



# The Current

South Branch Watershed Association, Inc. Established 1959

... published quarterly at the Hermita Lechner House

## South Branch Hosts Controversial Guest

By Alan Rennie, Environmental Educator



The South Branch is playing host to a controversial visitor from Siberia, or possibly from Greenland. And no, it's not Vladimir Putin or Eric the Red. The dispute was over the place of origin of this visitor — a goose.

In November 2005, my wife, Barbara, and I were scanning the "pond" for newly arriving winter water fowl. This "pond," as I refer to it, is the section of the South Branch in Califon below the bridge, across from the Methodist Church on River Road. This wide stretch of the river attracts a number of interesting water fowl that stop on their way south, or spend much of the winter. As we approached the pond, we immediately spotted two male and two female Hooded Mergansers, our favorite winter guests. But even before I lifted my binoculars to look at the birds, I exclaimed to Barbara, "I can't believe it. I think I see a Barnacle Goose." And we did. I had never seen one before and it was certainly on my life "wish" list. I kept telling Barbara how lucky we are to have this bird in our town. In 2004, we tried but did not find the reported sighting of this goose in New Jersey. That goose was seen with over 40,000 mixed Snow Geese and Canada Geese at Merrill Creek Reservoir. And now, here was one right in front of me, 20 yards away.

Then the controversy began. Knowing how important our 2005 sighting was, we contacted the person responsible for compiling bird records for the Hunterdon section of *New Jersey Birds*, the official publication of the New Jersey Bird Records Committee (NJBRC). He showed up right away, looked at the bird, and dismissed it outright, saying that it was more than likely an escapee from an avian water fowl collection. Their normal breeding range is northern Europe, Siberia, west to Greenland. He said that for these geese to be "legitimate" one would need proof in the form of a band indicating its country of origin. Our bird had no band. Deep down I felt sure that our bird was a migrant that somehow ended up in North America. After all, many other Eurasian birds show up in our country and they're never questioned.

The goose stayed through that winter and left in March. Barbara and I were happy when the bird returned the fall of 2006, and again in 2007, each year spending the winter with a large flock of Canada Geese. We were even lucky enough to find it during our Hunterdon Christmas Bird Count.

*(continued on page 4)*

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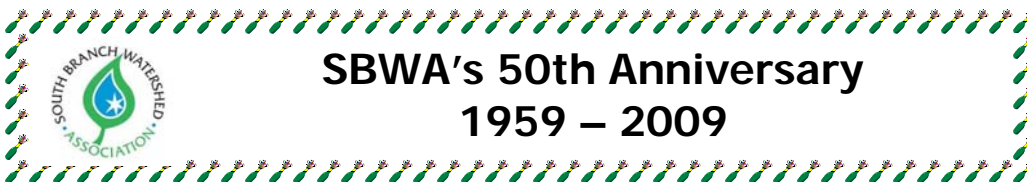
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SBWA is a proud member of Earth Share of New Jersey

Please check out our web site.  
[www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org)





## 50 Never Looked So Good!

By Bill Kibler, Executive Director

1959 was a remarkable year. With 50 years of hindsight, the events of that year seem sometimes disturbing, sometimes whimsical, sometimes historical.

Alaska became a state in the first week of the year. That same week, Castro took power in Cuba. In February, Buddy Holly, Richie Valens, and The Big Bopper perished in a plane crash memorialized as "The Day the Music Died."

"A Raisin in the Sun" debuted on Broadway in March just two days after that ubiquitous American icon — the Barbie doll — debuted. Decide for yourself what those two events say about American culture. In that same week in March, an uprising against the Chinese occupation of Tibet began in Lhasa and the Dalai Lama fled Tibet.

After deciding they all had "The Right Stuff," NASA announced the selection of our first seven astronauts in April. A project that evidently lacked the right stuff was the postal service's attempt in June to deliver "missile mail" from the submarine *USS Barbero* using a cruise missile. It may not surprise you that there was no second attempt. (I'd be remiss if I failed to mention that my parents were married in June 1959, so 2009 is also their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. No wonder I have a soft spot for 1959.)

In July, Dale Buis and Chester Ovnand became the first U.S. casualties in Vietnam. Louis and Mary Leakey discovered *Australopithecus* in Tanzania in July. Nine days and countless generations later, Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon engaged in the famous "kitchen debate" at the U.S. exhibition in Moscow.

In August, Hawaii became the 50<sup>th</sup> state. Earlier that same month, Explorer 6 sent back the first picture of Earth taken from space. In December, 12 countries, including the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., signed the Antarctic Treaty, the first Cold War arms control agreement, which set aside Antarctica as a scientific preserve.

