

# The Green Oasis

The Official Newsletter of  
Liberty State Park

FALL 2022

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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## Empty Sky Pays Tribute



The New Jersey 9/11 Memorial "Empty Sky" and "Tribute in Light"  
Photo by Brian Shankle

To commemorate the 21st anniversary of September 11th at Liberty State Park, park staff lined the bases of the 9/11 Memorial, "Empty Sky" with bags containing flameless candles, which gave off an illuminating blue glow. These 749 bags represent the 749 New Jersey lives lost on September 11th, 2001.

The blue lights are akin to the searchlights which form, "Tribute of Light," the art installation created from searchlights which are beamed into the sky to represent the Twin Towers. "Tribute of Light" takes place every year on the anniversary of September 11th.



# Liberty Welcomes New Superintendent



Superintendent  
Charles Brian Shankle

This past spring, Liberty State Park had the pleasure of welcoming our new superintendent Charles Brian Shankle, in his new role with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

Before coming to Liberty, Brian worked for the New Jersey Department of Transportation as a Landscape Architect. During that time, he designed and executed landscape plans for state and local roadways throughout New Jersey. He managed the state’s Good Neighbor Planting Program, which sought to remedy landscape issues caused by state roadway construction and use throughout the state, for homeowners and local business owners.

Brian was also instrumental in the creation and implementation of NJDOT’s Roadside Pollinator Program, which plants and maintains dozens of acres of pollinator gardens on highway rights-of-way.

Since his arrival at the park, Brian has focused his efforts on building relationships with the staff and the surrounding community. In addition to leading the park’s day-to-day operations and numerous special events, he is continually working with his staff to refresh areas of the park that have suffered during the pandemic.

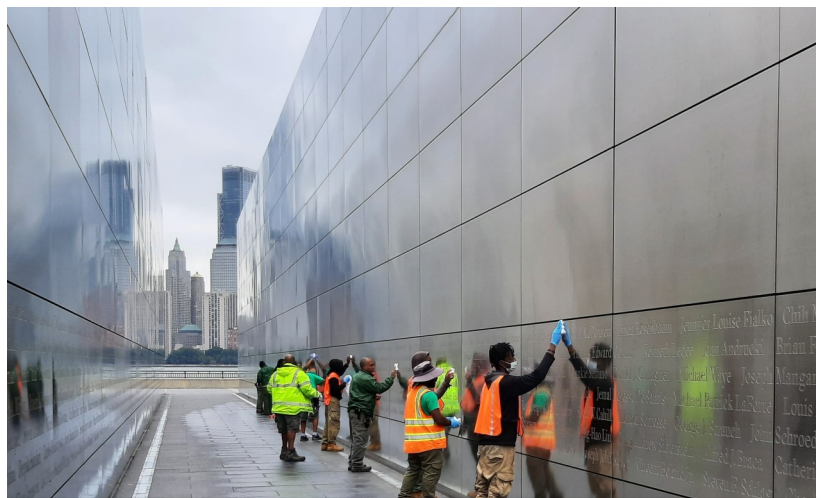
Brian studied Landscape Architecture at Rutgers University School of Environmental and Biological Sciences. His work at Rutgers focused on creative ways to design the built environment in response to climate and social issues. He became a New Jersey licensed Landscape Architect in 2016.

In addition to his work for the people of New Jersey, Brian spent several years in the private sector working in many different aspects of the retail and hospitality industries. He credits this early work for instilling in him his love for public service, and the desire to help others.

## Thank You to Seasonal Staff at Liberty State Park

As we wrap up another busy summer season here at Liberty State Park, a sincere thanks is extended to all of the seasonal staff who helped carry out numerous aspects of park operations during this very active time of year.

Whether it was assisting with office duties, helping teach interpretive programs, aiding park patrons with directions, or keeping the park looking neat and tidy, the seasonal staff stepped up and kept things running smoothly. All of their hard work is greatly appreciated, and the success of Liberty State Park would not be possible without them!



Seasonal and full time staff come together to clean Empty Sky Memorial  
Photo by Brian Shankle

# Red-breasted Mergansers

by Patricia Hilliard



Swimming male red-breasted merganser  
Photo by Carl Emont

Now you see it, now you don't! That odd looking duck on the harbor just might be a red-breasted merganser. Both males and females have spikey crests, and they can often be seen diving for fish in the river during the winter months in Liberty State Park. The males have black heads with a white collar and a rusty-red breast. The females have rusty-red heads and gray bodies. Both males and females range from 20 to 26 inches in length.

