



Friends of The Great Swamp



FrOGS

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Judy Kelley-Moberg and Jill Eisenstein, Editors

A Changing Landscape



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Photo by Dr. Jim Utter

**Beaver lodge on newly acquired 38-acre parcel in Ice Pond basin, see page 4.
Changes in Patterson Environmental Park, see page 3.**

Great Swamp Enthusiasts Can Help Stop the Spread of Invasive Plants

by Beth Herr

The threat of invasive species can overwhelm naturalists and land managers. Oriental bittersweet and porcelain berry line roadways and kill trees, reed grasses devour wetlands and biodiversity, Japanese barberry shrubs blanket the forests, making them impassable. The list goes on. But there *is* good news and there are ways hikers and kayakers who use the Great Swamp can help:

The good news: There is now legislation that stops the spread at the source: a ban on the sale, transport, import, or purchase of invasives. That seems like a no-brainer; however, New York State just took the lead with its new regulation of 98 prohibited species. The list includes old favorite hedge plants like border privet as well as new garden fads like bamboo. The top ten invasive plants in the Great Swamp are now prohibited, like Japanese stilt grass, Japanese knotweed, Japanese honeysuckle and those mentioned in the beginning of this article. The ban even includes red-eared slider turtles, goldfish, and some aquatic plants. To read the full list, go to www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/93848.html

New York State has also started "Stop the Spread," a campaign asking recreationalists to be proactive in preventing new invasions. Kayakers who use the Great Swamp are asked to clean their boats before and after being in the water. Hikers



are asked to clean footwear (deep treads collect mud and seeds), wear clothing that is NOT seed friendly (smooth material), and to brush off clothing and gear after leaving an area.

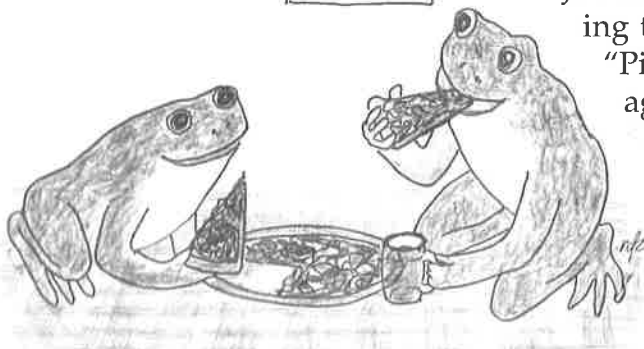
Park managers and natural resource experts have been joined by volunteers to keep the invasive plants at bay. The Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) is one of eight regional partnerships in the state of New York. Their emphasis is on education, prevention, early detection and rapid response to troublesome invasive species. To find out how you can do even more to help stop the spread and learn best techniques for control of invasive species: www.lhprism.org.

The best news is you CAN make a difference. YOU can help stop the spread of invasive plants.

Sauro Brothers Present Check to FrOGS



Steve and Lenny Sauro of Sauro's Town Square Pizza presented FrOGS with a donation of more than \$800. The gift was part of the "Pizza with a Purpose" initiative that the brothers began in June 2015, three months after they opened the restaurant adjoining their 20-year-old deli on Route 311 in Patterson. With "Pizza with a Purpose," the Sauro brothers donate a percentage of all pizza sales in a given month to a charity that they believe is helping others.



Sketch by Nancy Clark

"We support the ideas of community, charity and buying local," said Lenny. "We want to be a community-based restaurant where we are not only the hub of the community but an example of the good in the community."

The Environmental Park Beavers

by Rick Saracelli

Twenty years ago, beavers began to reappear in the East Branch Croton River. They built their dams and lodges in relatively remote areas. In October 2015, a pair established residence in the Patterson Environmental Park. After a dry summer, with the river at its lowest since 1999, a pair of beavers built a dam and lodge one hundred yards south of the canoe launch. It has been interesting to watch this beaver family develop its new habitat.

Beavers can be troublesome animals when their dams flood roads or property. However, in the area these beavers have chosen to live, none of these conflicts with human activity—which usually makes the beavers unwelcome—exists. One must consider that the Great Swamp first and foremost belongs to the wild animals residing there. Humans are visitors and seeing the animals and their habitats is part of the fun of visiting.