And on Tuesday, April 19, 1959, at 8:00 p.m. at the Art Center in Clinton, New Jersey, the board of trustees of the South Branch Watershed Association met for the first time. On June 14<sup>th</sup> of that year, some 154 people came together at the Grandview Grange in Flemington to organize and fight to keep their river valley a great place to live and work. The co-chairs of the meeting were Edward Arnitz, Hermia Lechner, and George Howard. Do you think they knew they were adding to the considerable historical legacy of 1959?

Now we're 50 years old! We're the second oldest watershed association in New Jersey (after the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, who helped us organize in 1959), and one of the oldest watershed organizations in the country.

Some of our best partners in protecting watersheds in New Jersey also started in 1959, including Trout Unlimited and the Upper Raritan Watershed Association. In addition to sharing a passion for protecting our watersheds, we share a fifty-year history that pre-dates the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the federal Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and most of the environmental movement. Hard to believe, but SBWA predates Earth Day and is older than Spruce Run and Round Valley Reservoirs!

So congratulations to all of our members on the occasion of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary! And thank you for your support of the South Branch Watershed Association. We would never have made it this far without you! I look forward to continuing to make history as we move into our next 50 years.



## Help Clean Up the South Branch Raritan River on April 18

We will hold our 19th Annual Spring River Clean-Up on Saturday, April 18th, 2009 from 9 am to Noon. Volunteers are needed to help clean up the river and surrounding land at 21 sites throughout the entire watershed from the river's beginning at Budd Lake in Mount Olive to its end in Branchburg. Come join us and spend the morning making your community sparkle!

Anyone can participate! Individuals, scouts, schools, churches, and senior citizen groups are just some of who has participated in the past. Last year, almost 800 volunteers collected several tons of trash at 20 sites throughout the watershed. The Association needs your help to have a successful clean up again this year!

For more information or to volunteer, please contact Suzanne Skrzenski, Americorps Watershed Ambassador, at 908-782-0422 ext 16, or e-mail [suzanneskrzenski@sbwa.org](mailto:suzanneskrzenski@sbwa.org). Please pre-register by Tuesday, April 14, 2009.

## Seventh Annual Ride for the River Fundraiser on May 16



On Saturday, May 16, SBWA is holding its seventh annual Ride for the River fundraiser, a Motorcycle Poker Run that highlights the beauty of the South Branch Raritan River Watershed. The Ride for the River Poker Run starts and ends at the Spruce Run Recreation Area. Riders will travel 65 miles through the watershed.

The SBWA is also seeking sponsors for the event. Last year's event was sponsored by over 40 businesses and individuals whose names were featured at the event.

The SBWA is also soliciting donations of prizes for the participants.

Details (about registration and directions) will be published in the next issue of *The Current* and on our web site ([www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org)). You can also contact Lynn Becker at 908-782-0422 ext. 13, or e-mail [lynnbecker@sbwa.org](mailto:lynnbecker@sbwa.org).

## MARK YOUR 2009 CALENDAR

**Earth Share Celebrates New Jersey — March 20** at Laurita Winery in New Egypt. Check the web site ([www.earthsharenj.org/info\\_events/esnjcelebrates09](http://www.earthsharenj.org/info_events/esnjcelebrates09)) for details.

**Community Well Testing** — Also check our web site for additional dates.

- **April 20 — Alexandria Township**
- **May 4 — Lebanon Township**
- **May 18 and 20 — Tewksbury Township**

**Annual Member Meeting and Dinner — March 27.** See details on page 8.

**Hunterdon County Green Table Forums** All forums are held at the Echo Hill Lodge from 8:00—10:00 a.m.

**April 16** — Field Trip — Preserved Farm Tour

**May 21** — Open Space Round Table — Municipal Plans and Greenway Connections

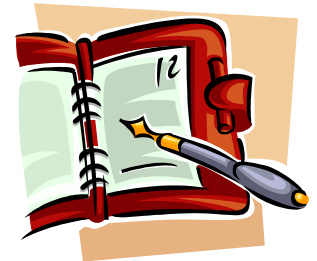
**Annual Spring River Clean-up — April 18** from 9:00 a.m. to Noon. See article above.

**Seventh Annual Ride for the River Fundraiser — May 16.** See article above.

**Volunteer Monitor Training — June 6** from 8:30 a.m. to noon at the SBWA office.

**Second Annual Treasures of the South Branch — June 13** at the Red Mill Museum in Clinton. See article on page 5.

Visit our web site ([www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org)) for dates of other meetings and events throughout the year.



