

September Newsletter

Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

Happy Autumn! We are delighted for the school year to resume and to welcome back student groups to our campus with exciting news to report about the future of the New Jersey School of Conservation.

Last week, in a unanimous vote, the General Assembly passed landmark legislation that permanently opens up a new opportunity to access state Green Acres funds to pay for urgently needed repairs on our campus. The Senate passed the bill unanimously earlier in the summer, and it now goes to Governor Sherrill's desk for her signature.

The state budget contained a similar provision that allows us to apply for these funds this year.

But as you know, caring for our century-old facility is a constant challenge. This legislation opens up a new source of funding to address our capital needs for the long term — giving NJSOC more financial stability and reducing our need for support from the state's general fund.

And it comes as we are preparing to submit our first $3 million proposal for Green Acres funding to the state.

Please join me in thanking the New Jersey Legislature for passing this bill on a unanimous, bipartisan basis.

Thank you so much for all of the work you have done to bring us to this point. Your thousands of calls, tens of thousands of emails and participation in our recent community survey have all helped build the case that NJSOC is a state asset that is worth investing in.

Because of you, the future of the New Jersey School of Conservation is bright.

Sincerely,



Kerry Kirk Pflugh,
Executive Director

Thank You For Completing Our Community Survey



Thank you so much for participating in our community survey and weighing in with your thoughts on forthcoming capital improvement plans!

We successfully submitted our application for $3 million in Green Acres funding to the Department of Environmental Protection. Your input was vital in strengthening our application and ensuring that we submitted an application that was responsive to our community's needs while delivering on critically needed priorities, including making our campus more accessible, fixing our aging electrical infrastructure, and restoring our bathhouses.

We look forward to keeping you updated on our plans in the months ahead as we ensure our campus continues to lead the world with conservation learning, scientific research, and more!

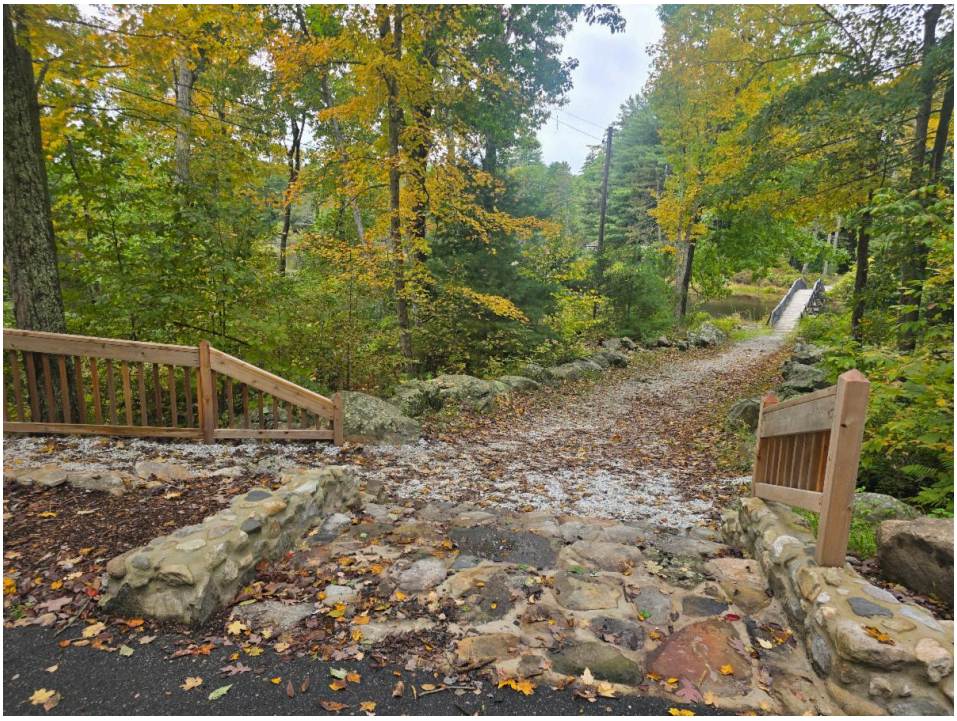
NJSOC Presents at the 1st Annual Soiree Under the Stars



The NJSOC had the wonderful privilege of attending and being a guest presenter at the 1st Annual Soiree Under the Stars, a gala event to raise funds for the state-wide campaign, Nature Accessible for All, (NAFA). Hosted by the Pinelands Alliance, NAFA 's mission is to make outdoor spaces accessible for differently abled people. The NJSOC serves on the steering Committee of the campaign, and works with individuals and organizations in the disabled community to improve trails, create spaces and make outdoor centers more welcoming and accessible for all people.

