

AAUW Somerset Hills – MARCH 2024 – NEWS

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY	CONTACT/ HOST
		MARCH 2024	
Mon 3/4	7:00 PM	Evening Book Group	Michelle Conover
Tues 3/5	4:30 PM	March Board Meeting	
Tues 3/12	7:00 PM	BRANCH MEETING - this meeting ONLY on Zoom.	Somerset County Environmental Center: Vital Vernal Pools with Vanessa Darras
Mon 3/18	9:30 AM	Morning Book Group**- in-person & Zoom	Jackie D'Alessio
		APRIL	
Mon 4/1	7:00 PM	Evening Book Group	Michelle Conover
Tues 4/2	4:30 PM	April Board Meeting	
Tues 4/9	7:00 PM	BRANCH MEETING - In-person at Bernards Township Library, 32 S. Maple Ave., Basking Ridge & on Zoom	Diversity & Inclusion Background: Where are we today? Bonnie Gould & Becky Hughes
Mon 4/15	9:30 AM	Morning Book Group**- in-person & Zoom	Jackie D'Alessio
		MAY 2024	
Tues 5/13	7:00 PM	BRANCH MEETING - in-person	TBD
Mon 5/19	9:30 AM	Morning Book Group**- in-person & Zoom	Jackie D'Alessio

NOTE: Change from usual time, date or place marked *.
All activities presented via Zoom unless marked **.

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**URGENT MESSAGE – HELP NEEDED:**

Have you noticed that recent newsletters have included open position announcements for a BRANCH TREASURER, BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIR, and FUNDS CHAIR? All these positions are still available.

Our CO-PRESIDENTS and several other members of the Board have served in current roles since 2021. We also are in need of a MEMBERSHIP CHAIR and will soon need a COMMUNICATIONS VP as your newsletter editor is moving away.

It's past time for a real effort to add new names and faces to the Branch Board.

Several interest groups are operating successfully but rather separately; they currently have minimal representation on the Board. **Is the SOMERSET HILLS AAUW important to you?** Would you be willing to pick up some additional responsibilities and help prevent a crisis that might lead to the Branch dissolving?

If you can offer **any help**, short or long term, please reach out to **Bonnie Gould** at 908-285-8385 or [bonniegould@verizon.net](mailto:bonniegould@verizon.net)

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Reminder: The March 2024 meeting will be ZOOM only. We hope this allows more members to attend without concerns about winter weather.

We plan to return to our hybrid meeting format (in-person at the Bernards Township Library & ZOOM) in April and sincerely hope all will take the opportunity to come out and support the Branch with added engagement.

**MARCH BRANCH MEETING: Vital Vernal Pools** - a presentation by Vanessa Darras, Naturalist on **Tuesday March 12, 7:00 PM**, on Zoom

Spring is right around the corner and New Jersey will soon be alive with sound and color. Some of the sounds will be from spring or vernal pools. These unique pools throughout the state are part of a special ecosystem that supports a wide variety of plant and animal life yet can only be seen as the woods ‘waken’ after the winter. Vernal pools are unique habitats that only exist when water is prevalent.

During this presentation, participants will learn what a vernal pool is and develop an understanding of the animals that use and depend upon a habitat that can soon disappear.

Darras, a resident of Branchburg, NJ, has been with the Somerset County Environmental Education Center for 15 years and especially enjoys teaching about the environment. She got her start on the coast of Georgia teaching about natural history and ecology of the barrier islands. In addition to people, she works with pet lizards and snakes, wild turtles, salamanders, and even bears. She loves all things involving the wildlife of New Jersey!



Members of the public are also warmly invited to join the group online, for this informative **FREE** program.

This meeting will be held **ONLY** on Zoom and will begin promptly at 7:00 PM. Use [this link](#) for all Branch Meetings - registration is no longer required. The Zoom room doors open at 6:30 PM for gathering and socializing.

