

# The Green Oasis

*The Official Newsletter of  
Liberty State Park*

SPRING 2021

*The Green Oasis is published  
by Liberty State Park.*

*We encourage and welcome  
your comments and  
suggestions. If you have any  
ideas for articles for upcoming  
issues, please contact us at  
[LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov](mailto:LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov).*

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## Spring Planting in Full Bloom at Liberty State Park

Since 2003, the Friends of Liberty State Park (FOLSP) has been supporting annual tree plantings in LSP. Over 950 trees have been planted over the past 17 years in cooperation with the New Jersey Tree Foundation.

This spring's planting include 15 native hardwoods along the Nature Path and some additions to the Grove of Remembrance. Many thanks to the FOLSP for their generous donation and to the NJ Tree Foundation for their expertise!



NJ Tree Foundation hard at work



## Farewell to Deputy Superintendent, Jon Luk



Superintendent Luk (third from right) at the 2019 Naturalization Ceremony. Photo by Tim Larson

When I think about my time at Liberty State Park, I must go back a few years before I joined the State Park Service. During college, I worked at the Liberty Science Center and my co-workers and I would often spend time exercising or playing frisbee or picnicking in Liberty State Park after work. I didn't realize then, the significant role that Liberty State Park would play in my life and that my journey of creating memories had just begun. After college, I moved to Jersey City, started a family and ultimately began my career at Liberty State Park as the Deputy Superintendent in 2012.

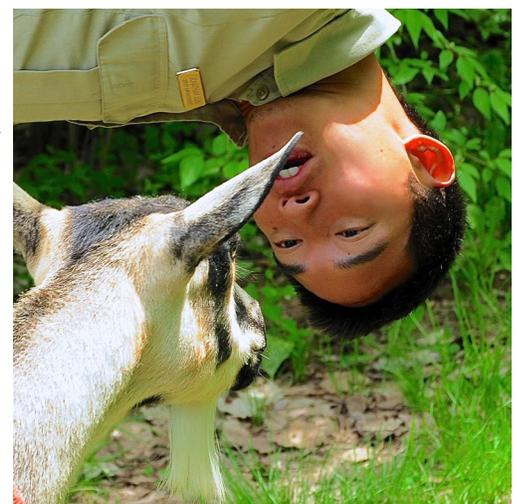
Liberty State Park is truly unique and I was awed at the staff's ability to make the operations and services seamless to the visitors. From facility operations,

groundskeeping, interpretive program development, special use permitting, to picnic scheduling, each of the different departments worked together to accomplish a shared mission. Superintendent Rodriguez and I also shared a vision of park initiatives we hoped to get started, including a ribbon cutting for the newly constructed group picnic pavilions, the park's newest amenity.

Unfortunately, 2012 also brought Superstorm Sandy to the region. Liberty State Park experienced unprecedented flooding and damage from the storm surge and heavy winds. The historic CRRNJ Terminal and Nature Interpretive Center were both inundated with flood waters as was most of the park land. I remember working with the maintenance to line sandbags along the doors of the Terminal in anticipation of the storm and asked the staff if the building had ever received significant flooding before. Most of the veteran park staff did not remember so. Of course, 24 hours later, the CRRNJ Terminal was flooded with over six feet of water, destroying doors, windows, utilities, interpretive displays, and so much more. From that day on, the promise of the new initiatives previously discussed with Superintendent Rodriguez had changed to damage assessment and eventually rebuilding.

Aside from the shocking views of the destruction caused by Superstorm Sandy, another memory that sticks in my mind is the dedication of the park staff who came to work each day to clean up debris and begin rebuilding the park. Like much of New Jersey, park workers were not immune to the long power outages and difficulties finding fuel for their vehicles to get to work. The dedication they displayed in showing up each day and working hard will always be in my mind.

