

For the birds: fruit trees planted in ex-lima bean field

By **JOHN ALVAREZ**
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Much to the surprise of many locals, Cape May has been becoming a little green lately.

Not in a sense of being ill, but in the way it sees the future of the environment and how we, as a society, must do our part with climate change. Nowhere was this more evident than this past weekend in West Cape May as people from all over southern New Jersey gathered to do something that was definitely for the birds.

“Normally, ‘for the birds,’ would have a negative connotation,” said the Rev. Jeffrey W. Elliott, pastor of Cape May Lutheran Church and chairman of the Green Team for Cape May. “But this time, it is a positive thing. We are planting 1,000 fruit trees. We will be tag-

ging each one to see how many survive. These trees will create a habitat from an old lima bean field.”

The “old lima bean field” is the Garrett Family Preserve at Cape Island Creek located at 801 Wilson St. in West Cape May. The Nature Conservancy now owns the property and opened it up to public access last fall.

“We have owned it for a while and it was publicly open but the trails and the parking lot is relatively new,” said Adrianna Zito-Livingston, Cape Preserves coordinator whose position with the Nature Conservancy is managing its three preserves in Cape May County. “The property was required as old agricultural fields. It is several acres, 180 in total, of upland forest, farm fields and tidal marsh that are a good combination of land to water ratio.”

It was an opportunity

because, as fallow fields, which is old English term for a field left unplowed for rotation, the Nature Conservancy can add lipid-rich, or fat-providing, fruit-bearing trees for migratory birds.

“The property was acquired along the Atlantic Flyway,” Zito-Livingston said. “It is an important site, as is all of Cape May is important for migratory birds. It is especially good for neotropical migratory birds, which fly all the way down to South America and need a lot of energy to do that. So we can provide them that resource and enhancement by planting additional trees here on this property.”

When it has these open fields, the Nature Conservancy will attempt to make a mosaic of these fruit-bearing tree habitats as well as an open meadow area.

Damon Noe, critical lands manager for the Nature Conservancy, is a land steward who has been with the project the longest. Turning the Garrett Family Preserve into a migratory rest stop was his brain-child.

“We are planting all together about 2,000 trees,” Noe said while taking a break from digging holes for the project. “There is a bunch of natural recruitment here. This field is along the Atlantic Flyway. Thousands of birds migrate through this exact area when they go up north and again when fly back south. It’s like a funnel. The birds need lots of energy. If you were to fly a thousand miles, you’d need lots of energy, especially if you are a tiny bird with a fast heart rate. So they come through here. All the shrubs and trees we are planting have lipid-rich berries on them. They also have long-term fats inside them so when the birds eat the berries, it will get in the birds’ system and stay in their system as a source of energy that will last a while. These trees don’t produce berries that are short-term sugars. They are not Monster energy drinks, which are good for an hour or two



John Alvarez/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Members of Atlantic Cape Community College’s Circle K dig holes to help plant the 1,000 fruit-bearing trees on a former lima bean field in West Cape May.

then the energy is gone. This will last in a bird’s system.

“We have a 90 percent survival rate so far, which is pretty high,” Noe said. “Some of what we are planting are shrubs and won’t get over 5 feet. Others like the black cherry trees will get 25 feet tall. It will be a mid-successional forest for years.”

This is the second 1,000-tree planting since the project started, done with mitigation funds from the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. With fees assessed for improvements on the turnpike, organizations such as the Nature Conservancy can apply for grants and get the funds to do good work in wetland areas.

“The last time we did a 1,000-tree planting here, we set up several workdays and planted them ourselves,” Zito-Livingston stated. “After the last planting, I thought if we could throw everyone at this thing together, not only would it be a great thing for community building and sharing knowledge about the project, but we could really see what we can do. Now I have an advantage of knowing a lot people in the community like Pastor Jeff (Elliott) and a lot of groups like his youth group from the church. Actually, the ACCC’s group, Circle K, approached me and said

they have willing bodies and wanted to know what they could do.”

“We were trying to provide some muscle, some people power to the project,” Elliott said. “When it comes to any green projects, I like to do things in a coalition way. We do projects with all the different groups down here. Our Green Team was just named the ‘Small Town Champion’ for the fourth time in nine years by Sustainable Jersey, which is the certifying group for the state.”

Being green is certainly nothing new to Elliott. A few weeks ago, he spoke at the New Jersey League of Municipalities Convention in front of about 400 people from all the different communities from all over the state.

“There are three categories; small town, medium town and large town.” he said. “We (Cape May) are the greenest small town. We are certified as the perennial champion of the small towns for the next three years. Yet we always want someone else to pass us by. This is one title you don’t want to hold onto because sustainability is so important. When it comes to climate change, the wider sustainability is practiced, the better it is for everyone. That’s what this is really

about; heading off climate change and its negative effects, especially here on the coastal area. We have a lot riding on that.”

As for Cape Island Creek Preserve, the funding was for a two-year project. There will also be maintenance required to handle aggressive vines which will need to be pulled and removed.

“There will see a regular volunteer need for this property,” Zito-Livingston stated.

“What a great resource protected lands are, especially when public asses is made available. I think this is opportunity for us to not only get important habitat work done but also raise awareness of this preserve. We’ve owned it for a while and it’s been a little tucked away. The Garrett family really wants this place to be a resource for the community for recreation, for passive wildlife viewing and, as they see it as an opportunity for people to learn about the importance of environmental resources and their connection to global issues.”

The New Jersey chapter of the Nature Conservancy is located at 2350 Route 47 in Delmont. For volunteer opportunities, call (609) 861-4129 or got to their website at www.nature.org/newjersey.

TIDES : Nov. 22-29, 2017

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
22	10:03	10:29	3:27	4:23
23	10:43	11:14	4:06	5:06
24	11:27		4:49	5:52
25	12:03	12:16	5:39	6:40
26	12:59	1:10	6:38	7:31
27	1:58	2:08	7:42	8:22
28	2:55	3:07	8:46	9:13
29	3:49	4:03	9:46	10:02

MOON PHASES

First quarter, Nov. 26 • full moon, Dec. 3

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Lower police investigating car burglaries

ERMA — The Lower Township Police Department reported a number of car burglaries investigated during the weekend of Nov. 17-19.

All the burglaries occurred in Villas, specifically on Oak, Walnut and

Spruce avenues. Several of the victims reported the car burglaries had occurred during the night hours.

Police are asking residents to ensure their cars are locked at all times and keep valuables secured in their residence. The majority of the vehicles burglarized over the weekend were unlocked and had valuables in plain view of potential

thieves, according to police.

Lower Township police are asking all residents to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity immediately to (609) 886-2711. Anyone with information in reference to the car burglaries can report it via the Lower Township Police Confidential Tip line at (609) 886-1619, ext. 159, or via Nixle.

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**2D Justice League PG-13 11:30, 2:10, 7:30, 10:05
**3D Justice League PG-13 4:50
**Wonder PG 11:20, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:40
**The Star PG 11:00, 1:30, 3:50, 6:50, 9:20
Daddy's Home 2 PG-13 11:40, 2:20, 5:00, 7:40, 10:00
Murder on the Orient Express PG-13 11:10, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 9:50
Thor: Ragnarok PG-13 12:00, 3:30, 6:30, 9:25

** No Passes • () Fri • Wed • [] Thursday

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