One element of the campaign was a stipend program, funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that provided funds to several projects across the state which were used to improve trail access, beach access, create sensory trails or provide equipment. The NJSOC received a stipend from the campaign that has allowed us to resurface our interior campus pathways and entrances, making them more accessible to wheelchairs and people with other mobility challenges. We also created a ramp on the Wapalanne side of the lake, making the loop around Lake Wapalanne accessible by wheelchair for the first time in 90 years.

There is much work yet to be done to fully transform our campus so that we are true to our mission of making the NJSOC welcoming to all people. With the help of our new Accessibility Ambassador, Amelia Basile and by continuing our participation in NAFA, we are committed to making this happen.





NJSOC Hosts the Sussex County Superintendent's Round Table



Earlier this month, we hosted the Sussex County Superintendent's Round Table for their monthly meeting.

As part of this gathering, summer intern and Newton High School Senior Ethan Haiduc-Dale was able to present on his capstone project.

The moment was extra special because Ethan's own superintendent, Dr. Joseph S. Piccirillo, was present — as was Ethan's mom.

Chef Mike and Shawn provided a delicious breakfast for the group, and Director of Education Tanya Sulikowski spoke as well.

After the meeting, the group participated in a short campus tour.

While we serve students from across New Jersey, we're hoping that gatherings like this help deepen connections with the education community right here in Sussex County. We want to be a resource for them as they seek to engage their students in critical topics, including conservation and outdoor learning.

NJSOC Tables at the Sussex Chamber of Commerce Sussex County Day



The NJSOC once again attended the annual Sussex County Day at the Sussex County Fairgrounds hosted by the Sussex County Chamber of Commerce. Despite the chilly rainy weather, Michela and Joe enjoyed visiting with many visitors including educators and students. And more people signed up to receive our monthly newsletter.

Ethan Bids Farewell



By: Ethan Haiduc-Dale, Former NJSOC Education Intern

As the summer of 2026 comes to a close, I have no hesitation in proclaiming that I truly loved my internship with the NJSOC. My days spanned the ultimate spectrum of work, ranging from the intellectual thrill of designing my own avian research project to the backbreaking glory of shoveling endless mounds of soil and gravel alongside the maintenance crew. When I wasn't testing my shoveling skills, I was knee-deep in data entry for numerous projects, regularly feeding the Educational Ambassador Animals, and figuring out how to troubleshoot and install the new bird-identifying Terra Listens unit.

None of these wild days would have been the same without the incredible people around me. Working alongside my fellow intern Chloe was an absolute highlight, especially getting to admire the process of her painting her stunning mural. Additionally, my time with Tanya, Allyson, Aliza and Bern was not only super informative, but genuinely fun. They offered a level of support that made every task feel not only doable, but genuinely engaging.

A major highlight of my time here was turning my passion for birds and the forestry knowledge I gained from field work with Professor Frank Gallagher into my capstone project: the NJSOC Forest Bird Survey. I designed the procedure and created a custom datasheet to compare avian richness across different forest typologies present on the NJSOC Campus. I was able to collect data across several separate days and am already formulating ways to return and build on this research.

I am deeply thankful for everything I've learned during this experience. This role has sharpened my technical abilities in field work, data entry, and data analysis, while strengthening my skills in project design, student instruction, and time management. Beyond the professional growth, this experience offered fantastic support to me during a challenging time in my life.

I'm excited to take these lessons into my next chapter as I continue building on my love and knowledge of our natural world. I will definitely miss the team at NJSOC, but I look forward to using everything I've gained here as I move forward!



Chloe Bids Farewell!



By: Chloe Chen, Former NJSOC Education Intern

This summer 2026, I will be leaving the NJSOC as an intern but coming out as an individual who hopes to utilize environmental conservation and awareness is everyday life. For the past 2 months, I've spent time not only painting but also learning about all the other aspects that make this place so beloved.

