

NJMC NEWS RELEASE

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**New Jersey
Meadowlands
Commission**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Amazing Animals, Stargazing, Local History Talks Highlight New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) Fall 2013 Public Programs

Season Begins on Thursday, Sept. 19, With Endangered Species Talk

LYNDHURST, N.J. –Visits from rescue dogs, owls, bats and other critters, local history talks, astronomy programs, nature walks and an annual Halloween event are among the highlights of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission’s (NJMC) Fall 2013 public schedule of events. These fun and educational programs for all age ranges take place at the Meadowlands Environment Center in DeKorte Park, the home of the NJMC.

“The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission is pleased to present a wide variety of engaging programs and workshops for children, adults and families that highlight the importance of wildlife and the environment through hands-on activities and lively discussions,” said Marcia Karrow, Executive Director of the NJMC. “The Commission invites everyone in the Meadowlands District and beyond to take advantage of these unique learning experiences.”

Awesome Animals

Visitors can meet and learn about a variety of wildlife and domesticated animals throughout the fall season, giving adults and children a chance to experience these fascinating creatures up-close. The season kicks off on **Thursday, Sept. 19, at 2 p.m.** with a talk by the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey on “**Threatened and Endangered Species**” in the Garden State. There are 45 such species in the state, including several birds that can be seen in the Meadowlands. Endangered bald eagles, northern harriers and peregrine falcons, and threatened Ospreys and American Kestrels have been seen often at DeKorte Park. Speakers will focus on the importance of educating the public about the plight of these animals and their importance to the environment.

Return to the MEC on **Sunday, Sept. 22, at 1 p.m.**, for a “**Muskrat Ramble with Don Smith.**” Don, a retired Chief Naturalist with the NJMC, grew up in Little Ferry and is an expert on the Hackensack River, its marshes and ecology. He will tell some great stories about life growing up in the Meadowlands in the late 1950s, including his childhood adventures trapping muskrats in the marshes.

Join third-generation zoologist and author **Lori Space Day** and some of her animal friends, including snakes, turtles and tortoises, on **Sunday, Sept. 29, at 1 p.m.** Day grew up surrounded by animals at Space Farms, her family’s zoo in Sussex County. As a young child, she learned at her grandmother’s side how to

care for the infant animals. Day's memoir, "The Zoo Keeper's Daughter," won the 2007 New Jersey Herald Reader's Choice Award for Best Local Author.

Next up on the animal agenda are some very special canines trained to help find people who become lost in forests, reservations and natural areas. Participants can **"Meet a Rescue Dog" at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 9.** Members of Mahwah-based New Jersey Search and Rescue will talk about how the dogs carry out their missions in all elements, and give tips for what you can do if you get lost in the wilderness.

Get ready for Halloween on **Sunday, Oct. 20, at 1:30 p.m.** by getting an up-close look at some not-so-scary **"Bats, Spiders and Snakes."** Visitors will learn how these seemingly creepy critters provide more than a good scare by helping the environment. Joe D'Angeli, who runs the Wildlife Conservation and Education Center in Ridgefield Park and is known as "New Jersey's Batman," will focus on local bat species, the environmental benefits of bats and recent threats to their survival.

On **Sunday, Nov. 17, at 1 p.m.,** meet some **"Cedar Run Owls"** and find out why these birds are considered so wise. Staff from the Burlington County-based Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge will bring some of their tree-dwellers, including Reggie, an eastern screech owl brought to Cedar Run after an injury caused permanent blindness in her left eye.

The incredible longevity of the horseshoe crab is the topic of discussion at **2 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 3.** Join Dr. Angela Cristini, Director of the MEC, as she explains why **"Horseshoe Crabs – Living Fossils,"** were here before the dinosaurs and still inhabit our bays today.

Halloween Fun

Kids of all ages are invited to DeKorte Park on **Thursday, Oct. 24** for **"Halloween at the Meadowlands."** The highly popular annual program includes hayrides, a "Spooky Walk," ghost stories, games and crafts. The fun begins at 5:30 p.m. The event sells out quickly and pre-registration is required. Cost is \$8, \$6 for MEC members. To register, go to www.njmeadowlands.gov/ec. For more information, call 201-460-8300.

Astronomical Wonders

Old and young alike can view and learn about planets, stars and other celestial bodies at the NJMC's **William D. McDowell Observatory.** The Observatory, which features a research grade telescope with a 20-inch mirror, is **open to the public for free on Monday and Wednesday nights** during the fall season, excluding holidays and weather permitting. **The Observatory is open from 8 to 10 p.m. in September and October, and 7 to 10 p.m. in November and December.** Adults must accompany children, and you must be able to climb 25 steps to reach the telescope. Registration is not required.

