



Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

111 Mine Street • Flemington, New Jersey 08822
Phone: (908) 237-4582 • Fax: (908) 237-2225

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Contact: Dave Harding
(908) 237-4582

Dave@hunterdonlandtrust.org

Quakertown Preserve Meadow Hums with Life

Franklin Township -- Not long ago, Tom Thorsen, steward for the Hunterdon Land Trust, hiked along the trail at the Quakertown Preserve and what he discovered was stunning.

A meadow near the preserve's entrance buzzed with life. Butterflies flitted about, swallows swooped from the skies above, and dragonflies darted from shrub to shrub.

"I was overjoyed," Thorsen said. "You can really hear the pollinators on the flowers; it's like a cloud of activity humming in this meadow at Quakertown. I love seeing that when going out to one of our preserves."

Thorsen was surprised at how native plants took root and thrived upon the several acres of fields where wheat or corn was once grown. Typically, invasive species like autumn olive or mile-a-minute weed devour a field left untended; however, here something truly unique was happening.

The Land Trust's plan for this section of the Quakertown Preserve was to delay mowing the meadow to see what sprouted, then devise an action plan for managing the land responsibly.



“We anticipated having to mow or manage it in some way, but a lot of native flowers, shrubs and trees started popping up. And all the butterflies, bees and moths love it.”

Pollinator meadows are terrific for supporting the life of pollinator insects and are visually stunning.

On any given fall day, hikers passing the field can enjoy a visual treat. Asters abound. Goldenrods glimmer. Native grasses and sedges stretch their tender roots forward. Branches of young cherry, oak and maple trees serve as landing pads for hungry birds to rest their wings. Virginia creepers, mountain mint and milkweeds all have claimed a space among the colorful petals that sway gently in the breeze.

The area’s beauty will be enhanced next year when an adjacent soybean field is converted into an area for native grasses and birds.

“The pollinator meadow and future grasslands area are two examples that demonstrate the Hunterdon Land Trust’s commitment to preserving our most critical natural resources -- places where everything that is part of that system can thrive,” said Patricia Ruby, executive director of the Hunterdon Land Trust.

Thorsen will continue to closely monitor the meadow, ensuring a balance among the plants, and will selectively remove undesired species. Also, he will make sure the trees don’t grow unchecked, which could form a canopy and block the annual flowers from bathing in sun.

“We really want to maintain habitat heterogeneity there,” Thorsen said. The variety of habitats ensures that plants and pollinators will thrive. “We have preserved forests and agricultural land; it’s great to have acreage set aside specifically for pollinators,” he added.

“When you visit, you can really see the food chain working,” Thorsen said.

The 35-acre Quakertown Preserve located on Croton Road (Route 579), just south of the intersection with Route 616/Quakertown Road in Franklin Township. Ample parking is available on the preserve. Go to the “Visit a Preserve” section at www.hunterdonlandtrust.org to learn more.

Upcoming Event at Quakertown Preserve

HLT is looking for volunteers to help plant native trees at the Quakertown Preserve on Sunday, Oct. 4 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. For more information or to register: tom@hunterdonlandtrust.org or 908-237-4582.

Images:

1. HLT Land Steward Tom Thorsen monitors the pollinator meadow at the Quakertown Preserve.
2. Shots of the pollinator meadow.



