

400 Learn About Area's Ecology, History, Culture at Pinelands Short Course at Stockton

March 8 Event at College Co-Sponsored by N.J. Pinelands Commission

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Galloway Township , NJ- South Jersey's Pinelands National Reserve is home to unique people, plants and animals, and contains aquifers that are the source of fresh water for the region. The 25th annual Pinelands Short Course at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey today featured 36 presentations by experts illuminating the Pinelands' culture, history and ecology.

The daylong event drew 400 people to hear experts on topics such as the southern pine beetle, climate change in forest ecosystems, wildlife habitat restoration, native bees and other insects of the Pinelands, the Jersey Devil, butterflies and moths of the Pinelands, owls of New Jersey,

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Dr. Ron Hutchison, associate professor of Biology at Stockton, outlined how elevated levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere are affecting plants in the Pinelands, during a presentation titled, "Climate Change in Forested Ecosystems."

Earth's temperatures have fluctuated between warm and cold periods for 4.5 billion years, Dr. Hutchison said. But since 1880, studies show

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A mini lesson in bee anatomy showed that pollen is transported by getting trapped on hairs, known as scopa, covering a bee's abdomen and/or hind legs.

Native bees collected from the surrounding region were pinned in display cases for observation. Green, blue and yellow-colored bees—some fuzzy, some shiny—ranged in size from tiny dots just larger than the heads of the pins to big bumblebees. Honeybees are actually not native to North America, so there weren't any queens to be seen.

"In the Pine Barrens things turn up that aren't well known," Cromartie said as he shared pictures of rare sightings.

To collect bees for pinning, Cromartie uses white, blue and yellow Dixie-cup sized plastic containers filled with a water and soap solution. He always uses blue Dawn dish detergent with the original scent. Prior to his presentation, he set out a trap line of the plastic cuts filled with soapy water. At the end of his lecture, he took the group outside to check the traps and learn which species are currently active on Stockton's campus.

Phil Levy, of Cedar Run in Ocean County, said, "I try to get here every year to keep learning." He is a recreation aide for Ocean County Parks and Recreation and has presented at the Short Course in the past. Now he hopes to take what he learns and "share it with the parks."

Stockton's Continuing Studies program helped organize the event, at which New Jersey educators could earn professional development credits through the state Department of Education.

The day included a field trip to the Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge, which is near the college in Galloway.

Other presentations were held in Stockton's Campus Center and the new Unified Science Center, both of which were designed to reduce energy use and impacts on the environment.

The 154,000-square-foot Campus Center, which opened in May 2011, was awarded the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. The center uses 40 percent less water and 30 percent less energy than standard construction. The Campus Center includes an 8,000-square-foot event room, a theater, meeting rooms, a food court and offices.

The Unified Science Center, which opened in September 2013, is a three-story, 66,000-square-foot building adjacent to the Campus Center.

The Unified Science Center includes 11 research labs, six multipurpose classrooms for natural science and math programs, computer classrooms, labs for Life Science, Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Analytical/Physical Chemistry, Genetics, Microbiology, and faculty offices. The building has been designed for energy efficiency in accordance with LEED guidelines.

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Photos - Please credit: Susan Allen/The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey