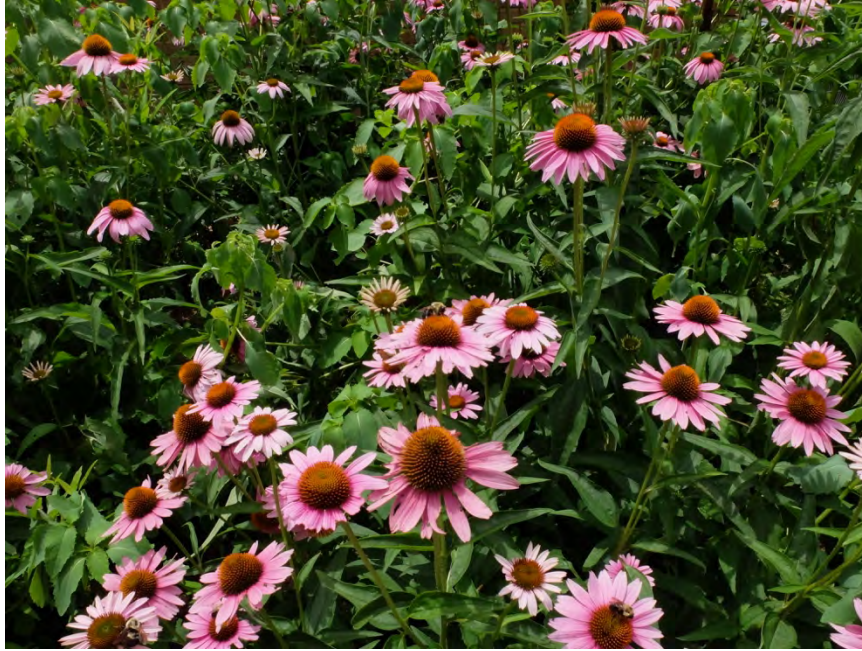


THE GREAT OUTDOORS



Coneflower or echinacea is one of the showy plants in the garden. It is a perennial that reaches up to 24" tall. It has many medical uses primarily thought to ward off colds and flu. Some studies indicate it has anti-inflammatory properties as well. Native Americans used it for burns, colds, sore throats, mumps, gonorrhea, smallpox, snakebites, headaches and more. Early Americans used it for toothaches, snakebites, spider bites and many of the same ailments as the Native Americans.

Native Focus

Convert half your lawn to native plants and you will be contributing to a homegrown national park.

J. Morton Galetto, CU Maurice River

In March I went on a trip to Belize and returned to southern NJ one week before lockdown. In Belize I read Tallamy's newest book *Nature's Best Hope, A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*. Consider this my review of the book and CU Maurice River's invitation to attend our virtual

Book Circle on the same. Librarian Suzy Merighi will be leading this event on July 30th, leaving you plenty of time to order and read the book. The sign-up for the book circles are kept modest for discussion purposes, but should we have an abundance of interest we might open another session.

There are many authors' works that I especially enjoy. Some offer new perspectives about how we might change the paradigm from a planet that was estimated to have been self-sustaining last in 1975 with a population of 4 billion, to a planet in which we might possibly survive. Currently we are 7.8 billion and growing. Dr. Douglas Tallamy's writings give me hope, something I desperately needed when faced with the world pandemic that is now a reality.

The hope, his optimism? Tallamy's fundamental concept is that collectively property owners can create a "homegrown national park" by converting half of their lawn to native plantings. The resulting space would be twenty million acres. How big is that? Tallamy writes, "It's bigger than the combined areas of the Everglades, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Canyonlands, Mount Rainier, North Cascades, Badlands, Olympic, Sequoia,

Grand Canyon, Denali, and the Great Smokey Mountains National Park.” He points out that this can be accomplished by collective will, vs. regulation or waiting for government to act.

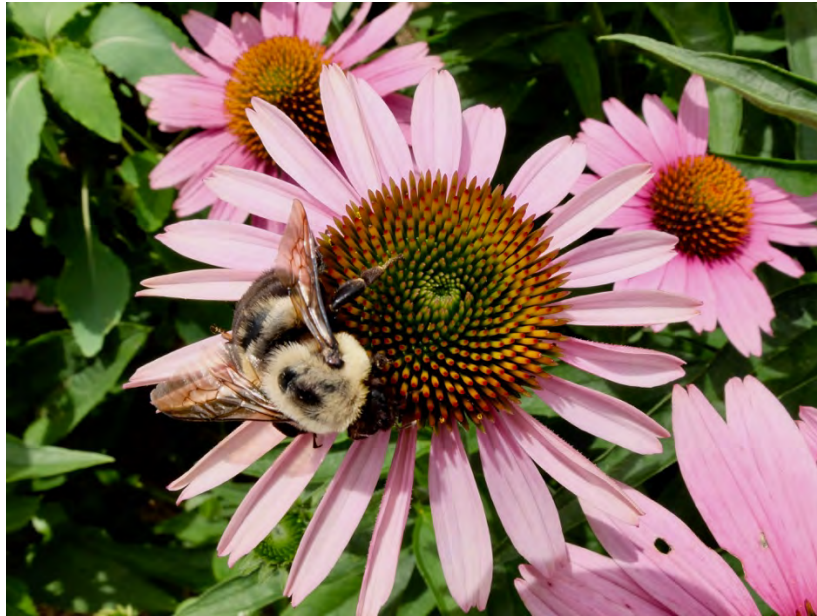
Nature can have great restorative powers, and when jump-started by people lots of positive changes can occur. Southern NJ’s eagle population is a great example. We were down to one remaining pair of eagles here in the late 1980s, whereas today we have hundreds of pairs throughout the state. Habitat is key in this success story. Basically when we create the “Homegrown National Park” we are creating new habitat for insects, plants, and animals.