One of the blessings in disguise that came with Superstorm Sandy was the opportunity for DEP to update the Nature Interpretive Center. Since the building was flooded as well, much of the interior finishes and exhibits required replacement. It was a true pleasure collaborating with our park naturalists, Lori Garth and Sarajane Bruno, and the rest of the design/construction team to implement the renovations, taking inspiration from the youth visitors of Liberty State Park and my own adventures with my children. I look forward to hopefully turning the corner on the COVID19 pandemic and attend another ribbon cutting for its reopening.



Superintendent Luk welcomes the "prescribed grazers" to LSP  
Photo by Gail Zavian

*(Continued from Page 2)*

Despite the challenges of both a once-in-lifetime superstorm and a pandemic, my time spent at Liberty State Park was filled with joy. I will fondly remember so many positive encounters with our park patrons, partners, volunteers, and the dedicated Friends of Liberty State Park that all care so deeply about the park. As I turn attention to my new assignment, I hope that the experiences at Liberty have prepared me for good stewardship of the nearly 1,600 acres of forest and tidal wetlands of Cheesequake State Park. While there's no view of the Statue of Liberty or NYC skyline, Cheesequake is unique with several miles of undulating hiking trails, a freshwater lake for fishing and swimming, salt marsh, and a campground. There is a wonderful Nature Center nestled in the forest surrounded by woodland creatures where children and families can join a guided nature hike. I look forward to developing relationships with my new park constituents, including the ospreys, fox, turkeys, blue birds, and bald eagles!

## *Black Tom Island: Virtual Radio Play and Panel Discussion*

by Janet Akhtarshenas



*Black Tom Island* explores the 1916 explosion at Black Tom Island, which is now part of Liberty State Park. Written by Martin Casella, the play examines the shocking act of sabotage on American soil through the lens of a fictionalized Slovak immigrant and his wife who may or may not be involved in the attack. Due to the COVID pandemic, Martin Casella's play has been adapted as a radio play and distributed as a podcast. A virtual panel discussion about the actual historical event featuring historians and the play's creative team is also available as a second podcast episode.

The radio play is directed by Darren Lee and features actors Michael Stewart Allen, Damian Buzzerio, Mason Hensley, and Jenna Krasowski. Narration is by Executive

Director Meredith Burns and sound design is by Megumi Katayama.

The panel features Dr. Libby O'Connell, Chief Historian Emeritus at the History Channel, Janet Akhtarshenas, Historic Interpreter at Liberty State Park, John Beekman from the Jersey City Public Library, and Dr. Timothy R. White of New Jersey City University. Additional participants include playwright, Martin Casella and director Darren Lee. The program was moderated by Jim Peskin.

*Black Tom Island* radio play is available to listen for free anywhere you get your podcasts: Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcast, etc. Just type "Black Tom Island" into the search and it will come up. It's also available with closed captions at [Black Tom Island Radio Play | Art House Productions - YouTube](#). The panel discussion broadcast is available at [Black Tom Island Historical Panel | Art House Productions - YouTube](#). Both will be available in perpetuity.

This program was made possible by a grant from the New Jersey State Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State, and administered by the Hudson County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs, Thomas A. DeGise, Hudson County Executive & the Hudson County Board of County Commissioners.

If you would like to learn more about the history of Black Tom, Liberty State Park offers a free program, *Explosion at Black Tom*, once a month. For a monthly schedule of our history programs, please email [LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov](mailto:LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov).

## Eagle Scout Candidate Builds Pollinator Boxes



Scouts constructing pollinator box

If you have been out walking in the park lately, you may have noticed the new pollinator boxes on the Nature Path and around the pond trail. Built and installed by Bernardsville Troop 150 Eagle Scout candidate, Jack Doyle, and his fellow scouts and volunteers for his service project, these structures look a bit like bird boxes but are covered with mesh and filled with drilled out wood, tree bark and pinecones.

### What is a Pollinator Nesting Box?

Pollinator nesting boxes provide overwintering habitat and nesting materials for native pollinators like bees, wasps, beetles, butterflies, and moths. Constructed of untreated lumber or found wood, these shelters can be filled with a variety of natural materials like pine-

cones, plant stems, tree bark, paper straws and drilled scraps of wood. A protective wire mesh helps to keep out predators like birds and rodents.

