

Full details available at [www.delawarenaturesociety.org](http://www.delawarenaturesociety.org)

# Native Plant Sale

Delaware Nature Society Members receive \$10 off purchases of \$50 or more! Coupon and membership card must be presented at time of sale to receive discount.

## Plant Sale Hours:

April 30 and May 1, 3:00 pm – 7:00 pm (Members-Only)

May 2, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm and May 3, Noon – 4:00 pm (Public Welcome)

New this year: **55-gallon Rain Barrels** and our **“ONE-OF-A-KIND”** plant raffle

# \$10 OFF

Coverdale Farm  
543 Way Rd  
Greenville, DE

Delaware Nature Society  
P.O. Box 700  
Hockessin, DE 19707

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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WILMINGTON, DE

## ASHLAND NATURE CENTER, COVERDALE FARM AND COOCH-DAYETT MILLS

Annual Meeting - Gov. Markell, speaker	Wed., April 1	6:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Copeland Native Plant Seminar	Sat., April 4	8:30 am – 12:30 pm
The Great Ashland Frog Count	Tues., April 7	7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Coverdale Farm Families Open House	Sun., April 26	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Native Plant Sale	Thurs., April 30 – Sun., May 1	Times vary
Farm Fun Days ( <i>Wednesdays only</i> )	May 6 <sup>th</sup> – November 18 <sup>th</sup>	12:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Patrons' Event at Oberod Estate	Tues., May 12	5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Cooch-Dayett Mills Open House	Sun., May 17	1:00 pm – 6:00 pm
DNS Day at Old Country Gardens	Wed., May 20	12:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Volunteer Appreciation Picnic	Wed., June 10	5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Family Movie Night Down on the Farm	Fri., August 28	6:00 pm – 8:30 pm
Harvest Moon Festival (HMF)	Sat. & Sun., October 3 & 4	10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Farm to Fork at HMF	Sat. & Sun., October 3 & 4	1:30 pm – 4:30 pm
The Big Sit - Bird counting contest	Sun., October 11	4:00 am – 7:00 pm
Pumpkins and Hayride	Sun., October 18	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Jupiter and the Moon	Mon., October 26	7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

## ABBOTT'S MILL NATURE CENTER

Family Fun Night	Wed., May 6	6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Paddles, Pollywags and Panfish	Sat., June 13	10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Evening at the Mill	Fri., October 16	6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

For Information About These Exciting Events and more, visit [www.delawarenaturesociety.org](http://www.delawarenaturesociety.org)



Dear Member,

For the past 44 years, we've enjoyed producing a paper copy of our newsletter, Nature's Voice. Perhaps you've noticed that this issue of Nature's Voice is a modified version. As an environmental organization working hard to conserve our natural resources, using less paper is the obvious choice for us, and we stand true to that commitment. As we've communicated to you through previous newsletters and Seasonal Program Brochures, we can now send e-communications regarding events, programs, volunteer opportunities and much more. Even better, registration is now offered online as a members-only benefit!



Now, I am proud to say that Nature's Voice will only be available via our website or through e-communications from us. Not only will we be conserving, but we now have a better way to share up to date news with you! From the new DuPont Environmental Education Center to the future Community Supported Agriculture program to Joe Sebastiani's Nature's Notes, our website will continue to provide our newsletter and more to all of you! As we make these changes, we thought we'd share the evolution of Nature's Voice with you, our readers and members, on this page.

Here's to a paperless environment!

*Michael E. Riska*

Michael E. Riska  
Executive Director

# Red Clay Valley Scenic Byway Recognized as an Important Bird Area!

Since moving its headquarters to Ashland in 1976, the Delaware Nature Society has placed high priority on the permanent preservation of the Red Clay Valley. The valley includes spectacular Natural Areas first described by the Nature Society in the mid-1970s: Red Clay Ravine, Red Clay Creek, Burrows Run, and Coverdale Woods. These natural areas sustain an abundance of plants and animals and contain some of the richest old growth forest in the Red Clay Creek watershed. The steeply-sloped wooded ravines and secluded stream corridors support diverse populations of birds, rare wildflowers, and ferns and include the state champion black gum tree.

The Red Clay Valley is becoming an island in our ever-more developed landscape. The Delaware Nature Society is committed to ensuring that future generations will be able to enjoy the spectacular resources just outside our door. We are inspiring the next generation through our education programs, working with landowners to preserve land in perpetuity, and striving to enhance the biodiversity of our landscape by controlling invasive species and reducing environmental impacts. The Red Clay Valley Scenic Byway designation provides us with another set of tools to meet these goals. Additionally, the Delaware Nature Society recently sought Important Bird Area status for the Red Clay Valley, which was accepted at the State level. This recognition makes official what we have known for a long time, that the Red Clay Valley is especially rich in bird species and biodiversity.