The flight pattern of the red-breasted merganser is amazing. To get airborne, they literally need to run across the open water, but once they take flight, can travel up to 80 miles per hour. Their legs are set far back on their bodies, which makes for strong dives but difficulty walking on land. When building nests, the females push themselves on their bellies across sandy beaches, pulling together grass to build a mound on which to lay their eggs. They can lay up to 20 eggs.

In summer, red-breasted mergansers live on lakes and ponds in northern Canada. They feed on small fish, crustaceans, and insects. After the breeding season, red-breasted mergansers migrate south to winter on the open bays and rivers in New Jersey. NJ Fish and Wildlife does not list these ducks as a threatened or endangered species.

Next time you are out for a stroll on the walkway, keep a look out for these fascinating winter ducks. They are constantly diving for food and can stay under water for much longer than any human. Next time you see a duck dive, hold your breath, and see who gasps for air first!



Male merganser (left) and female  
Photo by Carl Emont

## Rain Gardens: Stormwater Soak Ups



Green Park rain garden

A rain garden is an attractive and effective way to reduce stormwater runoff and create habitat for native wildlife. Rain gardens are designed to collect water in a naturally occurring or dug out depression and remove nutrients and sediments from runoff. They are dry much of the time but can hold water for a few days following a storm and require little maintenance to keep them thriving.

In the past few years, two rain gardens have been created in Liberty State Park to help with drainage issues and reduce stagnant stormwater. The first rain garden is located next to the gravel road near the Nature Center on Freedom Way and was created in 2019. The second rain garden is in Green Park by the parking lot and was created in 2022.

Plants that can tolerate a wide range of soil moisture are good choices for rain gardens. The park rain gardens feature plant species that include, swamp rose mallow, Joe Pye weed, bayberry, spicebush, goldenrod, and milkweed. These plants are not only tolerant of soil changes, but attract important pollinator species such as butterflies, bees, and birds.



Gravel path rain garden

The next time you happen to be in the park, be sure to visit our rain gardens and see what's in bloom!

## Help Support Liberty State Park with Gardening

by Anita Grist



The gardening crew with volunteers

The gardening crew at Liberty State Park is responsible for making the flower beds in the park look neat and tidy for visitors to enjoy and keeping them full of important plants and flowers to attract pollinators like birds, bees and butterflies across the park. The gardens range from natural to semi-formal. We also plant seasonal plants to create eye-catching displays for events at Liberty State Park such as July 4<sup>th</sup>, September 11<sup>th</sup>, and naturalization ceremonies.

We aim to keep the park looking great by weeding, pruning, mulching, and planting new plants and annual bulbs so if your hobby is gardening or you fancy some time out in the fresh air, we are looking for volunteers!

Volunteers can be any age and there is no experience necessary. We provide all equipment needed. You may also be an experienced gardener and want to show us your skills! Weekend volunteering takes place on Saturday mornings from 9:00AM to 12:00 PM, and we can also accommodate individual and group volunteers during the week.

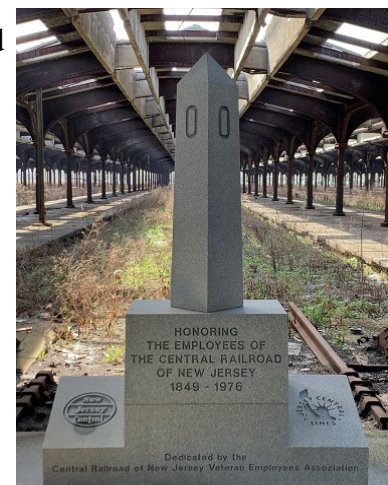
For more information or to sign up for some volunteer work, please contact Maria, LSP's head gardener, at 201-915-3418 or e-mail [Rosemarie.Cuillerier@dep.nj.gov](mailto:Rosemarie.Cuillerier@dep.nj.gov). Thank you for your interest in keeping our park looking great!