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**RECOMMENDED DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FROM THE 2023 BOOK SALE:**

The Book Sale Committee met in January and recommends that the Branch donate the funds from the 2023 Book Sale as shown in the table below. **Members each received an email from Book Sale Chair Teri Passarello asking for their vote to approve this distribution, and many of you have responded - Thankyou! However we still don't have a quorum responding. Teri will resend the request - if you didn't reply earlier please respond promptly.**

Per our by-laws, and as a 501(c)(3) organization, we must give away the funds made in the previous year's book sale, less money for a contingency reserve for the next year's sale. Once approved by the full Branch membership, we will award our 2024 Branch gifts.

**2024 SOMERSET HILLS BRANCH GIFTS (proceeds from 2023 book sale)**

|                                             |          |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|
| AAUW Greatest Needs Fund                    | \$ 3,900 |
| AAUW NJ Charitable Trust                    | \$ 1,000 |
| AAUW NCCWSL                                 | \$ 1,250 |
| Raritan Valley Community College Foundation | \$ 6,000 |
| Bernards Township Library                   | \$ 3,500 |

|                                                                       |                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Bernardsville Library                                                 | \$ 1,000         |
| Clarence Dillon Library                                               | \$ 500           |
| Long Hill Township Library                                            | \$ 500           |
| Warren Township Library                                               | \$ 1,000         |
| Bernardsville Middle School Media Center (Book Sale Location)         | \$ 3,000         |
|                                                                       |                  |
| <b>Total</b> - funds made in 2023 book sale, less contingency reserve | <b>\$ 21,650</b> |

**AAUW NJ NEWS:** What news will the February **Equi{tea}** - the monthly Newsletter from AAUW NJ bring us? This provides a regional focus and supplements the messages sent directly from AAUW National. Please be sure to read it or regularly check the **AAUW NJ website:** <https://aauwnj.org>.

This spring, in addition to electing members to the National Board of Directors, members will be asked to vote on an amendment to the national bylaws that would open membership to any individual who supports AAUW's mission. A college degree would no longer be required for membership.

Learn more about the amendment [here](#) and give it some thought. The AAUW NJ Executive Board voted to support the measure and is encouraging all New Jersey members to do so as well.

Voting opens April 3rd and closes May 15. Members will receive a direct email with a link to vote.

**ThriftBooks SUPPORTS OUR BRANCH:**

After our annual book sale a good number of unsold but totally worthy books were packed off to **ThriftBooks.com** These are listed for sale on their website and continue to sell, generating a check to the Branch almost every month. Last month they made over \$60 which is added to our reserve for awards made annually. If you are buying books, please see what they have on offer.

**AAUW BOOK CLUBS:** Please contact Jackie or Michelle, the coordinators, to be put on the list to receive a Zoom invitation for whichever Book Club meetings best fit your schedule, have titles that attract you or simply suit you best.

**MORNING BOOK CLUB:** 3rd Mon @ 9:30 AM; Chair Jackie D'Alessio [jqline@reagan.com](mailto:jqline@reagan.com)

In 2023-24 the Morning Book Group will meet in a combination of in-person and ZOOM meetings. The in-person meetings will also be available on ZOOM. Members will assemble for socialization at 9:00 AM with the Book Discussion beginning at 9:30 AM.

| DATE   | TITLE                          | AUTHOR           | REVIEWER          | HOME OF/ZOOM  |
|--------|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Mar 18 | <i>Eliza Scidmore</i>          | Diana P. Parsell | Cynthia Schneider | ZOOM          |
| Apr 15 | <i>Horse</i>                   | Geraldine        | Karen Brown       | ZOOM          |
| May 20 | Book Selection for 2024 - 2025 |                  | Jackie D'Alessio  | Karen Brown   |
| Jun 17 | <i>Heresy</i>                  | S.J. Parris      | Arlene Inglis     | Arlene Inglis |
|        |                                |                  |                   |               |

