The Changes of Fall

By Stephanie Fox

On September 22, the fall equinox, we can officially welcome the season of falling leaves and cooler temperatures. Fall is arguably the preferred season for most people, offering an amazing combination of cool air, cloudless skies and colorful foliage - perfect for outdoor activities of all kinds. It offers the ideal weather to take a leisurely bike trip down the D & R Canal towpath or spend the night camping at Bull’s Island without the worry of those pesky biting insects.

Of the benefits the Autumn season bestows upon us, the colorful fall foliage is the most impressive. The shortened days and cooler temperatures trigger the breakdown of the green chlorophyll produced in abundance in the leaves during the summer months revealing the hidden colors that have been there all along. These colors, called carotenoids, form the yellow, orange and brown colors, while pigments called anthocyanins create the red and purple hues. The carotenoid color are present in the leaf throughout the year - previously masked by the abundance of the green chlorophyll - however the anthocyanins are formed in the leaf in response to bright light and excess sugars within the leaf cells. So from year to year the carotenoid color display (yellows, oranges and browns) vary little, but the red and purple anthocyanin color is dependent on the weather. The color display will be most brilliant when we have warm, sunny days and cool, crisp nights.

A few trees and plants, such as dogwood and poison ivy, exhibit a phenomenon called foliar fruit flagging. This process occurs when the plants exhibit their red fall foliage in late August into early September. The bright colors will attract the migrating birds to their ripe fruits insuring that their seed will be spread. This process serves as a reminder that everything in nature is connected.

Plants and trees aren’t the only ones changing for the fall season, animals also alter their behavior during this season. Unlike people who have the luxury of hiding away in our heated homes stocked with food once the cold months settle in, animals must scurry around to guarantee their survival through the winter season. Some gorge themselves with an abundance of high quality foods in order to produce a thick layer of fat that will be slowly used up as they sleep and rest during the frigid months of winter. Other animals will spend the fall months collecting, hiding and caching enough food to last them through the winter months. And for those that must survive the harsh temperatures outdoors, growing a new, thicker pelt to help to insulate them from the cold is a necessity. At the opposite end of the spectrum, many animals will leave in search of warmer climates where food can be found in abundance. This group includes migrating bird species and also some butterfly and dragonfly species. It is a safe bet to say that the creatures in the wild, no matter which strategy they use, will be much busier that we are during this season so make sure you get a chance to get outside and enjoy the sights.

The U.S. Forest Service provides a hotline number at 1-800-354-4595 for up to date fall foliage information.

Commission Maverick To Retire

After 30 years at the helm of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission, James Amon has announced that he will retire from the Executive Director post in February of 2005. It's been a long, successful career - one that coincided with the establishment of the D & R Canal State Park in 1974. The Commission was created to serve as a regulatory agency with the authority to protect the new canal park from the detrimental impacts of any encroaching development or prohibited land use. While the agency was put in place in 1974, it was not until the early 1980s when it gained the power of "site plan review" giving it the authority it needed to approve, reject, or demand alterations to all development plans within 1000 feet of the canal. It is a responsibility that James Amon took quite seriously. Under his careful direction, the Commission took the lead in breathing renewed life into the historic canal while helping to protect and preserve the linear park as a wildlife greenway and sorely needed recreation area for central New Jersey. In addition to its role as a regulatory agency, the Commission undertook the task of long-range planning, drafting a Master Plan for the Canal Park as well as a 10-year Development Plan that was recently updated and adopted in 2003. It is due to Mr. Amon's overall vision and resolve that many projects and improvements came to fruition over the course of his 30-year stint with the Commission. One such recently completed project for example - the new pedestrian bridge over Route 1 - was envisioned over twenty years ago! Although we all wish him well, James Amon’s departure will leave a leadership void and will no doubt be felt by all who have worked with him and by those who simply love the D & R Canal State Park! His will be big shoes to fill. We wish him much luck as he embarks on this next phase of life however we wouldn’t be surprised that even though retired, Jim’s interest and influence on the Park will still be felt.
FREE FALL 2004 PROGRAMS AT THE D & R CANAL STATE PARK

Programs are subject to cancellation due to inclement weather or illness. Registration is REQUIRED for ALL PROGRAMS unless otherwise noted. Call the Park Office at 732-873-3050 (Somerset Office) or 609-397-2949 (Bulls Island Office) to register. Visit www.dandrcanal.com for further details and to check for program updates.

All programs are FREE unless otherwise specified!

**Oct. 2:** Walk the Path in Lawrence Township: Enjoy a morning walk along the canal with the D & R’s Historian and visit two historic homes along the way - The Port Mercer Canal House and the 18th Century Brearley House. The group will meet at the Port Mercer Canal House in Lawrence Township (4278 Quakerbridge Rd.) at 9:30 a.m. for a brief talk about the history of the D&R Canal. We'll then walk along the historic towpath to the Brearley House where the group will be treated to a tour of this restored 18th century home. Come join us for this 2.5 mile round trip walk back in time.

