

The Green Way

KINGSTON GREENWAYS ASSOCIATION

A NEW JERSEY NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

www.kingstongreenways.org

Winter 2023 No. 38

Our board is dwindling in size, and we are in urgent need of trustees who can bring fresh energy, diverse skill sets, and new perspectives and ideas to KGA. If you are interested, please get in touch with Tari at tari@kingstongreenways.org

COMING EVENTS

EARTH DAY CLEANUPS

Saturday, April 22, 2023

Celebrate Earth Day with us by tidying up our shared roadsides, neighborhoods, and public lands!

Morning session: 9 to 11 AM: Cleanup of Laurel Avenue and the vicinity of Rockingham Historic Site, from just north of the village of Kingston up to Route 518. Meet at the Rockingham parking lot, 84 Laurel Avenue.

Afternoon session: 2 to 4 PM: Trash collection in the Mapleton Preserve, Cook Natural Area, and in areas adjacent to Mapleton Road, Heathcote Road, Ridge Road, Greenwood Avenue, and Railroad Avenue. Parking for the event is along Railroad Avenue off Ridge Road.

Grabbers, gloves, orange vests, and garbage bags will be provided. Wear sturdy boots and clothing.

PAST EVENTS

AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Sunday, December 16th, 2022

The counting area for this year's Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) included Mapleton Preserve and seedbeds, the upper nursery, Heathcote Farm, and the Cook Preserve. Some highlights included a calling red-shouldered hawk, a raptor that has been seen (and heard) multiple times near Basin Street in recent years.

Red-tailed hawks were well represented, with 8 seen on the count day, including an amorous pair sitting close to one another on a tree branch. The "best bird of the day" had

to be a lovely male Northern harrier; a slim grey bird with a long banded tail, who was gliding low over the seedbeds looking for breakfast.

One of “our” eagles was spotted in a tree, not far from the Canal. Both birds have been observed at their nest on Mapleton Road. According to NJDEP, in 2022 this pair fledged two chicks, adding to the total of 335 eaglets raised in New Jersey last year, from 250 active nests. This is a dramatic comeback from the 1970s and 1980s, when, due to widespread use of DDT, the New Jersey eagle population was reduced to a single pair in a remote part of Cumberland County.

There were a lot of flickers (9) and blue jays (22) observed, and more juncos (28) than we saw last year. However, no yellow-rumped warblers were found, for the third year in a row. Cedar waxwings were absent as well, although close to 100 robins were seen eating holly, callery pear, and bittersweet near Ridge Road. A flock of 22 turkeys was also seen.

Many thanks to our counters this year!

Canada Goose	250	Chickadee SP	7
Mallard	CW	Tufted Titmouse	7
Wild Turkey	22	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Great Blue Heron	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	2
Black Vulture	CW	Carolina Wren	2
Turkey Vulture	8	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2
Bald Eagle*	1 (adult)*	Eastern Bluebird	1
Northern Harrier	1 (male)	American Robin	96
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	Northern Mockingbird	2
Red-tailed Hawk	8	European Starling	68
Mourning Dove	12	White-throated Sparrow	35
Great Horned Owl	CW (2)#	Dark-eyed Junco	28
Belted Kingfisher	1	Northern Cardinal	17
Red-bellied Woodpecker	7	House Finch	7
Downy Woodpecker	9	American Goldfinch	14
Hairy Woodpecker	CW	House Sparrow	2
Northern Flicker	9	Gulls	86
Blue Jay	22	Total species	32 + 5 others during CW
American Crow	2	Total birds	643

CW=Count week. These are species found within +/-3 days of the CBC, but not seen on the day of the count

CW 2 Eagles at nest on Mapleton Road

CW 2 Great horned owls near Cook

DOUG TALLAMY ON THE NATURE OF OAKS
Wednesday, October 5, 2022 on ZOOM

Professor Tallamy's webinar, presented to KGA last October, is now available on youtube at: [Doug Tallamy on The Nature of Oaks](#)

Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware Chief among his



research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities.

His book [Bringing Nature Home](#) was published in 2007; [The Living Landscape](#), co-authored with Rick Darke, was published in 2014; [Nature's Best Hope](#), a New York Times Best Seller, was released in February 2020, and [The Nature of Oaks](#) was released by Timber Press in March 2021.

In 2021 he co-founded [Homegrown National Park](#) with Michelle Alfandari.

SUNDAY EVENING WALK IN HEATHCOTE MEADOWS
Sunday, August 21, 2022

Light breezes and a mild temperature favored our group on this leisurely walk through Heathcote Meadows. Late summer grasses, boneset, goldenrod, milkweed, Queen Anne's lace, virginia creeper, New York ironweed, coppery curly dock, horse nettle, mountain mint, tick trefoil, rosy camphor-weed, and fleabane were plentiful, along with less welcome plants like mugwort, Chinese bush clover, and poison ivy.

Bird activity was light, but we were graced with two flyovers by a Great Blue Heron, and scattered bluebirds. All in all, a lovely walk!

And yet, we soon learned that all was not well in the Heathcote Meadows Preserve.

HEATHCOTE MEADOWS PRESERVE

Managed by the Middlesex County Office of Parks and Recreation, the 88-acre

Heathcote Meadows Preserve is one of the earliest parcels the County acquired under its Open Space Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Act.

The Preserve was acquired in 1998; coincidentally in the same year, Kingston Greenways Association was founded with the primary mission of establishing a permanent green belt around the village of Kingston. This greenbelt is now nearly complete, but the responsibility to protect and steward it is perpetual.

Heathcote Meadow Preserve, an important segment of this greenbelt, has been undergoing degradation. Several outparcels, zoned R-1 residential, are within the Preserve. Business activities that are not permitted on the outparcels within it (zoned residential) have been taking place. Heavy and frequent truck traffic has been creating noise and air pollution in what should be the peaceful, uncontaminated park-like environment of the Preserve, and also in the adjacent residential neighborhood, particularly Cleveland Lane.

South Brunswick's Zoning Officer has charged the owners for operating a commercial business in a residential zone, and for improper storage (of large commercial vehicles and trailers). Boundaries of the outparcels are not clearly defined, leading to contentious encounters between owners and users of the Preserve. Owner intrusions into the Preserve further blur the definition of the properties.

KGA remains concerned about impediments to the enjoyment of our preserved lands and will continue to monitor developments in the matter.



Heathcote Meadow Preserve: Outparcels and Access Easements

Base: (Partial) South Brunswick Township Tax Map 28. Annotated 12/18/2022 by Kingston Greenways Association