## Red Clay Valley Scenic Byway

The Red Clay Valley Scenic Byway is comprised of 28 secondary roads within the Red Clay Creek Watershed, located in New Castle County, Delaware. The Delaware Nature Society, together with partners including Mt. Cuba Center, Red Clay Valley

Association, Historic Red Clay, Inc., Red Clay Reservation, Gaadt Perspectives, Center for the Creative Arts, the Yorklyn Planning Group, the Chesapeake Bay Girl Scouts Council, and several Byway residents, sponsored the roads for Delaware Scenic and Historic Highway designation in July 2004. At that time the concept of nominating multiple roads within a single watershed was quite remarkable. Certainly such an approach had never been taken in Delaware and the sponsors quickly realized that such an approach was unique, if not original, to the nation. The roads of the Red Clay Valley form an interconnected and interdependent network closely linked to the Red Clay Creek and its watershed area. Just as healthy streams evolved and meandered to shape and define their watersheds, so too did the road network that evolved in the Red Clay Valley. Together, the intrinsic qualities of the Byway tell a unique story of scenic beauty, diverse natural resources, and a historically significant development pattern that contributed to the Valley's growth and preservation.

The roads of the Red Clay Valley date from early European settlements in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Three hundred years of human influence on the land has created a network of roads, mill dams and bridges, homes and barns, rolling meadows, and fence rows. Remarkably, however, such influences often "spared" the natural resources that contribute immensely to the character of the Valley.

Not urban, nor suburban, the Red Clay Valley provides a unique natural beauty that is unsurpassed in Delaware. Today, the roads of the Valley are exceptionally scenic and help tell the history of the Valley in the context of human interaction with nature. In this context the use of the land, both historically and in the present, speaks to the stewardship that has formed the thinking of those that live and work in the Valley.

RCV Photos by Jen Mihills



While numbers tell only part of the story, the Byway contains 94 identified visual accents, 11 vista points, 117 historic resources, and innumerable natural resources and stream tributaries that together form "a place of uncommon beauty and very special significance."

## Red Clay Valley Important Bird Area

As you enjoy scenic drives in the Red Clay Valley, understand that this is a diverse and important area biologically. Recently recognized by the Audubon Society as a State-level Important Bird Area, the valley's forest, meadow, and aquatic habitats hold populations of rare breeding birds, high concentrations of species of special conservation concern, and significant numbers of waterfowl.

The Delaware Nature Society nominated the valley for Important Bird Area status because it qualified under several criteria. For instance, Hoopes Reservoir regularly hosts large numbers of migratory waterfowl as well as a Bald Eagle nest. You may see the waterfowl, and sometimes the eagles as you drive the Route 82 causeway over the reservoir in winter. Just keep your eyes on the road! Also, the Valley is the only known breeding location for Sharp-shinned Hawk in Delaware, and is the breeding ground of significant portions of Delaware's Veery and Warbling Vireo. Other rare birds that breed here and practically nowhere else in Delaware include Blue-winged Warbler, Northern Parula, and American Redstart. Wood Thrush, a species of special conservation concern, has such a high breeding population in the Valley that it is being considered for continental status as an Important Bird Area. Bird populations reflect the health and diversity of local ecosystems. Therefore, not only is this a scenic area, but one with notable ecosystems worthy of protection and improvement.

Experience the Red Clay Valley Scenic Byway and Important Bird Area by visiting us at our Ashland Nature Center or by registering for a program at our Burrows Run Preserve.

Photo by Joe Sebastiani



## Nature's Notes by Joe Sebastiani

### Shrews on the Trail

Take enough nature walks in Delaware and you are bound to find a Short-tailed Shrew dead on a path. I have found many dead shrews on paths at Ashland Nature Center. The reason is that many predators find them distasteful and discard them because of their strong odor, which arises from a pair of glands on the flanks. Shrews are particularly strong-smelling during the reproductive season, which is spring and again in late summer. So now is a good time to find them on a trail, possibly left by a fox.



