



Monthly Newsletter



Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

The New Jersey School of Conservation needs your help.

Earlier this week, Governor Murphy presented his state budget proposal. This marks the first step in a process that will decide how much state investment the New Jersey School of Conservation will receive next year.

Our continued work depends on elected officials in Trenton prioritizing NJSOC in the state budget to protect the future of conservation education in New Jersey.

There is no better place for children to connect with the outdoors and gain an appreciation for the need to care for the environment than our campus in the Stokes State Forest in Sussex County, New Jersey. There is no better place for teachers across our state to gain professional training necessary to help implement the state's climate change education mandate.

In order for NJSOC to continue to welcome students and teachers from across New Jersey to our campus, we need to secure full funding from the upcoming state budget.

Since assuming management of this historic institution, we have been careful stewards of the state's investment, quickly expanding our programming, increasing outreach to underserved schools and creating new partnerships with institutions of higher education.

Over the past year, we doubled the number of students that we served — more than half of whom came from low-income schools — even as we made urgently needed repairs to our historic campus. And this spring, the school is fully booked with school groups eager to learn.

We need continued state investments to build on these successes.

We know this is going to be a tough budget year, but NJSOC has long enjoyed bipartisan support from elected officials. Under Governor Murphy's leadership, we expect this year to be no different.

We're asking that you take action now to contact your legislators and ask them to fully fund the New Jersey School of Conservation this budget season by clicking the **button to contact your lawmakers below**.

Our future depends on dedicated members of our community like you using your voice to support NJSOC.

In Friendship,



Contact Your Lawmakers



The NJSOC Remembers Dr. Noel J. Brown during Black History Month

By Kerry Kirk Pflugh, Executive Director, New Jersey School of Conservation

The New Jersey School of Conservation has been fortunate over its 75 plus year history to have hosted many distinguished environmental education professionals and leaders from across the world. With its operating principle of One World, the NJSOC has been involved in programs and initiatives generated by the United Nations Environment Programme.

It was during the period of the 1970s through the 1990s that Dr. John J. Kirk, fifth director of the NJSOC met and became colleagues and friends with an influential global thought leader

and program innovator - Dr. Noel J. Brown.

Dr. Brown is the former Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, North American Regional office. For several decades, Dr. Brown represented the United Nations Environment Programme at a number of the major international conferences and negotiations on environment and development issues and on international law, including the historic Earth Summit in Rio, 1992.

Dr. Kirk worked with Dr. Brown as a member of the North American Committee of The Belgrade Charter and many other international education initiatives. This partnership developed into a friendship and led to an invitation in 1979 for Dr. Brown to be a panelist at the 30th Anniversary celebration of the NJSOC. His presentation entitled, *The Global Dimensions of Environmental Education*, spoke about how consideration of human activity and its impact on the environment was integral to our survival as a species.

“We need new dimensions of thought and learning; we need new approaches to understanding phenomena that will enable us to discern the endearing continuity which links the actions of today with the consequences of tomorrow. This would seem to be the central challenge of environmental education which is now generally agreed to be an integrated process dealing with man's interrelationships with the natural and manmade surroundings, including the relationships of population growth, pollution, resource allocation and depletion, conservation technology and urban and rural planning to the total environment.”

Following the 30th Anniversary celebration, the NJSOC and Dr. Brown continued to collaborate and work on environmental topics through the UNEP. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Dr. Brown conceived of a program to reach another vital audience - organized religion. In keeping with efforts to address the moral dimension of the environmental crisis, Dr. Brown introduced the Environmental Sabbath Programme to the United Nations. This program has been celebrated worldwide by thousands of congregations in connection with World Environment Day. This year World Environment Day falls on June 5.

Two publications resulted from the establishment of the Environmental Sabbath which provided world religious leaders with suggestions and guidance on actions they could take within their religious community to be better stewards of the earth as well as suggestions for celebrations they could hold using their own ceremonies, rituals and prayers.

In his letter to Religious and Spiritual Leaders in the publication *Only One Earth*, Dr. Brown said, “Clearly, this is a vital and auspicious moment for humanity to reassert our compassion, care and respect of the Earth. Thanks to the perspective provided from space, we are now able to conceive the Planet as a whole – and ourselves as a global species, with a shared inheritance and common responsibility.”

Dr. Brown is responsible for raising awareness that caring for the earth is a moral and existential imperative. His message of stewardship over the many decades of work in a variety of capacities and institutions has inspired generations of students and young people to pursue environmental professions and to be more aware and responsible for caring for the earth. The New Jersey School of Conservation is proud to have been a partner of Dr. Brown's and to have worked with him in his effort to educate the public, students and religious organizations on the importance of conservation and environmental stewardship.

Read more about the Environmental Sabbath here:

https://digitallibrary.un.org/nanna/record/147669/files/UNEP%2802%29_055.pdf?withWatermark=0&withMetadata=0

<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/earth-and-faith-book-reflection-action>

To read more about Dr. Brown, please visit:

<https://www.pace.edu/sites/default/files/files/commencement/hdr-2003-dr-noel-j-brown.pdf>



Somers Point 6th Graders Return to NJSOC for an Unforgettable 3-Day, 2-Night Trip

By Michela Sales, Executive Assistant, Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation

Since 1984, NJSOC has had the honor of welcoming the 6th grade students from Jordan Road School in the Somers Point School District. This long-standing tradition fostered an incredible relationship between Somers Point and NJSOC, creating lasting memories and deepening students' connections with the environment. This year's 3-day, 2-night trip was filled with special moments, as the students had the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning experiences that they'll carry with them for years to come.