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



## Volunteer Monitoring Conference By Nicole Rahman, Program Director

On Saturday, November 8, 2008, at Echo Hill Environmental Education Area, we presented the results of our 2008 river monitoring season. This was the 15<sup>th</sup> year of collecting biological data at 18 sites along the South Branch of the Raritan River and its tributaries.

Nicole Rahman, Program Director for the SBWA, along with three SBWA Volunteer Monitors, Kathy Klink from Delaware Township, Pat Stover from Raritan Township, and Carole Stober from Glen Gardner, presented this year's monitoring results and water quality trends seen over time. Bill Kibler, SBWA Executive Director, spoke about "Removing Dams to Improve Water Quality in New Jersey." There are 250 dams in the Raritan Basin, many of which currently serve no function, but do impair water quality and fish passage.

Every June trained volunteers collect a macroinvertebrate, or "bug" sample at their assigned sites along the river. They follow specific protocols to maintain accuracy and precision in the data collection. This bug sample is analyzed at a certified lab. The species of bugs present tells us whether the river is healthy or not. Certain bugs can live in polluted water, but others cannot. If you find a large number and variety types of bugs that need clean water to survive, you know you have a healthy river.

Of the 18 sites monitored this year, 10 were non-impaired, 8 were moderately impaired, and none were severely impaired. This is similar to last year's results of 13 non-impaired and 5 moderately impaired. However, there were more moderately impaired sites this year, so we need to keep an eye on these sites trending downward in terms of water quality. With 15 years of data collected so far, it will be interesting to follow any trends in water quality that may be present.

We'd like to thank all of the volunteers, monitoring advisory committee members, spring workshop trainers, and sponsors. These dedicated people make the monitoring program possible.

For more information about the conference, or about becoming a volunteer monitor, please call Nicole Rahman, Program Director, at 908-782-0422 ext. 14, or visit our website at [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org).

## Barnacle Goose on the South Branch, continued from page 1



Now the good news. At its spring 2008 meeting, the NJBRC voted unanimously to accept a record of Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) to the New Jersey State List without caveats concerning origin. Our bird became legitimately recognized at that meeting along with 11 other birds. When the bird had arrived again in November 2008, it became instantly famous perhaps because of its new status. During the months of November and December, small and not so small groups of birders showed up at the "pond" with all manner of equipment to see and record the bird. We received e-mails from a gentleman in California who was coming to New Jersey to see our Barnacle Goose!

If you are interested in seeing this beautiful bird, it spends much of its time in the "pond" across the road from the Methodist Church. If you can't find it there, it is often in one of the cornfields north of Califon with a large flock of Canada Geese. If you would like to know more about the status of Barnacle Goose in New Jersey, see *New Jersey Birds*, summer 2008, volume XXXIV, number 3 (published by the New Jersey Audubon Society). Good luck!

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**Please Donate to SBWA Today!**

Yes, I/we want to support SBWA's efforts to protect and enhance our water resources!

My/our check is enclosed. *(Please make checks payable to "SBWA.")*

\$250\*    \$150\*    \$50   Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_   \* River Watch Club

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

My company will match my gift. I have enclosed an appropriate form.

I am interested in including SBWA in my will.

I am interested in donating appreciated stock to SBWA.

.....

Please complete this form and mail with your contribution to:  
SBWA, Lechner House,  
41 Lilac Drive,  
Flemington, NJ 08822

**Thank you for your support!**

SBWA is a 501(c)3 organization.

All donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.





## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS *October 15, 2008 to January 15, 2009*

Doug Bohnenkamp  
Robert Luciano  
Barney and Mary Ristoro

John and Kathi Thonet  
Gray Tuttle and Michelle Lerner  
Randy and Diane Wingett

Ed Zappula

It is always a pleasure to welcome new members. Please call us if you need information or have a concern about water quality or potential threats to our watershed.

Please stop by our office to learn about volunteer opportunities. We want you to help us continue our important work.

### To All Our Members: Are your friends and neighbors members?

We can help you convince your friends and neighbors that membership in SBWA means helping to preserve a healthy watershed for the future. Recruit five new members for 2009 and get your next annual membership fee free. We have membership kits for prospective members that we can send to you or directly to your friend or neighbor. Please call us at 908-782-0422 or e-mail us at [info@sbwa.org](mailto:info@sbwa.org).

### Free SBWA Water Bottle

Get your free SBWA reusable water bottle when you join as a first time member or upgrade your membership when you renew your membership. Special thanks to Garden State Laboratories, our independent water testing lab and co-sponsor of these handy blue bottles. Please tell your friends and neighbors about this offer.



## Second Annual Treasures of the South Branch — June 13



Mark your calendars for this great event! Last year over 400 people enjoyed the many festivities celebrating all that the South Branch of the Raritan River has to offer in the areas of environment, recreation, and history.

