



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

## 2021 Ah Why Knot Awards

**Volunteer Recognition Ceremony, Dinner, Music & Campfire**

Saturday, May 15th

The Galetto's Home

4:30 pm Social

5:30 pm Dinner

[RSVP Here](#)



### AH WHY KNOT AWARDS

Join us at the 2021 Annual Ah Why Knot Awards, with special guests, the Shorebird Recovery Team. All members, volunteers, friends, and families are invited to attend the annual get-together with the international shorebird scientists, where we will also present our Ah Why Knot Awards for the year. Music will be offered by the *Package Goods Orchestra*, selected by the AC Press as the region's best cover band. This is a great celebration at the river, and we want you to come! There will not be a buffet this year, but rather individual meals are being prepared in advance which will be CU's treat. We hope to resume the normal fare in 2022.

#### **Reservations are a must**

**so that we can order your meal(s) in advance.**

**On the registration form, you can choose your meal preferences  
as well as**

**sign up for one or more outdoor activities**

**CU Maurice River is hosting on this day.**

**Simply select the things you are attending.**

**RSVP by Tuesday, May 11th.**

RSVP Here

## Meet The 2021 Winners

Greetings!

Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 marks the 16th year that the local watershed protection organization CU Maurice River will be celebrating its outstanding volunteers with “Ah Why Knot Awards.” Our members collectively contribute over 10,000 hours each year to environmental/conservation projects. They monitor a host of species like purple martins, bluebirds, osprey, eagles, and wood ducks. They have led nature walks, saved horseshoe crabs, created wildlife habitat, maintained nature trails, cleaned natural areas, conducted surveys for air and water quality, taught children, fed the International Shorebird Recovery Team, helped with fundraisers, restored wetlands, conducted stewardship projects, planted riverine buffers and so much more.

For the past two years, we have added a flagship project to the usual array of activities that involves installing rain gardens and restoring a wetland at four sites in Millville, NJ. CU obtained a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and CU, in partnership with Rutgers Water Resources, has been organizing these projects. Volunteers have been key in this effort – germinating plants, preparing flower beds, planting, teaching children stewardship values - all things garden. The environmental goal is recharging water into the ground vs. having it spill into water bodies: in other words cleaning rainwater and runoff and helping to restore the aquifer.

Generally, our CU staff and ambassadors are very busy helping with projects or representing the organization at festivals. This past year presentations were shared via virtual formats because of the pandemic. In spite of in-person indoor limitations, many volunteers helped host lectures, demonstrations, and workshops online. CU is fortunate that so many of its volunteers are professionals who contribute a vast array of expertise toward its mission of raising awareness about the natural and cultural resources in the Southern NJ Region – what is called “Down Jersey.”

This year the awards will be held live out-of-doors and will once again include the International Shorebird Recovery Team. The 2020 event was taken on the road and a movie was made about the recipients – one might say COVID Style. The name derives from members’ responses when asked to help out - “Ah, Why Knot.” The ‘knot’ is a play on words because the award is a wood carving of the nationally threatened shorebird species called the *red knot*, which the group is working to protect. Each year we give a *Presidential Award* from the CU Board of Trustees. This year we have added an *Executive Director Award* for outstanding contributions to the CU’s Mission, and a *Chickadee Award* for a youngster who has participated with gusto.

I hope you will join us for this outdoor evening of fun and salute to volunteer endeavors.

Sincerely,



Jane Morton Galetto  
Board President



**Matt Pisarski** is the Planning Director and Department Head for the restructured Department of Planning, Tourism & Community Affairs. He has served Cumberland County for over 20 years, working on land preservation, cultural programming, and planning initiatives. Matt holds a Bachelor's in History from Rowan University and a Master's of Science in Historic Preservation from University of Pennsylvania. He serves on the Greenwich Planning/Zoning/Historic District Board and the Bridgeton Historic District Commission. The current President of the statewide historic preservation advocacy non-profit, Preservation New Jersey, Matt grew up in Greenwich where he currently lives with his husband Jesse.

Matt's passion for all things Cumberland County is evident in his contributions. At CU we have worked most closely with him on the Eagle Festival. He has orchestrated County support for the Purple Martin Festival, Mauricetown's Artist Day, East Point Lighthouse, Bayshore Heritage Byway, American's Byways, farmland preservation, and a myriad of other activities in which CU has also been integrally involved. His interests go far beyond these intersections with CU's work. He helps numerous other organizations in Arts, Tourism, and Planning, and we know many people will want to congratulate him on receiving this recognition.

