

At Pinelands, there's a lot to discover

By **LO EDWARDS**
Correspondent

For the past ten years, the governor of New Jersey has recognized and proclaimed October as Pinelands Month. And for 10 years, hundreds of visitors have come to Historic Whitesbog Village Sunday to celebrate at the annual Pinelands Discovery Festival.

"Every year we have a proclamation from the Governor," said Mike Hunninghake, director of communications for the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, at this year's event, held Sunday. "The Pinelands has a variety of events throughout the month. Today, everything here is Pinelands-related whether it be crafters, wildlife, photography, exhibits or lectures. They all have a pinelands theme to it."

Photographer Jim Sutton has been taking pictures of the pines for the past four years. He has been to several functions that display his work of the pines and is currently looking forward to his upcoming exhibit in Commerce Square, Philadelphia, in November.

"There's a lot here in New Jersey," he said. "I think the festival is great, just fantastic. I expect today to continue to meet people and learn more detail and pieces of information to fill in the picture I'm getting out of the exhibits."

The children's activity corner, taught by Valerie Vaughn, helped the youngest attendees make pinecone turkeys.

Ebba Ligori, a Pemberton resident, enjoyed showing off fossils from all over the United States. Native to the pines is the lampshell, correctly known as "fossil brachiopod" and found in New Egypt.

Ligori's husband Fred showed

**"There's a lot here
in New Jersey."**

Jim Sutton
Photographer

off a display of jewelry and stone carvings. He was actively chiseling away, creating lizards.

"They're not like the Gecko," he noted. "The Gecko is fatter. Lizards are skinny."

He wasn't the only one with critters on his mind. John Courtney, associate naturalist from the New Jersey Audubon Society, spoke about the velvet ant; better known as the "cow killer." The ants are colored black and red, and have velvet-like fuzz.

"It's not actually a 'cow killer,' but the sting is so bad, that it could kill a cow," he said.

The ant, really a wasp, stings and the female is known not to have wings.

Jackson-based beekeeper Peter

Leighton was in attendance as well.

"I raise bees on the hobbyist level and produce honey," he said. And when asked how many times he gets stung while working with the bees, he replied: "not that often."

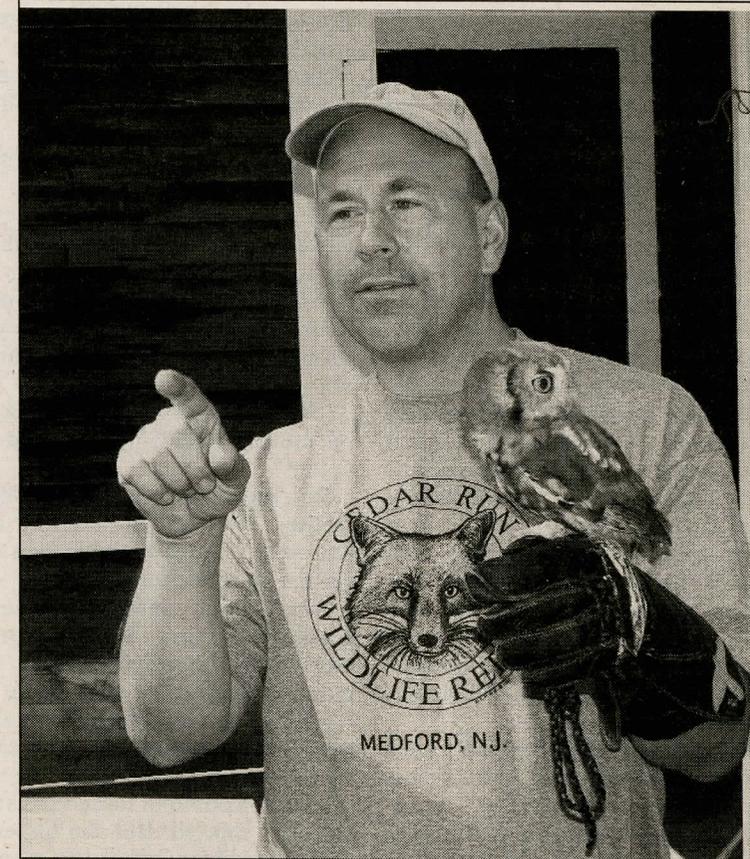
Photographer Ann-Marie Woods, director of the festival, also shares in the passion for the pines and for preservation. Her display was exclusive to the pineland flowers, plants and some rare and endangered species that are native to the area.