## The Central New Jersey Employees Monument

by Janet Akhtarshenas

Located at the northern end of Liberty State Park, the Historic Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal has many hidden gems. Just inside the train shed, at track 10, proudly stands the CNJ Employees Monument. About six feet tall, the granite structure was designed by Sam Myers and Bob Hoeft, both past CNJ Veteran Association Presidents. The monument was funded with donations made by the CNJ Vets.

The 3-part monument has a milepost in the shape of an obelisk atop a central block that sits on a base. The engravings are simple and poignant: the number 0 is on all four sides of the milepost signifying the beginning of the line. The central block reads, Honoring the Employees of the Central Railroad of New Jersey 1849-1976. The sides of the base are on a 45-degree angle on which CNJ heralds (logos) appear; on the left the New Jersey Central herald and the Jersey Central Lines/Statue of Liberty herald on the right. On the center of the base is engraved, Dedicated by the Central Railroad of New Jersey Veteran Employees Association.



CNJ Monument located at Track 10

The monument was installed on September 20, 2007. The dedication ceremony was well attended. Bob Hoeft was the master of ceremonies and spoke about the rich history of the CNJ Vets Association and the railroad heritage at Liberty State Park. Sam Myers and Park officials also addressed the attendees. Following the ceremony, a luncheon was held in the Blue Comet Auditorium. There was plenty of renewing old acquaintances and reminiscing about the good old days on the Big Little Railroad.

## A Waystation for Monarchs



Monarch adult on milkweed

The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is a familiar visitor to Liberty State Park during the summer and fall months. These black and orange butterflies rely heavily on milkweed, a common native plant named for its milky sap. Adults frequent the flowers for nectar and lay their eggs on the broad, green leaves, which larvae feed on after hatching.

This past summer, the monarch butterfly was officially classified as an endangered species. Their populations have actually been in decline for many years, primarily due to habitat destruction. One way to help restore monarch butterfly habitat, and their populations, is with the creation of monarch waystations - habitats which provide resources for all lifecycle stages of the monarch butterfly.

Earlier this spring, Liberty State Park partnered with AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassadors Carissa Herb and Mason Kramer to establish a monarch waystation near the Nature Center. Volunteers came out on a cool April morning to help plant native flowers and shrubs. The Friends of Liberty State Park funded the sign and the certification of the plot as a recognized monarch waystation by Monarch Watch.

During the summer, the waystation at Liberty State Park, named “Pollinator Flyway” attracted not only monarchs, but other species of butterflies, bees, and even hummingbirds. All of these are important pollinator species.

The Liberty State Park Nature Center staff also helps the monarch population rebound by collecting eggs and larvae from milkweed plants, and then raising them in enclosures to be sure they are protected from parasites and have enough milkweed to sustain them during their life cycle. This summer, the staff raised and released over 75 monarchs!

For more information about monarch waystations, including how to create your own, please visit <https://monarchwatch.org/waystations/>.



(Left) Volunteers hard at work in the spring (Right) “Pollinator Flyway” in full bloom during the summer

## Walk in the Footsteps of History

by Katherine Craig



An outside view of Boxwood Hall

You've heard of Alexander Hamilton, but have you heard of Elias Boudinot?

You've heard of Aaron Burr, but have you heard of Jonathan Dayton?

Curious? Come visit Boxwood Hall State Historic Site, a satellite of Liberty State Park, in Elizabeth, NJ. During your free tour of this 18<sup>th</sup> century house, you'll hear about Hamilton, Burr, George Washington and Lafayette's connections to the house, as well as lesser-known residents such as Hannah Stockton and Pompey.

Boxwood Hall is usually open Monday-Friday but will be open during the weekend of October 15 & 16, as part of the annual Four Centuries in a Weekend event. As an extra that weekend, you can visit another historic site here in Elizabeth, also connected with Hamilton & Burr: the Siloam-Hope/First Presbyterian Church, the oldest English language congregation in New Jersey. On its campus are the site of the Prep school, which both men attended, and one of the more historic cemeteries in the State.

Boxwood Hall and the church both have off-street parking and are within easy walking distance of each other. If you don't feel like driving, both sites are within easy walking distance of NJ Transit's Elizabeth rail station, and there are numerous places to grab a bite to eat. It's simple to have weekend day of history and family fun.

