

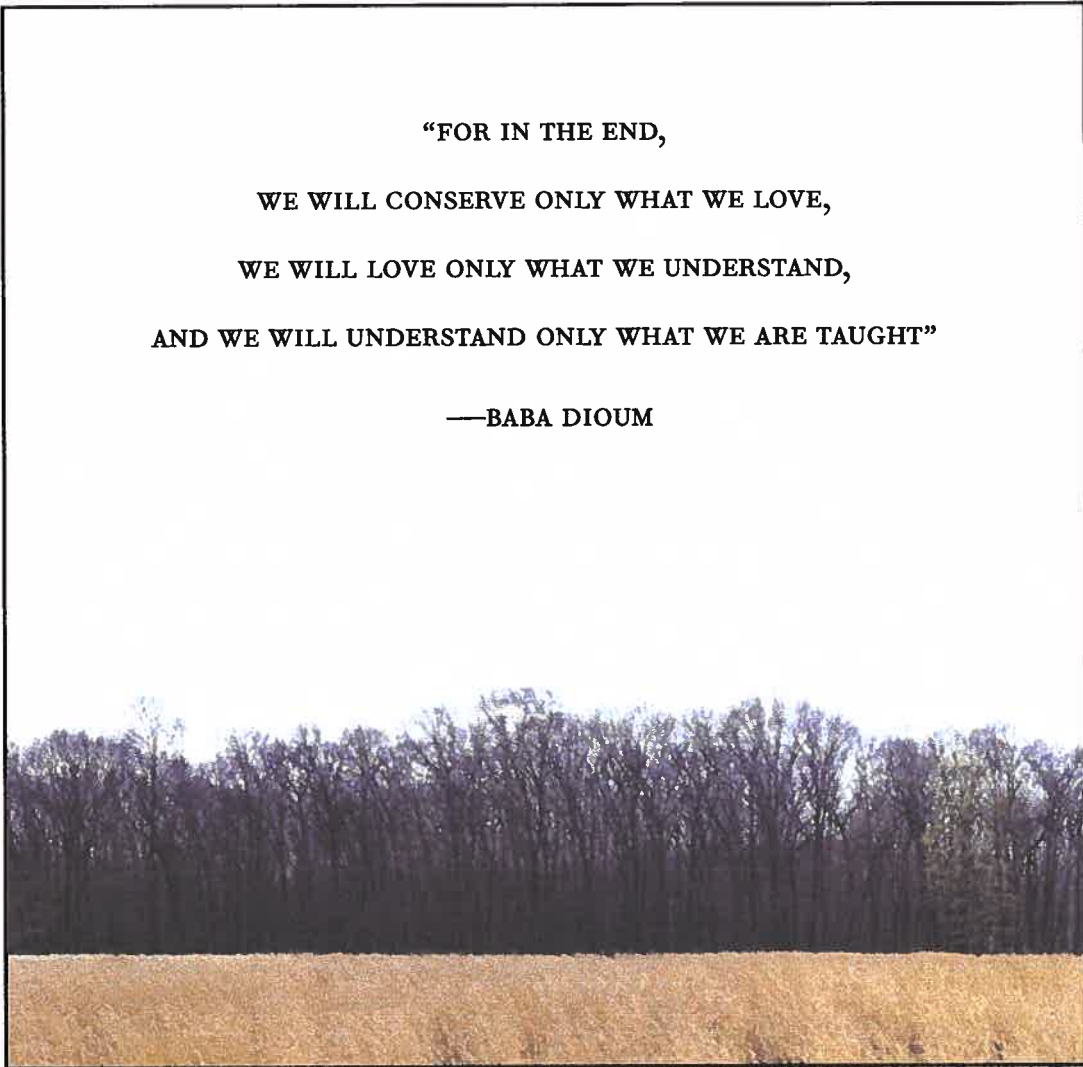
# Characteristic Flora & Fauna



*of* **READINGTON TOWNSHIP**  
**NEW JERSEY**

**“FOR IN THE END,  
WE WILL CONSERVE ONLY WHAT WE LOVE,  
WE WILL LOVE ONLY WHAT WE UNDERSTAND,  
AND WE WILL UNDERSTAND ONLY WHAT WE ARE TAUGHT”**

**—BABA DIOUM**



*This booklet is dedicated  
to all those who have entered their land  
into Readington Township's land preservation programs,  
and all those who have supported these landowners  
in their preservation effort.*

Produced by  
READINGTON TOWNSHIP  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION,  
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Written by  
R. Daniel Allen,  
*member, Readington Township  
Environmental Commission.*



