



Image by Claire Ciccarone

The First People of the First State

Restoring Ancestral Knowledge

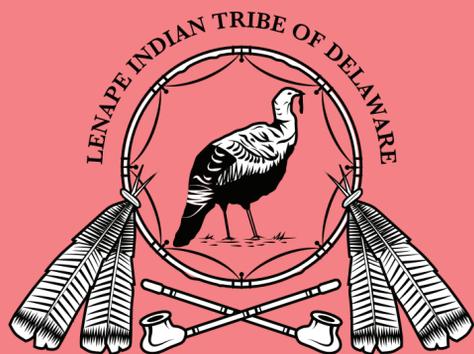


Image by Harry Gould

Gould captured the fruiting body of the Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), a native plant found on the Lenape Tribal land. This image was also given “Research Grade” status by the iNaturalist community.

Observations become “Research Grade” when the community agrees on species-level ID or lower, i.e. when more than 2/3 of identifiers agree on a taxon.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/help#quality>



On Wednesday, Aug. 21st an action packed iNaturalist training coordinated by RuthAnn Purchase was held at the Lenape Cultural Center with three elders, two parents, and seven young people who are direct descendants of the Original People. Most of the youth were either Cheswold Lenape or Bridgeton Nanticoke-Lenape Tribal Citizens who live on this side of the bay; one was an Allegheny Seneca Tribal Citizen studying at Delaware State University (DSU). Immanuel Union United Methodist Church (UMC) sent six of its members; there were three students from the University of Delaware (UD), and Grant Officer Erin Samarasinghe from Delaware Humanities participated in the workshop. Three UD professors, Jocelyn Alcantara-Garcia, John Jungck and Jon Cox, presented an introduction to the year-long project exploring the intersection of Indigenous Wisdom and Citizen Science. As Chief Quiet Thunder Gilbert stated during his closing remarks, “Modern society doesn’t recognize the importance of Nature; but man is not superior to what helps him exist.”

One example of this continuing collaboration between local Tribal Citizen - Scientists and Artist - Activists, was highlighted by the Lenape Cultural Center draft design proposal for the Village of Fork Branch, with a UD Art and Design class led by Professor Jon Cox in the spring of 2019. The practical training focused on nature photography with participants visiting the Tribal Grounds in the Village of Fork Branch to try out their new-found skills. After learning about the various types of Citizen Science projects from Professor John Jungck, participants downloaded the iNaturalist app on their smartphones. Participants then navigated the app and found “Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware” under projects and uploaded their photos. Immediately this on-line community grew as responses to the posted photos began, filling in the scientific and common names for each species and connected the Tribal project to a Monarch advocacy group.

Butterflies, being good indicators of the health of “All Our Relations,” were seen everywhere as the team hiked down to the stream on the Tribal property. Finding the pawpaw trees (*Asimina triloba*) planted by Chief Coker, participants learned about the zebra swallowtail (*Eurytides marcellus*), a species rarely seen in Cheswold, DE on account of their host plant, the pawpaw tree not being abundant in this area. Participants were encouraged to upload photos to iNaturalist of these rarely seen beauties anywhere they are found and identify the pawpaw trees the zebra swallowtail caterpillars depend on. The group also discussed how to use pawpaw seeds in their art work to raise awareness, and how their ancestors may have used these seeds as an insect repellent and the fruit as a major food source.

This project was partially funded by the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware and the University of Delaware Partnership for Arts and Culture. The majority of this project was funded by a competitive Vision Grant with Jocelyn Alcantara-Garcia as the Principal Investigator that was awarded by Delaware Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The second workshop in this series is scheduled for Indigenous People's Day on October 14th (location to be announced) where Roger Mustalish, retired West Chester University professor and president of Amazon Center for Environmental Research (ACCER.org), will focus on identifying forest foods and herbal remedies common to Lenapehokink. UD Professor Jules Bruck will also lead a field sketching exercise and guide participants into deeper observation and hands-on drawing and understanding of a single plant. Participants will continue to use the photography and iNaturalist skills covered in the first workshop. These specialized workshops and training sessions are building toward a spring project, promising to see these same young adults as cultural ambassadors training their younger siblings and cousins to recognize and honor the interconnectedness of all life in Lenapehokink.

Butterflies, being good indicators of the health of "All Our Relations," were seen everywhere as the team hiked down to the stream on the Tribal property. Finding the pawpaw trees (*Asimina triloba*) planted by Chief Coker, participants learned about the zebra swallowtail (*Eurytides marcellus*), a species rarely seen in Cheswold, DE because there are so few pawpaw trees in this area.

Participants were encouraged to upload photos to iNaturalist of these rarely seen beauties anywhere they are found and identify the pawpaw trees the zebra swallowtail caterpillars depend on. The group discussed how their Ancestors may have crushed paw paw seeds for insect repellent and harvested the fruit for nutrition. The group also explored how they might use Papa seeds in their artwork to raise awareness about this beautiful butterfly and luscious indigenous fruit.

This project was partially funded by the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware and the University of Delaware Partnership for Arts and Culture. The majority of this project was funded by a competitive Vision Grant with Jocelyn Alcantara-Garcia as the Principal Investigator that was awarded by Delaware Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The second workshop in this series is scheduled for Indigenous People's Day on October 14th (location to be announced) where Roger Mustalish, retired West Chester University professor and president of Amazon Center for Environmental Research (ACCER.org), will focus on identifying forest foods and herbal remedies common to Lenapehokink. UD Professor Jules Bruck will also lead a field sketching exercise and guide participants into deeper observation and hands-on drawing and understanding of a single plant. Participants will continue to use the photography and iNaturalist skills covered in the first workshop. These specialized workshops and training sessions are building toward a spring project, promising to see these same young adults as cultural ambassadors training their younger siblings and cousins to recognize and honor the interconnectedness of all life in Lenapehokink.



Image by Jocelyn Alcantara-Garcia

Chief Quiet Thunder Gilbert and UD Professor John Jungck look over Lenape community member Jaimy Renold's shoulder as she uses her cell phone to try and capture a closeup image of a skink living inside a cherry tree on Lenape Tribal land.

Alyssa Ridgeway captured an image of the invasive tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) and uploaded it to the iNaturalist app. Her image was upgraded to "Research Grade" in the app and was confirmed that the species was introduced into Kent County, DE. This valuable information will be used by the Tribal community to continue to restore the flora and fauna on their land to a more natural state.

Screen Capture from the iNaturalist App