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For Immediate Release

Pinelands Summer Short Course to Feature 14 Presentations and four Field Trips that Showcase the Pinelands' Natural, Cultural and Historic Treasures

NEW LISBON, N.J., May 18, 2026 – The 10th annual Pinelands Summer Short Course will feature 14 educational presentations and four guided field trips, including new courses on wildfire, ticks, carnivorous plants and the history of sawmills.

Registration is now open for the event, which will be held at [Stockton University's Kramer Hall](#) in downtown Hammonton from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday, July 17, 2026.

The event is co-sponsored by the [New Jersey Pinelands Commission](#) and the [Southern Regional Institute and Educational Technology Training Center \(SRI & ETTC\)](#) at Stockton University. Professional development credits are available for educators who attend.

“From botany to birds and history to hiking, this year’s Pinelands Summer Short Course offers an outstanding lineup of programs,” said Susan R. Grogan, the Pinelands Commission Executive Director.

“Stockton University is proud to co-sponsor the Pinelands Summer Short Course alongside the New Jersey Pinelands Commission, and we’re especially pleased to host several of the classroom presentations at Kramer Hall in Hammonton. It’s a wonderful opportunity to welcome educators, students and community members to our downtown Hammonton campus for engaging programs that highlight the natural, cultural and historic treasures of the Pinelands,” said Patty Weeks, the director of the SRI & ETTC.

Educators can earn four professional development credits for attending the event. To register, please log on to: <https://stockton.edu/ettc/pinelands.html>

Here is a full description of each course offering:

Classroom Programs at Kramer Hall:

Carnivorous Plants of the Pine Barrens

Jamie Lubov, Student Researcher

The New Jersey Pine Barrens is a hotspot of biodiversity when it comes to carnivorous plants.

Attendees will learn about the types of carnivorous plants that call the Garden State home and which species are present in the Pine Barrens, while learning how to identify them in the field. Jamie will also discuss their research into carnivorous plants, what they have learned so far, and what their next steps are. Beginners and expert botanists alike are welcome at this talk.

Communication in Nature Series (three parts)

Jennifer Bulava, Principal Park Naturalist, Burlington County Parks

This three-part lecture series highlights information relating to animal and plant communication. Each one can work as a separate stand-alone presentation, not requiring prior knowledge of another part to understand.

- **Part 1: Plants**

Ms. Bulava will focus on communication among plant species. Plants, especially trees, have incredible methods of “talking” using both the wind and underground networks or the “wood wide web.” Participants will learn about the information plants can exchange and how different species help each other survive.

- **Part 2: Birds**

Ms. Bulava will present findings of new research that deepens our understanding of bird communication. What are birds saying to each other and why? Innovative research has shed light on this and so much more!

- **Part 3: Amphibians, Insects, and Mammals**

Ms. Bulava will present current information that deepens our understanding of vocal and non-vocal means of communication between frogs and toads, certain insects, and some species of mammals that occur in the Pinelands.

Forestry 101 - An introduction

John Hooven, CCF, District Forester, DelAtlantic Conservation District and Chair of NJ Society of American Foresters

What is forestry? Why is it important to manage our forests? What type of forests do we manage on both public and private lands? If you love our forests and trees and want to learn more about basic forest ecology, this is the program for you! We will discuss the importance of forest management, measurements, forest health, and the consequences of not managing our forests.

Last of the Gentlemen Naturalists, The Life & Times of Dr. Joseph Leidy

Marc Rogoff

This presentation will focus on Dr. Joseph Leidy, who was the father of American Paleontology and Parasitology. Dr. Leidy was the first person to solve a murder using a microscope, and he

wrote the book on single-celled life of the Pine Barrens. Meet him in person as we travel back to the 19th century to learn about the scientific breakthroughs that occurred in the Garden State.

Lenape Elders Share Stories, Crafts, and Music

Teri “Many Flowers Pure Spirit Woman” Hislop, Unilachtigo clanmother, Lenape descendant, and Keeper of Traditional Craft along with Lenape Elder Chuck “Gentlemoon” Demund, Unami clan chief, Lenape descendant

Lenape elders will share stories, traditional teachings, crafts, native flute, drum, songs and dance. The stories are illustrated through porcupine quillwork, pine needle basketry, made from natural materials gathered along the Delaware Bay along with woodlands style bead embroidery.

Liven Up Your Forest – Deadwood for Wildlife

Tyler Savage, Community Forestry Technician, DelAtlantic Conservation District

Death is a functional process crucial for new life in the forest. This presentation will focus on the ecological contributions of a tree that has undergone the fateful transition from life to death, while exploring the complex relationship between wildlife and dead trees – or “deadwood” – in the disturbance-dependent, Pine Barrens ecosystem. We will cover misconceptions about deadwood, how wildlife uses deadwood to survive, and management strategies for deadwood in your forest.

Pinelands Discovery

Joel M. Mott, Principal Public Programs Specialist, NJ Pinelands Commission

This presentation will introduce the audience to the legendary Pine Barrens, while discussing its wildlife and history. Over many years living and working in the area, Mr. Mott has experienced this national treasure up close and will share his expertise and knowledge while highlighting the area’s recreational opportunities.

Sawmills in South Jersey: A Culture Within the History

Frank Vogel

This presentation explores the history of sawmills in South Jersey and their importance in shaping the region’s early economy and cultural identity. It examines how the abundant natural resources of water and timber made sawmill operations possible and helped communities grow. Attention is given to the role of local sawyers of the past and linking them to the cultural importance of sawyers in South Jersey today. By connecting industry with local heritage, the presentation highlights sawmills as an important but often overlooked part of South Jersey history.

