

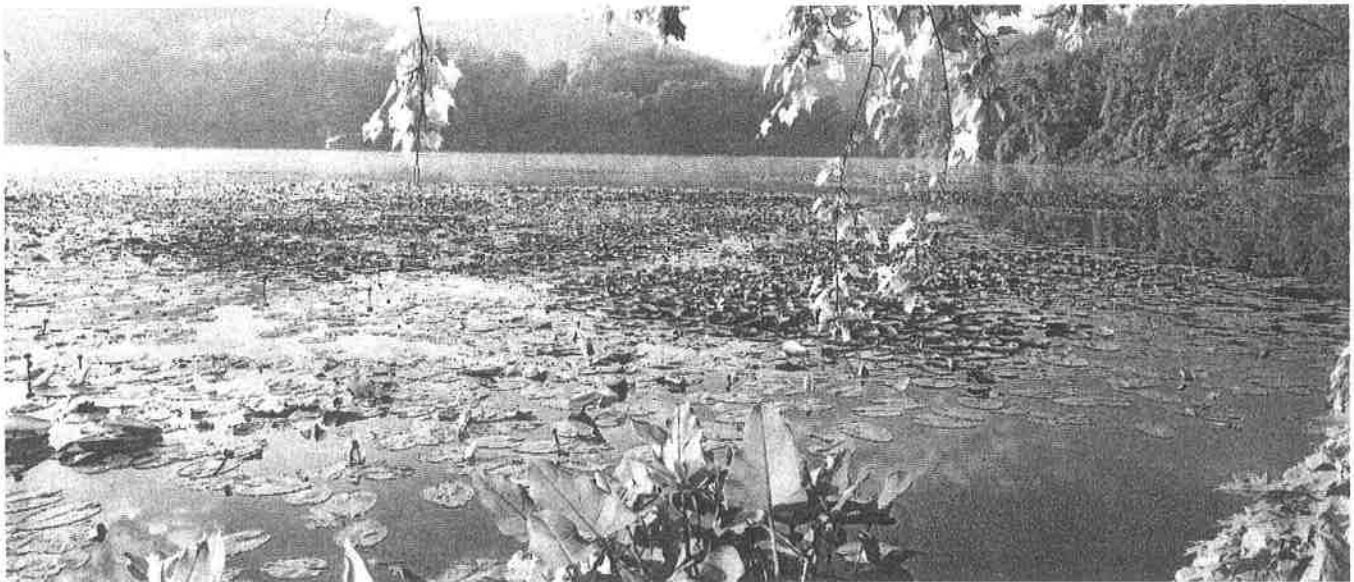
Friends of the Great Swamp



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Conservation Groups Work Together To Protect Critical Area



Photograph of "Turtle Pond" by Norman McGrath

FrOGS, the Putnam County Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy worked with Sheila and Bill Hamilton to Acquire a Critical Wildlife Area.

Mendel's Pond, a local landmark and important waterfowl habitat, is part of a 44-acre acquisition worked out with Sheila and Bill Hamilton by Friends of the Great Swamp (FrOGS), the Putnam County Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy. Coordinated by Hunter Pollock of PCLT with Laura Welles of TNC, preservation of this important wildlife area was accomplished with money from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NACWA) federal grant to FrOGs and all of its 12 partners.

As part of the agreement the name will be changed back to its original name, Turtle Pond. "We gave Turtle Pond back to the land where it belongs, we were only borrowing it" says Sheila Hamilton, the recent owner of this quiet corner property in Patterson.

Conservation Groups Preserve Turtle Pond

Pond is a Haven for Migrating Ducks and Shorebirds

Turtle Pond is at the western end of the newly protected corridor and is ecologically significant in its own right. It provides breeding habitat for wood ducks, kingfishers and green herons and becomes a migratory stopover diner for water birds during the spring and fall migration. Ring neck ducks, green winged teal, black ducks and mallard ducks generally remain until the pond freezes over and are back early in the spring as they "fatten up" for flights to their appointed destinations. The beautiful wood ducks use the pond during migration but residential parents are typically seen with their growing teenagers throughout the late summer and fall. Other water birds using the pond for migration include pied-billed grebe, hooded merganser, ruddy duck, and blue winged teal.

This area is important for shorebirds as well. Shorebird species such as spotted, least, and solitary sandpipers feed on the insects that hatch on lily pads and floating vegetative matter on the surface of Turtle Pond.