## Executive Director Award



**Tom McKee** a Trustee Emeritus of CU and a resident of Mauricetown. A 25-year veteran of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, he has worked in the areas of hazardous waste cleanup, watershed management, and geographical information systems. After graduating from Rutgers Cook College with a degree in Environmental Science, Tom currently works in environmental consulting, assisting clients in matters related to hazardous waste cleanup, wetlands permitting, and GIS mapping. He has lent his expertise to CU over a lengthy period and this year is no exception. He has been a key participant the mapping of the phragmites invasion on the Maurice River, and has used his computer-aided drone for both mapping and aeriels of work sites. His work has led up to a very complex grant proposal for wetlands restoration and solutions for restoration. For many years he has brought his birding and outdoor skills to Wild About Cumberland. Tom is an avid birder and a

folk musician. He sings as he paddles and many of his songs are about our region.

## Ah Why Knot Awards



**Jim Blumenstein** is a CU Naturalist and member of the CU World Series Team, the "Fish Hawks." He has helped with Eaglefest, Family-Friendly Fridays, CU Saturdays, and also offered

presentations. He teaches social studies at Sterling HS in Somerdale, NJ and freely shares his expert teaching skills with CU's members. Jim is a fan of the Down Jersey Region and introduces his students to the rich natural and cultural history of our area. He lives in Audubon NJ with his wife, Samantha, and three kids, James, Eleanora, and Jackson. His family is continually engaged in the natural world under their parents' mentoring.



**Dorothy "Dottie" Dayton** is a relatively new member of CU, joining our ranks in 2019 with gusto. When jobs are physical she fits the adage, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." She has been very involved in the wetlands restoration at AMCOR, the First United Methodist rain garden, Wheaton Arts water restoration site, the Neighborhood Wildlife Garden, and ReTurn the Favor. She especially enjoys our paddles, and has found being a bluebird landlord very rewarding. Although she's retired she still owns and runs "Dottie's Sewing Shop" in her home in Leesburg – should you need any alterations. She has two grown children, 4 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren. When asked why she is active in CU she says it's because she enjoys what we do. Active outdoor things with other volunteers suit her style, and she would never consider a sedentary retirement life. Dottie especially enjoys working with other volunteers and the CU staff.

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**Jill Mortensen & Stephen Freed** – Jill has been an involved member and advocate for CU for 34 years. Ten years ago Stephen and she married, and now both have been actively volunteering for CU. Jill noticed that monarchs and bees were not as plentiful in her garden and thus enrolled in our garden tours and workshops on Native Gardening led by Pat Sutton. Since then Jill has been not only an advocate for patient health, but for planet health as well – one backyard at a time. In fact Jill and Stephen's yard is one of our Wildlife-Friendly designated pollinator gardens. One might describe her endeavors as fulfilling Doug Tallamy's concept of creating our Country's Largest National Park one backyard at a time. At Jill's medical practice, "Cumberland Family Medicine Associates, LLC," she and Rutgers Water Resources Program installed a demonstration rain garden. Stephen

and Jill have been involved in the Neighborhood Wildlife garden on Third St. in Millville, the AMCOR restoration, clean-ups, germination sessions, campfires and potlucks, the Chili Bowl Fundraisers, osprey banding and platform construction, environmental advocacy, membership recruitment, CU Ambassadors, and more. Stephen is a retired lawyer for Weston, an environmental company based in PA. He is very environmentally conscious and responsible. They enjoy ecotours and among other adventures they hiked the Scottish Highlands and went on expedition in Africa. They recently went on one of our special naturalist-led bird tours that was a fundraising winning bid. They have four grown children and several grand-dogs.

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Nineteen years ago, **Lisa S. Garrison** first became involved in our organization as the Geraldine Dodge Foundation program officer who helped us get the grant for *The Cumberland County Birding Guide*, still a valuable tool for wildlife enthusiasts today. She took the lead in securing multi-year Dodge funding for the International Shorebird Team to create a solid database of scientific research on migratory red knots at three critical sites: Delaware Bay; Bahía Lomas, Tierra del Fuego; and Nunavet, in the Canadian Arctic. Subsequently, Lisa joined the team in Chile as liaison between the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program and the environmental agency CONAF, to encourage protection of Bahía Lomas as a RAMSAR wetlands of international importance, so designated in 2004. Today we recognize Lisa's cultural contributions. A musician/songwriter from Fairton, where she shares her life with



Jorge Phillips, Lisa sings at our campfires and recounts West Jersey history on our cultural walks. At our September CU Social at Greenwich Friends Meetinghouse, she regaled us with stories of early Quakers, free black communities, and the Underground Railroad. And who can ever forget Lisa's joyful spirit as she recited from Dallas Lore Sharp's chapter about turkey vultures at his graveside in Haleyville?