### What are pollinators and what do they do?

Pollinators are animal species that inadvertently transfer pollen between plants while feeding on nectar and other parts of the plant. Once pollinated, these plants will produce fruits and seeds, ensuring new plant growth. Some of New Jersey's most important crops depend on pollinators including tomatoes, peaches, blueberries, and cranberries. Native pollinators include mason bees, carpenter bees, bumblebees, sweat bees, wasps, hover flies, and numerous species of beetles, butterflies, and moths.

More information about pollinators can be found at:

<https://www.nj.gov/.../pi/pdf/beeswaspshornetsbrochure.pdf> or at:  
<https://www.fws.gov/.../PollinatorBookletFinalrevWeb.pdf>



Scouts working to install pollinator boxes in Liberty State Park

## Winter to Spring with the Birds

by Patricia Hilliard



Snowy Owl  
Photo by Rick Corder

### Winter of Snowy Owls

In January 2021, when cold northwest winds blew hard, many bird watchers got excited about the possibility of seeing a snowy owl. 2021 proved to be an irruption year, which means these owls traveled further south than normal. While snowy owls usually winter in the grasslands of Canada and go north to Hudson Bay and Greenland near the Arctic for spring breeding, this year, reports were coming in from all over New Jersey. Snowy owls had arrived!

The adult male owls are pure white while the adult females have some brown feathers on their lower bodies. Immatures are deeply flecked with brown. Snowy owls are the largest North American owl by weight. Their wingspan can be as wide as six feet, yet their flight is as quiet as the falling snow. They stand about 25 inches tall and look to be as large as a Canada goose.

Unlike most owls, snowys are diurnal, or active during daylight. At home in the Arctic, their most common food supply is lemmings, but when visiting New Jersey, they like to hunt small waterfowl such as ruddy ducks. They have been observed in Newark Bay hunting ducks by perching on the flashing lights of buoys. Boulders at the shoreline, hilltops and roof tops are favorite roosting places of snowy owls when they visit New Jersey.

### Spring Robins

In the crossing seasons from winter to spring, birders will bid farewell to winter migrants like the snowy owl but welcome in spring favorites like the American robin. As the snowy heads north to the Arctic, the robin reappears from its wintering grounds in the southern states and more protected inland forests. They reappear in urban areas in search of worms. Robins will also feed on berries and a variety of insects. Parks are a favorite place for robins because they like the tree and lawn balance that offer nesting sites and food close together. Robins usually lay three to five pale blue eggs in a round bowl-like nest in a tree. Liberty State Park is often home to hundreds of robins in the early spring. Watch for them along in the grassy areas along Freedom Way.



Male robin  
Photo by Lee Karney/SFWS

### Sources:

-*A Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern and North Central North America*, by Roger Tory Peterson, Houghton

Mifflin Company, 1980. ISBN 0-395-26621-1

-Book: *Guide to Owl Watching in North America* by Donald S. Heintzelman, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, NY ISBN: 0-486-27344-X

-All About Birds: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/>

## Eastern Cottonwood: It's So Fluffy!

by Sarajane Bruno

This past winter, it was all too common to see snowy landscapes in New Jersey and Liberty State Park was no exception. Come spring, however, the appearance of snowlike, soft, white, fluff can be attributed to a different natural phenomenon, the cottonwood tree.

Eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), is a type of poplar tree. Its common name is derived from its seeds, which are billowy and resemble cotton. These fleecy white clumps are easily dispersed through the wind, which carries seeds away from the parent tree. The female cottonwood produces the seeds in abundance and they may start to spread as early as February if the weather is warm enough.

An eastern cottonwood can grow very tall and very quickly. Some of the tallest cottonwoods have grown to be 100 feet in height. This tree also tolerates a wide range of soil types, which accounts for its abundance in Liberty State Park and much of the country.

The leaves of the cottonwood are shaped like hearts, with jagged, toothed edges. They are dark green in the spring and summer and turn bright yellow in the fall. When the wind blows through these leaves, they make a distinct rustling noise.

