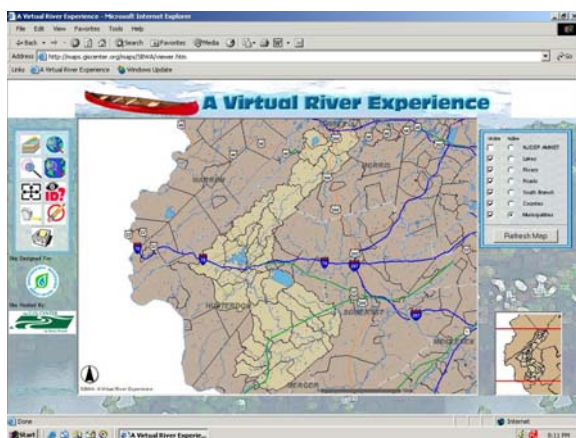


... published quarterly at the Hermia Lechner House

A Virtual River Experience

By Nicole Rahman, Program Director

A Virtual River Experience is the computer-based component of our environmental education program, the Waterways Stewardship Project. Previously known as the Explorer Project, A Virtual River Experience is currently being updated and revised by Sean McGinnis from Banisch Associates located in Flemington, NJ. It consists of a web-based interactive map and a database that teachers can use to help their students understand and explore land uses within the watershed and how changes in land use can affect water quality and the health of the river ecosystem. Students and teachers can explore the South Branch Raritan River Watershed virtually by using this interactive online map of the watershed and overlaying different pieces of information as needed, such as lakes, streams, rivers, roads, and land use/land cover. As part of the Waterways Stewardship Project, the school students go into a stretch of the river near their school to collect macroinvertebrate (small critters that usually live on river bottoms) data and complete site assessments (look at the habitat in and around the river) to help them determine the water quality of the river. These school river monitoring site locations will be represented on the map as points. Clicking on their school's monitoring site on the map will allow students to see and compare all of the previous and current data their school has entered for their site. Teachers will have password access so their students can add the data they collected at their site this year to the database. They can also then compare their data to the data collected by other schools throughout the watershed.



The South Branch Raritan River Watershed

As of now, the interactive map is online, but a few finishing touches still need to be made. The database is in the works with an expected completion date sometime this winter. At that point, it will be ready for teachers to begin entering their data. We plan to offer some form of teacher training and instruc-

(Continued on page 7)

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Check out our web site at www.sbwa.org.

After you read this newsletter, please pass it on to a friend or neighbor and ask them to join SBWA. Thank you.



North American Osprey

The osprey is the only diurnal (active during the day) bird of prey that feeds exclusively on live fish. They are at the top of the aquatic food chain, which means they are a good indicator for detecting habitat destruction, dwindling fish populations, and contamination of the environment.

Physical Characteristics

- The fish-hawk, as the osprey is also known, is a large raptor (bird of prey), with a body length of about two feet, a wingspan of five feet, and long sharp talons (claws). Its back and long arched wings are brown, and white plumage covers its breast and upper legs.
- The characteristic M-shaped crook in its wings, its wrist patches, dark brown stripes across the eyes, and the dark bands on the underside of the tail identify an osprey in flight.
- Based on recent DNA testing, ospreys are thought to be more closely related to eagles, hawks and Old World vultures than previously thought.
- Like most raptors, female ospreys are generally larger than males.

Habitat and Behavior

- Habitats include shallow water estuaries, lakes, and rivers.
- Ospreys build their conspicuous nests on tall, offshore structures such as trees.
- Ospreys usually mate for life.
- Ospreys hunt by soaring over water, scanning for fish. They are spectacular divers: once they have sighted their prey, they fold their wings tightly, descend swiftly and enter the water feet-first, often submerging completely. They also perform shallow scoops for fish near the surface. It quickly resurfaces and, if it has made a catch, flies off, adjusting the fish in its claws so that the head is pointed forward.



Ospreys declined drastically because of pesticides during the 1950s and 1960s, but since then they have made a comeback and are nesting again in areas from which they had disappeared.

This osprey was seen sitting in a tree between the pond and the SBWA office last November. We have also seen otters in the pond and foxes near the office.

STAFF NOTES:

Don Einhorn resigned as Executive Director of the SBWA in October. We appreciate all his efforts and wish him well in his new endeavors. Maybe he will see more ospreys near his new location in New Hampshire!

