

CLOSTER NATURE CENTER NEWS

P.O. BOX 80, CLOSTER NJ 07624 closternaturecenter.org

By the pond on Ruckman Road

OCTOBER 2021

OCTOBER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES:

October After-School Classes:

Come join Nature Marc at the Closter Nature Center for some outdoor science fun!

We will be adhering to CDC guidelines. Masks required.

Please dress for the weather; we will be outside for most of the sessions.

We will move into the cabin for severe weather.

\$100/session for Members - \$120/session for Non-members

All classes are 3:45pm-5:00pm

Mondays 1st-3rd Grades 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th

Tuesdays Kindergarten 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th

Wednesdays 1st-3rd Grades 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th

Thursdays 4th-6th Grades 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th

To register please go

to: <https://register.communitypass.net/Closter>, and you will be taken to Community Pass, our online registration and payment system.

If you have any questions please call our Naturalist, Marc Gussen at (201) 750-2778.

AUTUMN MAGIC IN NORTHERN NEW JERSEY

Nature Fun for Little Ones with Mrs. Wonderwhy!

Fridays, October 8th, 15th and 22nd

Experiencing the miracle of the season through leaf collecting, creating colorful art and taking lots of crunchy nature walks!

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If you have any questions, please

email admin@closternaturecenter.org.

Naturalist's Notes:

The cool weather of October kickstarts one of my favorite forest life cycles. Many fungi take advantage of a long spring and summer growing season, and put their hard-won resources to use by producing mushrooms and the fungal version of seeds: spores. Spores are microscopic, but contain the spark of life that can grow into new fungi and contain the DNA of both parents. With the wet summer we have had, we are in for a banner fall mushroom season.

Very often with a dry summer the fungi that inhabit trees, forest soil and decomposing organic matter lie in wait for the fall rains, but this year the spring rains never stopped. This extended growing season will lead to an amazing opportunity for many fungi to reproduce with gusto. For example, a dead ash tree with oyster mushroom fungi growing through the old wood could, in a normal fall, produce a dozen or so mushrooms. In a year like this it is entirely possible to find hundreds of mushrooms on that same tree. Another fall delight is the large, gray, cauliflower-looking mushroom called "hen of the woods". Where normally an old oak would have but one cluster, I look forward to seeing 3 or 4 on each tree. There are mushrooms that come in every color, from blue to pink to red to orange, and the fall is best time to witness this forest floor fireworks show. Take to the trails this October, keep your eyes to the ground and get ready, because this year might one of the best mushroom seasons yet.

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

Cute Kid's Quote

Over the summer while out with a bunch of kindergarteners, we were talking about going back to the cabin after our hike, when one camper asked, "when we get back to the fort can we see a turtle?"

Loss of Ash Trees Open Forest to Invasion of Mile-A-Minute: How the Nature Center is Fighting Back

Commonly called mile-a-minute weed for its aggressive growth, the invasive plant *Persicaria perfoliata* has been a long-time resident at the Closter Nature Center. While its common name greatly exaggerates its speed of spreading, in ideal conditions the plant can add up six inches a day and grow to an overall height of 25 feet, rapidly covering surrounding understory plants and trees, smothering them. Although it has been found for at least 20 years in relatively small populations along the White Trail, the edge of the Blue Trail, and Ruckman Road, it had been largely held in check by less than ideal growing conditions plus a small weevil, *Rhinoncomimus latipes Korotyayev*, which feeds on it.

Unfortunately, the plant has recently begun to proliferate along the White Trail, as a result of the death of many ash trees that line that trail, which parallels Anderson Brook. The loss of the ash trees is the result of their infestation by the emerald ash borer, *Agrilus planipennis Fairmaire*, an excellent example of one pest creating conditions that aid in the spread of another. In this case, the death of the ash trees has opened the canopy over the White Trail, letting in more sunlight and making the conditions more favorable for the weed which has begun to spread in this location.

Two efforts at eliminating the weed along the White Trail were undertaken in mid-September. On 16 September, Wayne Hudson, an entomologist with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Division of Plant Industry, Bureau of Biological Control, delivered several containers of the weevil to the Nature Center for distribution. The weevil is raised by the state at the Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Laboratory under a contract with the federal government. Found to be host-specific to mile-a-minute weed, weevil adults feed on the foliage, leaving recognizable small holes in the leaves, while larvae feed within nodes on the stem and can suppress growth and reduce seed production. The weevils were released at several places

along the White Trail where increasing stands of mile-a-minute plant have been observed.

Three days later, a group of volunteers hand pulled many of the larger stands of the invasive that line the White Trail. Hand pulling is one of the more effective ways of eliminating the invasive and is best done before the plant's berries turn blue. Continued control efforts will be required over the next few years, since the ripened seeds that fall to the ground are viable for up to six years.

The plant is easily identifiable by its triangular shaped leaves which appear alternately on somewhat delicate, reddish, highly branched stems. Both the underside of the leaves and the stems are covered with small, sharp, downward curving barbs, which allow the plant to cling to other vegetation, and contribute to its other common name among those who have come in close contact with it, Asiatic tearthumb.

Mile-a-minute weed produces a large number of seeds that can be carried long distances by birds, which are believed to be the main long-distance carrier, though deer, chipmunks, squirrels, and even ants are known to feed on the plant's fruits. The seeds can remain buoyant in streams or rivers for up to nine days and, with the preserve largely a wetlands forest, we can expect to see the plant continue appear in a wider area of the woodlands. The plants, however, are annuals, unlike some of the other invasives that have taken up residence in our preserve, and the roots do not survive the winter.

Native to India and eastern Asia, the mile-a-minute vine was introduced to the USA in York, Pennsylvania in the 1930s, via holly seed which was contaminated with it. Since then, mile-a-minute has spread throughout much of Pennsylvania, and to all states in the Mid-Atlantic region, as well as Ohio, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Oregon.

Tom Golodik