**Kathy Geiger** has been an active member on our nature walks. She is also part of a trio of horseshoe crab rescuers with the "ReTurn the Favor" project, where she and Wendy Walker and Jan LoBiondo really know how to make work fun and rewarding. Kathy, like many of our CU leaders, is a retired grade school teacher, bringing an enthusiastic learning spirit to our events. She has helped with the Neighborhood Wildlife Garden, Wild About Cumberland, the Eaglefest, clean-ups, wetland restoration projects, and rain gardens. She is also one of a number of Master Gardeners among our ranks. She is a welcomed participant, bringing a calm cheerfulness and a great aura to any project. Kathy taught grades K-6 for 35 years in Margate Schools, spending her last 20 years teaching science to 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. Kathy and her husband Rich are Millville residents. They enjoy active ecotravel, having participated in Earthwatch research expeditions in Arizona, Africa, and Mongolia,

including trapping jaguars in Brazil. They enjoy bicycling trips as well. Kathy has a son and daughter, both married. Kathy and her daughter are also travel companions.

## Chickadee Award



At six **Vera Rossini** isn't our youngest volunteer; yes, you read that correctly. But she is our most ambitious, having racked up over 35 hours of service this year alone. She possesses a very mature manner but is

all kid. She has more "dutch grandparents" than most children and an endless curiosity about the natural world. She is outgoing, thoughtful, clever, and reserved all at the same time. If it's gardening for wildlife Vera is all about it.

She knows the proper end of a shovel and is a great "go-fer." She particularly enjoys getting her feet wet when collecting dragonfly nymphs for the Dragonfly Mercury project, or when saving horseshoe crabs on the Delaware Bayshore. On wildlife walks like Family-Friendly Fridays she often engages other children, sharing what she has learned over the past three or four years. In fact,

we may be reminded in not awarding her any hours as a naturalist leader! She keeps her parents Karla and Julian Rossini in line. Yes, she is our Executive Director's daughter, but ask our staff or any volunteer and they will tell you this is truly a well-deserved award.



## Ah Why Knot Awards NJ Audubon's DE Bay Shorebird Ecology and Conservation Team



In some way, shape or form, **Lena Usyk** has worked for NJ Audubon as a field biologist since 1996, although her path has had many twists and turns. Early in her career she was hooked on raptors, working as the official migration counter at the Montclair Hawk Watch for three years. Lena then left NJ to work in Utah and Nevada counting raptor migration for Hawk Watch International in 1998, and then at Kiptopeke, VA in 1999. In 2000 she took a field biologist position in Michigan and by 2005 was enrolled in a Master's degree program at Central Michigan University where she worked on Le Conte's Sparrow. Raptor food!! After she successfully completed her Master's degree, she came home to roost and took field biologist positions on several grassland and marshland bird projects for NJ Audubon. But she was destined to work on shorebirds. In 2009 and 2010, she traveled to Suriname and French Guiana to work on NJ Audubon's

Connecting the Dots shorebird project and then in DE Bay in 2014. Since then, she has been a key member of NJ Audubon's DE Bay shorebird ecology and conservation program team. In 2016, she took over as the [Bandedbirds.org](http://Bandedbirds.org) database manager, after Jeannine Parvin left the program. Lena has also been a dedicated volunteer for Citizens United, Cape May Bird Observatory, and at the finish line for World Series of Birding.

## Ah Why Knot Awards International Shorebird Recovery Team

**H4 Enterprises** JR Phil Heun, Vicki Heun, and Boomer Heun are siblings who run a third-generation heavy construction business: H4 Enterprises. Since 2013 H4 has been working closely with the American Littoral Society not just to rebuild habitat but to take part in the experiment that this work represents. We started our work together after Hurricane Sandy when nearly 70% of the beaches, suitable for crab spawning, disappeared. No one had built beaches for horseshoe crabs so we had to figure it out as we were building based on scientific literature. We had little time to get the job done before the crabs returned in May. With JR, Boomer, and Vicki, we figured out how to create superior crab spawning habitat at the least cost, they got the work done in time, and since then, we have been experimenting since then to make better spawning beaches. H4 took part in our constant revisions, each year's methods better than the last, as we learned the best way to make good habitats that last.

It went far beyond usual big machine construction. They partnered with us, helping us understand the practical limitations of heavy machines in sensitive habitats and innovating solutions that only experienced machine operators have to offer. They didn't do it for the money alone but freely offered to work closely with us long before projects started and adapted to the craziness of building habitat within endangered species areas. Vicki, JR and Boomer have done as much to restore horseshoe crabs as anyone.