This year, the students participated in a variety of classes that sparked creativity, promoted problem-solving, and taught them valuable skills. Whether they were navigating through the corral with a map and compass, exploring the world of early settlers, or diving into the art of metalsmithing and conservation photography, the students were fully immersed in their surroundings.

One of the highlights of the trip was the rare opportunity to participate in ice fishing. Due to the mild winters in recent years, Lake Wapalanne has not been able to freeze over sufficiently to offer ice fishing, but this year's cold snap changed that. The students were thrilled to step onto the ice, fishing poles in hand, tip-ups in the water, for a hands-on experience unlike any other. Over two days, the students caught a total of 8 fish—7 largemouth bass and 1 bluegill sunfish. The largest catch was a 19-inch largemouth bass, a memorable moment for everyone involved. As Lake Wapalanne is a catch-and-release lake, the students gently returned their catches to the water, reinforcing the important lessons of conservation and sustainable practices that are a core part of NJSOC's mission.

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Meet NJSOC's Ambassador Animals! All About Elaphe – Our Corn Snake

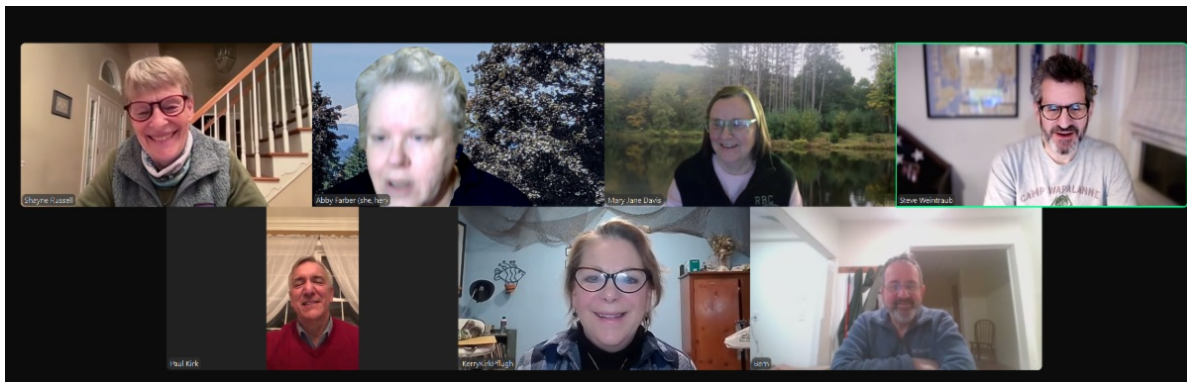
By Amelia Basile, NJSOC Intern, Jefferson Environmental Academy

Meet our next Ambassador Animal, Elaphe, our 25 year old corn snake! Corn snakes are native to southern New Jersey and can live up to 6-8 years old in the wild. In captivity, corn snakes can live up to 23 years old, therefore making Elaphe a senior snake. She got her name from the species scientific name, *Elaphe guttata guttata*.

Corn snakes can be identified by their pattern and varying colors. The species primary body color can vary from orange, brown or gray while their spots can be red, orange and/or brown. These spots are unique to each corn snake and some may even resemble stripe-like patterns. All corn snakes have an arrow shaped marking at the top of their head which opens outwards to the first spot on the body. The underside of a corn snake has a mismatched black and white checkered pattern that resembles a corn on the cob (that is where they get their common name!). Their sizes vary, but adults can grow up to 6 feet long. Their appearance can change slightly when they shed their skin, which happens multiple times throughout the year. Their skin may not appear as vibrant and have a cloudy look around their eyes. During this week-long process, the species can be seen using rough surfaces, like tree bark or jagged rocks, to help them shed.

In New Jersey, corn snakes can be found in the southern region of the state, primarily in the Pine Barrens. Their habitat in NJ ranges across Ocean, Atlantic, southeastern Burlington, and northeastern Cumberland Counties. They thrive in dense, mature pine-oak forests with sandy or loamy soil. They tend to stay near a body of water and spend time in rotten logs or stump holes. These coverings can be used for nesting eggs, hibernating, or for predator protection.

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Camp Wapalanne Memories

Last month, Executive Director Kerry Kirk Pflugh spoke about the fact that Camp Wapalanne, an integral program of the NJSOC for 35 years, was established 75 years ago this summer. As Kerry mentioned, each month we will highlight a memory or story about Camp Wapalanne as part of our celebration and commemoration of this significant camp program that was ahead of its time in program content, philosophy and professionalism.

This month, we talked with several NJSOC Trustees and staff members who were campers and/or counselors at Camp Wapalanne during the 60's, 70's, and 80's who recount their time there and how the experience shaped their lives, careers and perspectives on nature, the environment and relationships with people from around the world.

Listen and watch by clicking the link below:

[Watch and Listen Here](#)



Click logo to make a donation. Or click [here!](#)

Our Mission

The mission of the New Jersey School of Conservation is to foster environmental knowledge and action through education programs delivered in a natural setting. We are a community of diverse, responsible stewards of the earth who promote sustainability practices, climate change mitigation and environmental justice.

[Visit Our Website](#)

Friends of NJ SOC | One Wapalanne Road | Branchville, NJ 07826 US

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