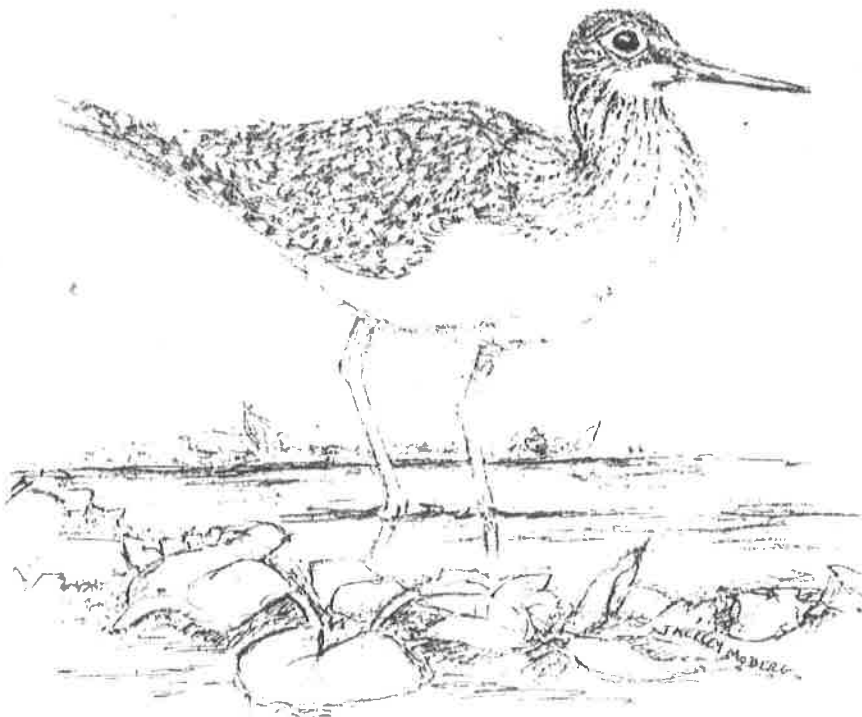
Forested Slope also Preserved

Included in the purchase of Turtle Pond is the forested slope that contains springs, which feed the pond. The new acquisition borders the Putnam County Land Trust's Luschinsky and Sterling Farm Preserves and completes a key 100- acre upland forest corridor owned by PCLT that will bridge Cornwall Hill. This large habitat block supports the breeding of declining area-sensitive bird species such as the scarlet tanager and the wood thrush.

Equally important, many wetland species need bordering uplands and protective habitat to move from one area to another. Such ecological links facilitate wildlife and plant movement, in this case connecting the Swamp along Route 22 with the Ice Pond and Muddy Brooks at Routes 164 and 312. Some upland species, like the rare blue-spotted salamander, live in this forest but move into the wetlands in the spring to breed. Protection of this overall complex is required. "That's why NAWCA requires acquisition of upland buffer areas as part of the wetland purchases on which this federal program focuses," notes Dr. Jim Utter, of the Environmental Science Program at Purchase College and Chairman of FrOGS.

Turtle Pond History

Turtle Pond and its surroundings have long been a part of Patterson's history. Originally the Turtle Pond area was part of land originally conveyed to Mary Haines in 1788. It was a 1920's era sprawling dairy farm owned by Linus Johnson recounts Edie Keasby who grew up on an adjacent farm. "The pond was probably created around 1900 by damming the stream and flooding a marshy area to provide ice for the farm" suggests Chris Maher, based on his research. Chris and Leslie Maher now own the yellow farmhouse, which is directly across the street