Eastern cottonwoods are native to North America and have existed for a very long time. Its wood is lightweight yet durable, making it suitable for building as well as pulp for paper products. Many animals eat the bark, leaves, and seeds of cottonwood trees, and birds roost and nest in the branches. Some animals also use the fluffy seeds as lining in nests and burrows.



(Left) Fluffy white "cotton" seeds of the eastern cottonwood. Photo by Brett Billings/USFWS

(Right) Heart shaped cottonwood leaf.

## Planning Continues on Restoration of Interior Section at Liberty State Park

Over the past few months New Jersey DEP has continued to host public virtual meetings to focus on specific aspects of the Liberty State Park Interior Restoration Project. Designs for the project feature the creation and enhancement of freshwater wetlands, the addition of tidal saltmarsh, and upland maritime habitat that will transform this former rail yard into an ecological gem within Jersey City. The project also includes an extensive system of trails, paths, wildlife observation structures, and interpretive signage which will allow visitors to connect with this amazing new natural area.

In January, the DEP hosted two additional virtual public meetings. The first focused on the specifics of the restoration remediation process and the second on potential options for active recreation amenities. The third meeting was held in February and detailed the ecological aspects of the restoration. Past public virtual meetings can be viewed at:

### **Liberty State Park Interior Restoration 30% Design Concept**

October 2020 [30% Design Concept Virtual Public Meeting](#) (YouTube)

### **Remediation of the Interior of Liberty State Park**

January 7, 2021 [View the meeting recording](#) (YouTube)

### **Options for Active Recreation Amenities**

January 21, 2021 [View the meeting recording](#) (YouTube)

### **Ecological Restoration at Liberty State Park**

February 4, 2021 [View the meeting recording](#) (YouTube)

The DEP is currently reviewing and incorporating the public's feedback and suggestions. Stay tuned for next steps in the design process.

## Help Support Liberty State Park with Dedicated License Plate

With the purchase of Liberty State Park license plates, you will be supporting the continued improvement of New Jersey's premier urban state park. Your dollars help to maintain and restore historic structures like the CRRNJ Terminal, provide for upgrades to the Nature Center, create wildlife habitat, increase recreational opportunities, and so much more.

In 2016, license plate funds were used to install 50 new flag poles along Freedom Way which now display the 50 state flags.



Please consider becoming part of our community of supporters. For more information or to order your plates today, please visit your nearest NJ Motor Vehicle Agency or visit on line at <http://www.state.nj.us/mvc/Vehicle/Liberty.htm>, or by phone at (888) 486-3339. Thank you for your support.

## Greetings from the Garden

SPRING! Always a wonderful time to be in Liberty State Park!

While our Volunteer Gardening Program has seen fewer participants with the pandemic, we still had some dedicated individuals who came out last fall to help us with our annual bulb planting. The daffodils and tulips will be showing their colorful brilliance as the weather begins to warm.

We look forward to welcoming back our volunteers this spring, as we start our seasonal plantings and maintenance activities. There is always plenty of weeding and mulching to be done!

If you are interested in volunteering, please call Rosemarie Cuillerier at 201-915-3418 or email [rosemarie.cuillerier@dep.nj.gov](mailto:rosemarie.cuillerier@dep.nj.gov). Corporate, non-profit and school groups are also welcome.



One of the many gardens in bloom at LSP

## From the Friends of Liberty State Park



Please join the "watch party" for the Friends of Liberty State Park! An inspiring & informative "virtual luncheon alternative" event will be held on Sunday, May 2nd, at 2:00 PM to support our mission of preserving, protecting, conserving and promoting LSP.

The event will feature our recognition awards to outstanding park advocates and a special new film trailer premiere of an extended version of the great LSP Protection Act and Caven Point film trailer of the in-progress "The Point."

Be sure to check out our website at <http://www.folsp.org> to join us virtually. The pre-recorded event will also be posted on our website starting Monday, May 3rd.

