



Newsletter

Preserving and Protecting the Historic Princeton Nursery Lands

Mapleton Preserve update: When the property was preserved, the Management and Use Agreement between South Brunswick Township and the State of NJ stipulated that the large warehouses on the property would have to be razed if plans for their preservation and use weren't implemented in 10 years (-Dec., 2015); however, both South Brunswick and the State agreed with the Mapleton Preserve Commission (MPC) and Princeton University that the buildings were essential to the cultural landscape and should be preserved if at all possible. The Township and the State worked together with MPC to develop a Management Agreement with which to facilitate adaptive re-use of the warehouses.

The new Management Agreement, signed in January 2017 allowed MPC to issue, in April 2017, a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) to see if there were any parties (non-profit, for profit or governmental) interested in the use and rehabilitation of the warehouses in a manner that is economically viable, sympathetic to the historical character of the Preserve and its landscape buildings, and compatible with the public use of the Preserve and adjacent park areas. Any such use would need to be done in accordance with recommendations of the Cultural Landscape Report for the Mapleton Preserve, as well as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation/restoration..



LARGE WAREHOUSE COMPLEX from west

One response to the RFEI was received from a winery that proposes to renovate all the warehouses and utilize some of the fields to put in a demonstration vineyard, a state of the art winery and provide food and event space. The proposal, to be phased over several years, is to plant grapes on some of the field areas, provide a wine bar and event space, an organic vegetable farm, an orchard and an apiary. In the years to come, the property would be developed to potentially include farm to table restaurant space, a brewery and a distillery. A program of education and interpretation of the former Princeton Nurseries as well as on wine and viniculture is planned.

Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands believes that this proposal offers a potentially viable chance to preserve the historic buildings on the Princeton Nursery Lands, and we support the decision of the Township and State to accept the Mapleton Preserve Commission's recommendation to proceed to develop and issue a Request For Proposal (RFP) to rehabilitate the warehouses and some of the field areas, and provide the needed infrastructure (utilities etc.) .

If the RFP does not result in a successfully implemented rehabilitation, the Management Agreement requires the demolition of the warehouse buildings, resulting in the loss of these historically significant structures, and

the chance for restoration of the surrounding fields to their historically active agricultural use will be lost. So stay tuned - many steps remain, including local and State level reviews, but we see this as very positive progress.

Some of our 2017 events

First Day Hike: This was a great opportunity for five dozen people of all ages (and seven dogs) to start the New Year off outdoors, with a brisk 1.5 mile loop hike through the Mapleton Preserve, into the fields on the other side of Mapleton Road, along the D&R Canal and back to the Preserve. *Photo by Eileen Beirne.*



Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service: Over forty volunteers attacked intrusive small trees, brush, and vines, and picked up trash in the Preserve on a fair January day. Trails were cleared between some of the old tree rows, and leaves piled up along the fence were amassed for later collection. We extend our hearty thanks to our cutters, rakers, litter collectors, bushwhackers, registrars, photographers, and two people who took on special tasks--the poison ivy ambassador and the hose king!

Arbor Day 2017: Those of you who enjoyed our 2016 Annual Meeting talk on Lichens, by Dr. James Lendemer, lichenologist from the New York Botanical Garden were treated to a second opportunity to learn about these fungus/algae composite organisms. He presented a slide update on types of lichens, and then led us on a somewhat soggy walk to examine the lichens of the Mapleton Preserve. We even found a specimen that was not expected in this area!



National Public Lands Day, in September, saw 17 cheerfully enthusiastic volunteers clearing brush from the front of the propagation house and picking up lots of litter. Our heartfelt gratitude to everybody that helped, with a particular shout-out to those of you who keep coming back, year after year!



Enthusiastic volunteers on National Public Lands Day

Notes from the field - Bluebirds:

Bluebirds like open grassland with a few trees with natural cavities or appropriately located bluebird houses for nesting. If they can find a cavity or box that is not already occupied by a house sparrow or a tree swallow, they lay 4-6 pale blue to white eggs in a nest built by the female, and can have 2 or 3 broods a year. It takes about two weeks for the young to hatch and they will leave the nest about 18-19 days later.

