

# **CLOSTER NATURE CENTER NEWS**

**P.O. BOX 80, CLOSTER NJ 07624 [closternaturecenter.org](http://closternaturecenter.org)**

**By the pond on Ruckman Road**

**FEBRUARY, 2021**

## **FEBRUARY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM**

### **The Wonders of Winter!**

Hiking, exploring, and enjoying nature with Naturalist Marc Gussen: a great way to accent online and at-home learning! We are keeping our class size to a maximum of nine and mask wearing is mandatory. It is imperative that our students dress properly for the weather, as we will be outside for the entire program. If severe weather is predicted, we may need to reschedule classes.

**\$60/session for Members. \$75/session Non-members**

**3:45 PM to 5:00 PM**

**Mondays, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grades**

**Tuesdays, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grades**

**Wednesdays, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grades**

**Thursdays, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grades**

**To register online please go to: <https://register.communitypass.net/Closter>.**

If you have any questions, please call Marc Gussen at (201) 750-2778 or email [admin@closternaturecenter.org](mailto:admin@closternaturecenter.org).

**Classes are filling up! Register soon.**

## **WINTER BREAK SCIENCE PROGRAM**

Need something fun and educational for children to do during the winter break? We'll have four days of nature exploration and discovery here at the Closter Nature Center! It is imperative that participants dress properly for the weather, as we will be outside for the full program. We are keeping our class size to a maximum of nine and mask wearing is mandatory. If severe weather is predicted, we may need to reschedule classes.

**1st-7th grades: \$100/week for Members. \$120/week for Non-members**  
**Kindergarten: \$80/week for Members, \$100/week for Non-members.**

<b>Mon. Feb. 15th - Thurs. Feb. 18th</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>1st - 3rd Grade</b>	9:00 - 10:30 am
<b>4th - 7th Grade</b>	11:00 am - 12:30 pm
<b>Kindergarten</b>	1:30 - 2:30 pm
<b>1st - 3rd Grade</b>	3:00 - 4:30 pm

To register online please go to: <https://register.communitypass.net/Closter>.  
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email [admin@closternaturecenter.org](mailto:admin@closternaturecenter.org).

## **NATURALIST'S NOTES**

Of all the science topics that I teach about and bring to schools, one of my all-time favorites is plant and animal adaptations.

The long neck of a giraffe never ceases to amaze me. A fish's gills, prehensile tails, dandelion seeds wafting on a breeze--the list goes on and on. The struggle to survive comes down to a couple of simple things: finding food, trying not to *be* food, coping with your environment, and reproduction.

The number of ways these four simple goals get met is staggering. Plants and animals that overcome adversity for a long enough period of time to reproduce get a chance to pass on their unique set of genes. Over time, this has led to ecosystems all over the planet being filled with organisms that fit in to their world like intricate puzzle pieces. Pieces that are tied to each other not by their mere shape alone, but by an interdependence that is only just beginning to be explained by the science of ecology. Kids take to this topic very well, as wonderment about nature often begins with a child's fascination with animals.

In dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed on us for our own good, I too have adapted to adversity by doing something that I never thought I would have to do--virtual nature classes for kids. After years of trying to find ways to get kids *off* of electronic devices, I have finally begun conducting Zoom programs in place of my in-person nature and science classes. They went over better than I possibly could have imagined. Of all the topics that could have been picked by the teachers, the subject of my first round of online classes could not have been more fitting: "Adaptations". Thankfully, we humans also have the ability to adapt!

See you on the trails...Marc Gussen, Naturalist

**Looking for something to do during the pandemic? Take a hike! The Closter Nature Center has 3-miles of trails to explore winter, spring, summer or fall!**

## **SECOND INVASIVES REMOVAL EFFORT A SUCCESS**

**Fourteen intrepid volunteers** showed up for the Closter Nature Center's second Invasives Removal Project on Saturday, January 23rd, two weeks after another highly successful attempt to reduce the prevalence of multiflora rose in the Nature Center's preserve. Led by Naturalist Marc Gussen and Trustees Adri Turrell and Tom Golodik, the crew concentrated on the multiflora roses found around Ruckman Pond and along the Mayer Loop Trail.

In the first removal effort, about 20 volunteers came similarly equipped with loppers, pruners and heavy work gloves, clearing multiflora from the White and Orange Trails. Over the two sessions, eight pickup truck loads of the removed plants, either pulled out by the roots or trimmed off at ground level, were disposed of at the Department of Public Works brush pile.

## **Why this effort?**

Our preserve has been undergoing a major transformation over the past few years as many of our ash trees are dying as the result of an infestation of Emerald Ash Borer Beetles. While the beetles are not directly related to the invasives, the death of the ash trees, some of the largest trees in our woodland, will result in openings in the forest canopy as the trees fail to leaf out or worse, fall, perhaps taking other trees with them. This allows more light to reach the ground and encourages aggressive growth by invasives. These invasives are not generally eaten by the browsers that live in or pass through the Closter Nature Center, thus there are no natural pressures controlling them.

Removing the multiflora can be a tedious job since it is covered with thorns—fairly large on the older plants--and grows in close proximity to other valued plants, sometime in quite a tangled and intertwined mass of brambles and branches. Volunteers were given a quick class in multiflora identification by Marc and enthusiastically headed out on the trails to prune and, where possible, uproot.

## **Some Invasives**

Three invasive species, all with Asian origins, are expanding in the Nature Center's preserve. All were imported to North America many years ago and initially seen as valuable horticultural plants. *Multiflora rose* was introduced into the country 150 years ago to serve as a rootstock for ornamental roses and for use as a living fence around pastures. *Japanese barberry* was originally introduced into this country 175 years ago as a horticultural plant to replace American barberry, which served as a host plant for a rust that destroyed wheat crops. *Oriental bittersweet* was introduced as a horticultural plant and for erosion control purposes more than 200 years ago.

While multiflora rose and barberry are relatively low growing plants, bittersweet grows aggressively, choking plants, bushes and trees. It can grow up to 90 feet long and four inches thick, twining around tree trunks, covering upper story foliage and reducing the sunlight reaching the leaves, limiting photosynthesis. The weight of the older vines can bring trees down in storms or when the tree begins to fail.

### **Naturalist Class is Planned:**

Marc is planning a naturalist class at the Closter Nature Center to provide information about identification of these three unwelcome plants as well as other invasives--both for our preserve and, perhaps, for your garden, as well. **Please email Marc at [mgussen@aol.com](mailto:mgussen@aol.com) for details if you would be interested in attending this instructional class.**