

Palisades

NATURE NOTES



Red Maple Flowers Photo: Evan J. Zupfer

Notes from the Naturalist

Spring is a time of renewal. Plants begin to add new growth; leaves and flowers explode from the old twigs of last year. Animals change their behavior from just survival to preparing for new offspring. Spring is a transition from slow doldrum days to an energetic fast paced life. As the spring progresses, you can see this increase in activity almost daily. At Greenbrook, we even document this transition with a large table posted on the front bulletin board. Its purpose is to track this progress of spring with many wildlife events throughout the Sanctuary. This is an exciting time for the naturalists. We constantly check for these changes in the sanctuary and get excited with every new date that we add to the chart. Members can also be a big help. The sightings that you post on the sightings board, can be added to this table as well, making it a collaborative task that all nature lovers can enjoy.

Winter sightings were, as usual, small this year, but still better than last year. On December 14, G. Weber heard a Great Horned Owl calling from Picture Point. Great Horned Owls usually begin to breed in December, which is a good time to listen for the male's territorial hoots. Paul Coburn had a couple of exciting sightings on December 22. He spotted a Red-tailed Hawk perched on a branch above the feeders, no doubt looking for a chipmunk or squirrel to make a quick meal. His second sighting of the day was the haunting call of a Pileated Woodpecker on "M" trail. Two more Pileated Woodpeckers were heard off of "C" trail on the same day by Kimberly Schims. Another Pileated Woodpecker was calling near the dam on December 29. Also on December 22, a Cooper's Hawk was seen perched above the feeders. Cooper's Hawks are Accipiters or Bird Hawks. They usually

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Notes from the Naturalist CONTINUING

prey on small birds, instead of mammals like the Red-tailed Hawk. These dissimilar hawks have very different niches in the ecosystem, and can usually co-exist without getting in each other's way by hunting different prey. Another Cooper's hawk was seen on January 5, also perched above the feeders. It was patiently waiting to prey upon any unwary passerine that may be feeding below. Unfortunately, the feeders were quiet, so he flew off after a few minutes. This was possibly the same bird as before, because Cooper's Hawks are known to stake out specific bird feeders during the winter. On January 22, a male Wild Turkey was seen feeding underneath the feeders. Interestingly, our Wild Turkeys have a habit of mysteriously disappearing throughout the year and then returning every once and awhile. In the Early spring it is very entertaining to watch them hanging out in the parking lot trying to impress car tires by puffing up their feathers. On the same day, I was fortunate enough to spot a Fox Sparrow feeding in the exposed gravel areas on the entrance road. On January 29, Sandy and I spotted a lone American Tree Sparrow on the office feeders. This is a bird that was a frequent visitor to Greenbrook and my home feeders when I was younger. A handful would show up every year without fail, but today they are uncommon to rare. A Winter Wren, one of the tinniest of wrens, was seen by Ken on "B" trail on January 30. A beautiful Bald Eagle took flight as I approached Picture Point on February 5. Bald eagles are very common along the Palisades again. It is nice to know that our national symbol has been brought back from near extinction in a very short time.

— EVAN J. ZUPFER *Naturalist/Director*

Little Brook Restoration Project Approved

At its February meeting, the Administrative Council approved the naturalists' proposal to construct an enclosure in order to restore an acre of Greenbrook habitat in the Little Brook area adjoining the south end of C Trail between the wood's road and the cliffs. As is the case with other areas in the Sanctuary, deer over browsing in recent decades has all but eliminated plant and shrub undergrowth essential to the flourishing of native flora and migratory birds. Exclusion fencing to prevent over browsing is now a critical tool to restore a healthy forest.

Former Naturalist-Director Sandy Bonardi, who spearheaded the proposal, recommended the Little Brook site because it possesses both dry upland and swampy lowland habitat features in a relatively small area, thereby providing the potential for greater plant diversity if protected from deer browse. The brook runs through the middle of the site and in the past attracted many species of birds, especially during spring migration, before over browsing removed the protective ground cover. Sandy recalls early morning bird walks when members were treated to the sights of thrushes and warblers bathing in and drinking from the stream following night-long northward migration. That, sadly, is no longer the case.

The enclosure area is also the site of the former Wherry Fern Trail, named for famed botanist Edgar Wherry. In the early 1950s, this trail became home to over 40 fern species that were planted under Dr. Wherry's direction and thrived until deer over browsing extirpated most of them.

An important factor in the Council's decision to approve the Little Brook project is the resounding success of the Fair Field restoration behind the Visitor Center that

Little Brook Restoration CONTINUING

Sandy had also proposed a few years ago. As Sandy explains: “One thing I have learned from my restoration of Fair Field is that nature is truly resilient. Once we cleared all the small trees from the long-neglected field and fenced it off from the deer, wildflower species that I had not seen on the site in decades reappeared. Joe-Pye weed, Boneset, several goldenrod species come to mind but there are many more. And because the area is protected from browsing, we were able to plant even more native wildflower species with the result that Fair Field now possesses more insect diversity than any other site in Greenbrook. It is my hope that we will see similar results in the Little Brook enclosure.”