Solitary Sandpiper feeding on a Lily Pad on Turtle Pond

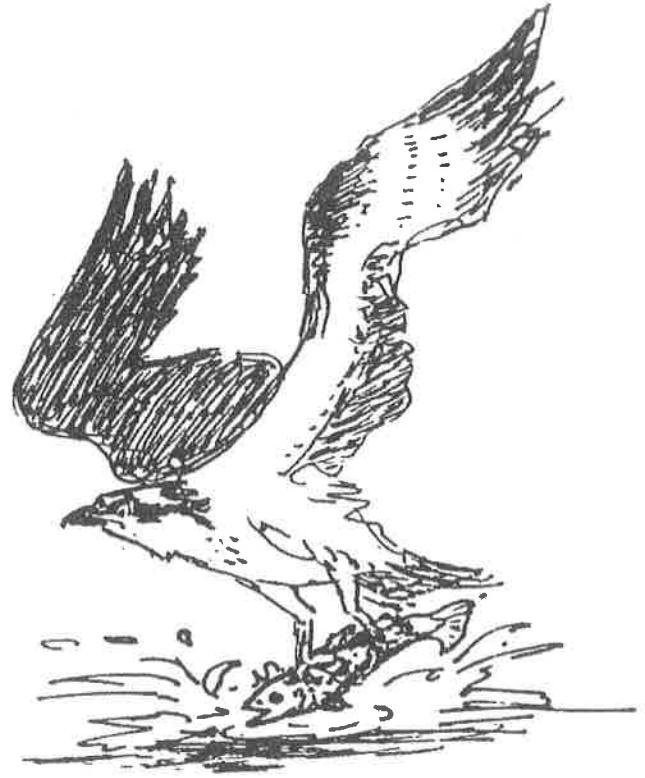
Osprey!

A solitary, semi-resident Osprey can be seen perching on one of the telephone poles along Cornwall Hill Road waiting to grab a fish. He finds fishing good in the pond and travels between Turtle Pond, Ice Pond and part of the Muddy Brook drainage.

Turtles

Prolific painted turtles can be seen basking from early spring through the cold winter snaps in the fall. As a wildlife feeding area, Turtle Pond compliments the feeding resources of the main body of the Swamp and connects the entire area ecologically.

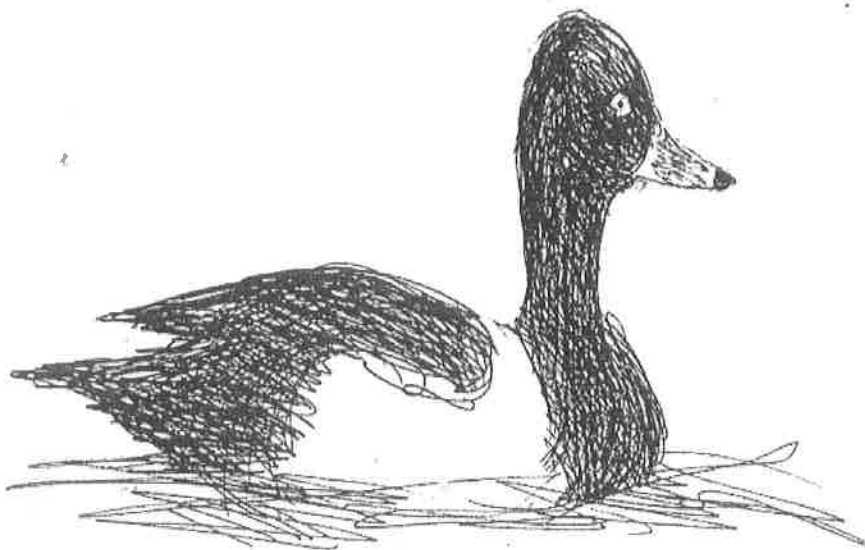
"Our family has received so much pleasure from this property." Said Bill Hamilton. "We were glad we could help the three organizations achieve their goal to preserve it for future generations."



An Osprey snatching a fish for dinner

Turtle Pond Photograph

Professional photographer Norman McGrath, who lives on the hill overlooking this new preserve, created the photo of Turtle Pond, seen on page 1. He has donated the 20X52 inch original print to raise money for the Peter Dunlop Memorial Fund. It is currently on display at The Gallery at KGSII in Katonah. Peter Dunlop, a long time FroGS member and next-door neighbor to Norman, also revealed in his view of Turtle Pond. Peter passed away last spring and the memorial fund has been established to promote aspiring young artists who utilize the Great Swamp in their creative endeavors.



Ring Neck Duck in Turtle Pond

Carruth Brothers Donate Parcel Along Swamp River

The Oblong Conservancy received the donation of an eleven-acre parcel fronting on The Swamp River from Gorton Carruth and his brothers. This parcel is located at the northern end of the Great Swamp across the river from the Sharparoon Reservation. It had been in the Carruth family for generations.

The parcel consists of woods, patches of old field, red cedar and areas of wetlands as well as frontage on the Swamp River. This is prime turtle nesting habitat: outwashes of limey, soft sand in this area of limestone hills. It is an ecologically beautiful sight.