*Profiles of characteristic Flora and Fauna are provided for the following  
Readington Township habitats*

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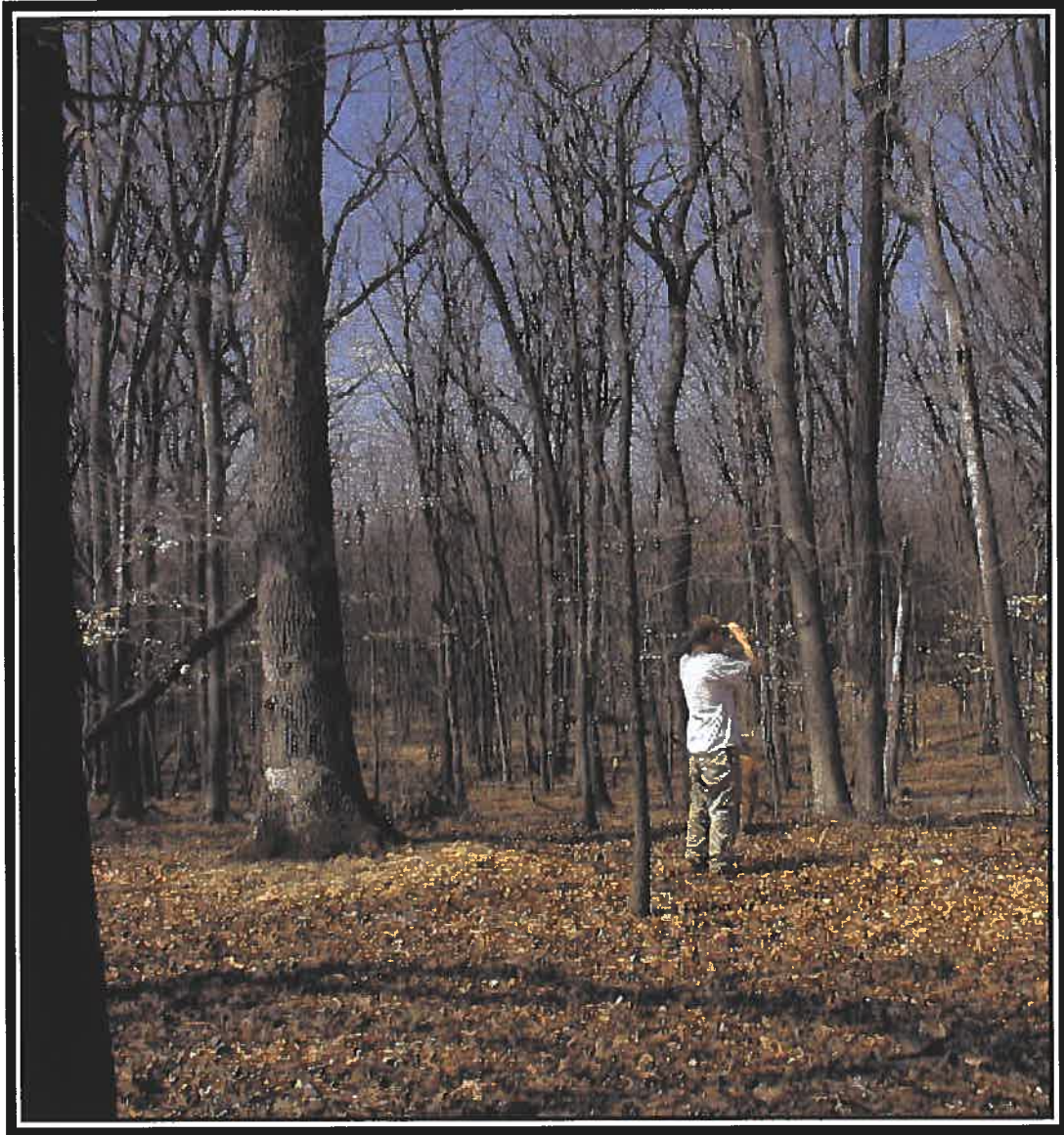
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# Mature Forest

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**"I WALK AS ONE SPECIES AMONG MANY. . ."**

**—DON FREIDAY, NATURALIST, HUNTERDON COUNTY PARKS**



**CHARACTERISTIC FLORA AND FAUNA  
OF MATURE FOREST HABITAT  
IN READINGTON TOWNSHIP**

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**CANOPY TREES**

oak (white, black, northern red, scarlet, pin, chestnut, swamp white), maple (red, sugar, silver, box-elder), american beech, tulip tree, ash (white, green), hickory (shagbark, mockernut, pignut, bitternut), elm (American, slippery), black birch, black walnut, butternut, black cherry, blackgum, american basswood, sassafass, plus remnant plantings of locally-non-native white pine, Norway spruce, Austrian pine, and scotch pine.