Observatory staff are also hosting two special programs for children. **On Saturday, Oct. 5, at 1 p.m.,** join Dr. John Sloan, Director of the Observatory, for **"Comets and Asteroids: Do Rocks Really Fall from The Sky?"** Dr. Sloan will give a non-technical overview of comets and asteroids. Kids can learn about comets that have been observed throughout history and view close-up photographs of asteroids. The program is geared toward children ages 8-12.

Children ages 5-8 are invited to **"A Child's Guide to the Universe," on Friday, Dec. 6 at 7 p.m.** The program is designed to introduce young children to the Observatory, learn how its telescope works and how to use it. The kids will then get to view several celestial bodies, weather permitting.

For adults, the Observatory offers a **“Let’s Talk Astronomy”** lecture series on Tuesday nights. Each month focuses on a specific aspect of astronomy. Cost is \$10 for September, \$15 per month for October, November and December. This season’s topics include:

September: The Development of Modern Astronomy

October: Our Solar System & Solar Systems Beyond

November: The Life Cycles of Stars & Relativity

December: Galaxies; Cosmology and Life In the Universe

Local History

The Meadowlands has a long, rich and sometimes quirky history. For instance, people may not realize that pigs in the Garden State, including a plentiful supply in Secaucus, were much sought after in colonial and early America for their lard and meat, and New Jersey was known to have the biggest and best pigs. Join historian Judith Krall Russo for her presentation, **“New Jersey Swine – Bringing Home the Bacon,”** on **Thursday, Nov. 7, at 1 p.m.**

Located under what is now a residential area, **“North Arlington’s Schuyler Copper Mine”** is the topic of discussion on **Tuesday, Nov. 26, at 2 p.m.** The former mine, which operated from 1715 to 1901, was the earliest known copper mine in New Jersey. On **Sunday, Dec. 8, at 1 p.m.**, Meadowlands Museum Trustee Frank Godlewski presents **“Mapping Out Meadowlands History.”** Godlewski will demonstrate how maps are used to help understand the evolution of the Meadowlands through time.

Nature As a Canvas

The NJMC is hosting several art workshops for adults and children this fall, with the environment as your muse. Basic supplies are provided at all programs. A four-session **“Autumn Watercolor Series”** will introduce participants to the unique qualities of watercolor painting and how to capture the movements and colors of the season. The workshops will take place at **2:30 p.m.** on **Tuesdays, Oct. 1, 8, 15 and 22.** The cost for the four sessions is \$60, MEC members \$40.

Kids ages 6-12 can get in on the fun by signing up for **“Watercolor Pencils for Kids: Signs of Fall,”** on **Sunday, Oct. 6 at 1 p.m.** Instructors will teach how to create drawings of falling leaves and then paint them with “no mess” color. The workshop costs \$10 per child. A **“Drawing Nature Beginner/Refresher Course”** for adults and teens is scheduled for **Saturday, Nov. 2, at 10 a.m.** If you’ve never drawn, or if it’s been awhile, this class will begin to unlock the secrets of realistic illustration. Exercises will focus on looking at natural objects for their visual components (shape, proportions and values) and using pencil techniques to translate what you view onto paper. Cost is \$20, \$15 for MEC members.

Fall is Fantastic for Bird Walks

The NJMC and the Bergen County Audubon Society continue their free guided bird walks during the fall on the first Sunday and third Tuesday of every month at 10 a.m. Walks take place at DeKorte Park, Harrier Meadow in North Arlington, Mill Creek Marsh in Secaucus and Losen Slote Creek Park in Little Ferry. Expert guides will help you spot raptors including northern harriers and bald eagles, waterfowl such as shovelers and pintails, and other fall migrants.

Welcoming A New Season

The fall schedule ends by welcoming the next season with a **“Winter Solstice Celebration”** on **Thursday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m.** Visitors of all ages can learn about the history of the solstice, make a solstice craft and enjoy solstice-themed treats. Adults must accompany children.

Cost for the Sept. 19, Sept. 22, Sept. 29, Oct. 9, Oct. 20, Nov. 7, Nov. 17, Nov. 26, Dec. 6, Dec. 8 and Dec. 19 programs is \$5, MEC members \$4. The Oct. 5 and Dec. 3 programs and the guided nature walks are free.

The Meadowlands Environment Center is an NJMC facility operated by Ramapo College. For more information on Fall 2013 programs, or to register, visit www.njmeadowlands.gov/ec or pick up a registration form at the Meadowlands Environment Center, 2 DeKorte Park Plaza, Lyndhurst. There is no phone registration. For questions, call 201-460-8300.

Press Only: For more information on Fall 2013 programs, for additional images and to arrange coverage, please contact Brian Aberback at 201-460-4619 or brian.aberback@njmeadowlands.gov.

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