



September Newsletter



Director's Corner

While we're still feeling the lingering heat of summer evenings, fall is definitely in the air here at the New Jersey School of Conservation, where we're thrilled to welcome students back to our campus.

We had a fun and busy summer hosting Stokes Music Camp from Montclair State University and Camp Sojourners, a girls leadership program from Philadelphia. Both camps are long-time clients with joyous students who brought smiles to our campus throughout the summer. And the busy pace and joy continues as we transition into the Autumn and another

school year. It's wonderful to see our school students returning ready to learn about the environment, conservation and their place in the natural world.

We're excited to be fully booked going into the fall. This is a testament to the demand for our type of educational experience — and to the hard work of our education team, led by Tanya Sulikowski, who have been actively engaging with teachers and principals in every corner of New Jersey to introduce them to NJSOC.

In addition to our school programs, we're pleased to be launching new conservation service projects with a variety of partners. As our state's premier outdoor education facility, we want to serve as a model for ecological care while also deepening relationships with organizations across the state who share our values and commitment to education.

Learn more below about Eastern Box Turtles and our Ambassador Animal Mo, read about a service visit from students at Ramapo College, and learn about the solar field restoration work we are doing with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to create a habitat for pollinator insects and migratory birds!

In Friendship,

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





Wildlife At Risk: Eastern Box Turtle

By: Ashley Rogers, Former NJSOC Education Intern

Throughout the next few months, we are excited to showcase animals located around the NJSOC to raise awareness about conserving at-risk species and ways you could make a difference.

For our first species, we are proud to feature the Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*). This turtle has a special place in our hearts because our Ambassador Animal, Mo, is a member of the species and was rescued by wildlife rehabilitators after being taken illegally from the wild. He now serves as an educational animal for countless students. To learn more, read our **Meet NJSOC's Ambassador Animal! blog series**.

Box Turtles are a terrestrial reptile that resides in forested areas, typically near water. This species consumes plants and animals, such as amphibians, mushrooms, and berries, takes up to 20 years to mature, and has a life span of 25-100 years. If threatened, they completely conceal themselves in their shell, a defense mechanism unique to Box Turtles.

Unfortunately, these turtles are of special concern in New Jersey from factors like habitat degradation, vehicular collisions, and the pet trade. To help protect them, organize clean-ups, support wildlife corridors, and educate others about Box Turtles. For more information, check out the **National Wildlife Federation** and the **Smithsonian Zoo**.



Ramapo Student Group Spends Service Weekend at NJSOC!

Ramapo College brought 15 students from the Civic Community Engagement Office who stayed over Saturday to Sunday for a fabulous weekend of service. NJSOC Director of Education Tanya Sulikowski led the group through two service projects: clearing Purple Finch Trail and a deep clean of the Ambassador Animal Tanks.

The group also did team-building exercises, hiked to Steam Mill in search of beavers, paddled canoes — and avoided being sprayed by a skunk who was eating a frog! The students also picked over eight pounds of invasive autumn olives that they then turned into syrup that was enjoyed on ice cream, french toast and Italian ice.

Ramapo students are a wonderful group to work with — we look forward to more visits from our friends in the future. This inspiring group gives us hope for the future of conservation!





Solar Field Restoration Project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Since March 2024, NJSOC has been working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore our campus' solar field so that it can one day serve as a habitat for insects and birds.

Along with volunteers from the Rutgers Service Club, Cedar Knolls Office of the state Department of Environmental Protection, and The Frog Hollow Pollinator Garden Crew, NJSOC is working to convert a field of invasive herbaceous plants and turf grasses to native wildflowers and grasses to create a habitat for pollinating insects and migratory birds.

This project, which highlights how we can pair habitat restoration with clean energy, is being funded through a generous grant of nearly \$28,000 from the Fish and Wildlife Service.

We look forward to using the space as both an enhanced wildlife habitat and as an additional

outdoor classroom space to teach about native plants and wildlife benefits.



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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.

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