Beaver Swimming. Photo by Rick Saracelli

ming about or lounging on the riverbank. The ones that have been spotted are quite large, perhaps sixty pounds, and are not shy. Remember, though they are making drastic changes to the landscape, change is normal in nature.

Editors' Note: On January 1, while doing the Hidden Valley Christmas Bird Count at the Clough Preserve, we heard a loud crash. Peering through our binoculars toward the origin of the sound, we saw a large tree had just been felled by a beaver on the western edge of the swamp. Patterson Environmental Park is not the only place they are changing the landscape!



Beaver Dam. Photo by Rick Saracelli

To witness the environmental changes made by the beavers, park at the end of the Environmental Park road and walk south. The most noticeable thing is the forest thinned of many saplings. Also observe the higher water level made possible by the dam. The lodge and winter food supply are evident on the west bank of the river. The dam is 50 yards down stream of the lodge. Traveling on the water in the spring, look for the beavers swim-



Photo by Judy Kelley-Moberg

More of Ice Pond Basin Preserved!

by Jill Eisenstein
Photos by Judy Kelley-Moberg

In November, FrOGS and Putnam County Land Trust (PCLT) closed on a 38-acre parcel formerly owned by the See family in the Ice Pond basin in Patterson. Mostly wetland, the parcel includes an acre and a half easement that will allow a trail above the flooded zone.

In the wetland, breeding wood ducks and mallards share the alder, viburnum and buttonbush habitat with hard-to-find warblers, green herons, and secretive Virginia rails. About four acres of the property are upland woods, part of a rim sheltering it from east and northeast winds, and making the wetlands a perfect roosting area for migrating

ducks including wood, black, mallard and teal. Visitors can observe plenty of beaver evidence in the flooded area.

"With the new purchase, 80 percent of the Ice Pond basin's 300-acre wetland is now forever protected," said Dr. Jim Utter, Chairman of FrOGS.



Buttonbush.



The new preserve.

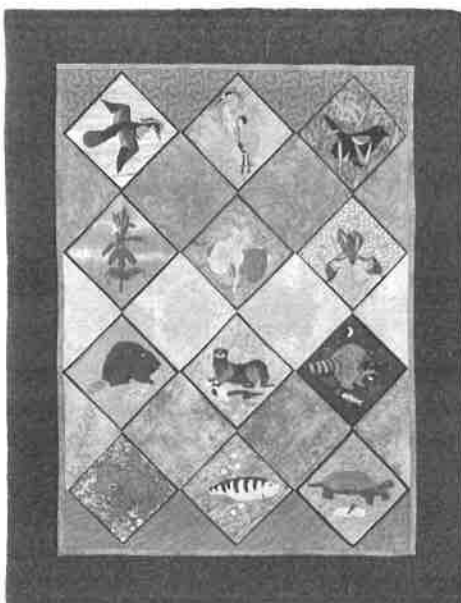
Because of its unique features, FrOGS has suggested that the Ice Pond system be included in New York's Open Space Plan. Scientific studies completed by experts from the New York Botanical Gardens (Daniel Atha, Robert Naczi and Bill Buck) found over 599 species of vascular plants, mosses and lichens, some of them rare, growing in 20 different ecological communities around Ice Pond. A checklist with maps and photographs is available on the PCLT website (www.pclt.net). A newly-discovered species of frog, the Atlantic Coast Leopard Frog (*Rana kauffeldi*), was identified in the Ice Pond wetlands just a few years ago, and tracking teams have found evidence of bobcat, otter, and mink as well as beaver and black bear.

The Traveling Quilt

The 25th Anniversary Friends of the Great Swamp Quilt, first displayed at the November dinner and celebration, is going on tour!

Designed and stitched by local artists and FrOGS Board members, the stunning quilt will become an ambassador for the Great Swamp. It will be exhibited at local libraries and town halls.

Not only is the quilt a work of art and labor of love, it now has a role to play in education. FrOGS will offer public programs at each venue highlighting the functions and value of this critical environment called the Great Swamp. In addition, an activity book with drawings by the quilt artists will be available free for the asking. The activity book will also be available on the FrOGS website. Look for the traveling quilt in a local library or town hall near you! Details to follow.