Bill Kibler, of Califon, has accepted the position of Executive Director of the SBWA. He is an environmental attorney with a broad background in environmental issues. We welcome Bill and wish him success at SBWA. He will write the Executive Director's message in the next issue of *The Current*.



Twelve Years of River Monitoring Data to be Presented at Annual Conference

On Saturday, **November 12**, 2005, we will present the results of the 2005 river monitoring. This annual Volunteer Biological Monitoring Conference will be held at Echo Hill Park Lodge from 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

A presentation about black flies and mosquitoes in New Jersey will be the highlight of the event. Tadhg Rainey, Mosquito/Vector Surveillance and Control Coordinator for the NJ Hunterdon County Department of Health, will be the presenter.

The Association's volunteer biological monitoring program celebrates its twelfth year of collecting data at 18 sites along the South Branch Raritan River and its tributaries. Every June, trained volunteer "water stewards" collect a "bug" sample at an assigned site within the South Branch Raritan River watershed. Volunteers follow an EPA approved protocol to ensure accuracy and precision in collection of data. The sample is then sent to a certified lab for complete analysis. Different species of juvenile "bugs" that live on the bottom of river can tell us much about the quality of the water.

Please join us to learn more about the river that flows through our community. For more information about the conference, or about becoming a volunteer monitor, please call Nicole Rahman, Program Director, at 908-782-0422, or visit our website at www.sbwa.org.

Sixth Annual Wine Tasting

The Sixth Annual Wine Tasting was held on October 9, 2005 at the Old Egg Auction in Flemington, NJ. This event is an opportunity to relax, sample an amazing variety of wines from over 30 vendors, nibble on hors d'oeuvres, bid on the silent auction items, and enjoy the atmosphere of the unique building. This event is a major fundraiser for the SBWA, and all proceeds benefit our environmental protection efforts.

There are pictures of happy participants on page 4. Because of the continued overwhelming positive feedback, the Seventh Annual Wine Tasting will be held on October 8, 2006!

MARK YOUR 2005-2006 CALENDAR

Community Well Testing — Check the SBWA web site at www.sbwa.org for dates in your township.

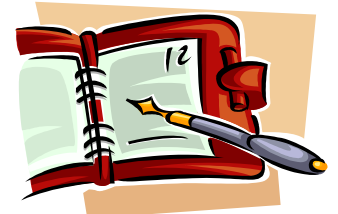
Annual Volunteer Biological River Monitoring Conference — November 12 at Echo Hill Lodge 2:00 p.m. — 3:30 p.m. See article above.

Hunterdon County Green Table — November 17 at Echo Hill Lodge 8:00 a.m. — 10:00 a.m. Topic is yet to be determined.

Hunterdon County Green Table forums in early 2006 — January 19 and March 16

Annual Membership Meeting and Dinner — March 24, 2006 — Details will be in the next issue.

Visit the Calendar page on the SBWA web site at www.sbwa.org for dates of other meetings and events throughout the year.



Mark your day to volunteer at SBWA. Please look at the SBWA web site for a list of volunteer opportunities.



Pictures from the 2005 Wine Tasting and Silent Auction Event



Everyone compared notes and agreed that this was yet another successful wine tasting.



A perfect day for a wine tasting.



Yes! This is a wonderful selection.



Another great wine.



Plenty of good food, too. Provided courtesy of Jake's Restaurant and Catering, and K-C Catering of Flemington.



SBWA Trustees Fred Puelle (left) and Ken Jagel discuss the silent auction items.



Some of the lovely items up for bid at the silent auction.



Wearing the new SBWA polo shirts are: (from left) SBWA Board of Trustees President Jim Hill, volunteer John Belle, Trustee Tish Plum, volunteer Laura Orbine, and volunteer Brunilda Gillespie.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS *January thru October 2005*

Herbert and Linda Busch	Bruce Magaw and Anne Mohan	<i>Corporate</i>
Carla Cielo	Veronica Mausser	
John and Susan Clausen	Todd Schanbaum	Flemington Granite and
Thom Donnelly	Matthew and Laura Spann	Architectural Supply
Ilona and Terrence English	John Tague	Fuze Beverage
Robert and Jeannie Geremia	Mr. and Mrs. Albert VanHolten	
Ellie Hilken	Bela Vincze	
Alex and Ellen Jeyschune	Herb Weiland	
Marylu Korkuch		

It's always a pleasure to welcome new members and we hope that you will call us if you need information or have a concern about water quality or potential threats to our watershed. Also, please stop by our office to learn more about the dozen or more volunteer opportunities for you to help us continue our important work.