Buttonbush or *cephalanthus occidentalis* is a shrub which grows 6-12 tall. Its spherical blossom attracts pollinators. It does well in moist soils and is

a great choice for a wet area in your yard. The bitter bark is used in home remedies, but note its foliage is unpalatable to livestock and in fact poisonous.

Tallamy explains the unique relationships between insects, plants, and animals – and ultimately us. This is the story of our future survival on this planet. The specialized connections between insects and plants are the building blocks on which all life depends. As Tallamy notes, “Insects pollinate 87.5 percent of all plant and 90 percent of all flowering plants, and plants turn energy from the sun into the food that we and an unimaginable diversity of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and freshwater fishes need to exist. Insects are also the primary means by which the food created by plants is delivered to animals.” Remember that insects’ lifecycles evolved in such a way as to specialize their utilization of specific plants. Plants incorporate protective properties that are toxic to many creatures, but individual species of insects developed adaptations to specific plants and thus can use them for food. This is why we need to provide a variety of native plants for native insects, so that this crucial link is unbroken.

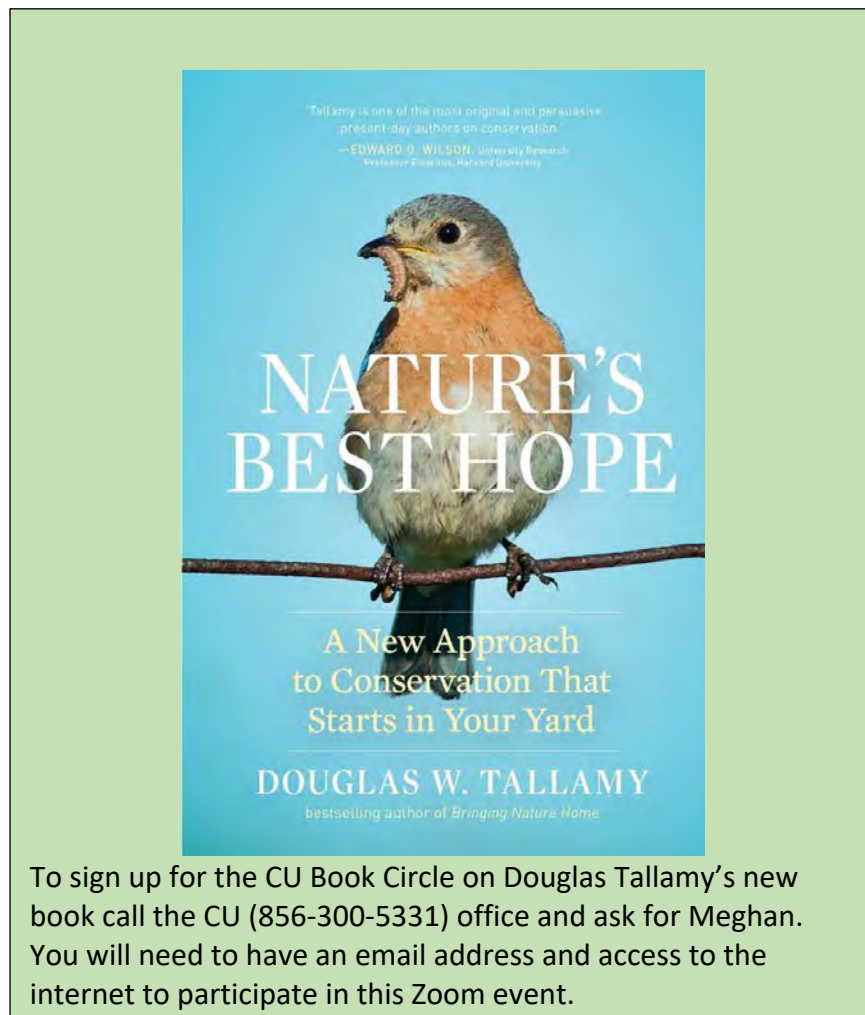


Providing for pollinators is key to reproduction in plants.

Tallamy gives many examples of this evolutionary mechanism. One of his prior books, *Bringing Nature Home*, goes into greater detail. However *Nature's Best Hope* takes the concept further; it talks about the importance of connectiveness. In my life's work we have tried to connect large habitats and corridors for wildlife to inhabit and traverse. Therefore we are continually looking at connecting tracts along waterways and linking forests to each other. Why? Because it is essential for creatures to be able to move from one area to another, not only for food and nesting habitat but to enlarge the gene pool and maintain healthy populations. Tallamy says it well: "Whether we like nature or not, none of us will be able to live for long in a world without it."

Tallamy is looking at urbanization and the disconnects it has caused between man and nature. And he is advocating for an opportunity so that everyone can play a connective role in healing that division: forming bridges of life, changing sterile lawn into habitat, and giving people an opportunity not only to enjoy nature on vacation but to benefit from its restorative effects year-round, on their own properties.

I hope you will read this book and his former title as well: "*Bringing Nature Home*." You'll be glad you did.



To sign up for the CU Book Circle on Douglas Tallamy's new book call the CU (856-300-5331) office and ask for Meghan. You will need to have an email address and access to the internet to participate in this Zoom event.