What follows is a list of some of the plant species that either formerly grew on the Little Brook site or are candidates to be planted there once the fencing is erected:

FERNS: Christmas, Clinton’s wood, Ebony spleenwort, Glan-dular wood, Goldie’s wood, Interrupted, Lady, Maidenhair,

Marginal wood, Netted chain, Ostrich, Polypody, Rattlesnake, Royal, Silvery spleenwort, Spinulose wood

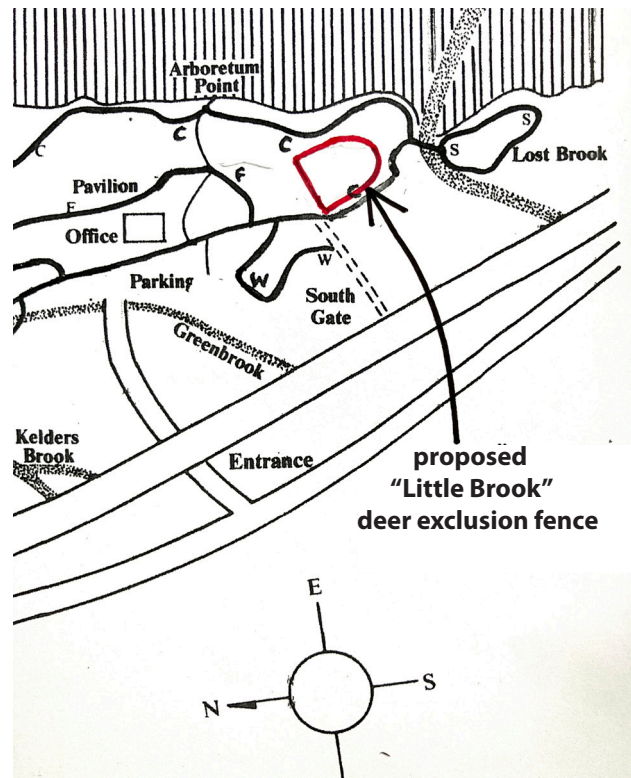
WILDFLOWERS: Bloodroot, Canada mayflower, Cardinal flower, Foamflower, Golden ragwort, Hepatica, Jack-in-the-Pul-pit, Jewelweed, Mayapple, Solomon’s seal, Toothwort, Trout lily, Turtlehead, Wild geranium, Wild ginger, Wild oats

SHRUBS: Bladdernut, Elderberry, Maple-leaved viburnum, Mountain laurel, Pinxter flower (pink azalea), Spicebush, Swamp azalea, Sweet pepperbush, Witch hazel

TREES: American basswood, Black birch, Eastern hemlock, Red and Sugar maples, Northern white cedar

These potential benefits make the Little Brook project one of the most important Greenbrook ventures in the last two decades. It should be noted, too, that the cost of the enclosure fencing has already been covered by a generous gift from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous. May we all be re-warded with a renewed and vibrant terrain!

— CHRIS CONNOLLY *Board President*
Palisades Nature Association



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

My message this season is simply put: Greenbrook needs a new generation of volunteers and volunteer leadership. And we need to start now.

For the past quarter-century, the Sanctuary has benefited from a dedicated group of volunteers who assist the naturalist staff in work projects and serve on the Administrative Council, which oversees Greenbrook's operations and of which I am the current President. These volunteers are beginning to age out and many will be unable to actively serve by the end of this decade. That volunteers are the lifeblood of nonprofit organizations like ours may be a truism, but it is true. The Sanctuary will not be able to function unless more members step up.

Volunteers can assist in a range of physical and clerical activities, including:

- **Light physical**, e.g., leaf/litter clean-ups, perimeter fence inspections, annual bird counts and animal censuses
- **Heavier physical**, e.g., bog/vernal pool cleanups, invasives clearing
- **Clerical Details**, e.g., membership and other mailings such as quarterly renewals, the distribution of new

keys and website content

- **I especially encourage** those members interested in securing the future of the Sanctuary to consider serving as board members on the Administrative Council. The Council meets five times during the year and directs the Sanctuary's finances, programming and major projects (such as the Little Brook restoration described in this Newsletter). Council members also assist at two Visitor Days in Spring and Fall and at the annual Meeting in October.

Greenbrook members with backgrounds in outreach, publicity, marketing and fundraising are welcome on the Council, but all of us on the Council encourage anyone with an interest in the Sanctuary's future to consider joining us. At this time, there is a vacancy on the Council for the position of Secretary, who takes and distributes the minutes of Council meetings. Members with a potential interest in volunteering in any capacity should contact Membership Chair Mike Gallo at greenbrooksanctuary@gmail.com or me at c.connolly7@verizon.net. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have, so please don't be shy. We need you!

— CHRIS CONNOLLY *Board President*
Palisades Nature Association

SPRING 2025 ALMANAC

Programs subject to change. • For more information call 201-784-0484 or email: pnanaturalist@gmail.com

Saturday, March 1 — 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Early Spring Amphibians 1

A chance to see Spotted Salamanders and Wood Frogs emerge from hibernation to breed. Bring flashlights. Light rain does not cancel this program.