**Oct. 9:** Basic Compass: This program will be an introduction to the orienteering compass. The Park Naturalist will teach participants the basics of using these directional devices and then let them try their new skills on a small orienteering course at the Bull’s Island Recreational Area. The group will also learn about topographic map symbols and orienteering maps. The program is appropriate for ages 9 and up and begins at 1:00 pm. The group will meet at the Bull’s Island Office (located 7 miles north of Lambertville off Route 29 in Hunterdon County). The park will provide compasses for use during the program.

**Oct. 16:** Walk the Path to Rockingham: Enjoy a morning walk with the D & R’s Historian and the Rocky Hill Heritage Project’s Historian (& Rockingham Docent) for the first offered tour along the canal path to Rockingham! In addition to receiving an introduction to the story of the D&R Canal, participants will visit two historic homes along the way - The Kingston Canal House and the 18th century Rockingham. Participants are asked to meet at the Kingston Canal House located off Route 27 (approximately 4 miles north of Princeton) at 9:30 am for a brief talk about the history of the D & R Canal. The group will then walk along the canal's historic towpath to Rockingham where they will be treated to a tour of George W. Ashington’s newly restored 1783 headquarters. Come join us for this 2.5 mile round trip walk.

**Oct. 23:** Fall Color in Kingston: The D & R’s Naturalist will lead a 4-mile nature walk along the towpath from the Kingston Canal House south towards the Millstone Aqueduct. Participants can enjoy the crisp autumn air as the group explores all the vivid colors the fall season has to offer. With the D&R Canal on one side and Carnegie Lake on the other, the location promises to provide some beautiful Autumn scenery. The program will begin at 1:00 pm at the Kingston Canal House located directly off Route 27 in Kingston approximately 4 miles north of Princeton.

**Oct. 23:** Bike the Path to the Millstone Aqueduct: Come join the D & R’s Historian for an Autumn bike ride along the canal towpath! Bring your own bicycle and meet at Rocky Hill Causeway (located at Route 518 in Franklin Township) at 10:00 a.m. for this 8 1/2 mile ride. The group will head south towards Kingston and beyond into Plainsboro Township. Come enjoy the park, see some fabulous Fall foliage, burn a few calories and learn a bit about the D&R along the way!

**Oct. 30:** Halloween Fest at the Island: A fun time will be had by all at the D & R Canal State Park’s third Halloween Festival! Pumpkin painting, crafts, games, hay-rides, goody bags and more will be offered throughout the afternoon. Rusty, Jan, Briz and Friends will also be on hand to entertain festival revelers with their unique brand of live acoustic folk music. And this year two special programs will be offered during the afternoon. Halloween tales will come to life through the storytelling magic of Rebecca Kelly from Storytelling Creations. And “Yer Deysspicable,” a nature program tailor-made for the Halloween season, will be presented by Snakes-n-Scales and Turtle Tales with Bill Rosenberg (see page 3 for more details). The fun begins at 12:00 pm and will continue until 4:00 pm. Come join us at the Bull’s Island Recreation Area (located 7 miles north of Lambertville off Route 29 in Hunterdon County) for this day of Halloween fun. Registration is not required.

Admission and all activities are FREE! RAIN DATE: Sunday, October 31.

**Nov. 6:** Walk the Path in Lawrence Township: Enjoy a morning walk along the canal with the D & R’s Historian and visit two historic homes along the way - The Port Mercer Canal House and the 18th Century Brearley House. The group will meet at the Port Mercer Canal House in Lawrence Township (4278 Quakerbridge Rd.) at 9:30 a.m. for a brief talk about the history of the D & R Canal. We'll then walk along the historic towpath to the Brearley House where the group will be treated to a tour of this restored 18th century home. Come join us for this 2.5 mile round trip walk back in time.

**Nov. 13:** Bike the Path to 10-Mile Lock: Join the D & R Canal’s Historian for the last bike ride in 2004. Come on, plan on getting outdoors to enjoy this morning bike ride along the canal before Thanksgiving! Bring your own bicycle and meet at the Blackwells Mills Park Office (625 Canal Rd, Somerset) at 10:00 a.m. The group will head north past Zarephath to Ten-Mile Lock and complete an 11-mile roundtrip ride. Come enjoy the park, burn a few calories before the holiday and learn a bit about the D & R along the way!
Nov. 13: **Explore the Natural Area at Bull's Island:** The natural area is a relatively unknown section of Bull's Island, but definitely worth a trip to see. The Park Naturalist will lead a one-mile hike along the immense Sycamores and large stately Tulip Poplars to explore what the Fall season has to offer here in this small section of Delaware Township. The program will begin at 1:00 pm and participants should meet at the Bull's Island Office (located 7 miles north of Lambertville off Route 29 in Hunterdon County).

Nov. 13: **Antique Artifacts:** The Blackwells Mills Canal House Association invites the public to visit the historic canal house on the corner of Blackwells Mills and Canal Road in Franklin Township between 1:00 and 4:00 pm to see artifacts from the 19th century on display. See how the bridgetender lived and worked. Registration is not required and admission is FREE!