Is your neighbor a member?

Call us at 908-782-0422 to help you convince friends and neighbors that membership in SBWA means helping to preserve a healthy watershed for the future. We have membership kits for prospective members and will be glad to send one to your referral.

Special Thanks To...

- *Richard and Susan Balsley* – donating hard cover dictionary
- *Oliver Elbert* – assisting with grant research and cataloging stored macro samples for donation to the NJ State Museum
- *Kathy Hale* – donating a toaster
- *Jake's Restaurant and Catering, and K-C Catering of Flemington* for their donation of time and fantastic food at the 2005 Wine Tasting Event.
- *Emily LeGrand* – finishing the inputting of the entire SBWA library into a database
- *Bill Rawlyk, Erik Silldorff, and Kathy Klink* – training new monitors at the spring monitoring workshop
- *John and MaryLou Thomas* – donating slide projector controller, extension cord, bulb, and slide stack loader
- *Local high school Student Conservation Association volunteers* – mowing the lawn and starting the process of cleaning out the shed and greenhouse
- *Ethicon, Inc volunteers* during Somerset County United Way's Annual Day of Caring – landscaping, mulching trails, cleaning out the shed and greenhouse, gardening, organizing and cleaning the office, painting the meeting room floor, donating a vacuum, weed whacker, and several boxes of Nalgene bottles, fixing the closet shelves, hanging bulletin boards, and much, much more!!
- *Everyone* who helped to make the annual Ride for the River and Wine Tasting events a success!

SBWA STAFF: **Bill Kibler**, Executive Director; **Nicole Rahman**, Program Director; **Michael Rehman**, Watershed Project Manager; **Dee Ely**, Office Manager; and **Mary Licetti**, Accounting.

2005 OFFICERS: *President:* James Hill *Vice President:* Johannah Weinhofer
Secretary: Patricia Stover *Treasurer:* Ken Jagel

2005 TRUSTEES: Raymond Drake, Karen Elbert, Oliver Elbert, Kenneth Fisher, Amy S. Greene, Dennis Kephart, Peter Kwiatek, Elizabeth (Tish) Plum, Fred Puelle, Kay Serebrakian, Sam Stothoff, and John Williamson

Contact SBWA at 908-782-0422 or email us at info@sbwa.org.



Two Grants: One Vision

By Michael Rehman, Watershed Project Manager

Imagine walking or riding your bicycle along a favorite road and passing a large forest tract, a subdivision, preserved farmland, a strip mall and so on. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to go along that same route and see only large forest tracts and preserved farmland? One of the many challenges we face in implementing project work in our watershed is forming a "connection" between past, present and future projects, improving water quality in multiple ways through a continuous corridor. SBWA is currently working on many projects, but two of these projects are doing exactly that, forming a connection and improving water quality in multiple ways, thereby maximizing the benefits of each project.

As part of the Targeted Watersheds Grant issued by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the 319H Pollution Control and Management Implementation Grant issued by New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), we are implementing two separate projects at one location: Hunterdon County's **Heron Glen Golf Course** in Ringoes. The first project, for the EPA grant, focuses on four areas of watershed management: water-quality management; water conservation; wildlife and habitat enhancement; and education and outreach. This is called the River Friendly program, which was developed by the Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association.

The second project, part of the 319H grant, focuses solely on water quality and is the implementation of a bio-filter trench next to Heron Glen's maintenance shed to capture and filter stormwater runoff prior to releasing it into wetlands connected with the Neshanic River.

"Positive results are already occurring (on this first project), ... on a visit last month I saw a Green Heron on one of their pond banks, ..."

To implement the first project, Kathy Hale of NJWSA's Watershed Protection Unit and I visited the golf course and were given an extensive tour by Jason Pierce, Heron Glen's Superintendent of Grounds. From this visit I compiled a list of actions, items aimed at improving the aforementioned four areas of watershed

management, for the course to become "River Friendly." After peer review by our Technical Advisory Committee, I presented the actions to Jason earlier this year. Positive results are already occurring, buffers have been increased around their ponds, on a visit last month I saw a Green Heron on one of their pond banks, out of play areas have been seeded with native little bluestem and their growth has been very successful, reduced mowing is taking place in selected areas, and a workshop is going to be planned to build blue bird boxes to be put on the course!

