamondback terrapins. I checked each one to make sure they were okay before putting them back in the nest and we marked the nest to prevent any further disturbances. You never know what you might come across in the garden! It's always a learning experience.

We are very grateful for the help that Save Stockton provided. We hope to work with them again on future garden and Refuge projects.





New Osprey Sign



The Friends of Forsythe provided the funds for the new osprey sign on the boardwalk at Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. The sign replaces the old one that had stood for years and was barely readable due to the harsh weather over time. This new sign compliments our new osprey platform and cam that went into operation last year. Check out the osprey cam at: [Osprey Cam – Friends of Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge](#)



Friends of Forsythe Announces Operations Manager Hire

The Friends of Forsythe is happy to announce the hire of Maureen Caporaso as our new Operations Manager. Maureen Hickman Caporaso grew up in South Jersey and has great memories of playing barefoot outside with the neighborhood kids until the streetlights came on. A lover of the outdoors, the beach and gardening, she is very happy to join the Friends of Forsythe team, and to get the word out about Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge. Maureen has worked in several fields, including Travel, Relocation and Sales. Most recently, she worked for the US House



of Representatives as a Veteran/Military Liaison and Constituent Advocate. A Gold Star daughter, she is active with the POW-MIA cause, and traveled to Vietnam last year.

Maureen has traveled extensively and seen some beautiful places. But nothing compares to the beauty she sees here in South Jersey, the wetlands, the sunrises, the native plants and the birds. Maureen welcomes the opportunity to reach out and engage with the community and beyond, to encourage membership while respecting the mission of the refuge and hopes to meet all of you soon.



Vinny Turner, Wildlife Biologist, Retires

By Virginia Rettig, Refuge Manager

After 34 years of dedicated service to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Biologist Vinny Turner retired in May. Vinny spent every year of his career at Forsythe Refuge. He spent a lot of time working on protecting piping plovers on the refuge and managing the Wildlife Drive impoundment system so water levels met the needs of different migratory birds throughout the year.



Vinny also loved tackling invasive species and he was especially adept and recruiting summer seasonal employees and was a mentor to hundreds of students during his years. A Grateful Dead/Boston Red Sox-themed party was held for

his send-off, and many reminiscent about his contributions. We wish all the best to Vinny and his wife Maria!



Summer Staff Announcements

Virginia Rettig, Refuge Manager, announced the two new summer visitor support members, Zach Lorenz and Jenny Bui.

Hi! I'm **Jenny Bui** and I am from South Philadelphia. I am a double major in Psychology and Sociology with a minor in Human Development, studying at Connecticut College in New London, CT! I aspire to be a mental health counselor for marginalized, underrepresented, and low-income youth with little to no access to mental health services and care. I have worked at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum (in Philadelphia) for several years and I hope to learn more about the positive impacts and benefits that wildlife refuges have on its local communities and its visitors. I adore the community at E.B. Forsythe and the kind folks that I have had the pleasure of meeting and am so excited to be working at E.B. Forsythe this summer!



Jenny and Zach talk to the public at Holgate Beach.

Zach Lorenz, Holgate Team: Visitor Services Support Member

I recently graduated from Stockton University this past month, with a degree in Hospitality (Tourism), and a minor in Environmental Studies. I am from Freehold, New Jersey, about an hour north up in Monmouth County. Some professional interests of mine include hiking, identifying trees, fishing (saltwater &

freshwater), and birdwatching! I spend most of my free time outdoors. I am passionate about engaging the public in the appreciation of New Jersey's vast mosaic of landscapes.

For this summer, I would love to learn all about:

- how we manage our coastal resources,
- how to better balance tourism and conservation,
- how T&E species is managed, and
- how agencies within the Federal Government (DOI) function.

I look forward to a great summer and am happy to be here!



Friends of Forsythe Donation to Refuge for Piping Plovers

The Friends of Forsythe made a \$700 donation to the Refuge going towards the monitoring of Piping Plovers at the Holgate and Little Island areas. These funds came from the sale of the Friends Piping Plover Adoption Kits this past year.



The following are some excerpts from a report from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the abundance of Piping Plovers in the NY-NJ area for 2023.

From the **ABUNDANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY ESTIMATES – 2023 UPDATE ATLANTIC COAST PIPING PLOVER POPULATION**

Abundance in the New York-New Jersey recovery unit experienced a net increase of 98 percent between 1989 and 2023. However, this population declined sharply from a peak of 586

pairs in 2007 to 378 pairs in 2014, before rebounding to 631 pairs in 2023. The New Jersey piping plover population has fluctuated at low numbers (1989–2021 range = 92 to 144 pairs). In 2023, 74 percent of the New Jersey nesting pairs was concentrated on the Sandy Hook Unit of the Gateway National Recreation Area and the **Holgate Unit of Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge**, which comprise less than 8 percent of the State’s sandy ocean beaches. Low productivity of New Jersey piping plovers in 2021–2023 exacerbates concerns about the declining status of the adjacent Southern recovery unit.

Periodic declines and lack of population growth following some years with productivity well-above the rate estimated necessary to maintain a stationary population in the New York-New Jersey recovery unit and response to habitat-creating events suggest that habitat availability may be a strong factor affecting New York-New Jersey piping plover breeding abundance. Active habitat management to conserve the carrying capacity of breeding habitat in the New York-New Jersey recovery unit may be necessary for its piping plover population to sustain its abundance goal and thereby assure its long-term resiliency.



There are several Adoptions kits still available for sale at the Nature Store in the Visitor Information Center in Oceanville. The proceeds of these sales will go towards the monitoring of the plovers next year. So, you still have time to adopt a Piping Plover to help support the Refuge again in 2025.



Our monthly FRIENDS MEETINGS are The SECOND MONDAY of each month starting at 5 p.m.

at the

EDWIN B. FORSYTHE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Administrative Building
800 Great Creek Road
Oceanville, NJ 08231

Public is invited to attend



Wildlife Likes us at

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