Opportunities granted to high school students such as myself are difficult to come by and I cannot begin to express the gratitude I have for being given a chance to explore not only my creative passions but also my scientific ones. This July, I began my capstone project that involved painting the Flat Brook River within the campus and highlighting native NJ species. In illustrating local ecology, my mural demonstrates native plants and endangered animals to teach people about their local ecosystems. Beyond this, it inspires action. Hard science may provide the facts of an environmental issue but art creates an emotional connection that motivates people to protect nature. As someone who finds themselves in both communities (hard science and creative arts), I understand that everyone learns in different ways. For some, art acts as a method of communication that breaks difficult concepts into digestible pieces. While the focus of this mural is to be used as a teaching tool and for education purposes, I find that it also serves as a way for environmental awareness to reach broader audiences.

The NJSOC is a place of firsts. I didn't realize what others meant by the magic the NJSOC held until I experienced it myself. My first campfire, fish, canoeing and other shenanigans were among the first things I was introduced to when I first joined. From working with diverse camps such as Camp Sojourner and Music Camp with children ranging from the ages of 9-17 and transitioning to working with teachers and Master Educators with years of experience under their belts, I truly did not know what they had in store for me. These experiences have forever impacted the way I approach life's challenges and altered my perspectives in the best way possible. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for me whether that be in environmental science, water ecology, or even the creative arts. While this will have definitely been the craziest side quest I've partaken in and will miss dearly, I have no doubt that the skills I've acquired here will lead me to the next milestone in my life. In the wise words of Jessie and probably Tanya, "It feels like a party everyday".



Letter from Stokes Music Camp Program Director Tatyana Kebuladze



Dear Stokes Music Camp Families,

On behalf of the Stokes Music Camp Faculty and staff, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for entrusting your children to us. This past year was truly exceptional since our reopening in 2022. We thoroughly enjoyed working with your children, witnessing their growth not only as musicians but also as individuals.

We are thrilled to see so many campers returning year after year, as it is a true testament to the impact of our program. Your survey responses are invaluable to us as we continuously strive to improve and enhance the camp experience.

We are excited to announce that our next summer session will take place from Sunday, July 11 to Saturday, July 24, 2027. Please mark your calendars!

In the upcoming academic year at Montclair State University, we have some exciting events planned. Stay connected with us on social media for updates.

We will be organizing a few fundraising events to support scholarships and to repair the practice room sheds on Melody Lane that were unavailable for use this year.

Your continued support and dedication to music education mean the world to us. We are committed to providing musical expertise and a nurturing environment to all families, including those who may not have the means to attend our camp.

Thank you for being a part of the Stokes Music Camp community. We look forward to another wonderful summer session and creating lasting memories with your children.

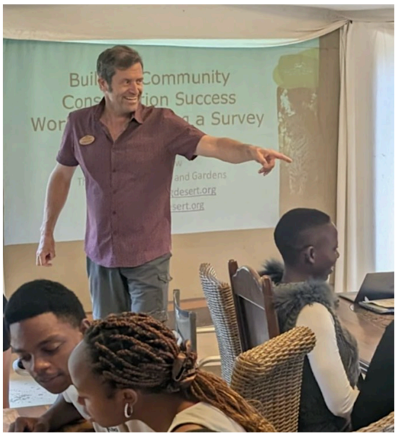
With gratitude,

Tatyana

Tatyana Kebuladze
Program Director
Stokes Music Camp
John J.Cali School of Music
Montclair State University



Upcoming Event: Conservation Psychology & Guided Landscape Walk





How do we move past frustrating arguments over lawn care, native plants and land use to inspire real environmental stewardship in our communities? Join us at the New Jersey School of Conservation on **Saturday, October 3rd**, for a special workshop exploring Conservation Psychology — the science of changing environmental behaviors by meeting people where they are.

Brought to us by conservation advocate Barbara Rosenberg, this hybrid program tackles the real-world challenge of motivating neighbors, local leaders, and communities to embrace sustainable practices.

Program Highlights

- VIrtual International Keynote: World-renowned conservation psychology expert **Dr. James Danoff-Burg** will deliver a live presentation from abroad on the mechanics of behavioral change. Learn why trying to "convince" people often backfires and how finding common ground can unlock lasting stewardship — drawing on global success stories, such as shifting Maasai lion hunting traditions into wildlife protection, to curiosity-driven suburban strategies like the Homegrown National Park movement.