Oh...Elias Boudinot was the second owner of the house and a President of the US under the Articles of Confederation; Jonathan Dayton was the third owner of the house and the youngest signer of the US Constitution. As to their connections to Hamilton and Burr, you'll have to visit to find out. Boxwood Hall will be open for tours on Saturday, October 15 and Sunday October 16 from 12pm-5pm. We are located at 1073 E Jersey St, Elizabeth, NJ 07201. Hope to see you there!

## 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. Funds were also used in 2020 to inoculate many of the park's mature ash trees against the Emerald Ash Borer and purchase replacement state flags, historic display flags and pennants.

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.

# October Nature Programs at Liberty State Park



## Fabulous Fungi

Saturday, October 1st

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Come to Liberty State Park to discover the hidden world of the often overlooked fungi and learn all about these unusual organisms. Please dress to be outdoors. We will meet at the Nature Center located at 275 Freedom Way. *Recommended for ages 4 & up.*

## Fall Bird Walk

Saturday, October 8th

10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Located along the Atlantic Flyway, Liberty State Park is home to over 250 different species of birds. Join us as we explore varied habitats and learn to identify some of our resident and migratory birdlife. Please dress to be outside and bring binoculars if you have them. We have a limited number that can be borrowed. We will meet at the Nature Center located at 275 Freedom Way. *Recommended for ages 5 & up.*



## Trailblazers Volunteer Day

Saturday, October 15th

10:00 AM - Noon

Join the LSP Trailblazers on to help improve our trails by removing invasive weeds and vines from the Richard J. Sullivan Natural Area and performing trail maintenance. Please be sure to dress to work outdoors with long sleeves, pants, sturdy shoes, and work gloves if you have them. We will meet at the Nature Center located at 275 Freedom Way. *Recommended for ages 10 & up.*

## Everlasting Autumn Wreath Workshop

Saturday, October 22nd

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

\$5.00 per person

In this workshop, we will use natural materials found in Liberty State Park to create ornamental wreaths. Once dried, these beautiful handmade wreaths can last forever. Decorate your home or give them as gifts! All materials will be provided. We will meet at the Nature Center located at 275 Freedom Way. Program will begin promptly at 9:30 AM! *Recommended for ages 10 & up.*



## Fall Leaves Walk

Saturday, October 29th

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

As the weather starts to cool and the leaves begin to change colors, it's a perfect time to come explore the beauty of fall at Liberty State Park. Join our Park Naturalist on this guided walk and learn how to identify some of our trees by their fall colors. Please dress to be outdoors. We will meet at the Nature Center located at 275 Freedom Way. *All ages welcome.*

*Pre-registration is required for all programs, and space is limited. For more information or to register for a program, please contact the Nature Center at 201-915-3400 x503 or email [LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov](mailto:LSPNatureCenter@dep.nj.gov). Children must be accompanied by an adult. You may register a maximum of six participants per reservation. Pets are not permitted on programs unless they are service animals.*

# October History Programs at Liberty State Park

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## Architecture of the CRRNJ Terminal

Wednesday, October 5th 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Join our historic interpreter on a 90-minute walking tour of the CRRNJ Terminal building and learn about the variety of architectural features found throughout this impressive structure. Please meet at the Information Desk inside the CRRNJ Terminal.

*Recommended for ages 10 & up.*

## Tales from the Morris Canal

Wednesday, October 12th 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Once a key factor for commerce in the 19th century, the Morris Canal made history for its use of inclined planes and locks to transport coal and iron to cities in the Northeast. Come travel through time to learn the history of the Morris Canal and discover what remains of the canal here in Liberty State Park today. This program will include a 60-minute Power Point presentation and discussion, followed by a walking tour to the Morris Canal Big Basin. Please meet at the Information Desk inside the CRRNJ Terminal. *Recommended for ages 10 & up.*



## Explosion at Black Tom

Wednesday, October 19th 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. This program will include a 45-minute Power Point presentation and discussion, a look at artifacts recovered from the site, and then a drive to the Black Tom site. You will need your own transportation to get there. *Recommended for ages 10 & up.*

## The Historic Trilogy

Wednesday, October 26th 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

The CRRNJ Terminal, Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island stand together as the Historic Trilogy. This program explores the unique immigrant experience through the Historic Trilogy and debunks longstanding myths often attributed to Ellis Island through a 90-minute Power Point presentation and discussion. Please meet at the Information Desk inside the CRRNJ Terminal. *Recommended for ages 10 & up.*