"I preserve the area ... which I'm photographing," she said. "I find it a shame when one day I have a rare and perfect find that I can photograph and enjoy, while the next day, it's gone. Someone picked it."

Lectures spoke to their audiences on the effects people have on wildlife. There are several endangered species most people don't know about, the lecturers said. Volunteers from Burlington County College, the Whitesbog Preservation Trust and Ocean County College were among those placing an emphasis on environmental awareness of the pines.

Luanne and Dan Weeks, a pair of volunteers from the Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge in Medford, made presentations as well. Dan Weeks showed off with an eastern screech owl named Reggie, and Luanne had red-tailed hawk Aldora handy. Both birds had been hit by cars and subsequently lost vision in their left eyes.

Reggie has a permanently fixed left pupil, which remains dilated. Aldora's left eye has begun to sink within his eye socket. When asked if either bird was in pain, Luanne Weeks answered, "It's very diffi-



DORANN WEBBER

Dan Weekes from the Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge Explains the rescue of an Eastern Screech-Owl to attendees of the Pinelands Discovery Festival.

took her five years to research, largely because there is so much folklore surrounding the pines. Riley, on hand Sunday signing cipes, spent much of that five years working to discern between fiction and non-fiction, she said.

Riley actually came upon her story accidentally, she said. Looking into the land around her home, she realized there was a story to be told.

Michael Hogan, whose photo-

averaged approximately 50 miles per day making pit stops at state forests including Wharton and Bass River — the latter of which will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Oct. 23 — to promote awareness of the Pinelands. His riding mates were Bob Roberts from Scotch Plains, Tony Khun from Manchester and Sherry from Little Egg Harbor.

They rode approximately 250 miles throughout South Jersey, not





ABOVE: Troy O'Keefe, 18 months old, helps his mom Patty eat a pretzel as she and brother Sean, 5, enjoy music played at the festival.

RIGHT: One attendee found the excitement at the festival a bit tiring, and enjoyed a quick nap in the nice weather.

RIGHT-BELOW: Violinist Vance Archer warms up, as he prepares to play the festival.

left pupil, which remains dilated. Aldora's left eye has begun to sink within his eye socket. When asked if either bird was in pain, Luanne Weeks answered, "It's very difficult to tell if a bird is in pain. They'll camouflage their pain by not eating, not preening their feathers, or may even have an attitude change." Neither bird displayed any symptom of pain as described by Luanne. Reggie and Aldora seemed to have enjoyed getting so much attention from the spectators.

Karen Riley, a new author of her first book, "Whispers in the Pines: The Secrets of Colliers Mills," spoke of the perspective her work on the book created. This book

story accidentally, she said. Looking into the land around her home, she realized there was a story to be told.

Michael Hogan, whose photographs appear in "Natural Wonders of the Jersey Pines and Shore" displayed images that demonstrated appreciation for the Pine Barrens and ecology.

The last highlight of the day was a visit from the "Tour de Pines." The group of eight cyclists, four of whom rode into Whitesbog Village mid-Sunday afternoon, traveled the borders of the pines over a period of five days.

"Dashing Dan," also known as Dan Rappaport, from the area,

Scouten Flams, Tony Khun from Manchester and Sherry from Little Egg Harbor.

They rode approximately 250 miles throughout South Jersey, not for a fund-raiser, but for "a consciousness-raising exercise" of the pines, said Hunninghake. He also stated that the Pinelands Preservation Alliance is "extremely grateful for all their efforts." The alliance hopes to repeat the event next year with with more bicyclists.

Pinelands Preservation organizers will be gathering next month to plan for their 2006 Discovery Festival, and will be continually conducting events throughout the month of October.



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