# May Nature Programs at Liberty State Park



## Spring Bird Walk

Saturday, May 1 10:00 AM - Noon

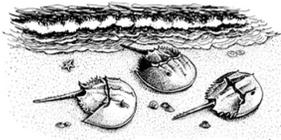
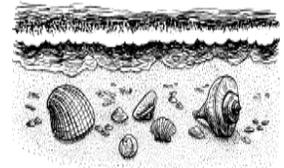
Located along the Atlantic Flyway, Liberty State Park is home to over 250 distinct species of birds. Join us as we explore varied habitats and learn to identify some of our resident and migratory bird life. We will meet at the Park Office located at 200 Morris Pesin Drive. Please dress to be outdoors and bring binoculars if you have them. We will have some available to borrow.

*Recommended for ages 5 & up.*

## Caven Point Beach Walk

Saturday, May 8 10:00 AM - Noon

Come on out to Liberty State Park for a beach walk and scavenger hunt at Caven Point Beach! We will meet in Lot #1 located at 300 Morris Pesin Drive and then walk over to our beach area. ***Please be advised there is over a mile of walking involved.*** Be sure to dress to be outdoors and wear old shoes that can get wet or muddy. ***All ages welcome.***



## Horseshoe Crab Walk

Sunday, May 16 10:00 AM - Noon

This is the time of year when horseshoe crabs come ashore to lay their eggs. Join our staff on a walk to discover these amazing creatures and learn about the important roles they play in the natural world. We will meet in Lot #1 located at 300 Morris Pesin Drive

and then walk over to our beach area. ***Please be advised there is over a mile of walking involved.*** Be sure to dress to be outdoors and wear old shoes that can get wet or muddy. ***All ages welcome.***

## Caven Point Shorebird Walk

Saturday, May 22 10:00 AM - Noon

Come on out to Liberty State Park and join us as we search for a variety of summer shorebirds. We will meet in Lot #1 located at 300 Morris Pesin Drive and then walk over to Caven Point. ***Please be advised there is over a mile of walking involved.*** Be sure to dress to be outdoors and bring binoculars if you have them. We will have some available to borrow. ***Recommended for ages 5 & up.***



***Pre-registration is required for all programs. Space is limited. For more information or to register for a program, please contact the Nature Center at 201-915-3400 x202 or email LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Groups are limited to a maximum of six.***

**MASKS  
REQUIRED**

- RESTROOMS
- GATEHOUSES
- BUILDINGS
- OUTDOORS  
where social distancing is not practicable

Exceptions for individuals: Under two years old, exercising or swimming, or when wearing a mask would inhibit health/safety  
As stated in NJ Executive Order #163

NJ COVID19 INFO:  
COVID19.NJ.GOV  
STATE PARK INFO:  
NJPARKSANDFORESTS.ORG



# May History Programs at Liberty State Park

*Pre-registration is required and space is limited. Programs will take place outdoors. For more information or to register for a program, please contact the Nature Center at 201-915-3400 x202 or email [LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov](mailto:LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov). Children must be accompanied by an adult. Groups are limited to a maximum of six.*



## Architecture of the CRRNJ Terminal

Wednesday, May 5 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM

Join our historic interpreter on a walking tour around the CRRNJ Terminal building and learn about the variety of architectural features found throughout this impressive structure. Please meet outside the CRRNJ Terminal building under the clock. *Recommended for ages 10 & up.*

## The Historic Trilogy

Wednesday, May 12 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

The CRRNJ Terminal, Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island stand together as the Historic Trilogy. Come follow the trail of the immigrant experience. This program will include a walk around the outer CRRNJ Terminal with views of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Please meet outside the CRRNJ Terminal building under the clock. *Recommended for ages 10 & up.*



## Explosion at Black Tom

Wednesday, May 26 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Join us for a tour and discussion of the dynamics of the land known as Black Tom then and now and how the events leading up to the explosion served as a catalyst for America's entry into World War I. We will meet at the green picnic tables outside the Park Office for an introduction and then take a short walking tour of the Black Tom site. *Recommended for ages 10 & up.*

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