**UNDERSTORY TREES**

flowering dogwood, shadbush, hornbeam (eastern hop, ironwood), american chestnut

**SHRUBS**

viburnum (blackhaw, mapleleaf), dogwood (silky, gray), spicebush, witch hazel, lowbush blueberry, bladdernut

**VINES**

grape (fox, etc.), poison ivy, virginia creeper

**HERBS**

Jack-in-the-pulpit, mayapple, false Solomon's Seal, white wood aster, trout lily, spring beauty, common violet, Indian pipe, spotted wintergreen, showy orchis, bugbane, cluster-leaved tick trefoil, northern maidenhair, common polypody, christmas fern

**MOSSES AND LICHENS**

common greenshield lichen, speckled grayshield lichen

**MAMMALS**

squirrel (gray, flying, red), eastern chipmunk, raccoon, black bear, white-footed mouse, striped skunk

**BIRDS**

pileated woodpecker, american redstart, black and white warbler, wood thrush, ovenbird, veery, scarlet tanager, cooper's hawk, rose-breasted grosbeak, barred owl, blue jay, long-eared owl

**HERPETILES**

wood turtle, box turtle, red-backed salamander

**INVERTEBRATES**

katydid, cicada, black carpenter ant, pigeon horn-tail, spring azure, mourning cloak, luna moth, polyphemous moth, cecropia moth, plus many species of soil dwelling invertebrates (e.g., earthworms, mites, beetles, etc.)

**FUNGI**

chicken mushroom, hen-of-the-woods, russula spp., amanita spp., bolette spp., shelf fungi, jelly fungi, puffballs, earthstars



### Northern red oak

The state tree of NJ; a very valuable member of mature forest habitat found in most woodland areas in Readington; many insects feed on its spring and summer foliage, which, in turn, attracts a wide variety of migrating and nesting songbirds; these include many species of warbler, vireos, woodpeckers, scarlet tanagers, rose-brasted grosbeaks, etc.; fall crop of acorns are a very important food for wildlife, including wild turkeys, squirrels, blue jays, and white-tailed deer; fallen leaves decompose to form an organic-matter-rich, spongy forest floor.



RED OAK LEAVES

### Tulip tree

Often the tallest, straightest tree in the forest; can grow to over 100' tall; beautiful orange-yellow flowers (although often difficult to see in tall canopy); seeds from trees on Cushetunk and Round mountains can be blown long distances within the Township.



TULIP TREE

### American chestnut

This once-common and very valuable mature-forest tree is now quite rare due to an introduced fungus; it now grows to only 20-30' before dying back and re-sprouting from the roots; A keen observer may be able to locate a few small specimens from the trails on Cushetunk mountain.



CHESTNUT TREE



FLYING SQUIRREL  
*(text on next pg)*



**SHOWY ORCHIS**

**NORTHERN MAIDENHAIR FERN**



**Northern maidenhair fern**

This beautiful fern can be found in moist mature-forest habitat. The whorled arrangement of its fronds make it especially striking; look under leaflets to see the reproductive spore-producing structures, called sporangia. Look for it along the Peter Buel Trail on Round Mountain.

**Showy orchis**

This relatively rare and beautiful woodland flower can be found in high-quality mature forest

habitat, such as that found on Cushtunk mountain. A group from the Torrey Botanical Society recently spotted one there. Overbrowsing of the forest floor by white-tailed deer can be especially devastating to this and many other woodland herbs, many of which may be severely threatened because of deer overpopulation.

**Flying squirrel**

Although rarely seen due to its nocturnal habits, this small squirrel is a likely resident of woodlands throughout Readington township; has the ability to glide long distances by spreading flaps of skin between its fore- and hind-legs—quite a wonderful sight for those fortunate enough to witness it; depends on nesting holes in standing dead trees or hollow limbs, as well as a good crop of nuts from forest trees such as oak, hickory, and beech.

**Pileated woodpecker**

The largest of North America's woodpeckers; this relatively shy (but strikingly patterned and often quite loud) bird can be seen and heard in



**PILEATED WOODPECKER**





**BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER**

older mature forests, such as Cushetunk and Round mountains. It can be heard more often than seen; large, long excavated cavities in standing dead trees are a good indication that a pileated is nearby; they excavate these cavities to access ant nests in the interior of dead trees, also use excavated cavities for nesting or sleeping; such cavities provide crucial nesting holes for many other species of mature forest wildlife, including both mammals and birds; forestry practices which remove all dead or dying trees severely decrease

the habitat quality for these woodpeckers, as well as many, many other forest species.