The fields of the former Princeton Nurseries make a good home for these beautiful members of the thrush family, so this year, for our annual meeting, we invited Allan Jackson, president of the NJ Bluebird Society, to speak with us about these New Jersey natives. He talked about bluebird boxes that meet design standards (and ones that don't!), and best management practices with the goal of fostering a healthy and productive bluebird population in our state. He even presented us with a new nestbox! To learn more about bluebird boxes, their placement, care and monitoring, and for information about predators of bluebirds and how to minimize their impact, visit [NJ Bluebird Society](http://www.njbluebirdsociety.org).

Male Eastern Bluebird - photo by Susan Liddle



Bluebirds are usually ground feeders and eat insects such as crickets, grasshoppers and beetles, but will also eat dried berries such as bayberry, fruit from honeysuckle and virginia creeper, juniper and pokeweed in the fall and winter. Many bluebirds are year-round residents in NJ, but if no food is available, bluebirds will fly south.

Based on Allen Jackson's recommendations and working with the D&R Canal State Park, FPNL has developed a plan for a Bluebird walk in the former Princeton Nurseries seed beds (between Mapleton Road and the D&R Canal.) The area along the path will be kept mowed to facilitate ground feeding and nesting boxes will be appropriately located.

Membership Renewal Appeal: *It is amazing how fast the year flies by - it is again time to renew your membership with the Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands for 2018 (or join us for the first time).*

Since we solicit renewals and donations only once a year, we urge you to join or renew your membership in the Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands TODAY. For those who are new to FPNL, our programs are generally free and open to the public. Your donations will be used for speaker and program fees, tree and trail upkeep, as well as the newsletter.

In addition, FPNL is continuing to solicit additional funds for stabilization and rehabilitation of the Propagation House, a project that should be starting soon, once asbestos abatement is completed. Visit our website at www.fpnl.org to join or renew using either PayPal or by downloading a membership form.

Please give as generously as you can.

Still to come

Thursday, November 23. 10-11:30 am - Thanksgiving Day Walk:

Join FPNL President Karen Linder for our annual Thanksgiving morning walk, as we look for natural things to be grateful for and search for signs of what our local wildlife is having for Thanksgiving dinner. This 10 am program will begin at the Main Office for the D&R Canal State Park, 145 Mapleton Road, Kingston. Suitable for all ages. **Open to all, but preregistration IS requested. Call 609-683-0483 to reserve a spot.**



Fall fungus Photo by Karen Linder

Sunday, Dec. 17th, Audubon Christmas Bird Count (BIRDERS TAKE NOTE!)

The Kingston segment of this year's Audubon Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the Kingston Greenways Association, begins at 7:30 AM to catch the "early birds". We will bird until noon, when we take a break for lunch at the Palace of Asia (the new name for the Pind). The group then continues with the count in the afternoon. You can join us for morning, afternoon, or both. If interested, give Karen Linder a call (609-683-0483) for more info. We would particularly appreciate the help of experienced birders for this event, but novices are also welcome. It is a great way to build your skills and get to know the Nursery Lands better.

Monday, January 1, 2018, Noon - 2 pm: First Day Hike:

Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands invites everyone to a First Day Hike in the Mapleton Preserve on Monday, January 1, 2018, at noon. Exercise your New Year's resolution to walk more, or make new friends on this easy 1.5 mile loop hike through the Mapleton Preserve. We know you will want to sleep in a little, so the walk will not start until noon. It will begin and end at the Mapleton Preserve/D&R Canal State Park Headquarters at 145 Mapleton Road in Kingston. Dress for the weather, whatever it is. The walk is free and all are welcome. For more information, visit www.fpnl.org as we get closer to the New Year.



First Day Hike - Jan 1 2016 Photo by Laura Howkins

Monday, January 18th, 2018, Noon to 3 pm -

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service work session in the

Mapleton Preserve: We will be clearing small trees, brush, vines, and trash. Come spend a winter afternoon outdoors with us, and discover the special joys of stewardship! Bring saws, clippers, loppers and rakes. Work gloves, sturdy shoes, warm clothing and hats are a must. All are welcome. Call 609-683-0483 for more information, or if you would like to involve a group to help.

Sunday, February 25, 2018 - 2-4 pm. Weeds and Wildflowers in Winter.

This walk in Mapleton Preserve will be in the old Princeton Nurseries fields, which are full of grasses, wildflowers and wildlife. Learn to identify plants in the "off-season" and look for evidence of the wildlife that lives there. Although it is winter, there will still be lots of signs of life. Most of the area is flat, but it will likely be wet underfoot, so dress accordingly.



Stay up to date. For more information on events in the New Year, see www.fpnl.org