Volunteers are needed to help with marketing and promotion, as well as "day of" activities. If you are interested in sponsoring or exhibiting at this event, please call Lynn Becker at 908-782-0422, ext 13. Details on sponsorships, exhibiting, and highlights from last year are on our website [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org).

**SBWA STAFF:** Bill Kibler, Executive Director; Nicole Rahman, Program Director; Tom Southard, Neshanic Project Manager; Lynn Becker, Director of Development and Member Relations; Dee Ely, Office Manager; Mary Licetti, Finance Director; Alan Rennie, Kandi Kaczetow, Marie Comerford, Tom Southard, Harold Blackstone, Henry Cattle, and Antoinette Boccuzzi, Environmental Educators; Suzanne Skrzenski, Ameri-corp Watershed Ambassador.

**2009 OFFICERS:** *President:* Fred Puelle; *Vice President:* James Hill; *Secretary:* Tish Plum Doggett; *Treasurer:* Ken Jagel.

**2009 TRUSTEES:** Randy Block, Dave Clapp, Karen Elbert, Amy S. Greene, Skip Jonas, Nick Romanenko, Kay Serebrakian, Christopher Trofimov, Johannah Weinhofer, and John Williamson.

Contact SBWA at 908-782-0422 or e-mail us at [info@sbwa.org](mailto:info@sbwa.org).





**Thanks to all who donated to our 2008 Annual Appeal. It was the most successful ever!** (through January 31, 2009)

River Steward (\$1,000 +)

Cassa Family Fund for  
Charitable Giving

Iona English  
Patricia Stover

Stream Steward (\$500—\$999)

Ira Kapp

Site Steward (\$250—\$499)

Dave Clapp  
Hatch Mott McDonald Engineering

Skip Jonas  
Jay Langley  
William Riley

Richard Zimmer and Marfy  
Goodspeed

Friend of the River  
(\$150—\$249)

Access Property  
Management, LLC  
Amy S. Greene Environmental  
Consultants, Inc.

Lynn Becker  
Jack Benson  
Phil Fleming  
Gordon Kibler  
Mary Melfi  
John Mocenigo

W. Burton Salisbury  
Joseph and Mary Schwenkler  
Dan and Kay Serebrakian  
Gene Slowinski and Kathryn L.  
Koch  
Richard Stothoff

Contributors (\$100—\$149)

Barbara Bemelmans  
Sarah Dougan

Mitchel and Ruth Feldman  
Jon Fineman  
John Frisoli

Rebecca Nadolny  
Tom Southard  
Harry Woske

All 2008 Annual Appeal contributors will be recognized in the 2008 Annual Report that will be distributed at the 50th Anniversary Dinner on March 27, 2009. All contributors will be listed on our website, [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org).

## More Special Thanks

- PSEG — \$2,500 grant for Waterways Stewardship Project
- Mary Reinhart Stackhouse Foundation — \$30,000 grant for general operations
- Merck — \$10,000 grant for Waterways Stewardship Project
- Laraine Mocenigo — designing Annual Dinner invitation
- Lucy Fleming, and Val and Lindsey Burns — preparation of Annual Appeal mailing
- Sue Clausen — repair of display carrier
- Pat Stover, Kathy Klink, and Carole Stober—presenting their monitoring site results at our conference

## Other Ways to Help ...

- Donate a car or motorcycle to benefit SBWA and get a tax deduction. Go to [www.vehiclemanagementservices.com](http://www.vehiclemanagementservices.com) or call 888-395-3955.
- Use [GoodSearch.com](http://GoodSearch.com) as your search engine and designate SBWA as your cause.
- Contribute through giving programs at your workplace.
- Order "Tastefully Simple" products through our web site, [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org).



### 50th Anniversary Dinner and Member Meeting — March 27

All are invited to attend the 50th Anniversary Dinner and Annual Meeting on Friday, March 27. The dinner will be at the Copper Hill Country Club, Ringoes, NJ, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The festivities will start at 6:00 p.m. with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres; the dinner and the program will start at 7:00 p.m. The cost is \$50 for members and \$60 for non-members.

The program will feature the premiere of the video, "People and Water: 50 Years of the South Branch Watershed Association." This video was made to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the association.

The following awards will be presented:

- The Corporate Achievement Award to Economics Concepts
- The Environmental Achievement Award to Student Environmental Alliance, Hunterdon Central Regional High School
- The Hermia Lechner Award to Laraine Mocenigo

For more information and tickets for the dinner, please call Dee Ely at 908-782-0422 ext. 10.

Please bring your friends and neighbors to this exciting 50th Anniversary celebration!



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Environment"



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