The second project is well underway also. A local engineering firm has completed a survey of the site and Jim Hill, the president of our Board of Trustees, is currently doing the design work for the trench. The trench will be about 30 inches deep, 15 to 20 feet wide and 120-150 feet long with approximately a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch depth of stone topped with about 3 feet of topsoil along the entire trench. The trench will be drained via a pipe laid underneath the stone directed into the wetlands. Once everything is in place we will plant native plants along the trench. When we have the design in place we will be able to move forward with the implementation of the trench. We anticipate that the trench will be in place next spring.

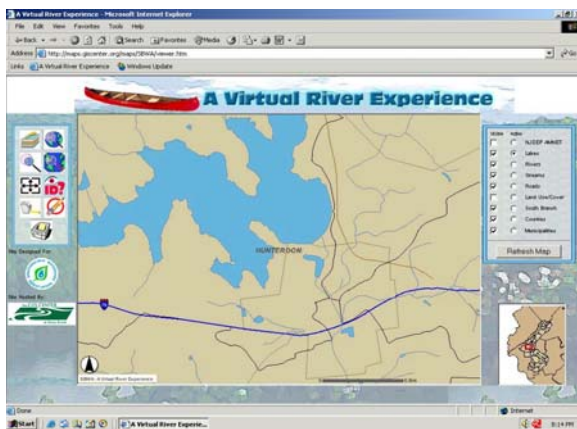
These two separate projects will improve the quality of water entering the Neshanic River and demonstrates the continued need to address water quality throughout our watershed with a multi-faceted approach. Working on a local smaller scale does have a positive affect for a much larger area, in this case our watershed.



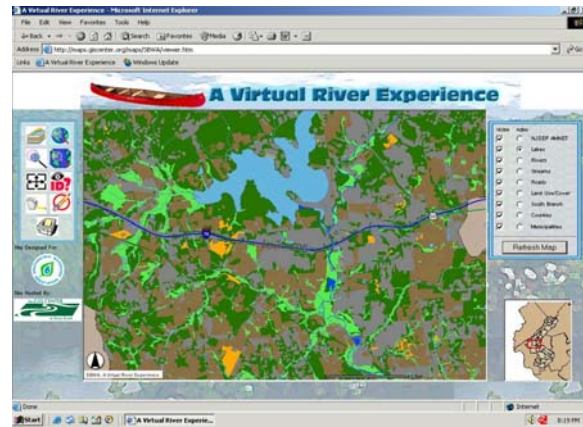
A Virtual River Experience, continued from page 1

tion for participating teachers once the site is complete and ready for action.

Although it is part of our Waterways Stewardship Project, the benefits of A Virtual River Experience can be utilized for free by any school within the watershed. The copies of screens in this article lack the detail and color of the real screens. Check them out online at www.sbwa.org!



A Close-up of Spruce Run Reservoir



A Close-up of Spruce Run Reservoir Showing the Land Use/Cover Layer

Wish List...

- Clipboards
- Computers – Pentium 3 equivalent or greater
- Copies of "A Guide to Common Freshwater Invertebrates of North America" by J. Reese Voshell, Jr., 2002, McDonald and Woodward Pub. Co., ISBN 0939923874
- LCD/Video projectors for PowerPoint presentations
- Microsoft Office 2000, XP, or 2003 - original CD's with license
- Microsoft Windows 98, 2000, ME, or XP – original CDs with license (OEM only w/ computer)
- Slide projector case, cordless remote control, and spare bulbs
- Thesaurus – Hardcover – 1995 or newer

Please call first to see if our need has already been met. Thanks!



EPA Grant for a Comprehensive Report on Twelve Years of Monitoring Data

Over the summer, we received a \$10,000 grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency. The funding will be used prepare a comprehensive report on our 12 years of stream monitoring data that have been collected by our trained "water stewards" every spring.

This report has been talked about for quite awhile, but no one was sure when it would be done. Now is the time! Our Monitoring Advisory Committee decided this past winter that it is indeed time to pull the collection of macroinvertebrate data off of the shelves, dust it off, and put it to good use.

We will keep you informed of the details as they develop. We have not yet determined who will be contracted to write the report and what variables will be included in the data analysis. We do know, however, that the report will be an excellent resource on the water quality trends of the South Branch Raritan River Watershed.

Additional funding is being sought to add even more depth to the report, and will be greatly appreciated.

See the related article on page 3 about SBWA's annual Volunteer Biological Monitoring Conference.



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