Owner, Gorton Carruth said, "My brothers and I agree that an elegant solution to the disposal of our Dover property is to donate it.. ." The Oblong Conservancy and FrOGS do agree and appreciate this generous gift of a precious living landscape. The Oblong Conservancy will manage this property as a preserve.

SWAMP RIVER

The Great Swamp straddles a drainage with the East Branch Croton River flowing south and the Swamp River flowing north. The Swamp River rise in the Village of Pawling then snakes its way north for almost ten miles before joining the Ten Mile River. It is a low-gradient stream bordered by extensive woodland swamp and marsh. About 40% of this portion of the Great Swamp is wooded swamp, another 25% flood plain forest and about 13% wet meadow.

The Swamp River winds and twists itself through the swamp forest through thick cattails and reeds. In many places it just about disappears in the vegetation then later, further north, follows a more defined stream-bed.

The wetland and upland portions of the far northern end of the Swamp encompasses some of the most pristine and most biologically rich habitat in the entire watershed region. This area is especially rich in reptiles and amphibians. Most of the flood plain forest, of the north flow of the Swamp, occurs along the banks of the Swamp River and Borton Brook.



Marsh of the Carruth Property

Donations of Land

The donation of land in fee simple (outright) to a qualified land conservation organization, like the Oblong Conservancy, may combine financial benefits to the donor, like income tax deductions, no capital gains tax to be paid, or an asset removed from the estate. It can be a great opportunity for the conservancy to promote its mission of protecting additional land.

The process of making a land donation is a simple one. If you are a landowner of vacant land a donation may be a practical consideration for you and one, which will also benefit the cause of conservancy. If you would like more information please contact the Oblong Land Conservancy at 845-855-5993

River Otters of the Swamp River

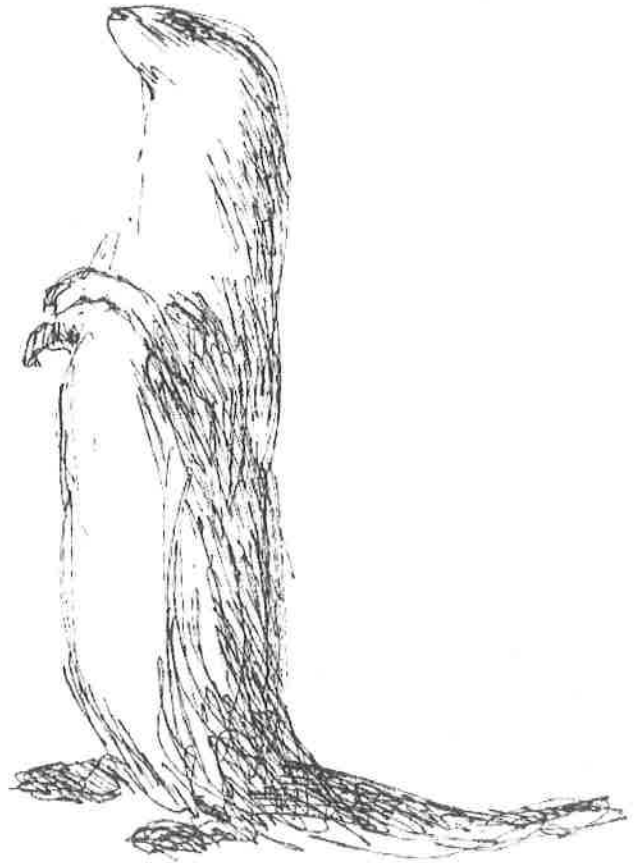
The Swamp River is habitat for many varieties of reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. All of these provide an excellent food source for River Otter.

Hiking along the banks of a river, otter tracks are spotted in many places. Signs of otter from the fish scales they discard along the banks, confirm their tracks. Winter is the best time to discover their presence, as the tracks of the otter are unmistakable. They are well adapted to the snow and travel by bounding and sliding. They typically take two to five bounds then slide five to fifteen feet. The "bound" track has a distinctive print and the "slide" leaves marks in the snow like someone pulling a sled.

For otters in the wild, their bounding and sliding tracks record their travels to find new waterways and something to eat. Otters eat fish, crayfish, turtles, and frogs. They have a very fast metabolism that burns food quickly so they must eat up to four times a day. In winter they prefer spots along stream banks or deep swamp areas where they can make holes in the ice to fish. They try to keep a hole or two open in a frozen pond. They dive into the water and chase the slower fish towards the shore where they can catch them in their mouths. Then they emerge from the water to eat, depositing piles of fish scales when they have finished.