**EVENING BOOK CLUB:** 1st Mon @ 7:00 PM; Chair Michelle Conover, [chellemartin@hotmail.com](mailto:chellemartin@hotmail.com)

In 2023-24 the Evening Book Group will continue to meet on ZOOM, except for the book selection in June.

| DATE  | TITLE                          | AUTHOR         | REVIEWER        |            |
|-------|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Apr 1 | <i>Lady Clementine</i>         | Marie Benedict | Pat Emanuele    | ZOOM       |
| May 6 | <i>Carnegie's Maid</i>         | Marie Benedict | Ginny Pasternak | ZOOM       |
| Jun 3 | Book Selection for 2024 - 2025 |                |                 | In-person! |
|       |                                |                |                 |            |

**TAX IMPLICATIONS OF OUR AAUW DUES & DONATIONS:**

2023 tax preparations will be underway shortly for most of us. Here’s an update about the tax implications of contributing to AAUW. Generally, AAUW dues can be tax deductible as 501(c)(3) charitable contributions, except for \$3 of national dues and \$10 state dues which support 501(c)(4) non-partisan lobbying efforts. This means that \$102 of the \$115 membership dues we paid for the 2023-2024 membership year and all dues paid by our Friends of the Branch are tax deductible.

If you have set up an account and log into National’s [aauw.org](http://aauw.org) site, click on the “Orders and Donations” button in your “Personal Snapshot” screen and charity donations made to the AAUW National funds will come up and can be printed as backup for your tax records.

Our AAUW Somerset Hills Branch is a separate fully recognized 501(c)(3) with NJ Exempt Organization ID 237-005-372/000. Donations to our annual Branch Book Sale are tax deductible. Individual cash donations made by check at the sale have been acknowledged and receipts have been issued.

While the NJ state portion of our membership dues are not tax deductible, contributions to the AAUW-NJ Charitable Trust, including those in support of Tech Trek, are. Call Bonnie Gould at 908-285-8385 or send her an email [bonniegould@verizon.net](mailto:bonniegould@verizon.net) if you need more clarification.

Don’t forget to alert the **MEMBER ENGAGEMENT & SOCIAL COMMITTEE** if you know of a member whose life circumstances are such that they could use a little SUNSHINE. They can extend a supportive connection on behalf of the Branch!

*Please contact Jean Aurnhammer (908-227-3861, [jaa39@aol.com](mailto:jaa39@aol.com)) or Lee Delitzscher (908-647-4497, [ladybearlee@aol.com](mailto:ladybearlee@aol.com)).*

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**Each of our members is valuable to us. Please do what you can to stay healthy as COVID/Flu/RSV season continues. Although the wearing of masks is no longer required, we *highly* encourage it.**

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**ENVIRONMENTAL TIP from Co-President BONNIE GOULD:**

“Our collective excessive use of paper towels bothers me. Use of a paper towel -- while compostable without the detrimental impact of single use plastic – often doesn’t have to be. NY Times Wirecutter, one of my favorite websites for product use and purchase information, had a recent article on how to think about proactively making less use of paper towels. Their recommendation:

- If a paper towel is the first thing you reach for, put them away. Storing them in a cabinet or under the sink can help you pause before automatically grabbing them.
- Buy reusable towels – a lot more – and employ them for the right tasks. The upfront costs for a package of “bar mops” or microfiber cloths are about the same as for a multipack of Kirkland Signature Paper Towels. I’ve now devoted a drawer in my kitchen to clean dish towels and cleaning rags.
- Then, think about using your cellulose Swedish dishcloth, which can be washed hundreds of times before being composted, as your “go to” sponge.

Over the last year, I’ve been amazed at the few times I’ve wanted to reach for a paper towel. And, I still have that multipack of Kirkland Signature Paper Towels sitting in my supplies closet for the much fewer times where the convenience of a paper towel still makes sense.

Contact Bonnie at 908-285-8385 or [bonniegould@verizon.net](mailto:bonniegould@verizon.net)

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