- Guided Landscape Walk: **Dr. Frank Gallagher** of Rutgers University will then lead a hands-on walk across NJSOC's 240-acre campus, translating conservation psychology concepts into physical ecological history across five field stops:

1. *Native American Land Management: Examining historical stewardship practices visible on site.*
2. *Glacial Geology: Physical features left behind by the Wisconsin glaciation.*
3. *Agricultural History: Reading past farming footprints in tree species and pollen records.*
4. *CCC Legacy: Tracing the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps' impact on the landscape.*
5. *Rapid Modern Change: Observing climate shifts, disease impacts, species migration, and a special stop to view wild American chestnut trees recently identified on campus grounds during prep surveys.*

Who Should Attend?

This workshop is open to all — including educators, master gardeners, university students, conservation professionals, and residents looking for practical tools to make a difference in their communities.

Registration is open for both on-site attendance and remote participation.

Click here or follow the button below to register for the event.

Register Here

Public Programs



October 3 @ 10:30 am - 3:00 pm
Connecting People and Place: Conservation Psychology in Action
NJ School of Conservation | 1 Wapalanne Road, Sandyston, United States

Join us to explore how understanding human behavior and connecting landscapes and people can inspire lasting environmental stewardship. This unique hybrid workshop offers participants the opportunity to engage virtually with the New Jersey School of Conservation in Sandyston, NJ and the The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in Palm Desert, CA to explore the challenges—and promise—of community-based conservation through the lens of Conservation Psychology. Local people determine the success of conservation projects, so learning from them on how to best engage them in ways that benefit them will make our nature conservation work more successful.

https://njsoc.org/event/connecting-people-and-place-conservation-psychology-in-action/

October 9 @ 10:30 am - 1:30 pm
Fall Nature Zen Tangle Drawing Workshop and Walk
NJ School of Conservation | 1 Wapalanne Road, Sandyston, United States

Join us as we learn about this meditative drawing method. Zen Tangles are an easy-to-learn, relaxing, and fun artform in which you use structured patterns to create beautiful images. The designs are non-representational and unplanned. There is no up or down to Zen Tangle art. You don't need to know what a tangle is going to look like to draw it. The result is always a delightful surprise! In this workshop, we'll learn the principles of Zen Tangles and practice drawing the basic patterns. We will then go for a walk and draw inspiration from nature to make our own Tangles and designs. Back inside, we will practice our Zen Tangles, share our creations, and enjoy this calming kickoff to the weekend. No artistic skill is necessary! All materials will be provided and you will leave with supplies to continue to practice your art at home.This workshop is for artists age 18 and up; 12 and up are welcome with an adult. Everyone is an artist!

https://njsoc.org/event/fall-nature-zen-tangle-drawing-workshop-and-walk/

October 23 @ 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
The NJSOC Book Club… Fall Session
NJ School of Conservation | 1 Wapalanne Road, Sandyston, United States

Our FREE book club is back with a new title for Fall 2026! Join us as we read together Night Magic: Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens, and Other Marvels of the Dark by Leigh Ann Henion. Participants will read at their own pace, with the opportunity to discuss virtually via the Heylo app. You'll receive weekly discussion points to ponder that will guide our group conversation. We'll meet to discuss the book face-to-face on Friday, October 23rd, at the School of Conservation from 6:00 to 7:30 pm. This will be our first evening book club meeting and will also include a night hike to complement our reading. High School students and up are welcome to join. Participants will provide their own copy of the book. We will officially begin reading on Tuesday, September 8th. Please feel free to register and jump in any time. Participants will receive additional instructions via email (don't forget to monitor the email address you use to register!).

https://njsoc.org/event/the-njsoc-book-club-fall-session/

October 24 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Birding 101
NJ School of Conservation | 1 Wapalanne Road, Sandyston, United States

Get to know your feathered neighbors a little better! Do you wish you could identify birds accurately by memory, but find yourself overwhelmed by the task of learning the details of every species? Or do you always pull up Merlin on hikes to try and identify birds? Congratulations, you're already a birder! Come and join us for our Birding 101 program, designed to help you build the foundation you need to become a better, more confident birder. Bring your binoculars, or borrow a pair from the SOC, and step into the world of birding. The program will begin with about one hour of classroom instruction, during which we will demystify the art of bird identification by learning to group birds by silhouette, understand bird behavior, and develop our "birding senses." Then we will take our newly developed skills into the field to practice while exploring the trails at the School of Conservation. Fall is an amazing time to get out in the woods and make some observations as our feathered friends forage and prepare for winter.

https://njsoc.org/event/birding-101/

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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