Otters move on to the next hole or the next area of open stream to hunt for more food. Otters travel from one stream or pond in their territory along a route that is usually three to four miles in length. Some families have been known to travel routes that extend for 20 miles.

Otters are social animals and are often seen in groups. However, they are shy when it comes to humans thus are rarely seen by hikers even when we seek them out. Wildlife photographers with a lot of patience can catch a group of otter sliding down a snowy slope on their bellies. They appear to be "playing" on route to their next meal.



River Otters breed in the summer and give birth to their young the following spring. Their dens are located on the banks of streams with the entrance below the surface of the water. Because they are so social a family will generally stay together for a season, sometimes longer.

Although often seen in some of our wilder areas, otters are scarce in others because they are very sensitive to pollution. The fact that they can still be found in the Swamp River and portions of the East Branch Croton (south flow) indicate that these areas are still healthy enough for them. Maintaining both river areas as pollution free as possible ensures that we will enjoy the presence of River Otter for many years to come.



International Migratory Bird Day

FrOGS will celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with events on Friday evening May 7th and All Day Saturday, May 8th!

Friday Night will be our special "Birding 101", an introduction to birds of the Great Swamp. The Hudson Valley Raptor Center will bring live Hawks and Owls. John Askildsen from Bedford Audubon will introduce songbirds from the Swamp.

International Migratory Bird Day is an annual event, a nationwide focus on our migratory birds during the peak of their spring travels from Central and South America back north to their nesting habitats, both here and further north. FrOGs will focus on welcoming back our special SWAMP birds.

Over 90 species of bird's breed in the Great Swamp, another 90 species use the Swamp as a refueling stop on the way to Canada and the Arctic. Most of our songbirds winter in Central and South America. They leave their winter homes and make their first grueling flights across the Caribbean. Although they have fattened up for the journey, by the time they have reached the gulf coast shores they are exhausted and battered. Their weight is often down one to two ounces. The gulf and the southeast provide the first refueling stops but their journey is not over and other places to stop, eat, and rest are necessary.

Those that fly near the coast can make another stop at Bombay Hook N.W.R. in Delaware or Brigantine N.W.R. in southern New Jersey, but then they must make the leap north once again. Most make the trip via the Great Swamp and East Branch Croton River. It is a long, hard leap for these already tired birds. The SWAMP is an essential stop.

Fortunately the high rocky ridges paralleling the East Branch Croton River funnel the exhausted migrants toward and into the SWAMP. Here they find food and refuge; early hatching insects for food and a quiet place to rest.

FrOGs celebrates their return with educational activities for families and bird walks for both experienced birders and those who are just interested in learning more about birds and their environment.



A Falcon from The Hudson Valley Raptor Center



FrOGS Would Like to Thank..

Judy Moberg for her drawings.
Jean Hannon for her drawings
Gordon Douglas for his photographs.
Norman McGrath for his photograph.
Karen O'Neill for her editing.

GREAT SWAMP CANOE TRIPS

Join FrOGS at the Green Chimneys Beach off Doansburg Road
A canoe trip on the East Branch Croton River into the magnificent Great Swamp
A naturalist leader will accompany each trip

Saturday, May 1 st	8:45AM	10:45AM	12:45AM	2:45AM
Sunday, May 2 nd	8:45AM	10:45AM	12:45AM	2:45AM
		AND		
Saturday May 29 th	8:45AM	10:45AM	12:45AM	2:45AM
Sunday, May 30 th	8:45AM	10:45AM	12:45AM	2:45AM

Reservations are a MUST!! Reserve early, as spaces are limited.

Cost: \$18.00 a person

Call: Evelyn Chiarito at 845-877-6498 or Email echiarito@aol.com

**** Special Ecological Excursion ****

Saturday, May 15th

A day-long adventure through the magical wilderness of the Great Swamp

Enjoy the beautiful "bayou" environment and diverse birdlife.

Lunch provided

Leave from the Patterson Environmental Park at 9 AM

Reach Green Chimneys in the afternoon

Limited to 20 participants so reserve your spot soon!

Cost: \$75.00

A tax -deductible donation to Friend of the Great Swamp (FrOGS)

Call Evelyn Chiarito to reserve your spot. 845-877-6498

