



May Newsletter



Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

As summer approaches, Stokes State Forest is in full bloom. We're inspired by our verdant surroundings, with the beautiful flowers blossoming to the wildlife that has emerged from hibernation and can be seen as we walk around campus.

And while the school year is coming to a close, we're now turning our attention to an eventful summer.

Take a moment to check out opportunities to enroll in Stokes Summer Music Camp, read about our facilities manager Bern Weintraub, hear from Camp Wapalanne alum and gardening guru Barbara Rosenberg, and admire gorgeous pictures of wildflowers and wildlife that make their home in the Stokes State forest.

Most important, make sure that you follow the link below to contact your legislators and communicate your support for keeping NJSOC open and thriving in the years to come.

Budget negotiations are underway and your legislators need to hear from you about the need for inclusive conservation education for New Jersey's children.

We've gotten great news in recent days. Three of our most committed legislative champions, Sens. Bob Smith and John McKeon and Assemblywoman Alixon Collazos-Gill, have submitted resolutions requesting that our funding be restored in the final state budget.

This is an important step in our fight for funding. Now, we need to help our legislative champions by reaching out to their colleagues and explaining NJSOC's importance for students and communities in every area of our state.

Only with continued investment from the state will we be able to keep serving students from every corner of New Jersey.

In Friendship,

Sally Strick Pflugh

[Contact Your Lawmakers](#)



Stokes Summer Music Camp is Coming Back

We are excited that registration for Stokes Music Camp is open for Summer 2025! Once again held at NJSOC, this camp provides an inspiring and immersive environment for young musicians to hone their craft and connect with fellow music enthusiasts.

Whether your child is a budding musician or a seasoned performer, Stokes Music Camp offers a range of programs for students ages 10-17. From classical to contemporary styles, campers will receive expert instruction, participate in group rehearsals, and enjoy performances that showcase their talents. The camp's scenic outdoor setting also allows for unique team-building activities and outdoor fun, providing a well-rounded experience.

Spaces are limited, so don't miss out on this incredible opportunity for your child to make lasting memories while developing their musical skills.

We can't wait to see you at Stokes Music Camp this summer!



Camp Walanne Memories: Celebrating Camp Wapalanne Alumna, Master Gardener and Educator Barbara Rosenberg

Barbara Rosenberg's love for science and conservation goes back to her youth, and was nourished in the Camp Wapalanne woods. As a curious 12-year-old with a deep appreciation for nature, Barbara found a perfect place to be during summers at the New Jersey School of Conservation in the Stokes State Forest.

"Camp Wapalanne was heaven-sent," Barbara recalls. "As a kid I was always exploring the outdoors and asking questions." She spent nearly every summer from ages 12 to 18 at camp, learning how to survey land, create forest paths, and explore the science of ecosystems. A favorite activity was "sloppy slurching"—wading through streams and turning over rocks to find crayfish and other creatures.

One memory stands out clearly: a night camping outside interrupted by a sudden thunderstorm. "We were walking back to the cabins through ankle-deep water with thunder cracking overhead. I was terrified and awestruck."

Barbara's love of science inspired her educational and career pursuits. She earned a science degree from Penn State, later working as an engineer for Johnson & Johnson and U.S. Steel. She eventually returned to her roots in environmental education, serving for the past 35 years as a Penn State Master Gardener. In her Western Pennsylvania garden, she raises Monarch butterflies each summer and leads lectures on replacing lawns with native plants.

Now nearing 80, Barbara continues to inspire others through her work as a volunteer Conservation Ambassador at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in Palm Springs, California. She's also exploring Conservation Psychology, a field focused on promoting sustainable behavior through empathy and education.

Barbara reconnected with NJSOC several years ago and now leads an annual fall lecture series at the school. Her topics—ranging from butterfly gardening to native plant advocacy—reflect her lifelong passion, from her days as a Camp Wapalanne camper to the lecturing she does now.

"What Camp Wapalanne has done for my life is instill the love, respect and intellectual curiosity for the conservation of nature," Barbara says.

This love, respect and curiosity forms Barbara's approach to her retirement years. "For me the first and best plan for dealing with retirement as well as whatever life throws at you is to stay active both physically and mentally, and being intellectually curious and passionate about whatever one finds interesting, and for me that is the conservation of nature. Thank you, Camp Wapalanne."





Recognizing Facilities Manager Bernard Weintraub

The New Jersey School of Conservation is successful thanks to a dedicated team of professionals and volunteers committed to delivering an accessible campus for conservation programming for our visitors. This month, we recognize Bern Weintraub, Facilities Director at the New Jersey School of Conservation (NJSOC), whose lifelong connection to the school continues to shape its future.

Bern's journey with the NJSOC began several decades ago, when he first came to Camp Wapalanne as a seven-year-old kid following in his sister's footsteps. Those formative Julys—filled with archery, swimming, and science-focused nature classes—set Bern on a lifelong path as steward of the natural environment. That early inspiration led to environmental activism, environmental education, a career as an environmental attorney and, later, as a licensed building contractor. Today, all of those skill sets are put to use every day at the school.

As Facilities Director, Bern oversees everything from maintenance and janitorial services to landscaping and capital improvements across the campus's 50+ buildings. Whether coordinating with contractors to renovate ADA-compliant bathhouses or mapping out utility line placements, Bern approaches each decision with an eye toward inclusion, sustainability, and environmental responsibility.