The New Jersey Tick Problem – It’s Not Just Lyme Disease

James L. Occi, MS, MS, PhD Microbiologist, Center for Vector Biology
Rutgers University

Dr. James L. Occi, a microbiologist with Rutgers University, will describe the different species of ticks found in NJ, their biology and ecology and blood-feeding lifestyle. He will also explain which pathogens can be transmitted by each tick species, while showing numerous images

during the presentation.

The Trouble with Oaks, NJ Pine Barrens Edition

John Hooven, CCF, District Forester, DelAtlantic Conservation District and Chair of NJ Society of American Foresters

Though the Pine Barrens are dominated by pitch pine, they are also a unique ecosystem for oaks. Oaks are under threat across the eastern U. S. and Mid-Atlantic, and this presentation goes into the reasons, and why this genus is so important. Per the National Park Service, oaks are suffering from “death by a thousand cuts.” We will look at the fundamental problems facing oaks, and why the New Jersey Pine Barrens may be bucking the trend for the decline of oaks in the region.

Wildfire Corridors Across the Pinelands

Horace Somes Jr.

Wildfires have historically shaped the Pinelands in response to fuel cover, firebreaks, prevailing weather and fire behavior. The resulting fire ecosystem has changed historically and is subject to both fire suppression, prevention and ongoing landscape management. However, consideration must now include the necessary protection of life and property for local communities, outdoor recreation, pinelands agriculture, regional traffic and air quality. This presentation will focus on the fire corridor across the core of the Wharton tract from the Atsion lowlands to the Pine Plains. Historically, this was mapped as part of “sandy barren deserts.”

Wildlife of the NJ Pine Barrens

Jim Hansen, After-School Coordinator and Educator, Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge

The New Jersey Pine Barrens is a unique environment that is home to a wide variety of wildlife. Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge sits on 171 acres of preserved Pine Barrens forest and takes in over 7,000 native NJ wild animals per year to their wildlife hospital. We will take a look at some common species that you can find as well as some more rare species. A select few Wildlife Ambassadors (live animals) will join us for a closeup view!

Half day, outdoor field trips:

Batsto Village: Nature and Industry in the Pine Barrens

Led by John Hebble, Historian, Wharton State Forest and Ally Horan, Naturalist, Wharton State Forest

Explore Batsto with Wharton State Forest’s Naturalist and Historian! Topics will include the flora and fauna of the Pine Barrens, notable people who lived and worked in Batsto Village, and the ways in which humans interacted with the natural resources of the Pinelands through different eras of Batsto’s history. The tour will also include time in Batsto Mansion. Comfortable shoes and sunscreen are recommended! (Participants will drive on their own to Batsto, where they will meet with the guide at the parking area in front of the Visitor Center.)

Nature Walk around Hammonton Lake Park

Guided by a naturalist with Ocean County Parks and Recreation

Nestled in the middle of suburbia, Hammonton Lake Park is an island of mixed pine and oak

upland forest surrounded by Atlantic white cedar wetlands. An Ocean County Parks naturalist will lead the walk around the trails of Hammonton Lake, and we will discuss topics such as forest fire, Pine Barrens ecology, and the plants and wildlife, including birds that you will find in the area. We will walk approximately 2.5 miles. Attendees should wear appropriate footwear, dress for the weather and bug spray with DEET is highly recommended. Bring binoculars if you have them. (Transportation is provided.)

Paddling in the Pines - Batsto Lake from Industry to Ecology

Monica Cahill, Assistant Manager, Naturalist and Guide, Pinelands Adventures

Join Pinelands Adventures for a unique guided kayak tour of Batsto Lake, where layers of rich history and vibrant ecology come to confluence. Established in 1766, Batsto played a vital role in the Revolutionary war area as an Iron production center. Its legacy remains a treasure trove of historical and ecological diversity, and outdoor recreational opportunities. As we paddle, we'll explore the aquatic and shoreline habits, with a focus on unique Pine Barrens plants and animals in their natural setting. Learn how centuries of human activities have shaped and been shaped by this resilient, yet sensitive landscape. (Transportation is provided.)

Walking Through History on the 1808 Trail

Led by Rosemarie Mason and Diane Mason, Outdoor Club of South Jersey

This course will feature a guided hike along the same road the loggers of the 1700's traveled on when they timbered out the majestic cedar trees in Mordecai's Swamp. The walk is approximately 5 miles or less over 13 footbridges and through the middle of an old-age swamp.

***** ATTENTION EDITORS/REPORTERS:** Digital photos of the Pinelands can be obtained via e-mail by contacting Paul Leakan at info@pinelands.nj.gov, including the photos below.



Above: The 10th annual Pinelands Summer Short Course includes a program on wildfire corridors across the Pinelands. This photo shows a prescribed fire in Wharton State Forest in the Pinelands. Photo/Paul Leakan, Pinelands Commission



Above: The 10th annual Pinelands Summer Short Course includes a program on carnivorous plants. This photo shows native spatulate-leaved sundews growing at the edge of a Pinelands pond.

Photo/Paul Leakan, Pinelands Commission



Above: The 10th annual Pinelands Summer Short Course includes a program on the ecological contributions of dead trees. This photo shows a green heron fishing in a Pinelands bog while perched on a dead tree.

Photo/Paul Leakan, Pinelands Commission



Above: The 10th annual Pinelands Summer Short Course includes a presentation on ticks in New Jersey. This photo shows a Lone Star tick in the Pinelands. Photo/Paul Leakan, Pinelands Commission



Above: The 10th annual Pinelands Summer Short Course includes a presentation on the history of sawmills in South Jersey. This photo shows the inside of the historic Batsto Sawmill. Photo/Paul Leakan, Pinelands Commission

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