

Hamilton-Trenton Marsh

(continued from page 4)

January air. "Fall is the fruiting time," Mary admitted, as berries bent boughs over our heads. Charles and Mary remembered a recent full-moon walk. Striding between lake and marsh, they were startled by a Great Horned Owl sailing past to a convenient stump. You never know what gifts the Marsh will bring. ☞

Carolyn Foote Edelmann is a poet, writer, author and devoted naturalist. She expresses her love of nature and zest for life as part of a seven-woman critique and performance troupe. The seven-woman team has been reading for audiences ever since Princeton's Micawber Books requested Valentines Poems in February, 2000. "Hot Poems by Cool Women," their flip defense against expectations of "Roses Are Red," christened the group and won the press. Demand has been such that they have published two volumes of their collected work, the vivid covers painted by Cool Husband, Gary Lott. The Princeton University Store will showcase this year's official reading on Sunday, February 16, at 3pm.

New Jersey Sierra Student Coalition

A Network of New Jersey College and High School Student Environmental Activists

Online at www.ssc.org/nj – or send messages to nj@ssc.org

contributed by Dan Rosen, our SSC liaison. His contact information is below.

The NJSSC is a community of student activists who feel that calling New Jersey the Garden State shouldn't be false advertising. We are naive idealists who refuse to believe that it is somehow "rational" and "practical" to exploit and destroy the world and each other.

An entirely student and youth run organization, the NJSSC Community is challenging assumptions about students and youth as we organize to achieve real progress for our communities and our environment.

From being a district organizer to participating in the planning of the NJSSC's Environmental Justice and lobbying in Washington, there are numerous ways for you to be actively involved in planning and organizing the NJSSC.

DISTRICT ORGANIZERS NEEDED

NJSSC District Organizers work with high school and college students in their district as well as the national campaign coordinators of the Sierra Student

Coalition to lobby the Member of Congress in the district on crucial environmental legislation. (A brochure with the responsibilities of a District Organizer can be downloaded at <http://www.ssc.org/nj/districtorganizers/districtorganizer.pdf>)

A little hard work can make a very big difference. **STEP UP TO ORGANIZE YOUR CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT!** Being a district organizer is a great way to make a difference in protecting the environment while also meeting other student activists locally and around the country. Get more info and apply online at <http://www.ssc.org/nj/districtorganizers>.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

When locating their environmentally hazardous operations, corporations often target places where working class people and people of color live, because it tends to be cheaper and easier to get away with. The situation is so bad here in the "Garden State" that, on average if you live in a low income community, you live next to twice the number of toxic Superfund sites as a person living in a high income community. (Read more about EJ at www.ssc.org/nj/ej/ej.html)

The NJSSC Environmental Justice Organizing Committee is planning a statewide campaign for environmental justice, urban environmentalism, clean energy, and public transit. Plans include organizing in our schools to promote alternatives to cars and install solar panels on our schools, working with community organizations who ask for our support, and lobbying state legislators to fight sprawl while addressing environmental racism and classism. A student EJ summit/activist training is being planned

for this Spring.

For more information, contact Dan Rosen at (201) 670-1980 or danrosen85@hotmail.com.

PUBLIC LANDS ACTION SUMMIT IN DC — MARCH 7th-11th

Less than a year ago, 150 students from 45 states descended on Washington, D.C. They came from high schools and colleges, from cities, suburbs, and small towns. All were united by a common belief: "Wilderness needs no defense, only more defenders." - Edward Abbey

Thanks to our energy and passion, our National Forests and wilderness lands have received added support from lawmakers. We took the fight back home, waging strategic campaigns to get even more cosponsors. We did great work, but now there's a new Congress, and it's time for students to return to Washington.

At Public Lands Action Summit (PLAS) 2003 we will be lobbying members of Congress to protect our National Forests, nine million acres of Utah's Redrock Wilderness, and Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

High school and college activists from around the country will gather at PLAS in Washington, DC from March 7th through 11th. By attending the Summit, you'll gain the knowledge and skills to help win permanent protection for magnificent and threatened lands. You'll learn how to work with media, talk with your elected officials, and plan a long-term campaign to win their support for wild lands protection. When the weekend is over, you'll take these skills home with you.

GET MORE INFORMATION AND APPLY ONLINE @ www.ssc.org - click on "Public Lands Action Summit". ☞

REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION ISSUES:

TEA-21 RENEWAL

by Bob Johnson, our Transportation Issues Coordinator

TEA-21 is the federal Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st century. This is the main source of federal funding for surface transportation. It comes up for reconsideration every six years and the current law expires Sept 30, 2003. For more information about it, see <http://www.istea.org/> We need to pay attention to the debate over the renewal of this bill, because its final form will determine whether the United States will have more alternate trans-

portation or more sprawl-inducing highways. The Sierra Club is going to wage a campaign to get the most environmental-friendly bill possible.