Saturday, March 8 — 7:30 – 8:30 PM

Early Spring Amphibians 2

See March 1 for details

Saturday, March 15 — 7:30 – 8:30 PM

Early Spring Amphibians 3

See March 1 for details

Saturday, March 22 — NOON – 2:00 PM

First Weekend of Spring Hike

Saturday, March 29 — 1:00 – 2:00 PM

Hike around the Pond

Saturday, April 5 — 1:00 – 2:30 PM

Hike to Bald Eagle Point .

Sunday, April 6 — NOON – 2:00 PM

Greenbrook Perimeter Hike

Hike the entire perimeter of Greenbrook using the outer trails.

This will be a brisk hike. Participants should be in good condition and wear good hiking shoes/boots. Bring water.

Saturday, April 12 — 10:00 AM – NOON

Greenbrook History Hike with Eric Nelsen

Guided hike highlighting many historical structures in Greenbrook Sanctuary. This hike covers about 3 miles round-trip in about 2 hours on moderate trails. Hike will be held "drizzle or shine." Heavy or steady precipitation or icy trail conditions will cancel. If weather seems questionable on the morning of the hike, hikers can call 201-768-1360 and enter ext. 6108 to confirm.

Saturday, April 12 — 8:30 – 9:30 PM

Full (Pink) Moon Hike

Enjoy the beauty of a spring evening in Greenbrook by the light of a full moon. Bring Flashlights.

Saturday, April 19 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

General Nature Walk

Friday, April 25 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

Early Morning Bird Walk

This is the first in a series of four Friday morning bird walks.

Beginners welcome. Bring binoculars. Rain cancels.

Saturday, April 26 — 1:00 – 2:30 PM

Early Spring Hike to Picture Point.

Sunday, April 27 — NOON – 3:00 PM

Visitors' Day

This open House is an opportunity for non-members to visit the Sanctuary. Call 201-784-0484 or email pnanaturalist@gmail.com for more information.

Friday, May 2 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

Early Morning Bird Walk *See April 25 for details*

Saturday, May 3 — 7:00 – 11:00 AM

Field Trip to Garret Mountain Reservation

8 Mountain Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424

One of the finest places in New Jersey to observe the spring migration of birds. Meet in the Tiered Parking Lot next to Barbour Pond. Beginning birders welcome. <https://seepassaiccounty.org/explore/parks/garret-mountain-reservation/>

Sunday, May 4 — 7:00 – 11:00 AM

Field Trip to Ironwood Drive, Orange County, NY

An opportunity to see some unique and rare spring migrants, such as the Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, and Cerulean Warbler. Beginning birders welcome. Carpool from Greenbrook at 7 AM.

Sunday, May 4 — NOON – 3:00 PM

Rain Date for Visitors' Day

Friday, May 9 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

Early Morning Bird Walk *See April 25 for details*

Saturday, May 10 — 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM (or longer)

Big Day Bird Count (Global Big Day)

Join in to help us find as many bird species as we can in the Sanctuary. Lunch break at Arboretum point. Beginners always welcome.

Friday, May 16 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

Early Morning Bird Walk *See April 25 for details*

Saturday, May 17 — 7:00 – 11:00 AM

Field Trip to Doodletown Road, NY

A great place to see the spring migration, especially Hooded warblers, Cerulean Warblers, and Tennessee Warblers. We will carpool from Greenbrook at 7:00AM

Saturday, May 24 — 7:00 – 9:00 AM

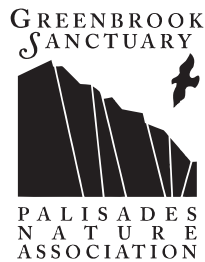
Late Spring Bird Walk

Look for late spring migrants and possible breeding birds in the Sanctuary. Beginning birders welcome.

Saturday, May 31 — 8:00 – 9:00 PM

Sunset Hike

Hike through the Sanctuary during a sunset, when the day changes to night.



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS: 2025 CYCLE 1— Robert Morel, Rob Goldstein, Bob Cunningham, Ann M. Andron, Jeferson Torres, Vincent Dryer, Yaffa & Tanchum Cohen, Sara McDonnell, Daniel Ferolie, Brian Elder, Caroline Hubschman, Peter and Allison Sabatini, Mitch Merberg, Robert Kornhaber, Laura and Daniel Kibala, Kenneth Card, Annitsa Philliou, Susie Hoffman, Lisa Tondo

Members may RSVP to events on our website. <https://www.greenbrooksanctuary.org/>.

Email 2greenbrook@gmail.com or call Membership Director Mike Gallo with online questions: 201.280.0160.

Palisades NATURE NOTES

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Asst. Naturalists: Sandy Bonardi

Kenneth Habermann

Join Us.

THIS FORM IS FOR NEW MEMBERS ONLY.

Yes, I want to become a member of Greenbrook Sanctuary.

- | | | | |
|---|--------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$ 40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship | \$ 250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household | \$ 60 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member | \$ 1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor | \$ 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization | \$ 50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>This is a gift membership given by:</i> | | | |

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please make checks payable to: PNA, PO Box 155, Alpine, NJ 07620, or join on our web site.