### **Black and white warbler**

A member of the very diverse wood warbler family, many of which are threatened by the loss of mature forest habitat; Like many other warblers, it can be found flitting and creeping along tree branches, trunks, and leaves, looking for tasty insects; can most often be found in moist streamside areas within mature forest habitat; like many forest birds, it is often heard before it is seen; its song consists of several high “wee-zy” notes.

### **Wood turtle**

A NJ-threatened species; declining due to habitat fragmentation and loss; requires larger patches of high-quality forest habitat, interspersed with wetlands or streams; found most often in moist woods, although can range far from water; shell is strikingly patterned with a series of raised plates, each decorated with concentric grooves (thus, giving it its Latin name, *Clemmys insculpta*).



**WOOD TURTLE**

### **Luna moth**

One of the largest and most beautiful of all North American moths, and a secretive resident of Readington’s mature forests; 4” long, with striking wing pattern and shape; nocturnal, but can sometimes be found sleeping among the vegetation in mature-forest habitat; depends on hickories, beeches, and other mature-forest trees as food-plants; thought to be in decline due to habitat loss and pesticide use in surrounding habitats.



LUNA MOTH



MAY APPLE



SCARLET TANAGER



TROUT LILY



INDIAN PIPE

# Agricultural Landscape

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DOBOZYNSKI FARM PARK, BLOCK 63  
ROUND MOUNTAIN IN DISTANCE



**CHARACTERISTIC FLORA AND FAUNA  
OF AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES  
IN READINGTON TOWNSHIP**



**FIELDS, FENCEROWS, SMALL  
WOODLANDS, AND CROPLAND  
TREES**

black cherry, ash (white, green), black walnut, red mulberry, eastern redcedar, sassafras, dogwood, maple (red, silver, boxelder), oak (red, pin), shag-bark hickory, apple, crabapple

**SHRUBS**

blackhaw viburnum, dogwood (silky, gray), sumac (staghorn, winged, smooth)

**VINES**

grape spp., poison ivy, virginia creeper, greenbriar

**HERBS**

common milkweed, common mullein, hawkweed, ox-eye daisy, red clover, white clover, orchard grass, timothy

**MAMMALS**

white-tailed deer, red fox, raccoon, opossum, striped skunk, groundhog, cottontail rabbit, meadow vole, short-tailed shrew, white-footed mouse, deer mouse, squirrel (gray, red), coyote

**BIRDS**

red-tailed hawk, great horned owl, screech owl, indigo bunting, white-eyed vireo, northern oriole, kingbird, eastern bluebird, northern flicker, American woodcock, barn owl, barn swallow, tree swallow

**HERPETILES**

snakes (eastern milk, black rat, northern black racer, eastern garter), red-backed salamander, American toad, box turtle

**INVERTEBRATES**

monarch butterfly, bumblebee, honey bee, swallowtail (tiger, black)

**HERPETILES**

painted turtle, snapping turtle, spring peeper, bullfrog, green frog, pickerel frog, southern leopard frog

**PLANTS**

duckweed spp.

**MAMMALS**

muskrat

**INVERTEBRATES**

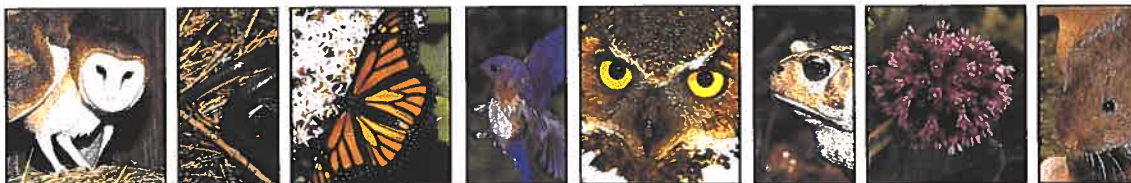
dragonfly spp., damselfly spp.

**FISH**

large-mouthed bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed sunfish

**BIRDS**

green heron, great blue heron, spotted sandpiper, ducks (mallard, black, wood), Canada goose, Indigo Bunting





**MONARCH BUTTERFLY**



**MILKWEED**

### **Monarch butterfly/common milkweed**

The beautiful monarch butterfly is dependent on the availability of plants in the milkweed family for food during its larval caterpillar stage. The monarch larvae will then attach its cocoon to the plant and pupate, emerging as a fully-formed butterfly. Several milkweed species are associated with a diverse agricultural landscape, including swamp milkweed and dogbane; monarch migrates thousands of miles each fall to the mountains of c. Mexico, returning again in the Spring to breed; Warning coloration on both butterfly adult and caterpillar larva signify their toxicity to predators. Milkweed is a once common “edge plant” in agricultural landscapes in Readington Township. In order to provide habitat for Monarch butterflies, we must preserve the habitat for milkweed.