Nov. 20: **Nature and History Walk to Alexander Road:** Enjoy a brisk morning walk with the D & R's Historian and Naturalist. The group will meet at the Millstone Aqueduct located on Mapleton Road in Plainsboro Township at 10:00 am for a 3 mile round trip walk. We'll head south from the Aqueduct area to the Alexander Street Causeway in Princeton Township. Come enjoy the park and a late Autumn morning while burning a few calories and learning a bit about the natural and historic resources of the D & R Canal State Park!

Dec. 3-5: **Art Exhibit & Sale at the Blackwells Mills Canal House:** The Blackwells Mills Canal House Association is proud to welcome back local artist BILL HEINS who will be displaying (and selling) his watercolors and oil paintings at the historic canal house on the corner of Blackwells Mills and Canal Road in Franklin Township. This weekend event will be held on Friday, December 3rd from 5 - 8 pm; Saturday, December 4th from 10 - 5 pm and Sunday, December 5th from 12 - 5 pm. Registration is not required and admission is FREE!

Dec. 11: **Holiday Crafts:** Children ages 5 and up are invited to create unique nature holiday crafts with the Park Naturalist and Historian at the Bull's Island Office between the hours of 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Crafts will include pressed flowers, fall leaves, pine cones and other materials found in nature. It’s a perfect opportunity for your children to create a special, one-of-a-kind gift that comes from the heart, not the store. Registration is not required and children MUST be accompanied by an adult.

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### **COME TO OUR 3RD “HALLOWEEN FEST AT THE ISLAND”**

October is here again and it’s time to get the pumpkins ready for carving, the costumes ready for wearing, and the goody bags ready for filling. Get in the Halloween spirit by spending an afternoon with us at the Bulls Island Recreation Area on **Saturday, October 30th from 12:00 - 4:00 pm.** We’ll be offering activities for the kids including pumpkin painting, hay rides, games, Halloween crafts and more. There will be goody bags for everyone! Live music will be provided by Rusty, Jan, Briz and Friends and The Delaware River Mill Society will be helping out by providing light refreshments to the afternoon revelers.

As a special treat, this year two unique programs will be offered as part of the afternoon’s entertainment. First, we are proud to welcome Rebecca Kelly from Storytelling Creations who will engage the audience with her special brand of Halloween storytelling. Kids are prepared to take part in all the storytelling fun! **PROGRAM TO BEGIN AT 1:30 pm.** And, for those of you who just love to see nature’s creepiest little creatures up close and personal, Snakes-n-Scales and Turtle Tales with Bill Bosenberg will be presenting “Yer Despicable”, a nature program tailor-made for the Halloween season. Anacondas, alligators, piranhas, scorpions, snapping turtles, and many other creepy creatures will be at the Island for the Fest. These are the animals we love to hate. TV, movies, bedtime stories and even children's nursery rhymes use these animals as monsters and villains, but are they really that bad? Meet these and other "reprehensible" creatures found in your own living room and learn for yourself! **PROGRAM TO BEGIN AT 3:00 pm.**

So kids put on your costumes, bring your family and join us for all the fun!

**NO ADMISSION FEE ~ ALL EVENTS ARE FREE!**

**RAIN DATE: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31ST**
Boating Made Easier

Thanks to a $24,000 grant from the National Recreational Trails Program, boating enthusiasts will notice several helpful additions to the banks of the canal. The grant money will enable the D & R Canal State Park to install a total of eight boat docks, including two that will be ADA compliant, along the length of the canal. The ADA docks have already been installed - one along the feeder canal and the other on the main section - and are located at the Firemen’s Eddy parking area (located in West Amwell Township off Route 29) and the Demott Lane parking area (located in Somerset off Easton Avenue). The remaining six docks will be located strategically along both the feeder and main sections of the canal to allow maximum distances between portages. Previously boaters had to put in along steep, precarious banks, but now they will be able to access the water safely. We hope that the addition of the docks will encourage people to travel and explore the canal via water as the canal boat captains, their families and workers did many years ago.

New Hiking Trail to Connect Rockingham to the D & R’s Towpath

Only a few months after Rockingham’s official July opening, visitors will be able to access the historic mansion via a new trail that connects the property to the D & R’s towpath. The short hiking trail (less than .15 miles in length) traverses through an upland forested area consisting of mature oak, hickory and maple trees with an shrub layer of spicebush. The new trail, located between the Rocky Hill and Kingston stretch of the Park, will be accessible via the canal’s “berm-side” path (opposite the towpath). Hikers accessing the trailhead from the canal will gradually ascend through the forested area that separates the canal from the 18th century mansion eventually emerging at the property’s northern side near the arched pedestrian bridge. Thanks are extended to Louise Wilkens from the D & R Greenway, volunteers from the Rockingham Association, Stephanie Fox and the D & R’s maintenance crew for clearing this new public path in time for the first offered “Walk the Path to Rockingham” program to be held on Saturday, October 16th. Eventually a second, steeper path will also be cleared that will bring visitors to the mansion’s southern facade and alongside the fenced garden.