If you would like to get involved in this campaign, the Chapter has created a new list-serve devoted to transportation. To join, send a blank message to: NJ-Sierran-Transportation-subscribe@topica.com Members with questions should feel free to contact me at robert.johnson@comcast.net. ☞

Book Summary

(continued from page 1)

dirt bikes, snowmobiles, and other two-stroke gasoline-powered machines. For one thing, their engines do not contain catalytic converters and other emissions controls. As a result, large amounts of hydrocarbons are created, which then turn into smog. An hour of water skiing can create nearly as much smog as driving a car from Washington D.C. to Florida.

When making decisions about transportation, know that your choices are truly important to the environment. Buying a high mileage, low emissions vehicle is the most obvious step. Today, excellent choices such as the Honda Civic hybrid provide a great combination of high-mileage in an all-around practical and reliable car. But there are other decisions we can make, such as driving less by combining or eliminating trips, or travelling with others. There really are many opportunities to do this if we keep it in mind before we use our car. Although we never previously considered it an option, my wife and I recently began commuting to work together. Not only does this reduce traffic and carbon dioxide emissions, it's enjoyable. Another major transportation decision is to move close to where you work or shop, or to a rapid transit station, so that you can reduce the amount of driving you do.

The second most important consumption choice relates to WHAT WE EAT. Growing and raising food are resource-intensive activities that contribute to water depletion, water pollution, and land use. Once again however, some activities are more harmful than others. Raising cattle, chickens and pigs are the three most environmentally

damaging activities. For example, compared with pasta, red meat is responsible for 20 times the land use (due to cattle grazing), 17 times the water pollution (due to animal wastes), and 5 times the toxic water pollution and water use (due to chemicals used on feed grains and water for irrigation and livestock). Livestock are a very inefficient food source in that only a small fraction of the grain fed to animals is ultimately converted into meat that people consume.

One helpful choice is to reduce household meat consumption. There are many satisfying meat alternatives available in regular grocery stores these days. Also, choosing certified organic fruits, vegetables, and other packaged food items is a good way support organic farming, which reduces the amount of chemicals that wind up in our water supply. This choice also reduces our pesticide intake and exposure. By the way, because pesticides build up in the fatty tissue of the animals, eating meat may expose us to several times more pesticides than consuming fruits or vegetables. Of course, the best organic produce is that which we grow in our own gardens.

The third most important consumption choice relates to the VARIOUS DECISIONS WE MAKE IN OUR HOMES. Whether a house runs on electricity, natural gas, or oil, and whatever fossil fuel is used by the local electric utility, energy used at home pumps significant toxins into the air and contributes to global warming. So reducing energy consumption can directly reduce air pollution. Generally, the larger the house, the larger the fuel bills and the larger the air pollution emissions.

To reduce energy consumption, here

are five easy-to-implement ideas.

a) Replace the incandescent bulbs used most often with compact fluorescent bulbs. Compact fluorescent bulbs generate much less heat, use four-fifths less energy, and last up to 13 times longer than incandescent bulbs. As a result, one such bulb, over its life, will avoid putting one ton of carbon dioxide into the air if powered by a coal fired power plant, and, if powered by oil, will save the burning of a full barrel of oil (42 gallons) and all the attendant emissions. Think of the difference we could make if everyone replaced just one bulb. In addition, the energy saved translates into money saved over the life of the bulb, even accounting for the higher initial cost of the fluorescent bulb. And if you buy a multi-pack at a discount like Costco, the savings are even greater.

b) Use less hot water. Efficient shower heads deliver as little as 1 gallon of water per minute (gpm) and still provide robust water flow. Older, inefficient ones may deliver up to 6 gpm, though the current maximum is 2.5 gpm. Modern front-loading washing machines use far less water than older top-loading ones. Choose warm or cold cycles for more of your washing. Turn down the temperature on your hot-water heater and be aware when the hot water is needlessly running, because it is running up your energy bill as well.

c) Make sure the windows, doors and walls are sufficiently weather-stripped and insulated. This includes making sure windows receive significant summer sun (east- and west-facing) are blocked by window coverings or shade trees, and making sure that south-facing win-

dows are not blocked to maximize heat uptake from the winter sun.

d) When you purchase appliances, consider the entire life cycle cost, instead of just the initial cost. This leads to purchasing much more efficient appliances, especially government labeled Energy Star® models. The refrigerator is typically the biggest energy user in the house, but they have become much more efficient and less polluting over the past decade.

e) Choose a green energy supplier. In many places we can choose an alternative to our local utility. Some power companies provide completely renewable energy, such as wind or solar. It may cost a little more right now, but will provide much needed help to a vitally important industry in its infancy.

Good ideas are wasted unless we take action. What specifically will you do to reduce your automobile travel, to eat in a more sustainable manner, and to improve the efficiency of your home? And don't forget another timeless, but powerful suggestion: plant a tree. By soaking up carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, each tree offsets some of the harmful effects of our daily activities.

Incidentally, based on a study of the energy use and waste created, there is little difference between choosing paper or plastic bags. So choose whichever you prefer, or choose a reusable canvas sack. The key to making a difference is to keep priorities ordered and to focus time and energy on choices that matter most. ☞

Michael Minaides can be contacted at msminaides@hotmail.com