RED FOX



MEADOW VOLE

### **Red fox/meadow vole**

Like the monarch and milkweed, these two species are closely linked; Meadow voles are herbivores which inhabit fields—especially those with a thick growth of grasses and herbs; Vole tunnels and runways can often be seen on the ground in late winter after the snow melts; Voles are very prolific breeders, and an important source of food for many predators, including red foxes, hawks, owls, and coyotes; Red foxes and other predators are most common in areas with good meadow vole populations; Foxes often dig their nest den out of an old woodchuck burrow in a field or woodland area; pups are born in early April and can often be seen from a distance, frolicking outside the den. This is still a common sight in Readington.

### **Great-horned owl**

One of the largest owls; heard often in early spring, hooting near woodland edges; a skilled and powerful predator, feared by small mammals, as well as by other owls and hawks; by day, however, must hide from crows, which raucously mob and harass any great-horned owls who dare show themselves by daylight; use large stick-nests high-up in large trees, often former red-tailed hawk nests. It is not difficult to find a female Great-horned owl sitting on a nest in a patch of mature forest in Readington Twp.



GREAT-HORNED OWL



**BARN OWL**

### **Barn owl**

A formerly-common, but now decreasing resident of Readington's agricultural landscape; prefers to nest in barns and other man-made structures; hunts rodents in fields and around farm buildings; called 'flying rat-traps' due to their skill in controlling Norway rat populations; unfortunately, a possible future addition to the NJ-threatened list. Until recently, a pair had nested annually in the abandoned water tower on the Lane/Zweerink farm on Pleasant Run Road.

### **Eastern bluebird**

Often seen near field edges and in pastures; hunts by dropping down from perch to grab an insect, and then returning to the perch; males are a brilliant sky-blue color, while females are less strikingly colored; an Indian legend says that, due to its gentleness, the gods allowed the once-drab bird to bathe in a sacred lake of incredibly blue water, thus giving the bluebird its color; once in serious decline due to decrease in available nesting holes (due to habitat loss and European starlings), however, now making a comeback, thanks to nest boxes.



**EASTERN BLUEBIRD**



**NORTHERN BLACK RACER**

### **Northern black racer**

This little-seen, but potentially-large (4 feet long) snake inhabits fields and open woods of agricultural landscapes; region's fastest snake; chases-down prey and bites rather than constricts; eats small rodents, frogs, other snakes, and birds; lays its eggs in rotten logs or under large stones; like many other predators, the black racer will be drawn to areas with large meadow vole populations.

### **American toad**

A formerly very common toad, now thought to be in decline due to unknown factors; mating song is a beautiful musical trill, heard most often on warm April evenings; Dependent on habitat diversity found in agricultural landscapes; breeds in ponds, but wanders widely throughout fields and woodlands in search of insect prey.



**AMERICAN TOAD**





AMERICAN KESTREL

### **American kestrel**

One of the smallest of Readington's raptors; slightly larger than a robin, member of the falcon family; often seen hovering low over open hay fields, in search of insects and voles, then drops quickly to pounce on prey.

### **Poison ivy**

This much-maligned vine, which produces an allergic reaction in many people, is actually one of the best sources of nourishment for birds during the winter months; produces abundant white berries which are consumed by many bird species when food is otherwise scarce; vine fastens itself to tree trunks with an amazingly strong natural glue at the tips of many small fibers, which are actually modified roots; unlike other vines, rarely overgrows and kills trees.

### **Box turtle**

Most commonly-seen land-dwelling turtle in Readington, however, in decline due to habitat loss, pet trade, and cars; utilizes full complement of agricultural landscape, including woodlands, meadows and gardens; often soaks in mud or in very shallow water, or burrows under damp leaf-litter; eats berries, invertebrates, and mushrooms (even those poisonous to humans); most active on mornings after summer rains; during mating season, males can be seen following the smaller females in a slow-motion pursuit through wetland areas; females lay three eggs between May and June; can live over 100 years; can completely hide inside shell, unlike most other turtles.



BOX TURTLE



**GREAT BLUE HERON**



**RED-TAILED HAWK**



**BARN SWALLOW**



**SPRING PEEPER**



**INDIGO BUNTING**



**OX EYE DAISY**