

# Spending an evening on the bogs

by **Darlene Bakhoun**  
Community News staff

**BROWNS MILLS** —A group of 15 people had the best seats in the house for a unique natural concert Saturday night.

The Sturgeon moon lighted the guided tour along the sugar sand paths of Whitesbog Historic Village off Lakehurst Road, and set the stage for the songs of katydids and other natural musicians.

Whitesbog Preservation Trust volunteers, Richard Rolle and Steve Young, guided the tour, which began at the General Store in the village.

Before sunset, guides led the visitors on a stroll through the village, better known as the birthplace of the blueberry.

The modern blueberry, as we know it, was cultivated at Whitesbog in 1916, by Elizabeth White and Dr. Frederick Coville, a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist.

According to the trust, Whitesbog also played a large role in the development of cranberry agriculture, which is still harvested on the site.

The Franklinia tree, named for Benjamin



PHOTOS DARLENE BAKHOUM

Michael White and Diane Taylor of Medford take in the natural beauty of a reservoir at Whitesbog last weekend. The couple took part in a moonlight walk along the historic bogs.

White's original test garden was also visited on the tour, and the group tasted blueberries from 95 year-old Rubel bushes.

"Now you can tell people you've tasted blueberries from the oldest bush



large role in the development of cranberry agriculture, which is still harvested on the site.

The Franklinia tree, named for Benjamin Franklin, thrives in the acidic soil of the pinelands, Rolle said, and was one of the first plants White marketed in her nursery.

The natural setting for cranberry harvesting was created by the destructive mining of bog iron in the pinelands, according to Rolle.

“The dredging of the pinelands for the iron industry left behind depressions in these naturally wet lands, creating the perfect place for cranberries to thrive,” Rolle said.

Visitors were given the opportunity to test the magnetic properties of natural bog iron, which can be found in various places throughout the village.

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“Now you can tell people you’ve tasted blueberries from the oldest cultivated blueberry bushes in the world,” Rolle said.

Rolle and Young led the group to the cranberry bogs, and compared char-

**“C**ranberries care acidic-evolving plants, which explains why they thrive in the Pine Barrens.”

**Richard Rolle**  
Whitesbog volunteer

acteristics of bogs that are currently being harvested and those that have been abandoned.

According to Rolle, the



Richard Rolle, a Whitesbog Preservation Trust volunteer, leads a group of 15 people on a moonlight walk at the historic site. Rolle points out a chunk of bog iron left over from the nineteenth century. Below, White samples a blueberry from one of the original bushes from the test field.

J.J. White Company still harvests a portion of the bogs that is now a part of Brendan T. Bryne Forest through a lease agreement with the state.

“Cranberries are acid-loving plants, which explains why they thrive in the Pine Barrens,” Rolle said.

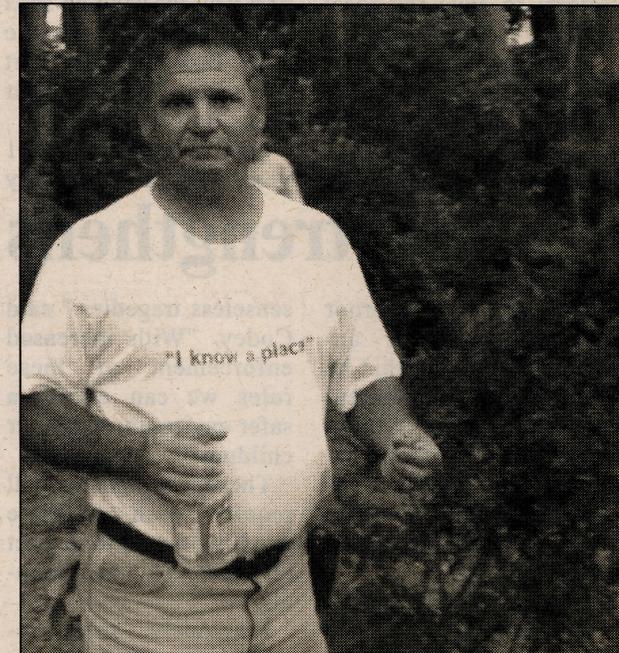
“The water in the pine barrens is about as acidic as Coca-Cola,” Rolle said, “and the area supports wildlife and vegetation that is unique to this environment.”

The trust offers multiple guided tours throughout

the year, including an evening moon canoe trip and the harvest moon moonlight walk in September.

“One of our most popular moonlight walks is the Tundra Swan tour in February, when Whitesbog becomes a winter getaway for hundreds of swans,” Rolle said.

To view a schedule of upcoming events at Whitesbog visit [www.whitesbog.org](http://www.whitesbog.org), call 609-893-4646, or stop in to the General Store in Whitesbog Historic Village for more information.



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