Our Silver Anniversary Dinner

by Jill Eisenstein
Photos by Lori Adams

Pawling: Thomas Memorial Center, 6:30 p.m. November 14, 2015: Entrance hall abuzz with the excitement of old friends meeting again. Some who had been involved in the early years had traveled thousands of miles to help celebrate. Exclamations of approval as people looked at the highlights of FrOGS projects through the years. Smiles of delight as they looked at historical displays. Exquisite photographs. Wide-eyed looks of awe at the 25th Anniversary quilt designed, pieced and hand-sewn by FrOGS members.

The festivities began with a cocktail hour and live harp music in the beautifully paneled fireplace room. In the Great Room, Chairman Dr. Jim Utter opened the dinner hour with a champagne toast. Special presentations included silver recognitions for the three founding Board members still on the FrOGS Board after 25 years: Edie Keasbey, Gordon Douglas, and Dr. Jim Utter. The prestigious Michael T. Ciaiola Conservation Award was presented to Ralph Odell, Norman McGrath and Cherie Ingraham for their important work in helping to preserve the Great Swamp.

The evening culminated with an address by Ned Sullivan, President of Scenic Hudson. He applauded FrOGS for its collaborative approach in protecting the Great Swamp and drew many parallels between the work of Scenic Hudson and FrOGS to create

awareness “about the potential loss of a natural treasure ‘hidden in plain sight’.” He listed some of FrOGS’ accomplishments in research, education and conservation, and complimented the group on “continuing to be the leading grassroots voice on behalf of the Great Swamp and its 62,000-acre watershed.”



Keynote speaker Ned Sullivan,
President of Scenic Hudson.

He also underscored how imperative the mission of FrOGS will be to the Great Swamp in the years to come: Wetlands not only clean water and provide quality-of-life amenities, they provide the best defense against the flooding that is expected to accompany climate change. By protecting the wetlands, we can also play a role in *reducing* the impacts of climate change, he said, as carbon emissions building up in the atmosphere is one of the biggest contributors to atmospheric warming, and “up to 35 percent of the carbon stored in the U.S. is found in places like the Great Swamp.”

He added that “although wetlands comprise only about five percent of the land mass of the lower 48 United States, they provide habitat for more than one-third of the nation’s threatened or endangered animal species. Many wetland birds and insects benefit humans—for example by helping prevent the spread of diseases such as West Nile Virus.”

In closing, Sullivan summed up the celebration by looking both backward and forward: “For 25 years, Friends of the Great Swamp has been ‘changing the world’ in this neck of Putnam and Dutchess counties. I look forward to returning to celebrate your future successes. I have no doubt they are on the horizon.”



Dr. Jim Utter, Gordon Douglas and Edie Keasbey, recipients of the Silver Award.

December Sightings in the Swamp



Are You Kidding Me? Peepers in December?

by Mark Chipkin

One night in December I saw a dozen frogs or more crossing the roads near the Great Swamp in a rain storm. Later in the month green frogs were basking on the rocks of our little frog pond during a 60 degree day.

While walking around the lake at Lakeside Park, I observed dandelions in bloom around mid-December.

What really surprised me most was hearing the peepers calling. I asked Nature, "Are you kidding me?"

With some research I found out that the somewhat misleadingly named Spring Peeper will peep well into fall, especially when the weather's warm.

I wondered if anyone else noticed these or any other unusual things this December?



Peeper sketch by Nancy Clark

Acorns and Ardent Turkeys

Article, green frog and feather sketches by Judy Kelley-Moberg

The warm days of December fueled up the ardor and the competitiveness of the male turkeys in the flock that sticks around June Farm on Bullet Hole Road in Patterson.

The males strutted about each other in full display, all fluffed out with wings trailing to impress the others with their size, and shaking their fan tail bustles for effect. The sunlight picked up all the beautiful iridescent colors in their feathers. They put on quite a show...a little ahead of time, since they don't usually do this until spring...and a waste of energy, as the hens completely ignored them and went on eating.

Animals have to be very careful to balance the amount of energy they expend with amount of energy (food) they take in. The heaps of acorns that still litter the roadside and roll around under your feet like ball-bearings are indicators of a big mast crop this year. The abundant food supply should help re-fuel the show-boaters and get them through the rest of the winter.