'Jr' Phil Heun



Boomer Heun



Vicki Heun



**Theo Diehl** first began working for us as a recent graduate of the Stockton Environmental Science program, collecting data on shorebirds and horseshoe crabs. He immediately impressed our team with his good nature, ingenuity and determination to complete fieldwork. Over the last four years, he has shown us he's not just a good biologist, one who cares passionately for wildlife and their protection, but a biologist of the next generation. He brings a fresh and much-needed perspective to our work in advocating for animals that have no voice. Theo has easily taken up old skills, catching and handling animals, collecting data and analysis, but he also has a commercial drone license, makes 3-D mosaics of ground topography, he puts together short videos which explain 23 years of information in

1 minute, he works out bugs on a web page or in coding for statistical software, plus he is a self-taught expert in Motus radio telemetry. He is the future of a profession that badly needs a re-think, a redirection to issues more important than saving an animal -- like saving our world.



**Alinde Fojitek** started coming to Delaware Bay as part of a University of Georgia team studying avian influenzas in wild birds-- not just detecting presence/absence of viruses, but studying their annual ecology and how they change year to year.

Alinde is not only a key member of the Georgia team, she has become a key member of the NJ shorebird team. Alinde not only does her own work, she does a lot of work to benefit the team.

But it takes more than that to be a great team member. Last year, at the height of the pandemic, Alinde drove from Georgia to join our small shorebird capture team. We were successful because of her help -- and she still collected a large number of influenza samples when few other researchers could do influenza surveillance due to Covid-19 -- the work that informs annual influenza vaccines. More than this, Alinde meets all challenges with patience and ingenuity, every job with good humor and kindness, and she's rock solid in the field when things get hairy. We're incredibly lucky to call her our own.

CU'S BIG DAY - In addition to the Ah Why Knot  
There's plenty more to do on May 15th  
*A full day of fun!*

Join us for a day of fellowship and birding on land and water! In the early morning, walk Hansey Creek Road to take in the dawn song with the hope of spotting warblers as they migrate through southern New Jersey. Then mid-morning unload your kayak or canoe for a paddle on the back creeks that should be lined with shorebirds. You can participate in one or both activities. In the afternoon we will celebrate the work of dedicated volunteers at CU's Ah Why Knot Awards Ceremony and campfire.

### **Dawn Song**

On the morning of May 15th join the 2021 World Series of Birding Fish Hawks team members: Tony Klock, Kathy Michel, Mary Watkins, and James Blumenstein, for a great guided walk. Who knows - possibly past team members like Clay Sutton, Laurie Pettigrew, Karen Williams, Diane Jones, Karen Johnson, or others might show up as well. Hansey Creek is one of the team's favorite warbler hot spots. **The walk begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Hansey Creek Road boat ramp. RSVP below.**



### **Hansey Creek Paddle**

After the walk, CU Naturalists Tony Klock and Executive Director Karla Rossini are leading a short paddle to explore the bayshore's back creeks off Hansey Creek Road. The last time a group of CU members and friends ventured out on this paddle trail, they saw many shorebirds at eye level, as well as otters and herons, and the vista of the expansive

wetlands was breathtaking. The hobby photographer will want to bring her camera if she is comfortable on the water with it. Everyone will want to bring their binoculars.

Paddlers will need their own kayak or canoe; kayaks can be rented from Al and Sam's. CU Maurice River can lend canoes to members, but we ask that you either transport it yourself or help load it on the CUMR truck. **To paddle with us please meet at the Hansey Creek Road boat ramp at 9:30 a.m. RSVP below.**

#### **WHAT**

CU's Big Day!

Dawn Song, Hansey Creek Paddle and Ah Why Knot Awards 4:30 pm

#### **WHEN**

Saturday, May 15, 2021

#### **WHERE**

Dawn Song: Hansey Creek Boat Ramp

Hansey Creek Paddle: Hansey Creek Boat Ramp

Ah Why Knot Awards - Home of Jane and Peter Galetto

#### **RSVP REQUIRED**

Please let us know you plan on attending by signing up using the sign up links above



**CU ON THE RIVER**

[www.CUMauriceRiver.org](http://www.CUMauriceRiver.org)

**CONTACT US**

**CU MAURICE RIVER OFFICE**



[CitizensUnited@CUMauriceRiver.org](mailto:CitizensUnited@CUMauriceRiver.org)  
(856) 300-5331

Jane Morton Galetto  
Board President  
[ForRivers@comcast.net](mailto:ForRivers@comcast.net)

Doreen Homan  
Membership, Events, and Office Manager  
[Doreen.Homan@CUMauriceRiver.org](mailto:Doreen.Homan@CUMauriceRiver.org)

Karla Rossini  
Executive Director  
[Karla.Rossini@CUMauriceRiver.org](mailto:Karla.Rossini@CUMauriceRiver.org)

Rebecca Roberts  
Membership and Events Coordinator  
[r.roberts@CUMauriceRiver.org](mailto:r.roberts@CUMauriceRiver.org)

Jamie Warner  
Program Manager  
[J.Warner@CUMauriceRiver.Org](mailto:J.Warner@CUMauriceRiver.Org)

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