Living on campus during the week, Bern knows the NJSOC well. A typical day begins around 6:45 am, when Bern meets with the facilities crew and checks in on ongoing projects. His hands-on commitment was essential in 2020 and afterward, when the Friends of the NJSOC began to assume leadership of the school. Bern joined the effort to preserve the school as soon as he heard of MSU's intent to close the facility, helping to navigate the legal and logistical complexities of reopening. During the transition to Friends leadership, Bern was part of the team organizing ongoing security at the campus and managing inventory of everything from tools to silverware to larger

equipment.

Bern's vision for the school includes creating welcoming, accessible spaces for all visitors. "The environmental movement must be inclusive," Bern says, "and we want everyone to feel that the school is for them." From renovating interior spaces to be light and pleasing, to making campus paths easier to navigate, to updating dining hall menus, Bern believes that every detail matters in shaping a meaningful, inclusive, and welcoming visitor experience.

"Sustainability isn't just about our program offerings," Bern says. "It's about how we operate—how we build, how we welcome visitors, and how we plan for the future."

We are grateful for Bern's tireless work to restore, sustain, and reimagine NJSOC for our returning visitors and the newcomers who will visit us for generations to come.



Looking Back, Moving Forward: Our 2024 Annual Report

By: Michela Sales

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with immense gratitude and pride. The New Jersey School of Conservation has long stood as a beacon of environmental education, stewardship, and community engagement—and 2024 was a year that reminded us just how powerful this mission continues to be.

Our **2024 Annual Report** is more than a summary of numbers and events. It's a celebration of connection—between people and the land, between students and their potential, and between our historic mission and a sustainable future. We invite you to take a few moments to explore the report and relive some of the milestones that made this year unforgettable.

[Read More](#)



After Attending NJSOC Professional Development, Teachers Lead Middle School Students on Memorable February Trip

Middle school science teachers and club faculty leads Heidi Wachtin (West Windsor–Plainsboro Regional School District) and Lisa Montana (Thomas E. Bowe Middle School, Glassboro Public Schools) first met two years ago during a professional development experience at NJSOC. The two stayed in touch, discussing how they might one day bring student environmental stewards together for a field trip to the school. The idea: bring together students who share a passion for the environment to work and learn together at NJSOC.

This past February, their vision came to life during a two-day overnight trip — one made unforgettable by the snowstorm that preceded it, students' first-time snowshoeing adventures, hikes on our frozen lake, animal tracking using telemetry, and evening campfire bonding.

In so doing, they managed to pull off an NJSOC first. Students from two different school districts were at our campus at the same time, learning together and making friends across traditional geographic boundaries.

Heidi's students traveled from Central Jersey, while Lisa's students made the three-hour trip from South Jersey.

"You could see them bonding almost immediately," says Heidi. "One student, upon returning, remembered the names of every new friend she met on the trip."

Another student was so inspired by the nature data collection and interpretation activities that she stayed in touch with one of the NJSOC faculty members she met about the project.

"It was a very special experience for the students to learn alongside their teachers," says Heidi. "The experience changed their view of us as teachers. We became partners in learning, rather than just the ones sharing knowledge."

The students who joined were already motivated environmentalists. Lisa's students were members of her school's Green Team, whose mission is "to help students understand how important it is to be outside and to protect, preserve, and respect what is outside." Heidi's students participated in their school's Pollinator Garden Club that grew out of sixth graders' concerns about the plight of the monarch butterfly. The club built and maintains a waystation for monarchs migrating from North to Central America each year.

For these young environmentalists, the trip was both meaningful and inspiring. “It was thrilling to see these kids be thoroughly entertained by nature,” says Heidi. “Nature is beautiful, and they came away with the understanding that they can adapt to being outdoors, no matter the weather. Most importantly, they realized they’re not alone in wanting to protect the environment and fight climate change.”

On the ride home, the students were emphatic: they loved the experience. Those with another year of middle school were determined to return. Those preparing to graduate lamented that they wouldn’t be able to come back as part of the club.

“It is urgent and necessary to get kids up there,” says Lisa. “I love NJSOC to death. I come up as much as I can. There’s so much to offer — so many professionals working there with a wealth of knowledge.” Many of her students said they wished the trip had lasted one more day. For Lisa, the greatest reward is seeing students learn effortlessly through joy and play. “They don’t even realize they’re learning — because they’re having fun. That’s one of the most rewarding things.”

It was inspiring to have Heidi and Lisa’s students on our campus. We hope they return and encourage even more classmates to join them in the years to come. We’re deeply grateful to the teachers who attend our professional development sessions and continue to find creative, meaningful ways to bring their students back to NJSOC for field trip experiences like this one.



Spring has Sprung at NJSOC

If you haven't been on campus recently, then you have missed the forest's explosion of leaves! Thanks to several days of much needed rainfall, the campus and surrounding forest is alive with many shades of green. It is also filled with the chorus of our returning Spring and Summer fine feathered friends. Enjoy these photos we captured of some of our resident birds, other animals and beautiful plants.



Yellow Warbler



Baltimore Oriole



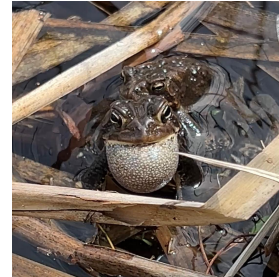
Painted Turtle



Wood Anemone



Red Trillium



American Toad

Our Mission



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

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](#)

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