Editors' Note: Officials reported that the Northeast had its warmest December on record (records go back to the 1800s), with average air temperatures in each state more than 13°F above normal for the month.

Leaving a Legacy to Friends of the Great Swamp

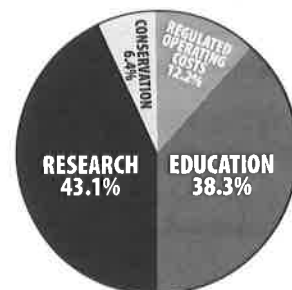
by Gordon Douglas

When it comes to leaving a legacy for the generations to come, a legacy for which we would like to be remembered, we turn to who and what we love. In my case it is my family and nature. There is a saying with regard to nature one should think "globally and act locally". I can't save the world but I can participate meaningfully in saving and preserving the Great Swamp, our local environmental crown jewel. I like to think that I will be remembered as playing a small but significant role in this achievement.

There are special attributes that make FrOGS an especially attractive legacy. It is a 100% volun-

teer organization and almost every cent received is spent on science, education and conservation of the Great Swamp.

I hope that you will join me and other members by including a legacy for the Great Swamp in your estate planning. Call us (845-228-5635) if we can be of assistance or if you want to inform FrOGS of your intentions.



FrOGS 2015 EXPENSES

Note: FrOGS spent an additional \$36,543 of its saved funds on land acquisition expenses in 2015

New Great Hollow Nature Preserve

by John Foley

Photos by Judy Kelley-Moberg

“What will become of Great Hollow?” has been a common question over the past several years. The answers varied. To many, it meant fond memories of a place where children and nature joined in harmony; to some politicians, it meant a place to construct a cell phone tower and dog park; and to local environmentalists, it signified an important part of a critical watershed needing permanent protection.

The original owner, a famous New York lawyer, Walter G. Merritt, declared in his will that the 1,440 acre estate was “to maintain as a wildlife sanctuary, for the benefit and enjoyment of the public and for educational purposes consistent therewith.” After Merritt died, the historic eighteenth century homestead and land went to Wesleyan University. Wesleyan later neglected to file IRS exemption in NY and the 600 acres of NY land was turned into Putnam County Conservation Lands. It was named the Walter G. Merritt Park, later changed to the Michael Ciaiola Conservation Area, after a prominent conservationist in Putnam County. The Regional YMCA of Western Connecticut later purchased the Connecticut land from Wesleyan with the help of a state bond.

Great Hollow’s 827 acres of today, designated a critical treasure by the Highlands Coalition, is located in the heart of one of the most ecologically important areas in Northern Fairfield, CT, and Putnam, NY, counties. It also contains a vital watershed that feeds into the Great Swamp in New York. The stream Quaker Brook/Haviland Hollow begins in a large wetland in Pawling, NY, and then circles clockwise through Sherman and New Fairfield before crossing



back into the Great Swamp in Patterson. The 7 square mile watershed area contributes runoff into the stream which contains some of the cleanest water along the New York-Connecticut divide. Over 2,000 acres of protected NY state and county lands border the western portion of Great Hollow and nearly 1,400 acres lie just to the east of the property, encompassing Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) state forest and park lands.

Due to economic hardships, the YMCA was forced to put Great Hollow up for sale after 15 years. The property’s restrictions kept the list of potential buyers small. After just a few years of neglect, the homestead and barns began to fall into disrepair, the fabled apple orchard became completely overgrown with brambles and the estate lawn with invasive Japanese knotweed. In spring of 2015, rumors of the property being purchased were afoot and estate renovations were in the works. Local Sherman resident and philanthropist, Gary Goldring, had purchased the land.

Great Hollow is now Great Hollow Nature Preserve. Goldring, whose sole intent is to follow Merritt’s will, envisions it becoming a renowned environmental research center as well as a nature preserve open for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. Soon the Great Hollow Nature Preserve and the Michael Ciaiola Conservation Area will be reunited through a series of scenic trail networks.

Great Hollow will officially open on April 23 (Earth Day weekend) and host a BBQ with many activities. As he wished, Walter G. Merritt’s legacy will continue.