At first this creature may look like a dark, slate-colored mouse with a short tail and no eyes, but pick it up and look closer. (Don't worry, dead ones can't bite). It does have eyes, but they are tiny and are thought to merely distinguish between light and darkness. This sounds disgusting, but pry open the mouth and look at the teeth. The Short-tailed Shrew, as well as its smaller cousin, the Least Shrew, has a row of sharp pointed teeth. The teeth are quite different from the teeth of a mouse, which have incisors, then a gap, and molars in the rear of the mouth. The teeth of the shrew are designed to chew up prey such as small insects, worms, slugs, snails, spiders, centipedes, and even salamanders. Mice are herbivores and feed on seeds, berries, and other plant material. The Short-tailed Shrew is also poisonous! It and the European Water Shrew are thought to be the only mammals in the world that secrete poison through the salivary glands.

This small and interesting mammal has other secrets as well. It has been found to use echolocation like a bat by making very high pitched squeaks and clicks. With this ability, it can better navigate the darkness of the forest floor leaf-litter zone, where it typically makes its home. It digs small burrows in the soil, usually under an object like a rock or log to make a den. Knowing this, I found it very strange indeed that I once caught one in a mouse trap in my attic!

I have also found another species of shrew in Delaware, called the Least Shrew (again, they were dead and lying on a path). The Least Shrew is a very small mammal (Delaware's smallest) whose body is only about 2.5 inches long. A Short-tailed Shrew is 3 or 4 inches long. The coat of a Least Shrew is brown, not dark-slate colored and it has a relatively long tail. It tends to be more of a meadow species than a forest-dweller, and is not as solitary as a Short-tailed Shrew, sometimes living together in a single den.

Keep your eyes on the path this spring and you may just come across a shrew. Examine it, look at the teeth and eyes, and spend some time appreciating these tiny predators that are abundant in our area.

Reference: Whitaker, Jr. J.O., Hamilton, Jr. W.J. 1998. *Mammals of the Eastern United States*. Cornell University Press.

## Community Supported Agriculture at Coverdale!

Looking to Buy Fresh-Buy Local? Well, soon you will be able to do just that as we move forward with our plans to start a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. In the CSA, members can purchase shares to support the organic farming of the land. In return, they receive their weekly allotment of fresh, locally-grown food through the program. In this effort, community involvement increases, the educational impact of the farm increases with the "real farming" teaching tools, and nutrition-based programs for all ages.

To accommodate the CSA, the growth at our Coverdale Farm continues with the renovations of the Education building, not only providing space for the CSA, but also allowing for expanded programming, increasing awareness



of the relationship between people and their food sources and soil.

We expect to hire a farmer and begin selling CSA shares in the fall. Shares will only be offered to DNS members, so be sure your membership is up-to-date. Stay tuned for future news regarding this exciting enterprise!

**SUMMER CAMP**  
It's not too late to register!

**VOLUNTEER AT DNS**  
Get Involved!

**DNS TRIPS**  
Spend a week in Trinidad or visit other exciting places!

**Visit our website for more information!**

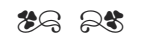
## DuPont Environmental Education Center Coming Soon!

While driving down 195, you may have noticed a new construction project at the Wilmington Riverfront. Under roof is the new DuPont Environmental Education Center, which will be operated by the Delaware Nature Society. John Harrod has been hired as the new Manager. Programs and activities are being planned to complement the Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge (the 212-acre restored marsh.) Check out the photo above of the nature center's progress and mark your calendar for the Grand Opening, scheduled for Saturday, September 19!



## Voice It!

Look for the new "Voice It!" section in the online newsletter coming soon! "Voice It!" will feature articles about environmental concerns such as the Delaware River Main Channel Deepening Project featured in the Winter, 2008, *Nature's Voice*. For more information regarding environmental updates, sign up for "Voice It" alerts on our website.



## The Nature of Delaware

DNS's new blog, "The Nature of Delaware" ([www.delawarenaturesociety.org/blog](http://www.delawarenaturesociety.org/blog)), is the place to go for updates on recent field trips, view photos of our adventures and interesting natural spectacles, discuss the environment and conservation in Delaware and read about lots of other fun and exciting happenings. Subscribe to our blog posts and receive them automatically (with an RSS newsreader or on your Google or Yahoo homepage) or by email. Check it out to see what is happening and make sure you leave us some comments!



## Wild Delaware

Wild Delaware, a new book by well-known photographer and native Delawarean, Kevin Fleming, highlights the beauty of Delaware's outdoors and features essays by DNS staff members, Jim White and Derek Stoner. Meet Kevin, Jim and Derek at our Annual Meeting on April 1st and get a copy. Or, signed copies will continue to be available for \$40 at Ashland Nature Center.

