



# Friends of the Great Swamp



FrOGS  
PO Box 373, Pawling, NY 12564  
Phone: (845) 855-1917

Volume 6, Issue 2  
Spring 2005  
[www.frogs-ny.org](http://www.frogs-ny.org)

## Butterflies of the Great Swamp



Meadow Fritillary, Sharpshoon

*March brings the Red-Winged Blackbird and the Wood Duck back to the Swamp—but if we are lucky and have a warm April day—we can thrill to the site of the season's first Butterfly.*

(Continued Inside)

# Butterflies of the Great Swamp

*(Continued from Cover)*

March brings the Red-Winged Blackbird and the Wood Duck back to the Swamp—but if we are lucky and have a warm April day—we can thrill to the site of the season's first Butterfly.

The Great Swamp has a high diversity of butterflies. Over seventy species have been seen in some portion of the Swamp. Most are associated with wet meadow habitats. The number and diversity of butterfly species is a key indicator of the health of both the wet meadow and shrub swamp habitats in the Swamp. Like the "caged canary" of the coal mines, declines in key species of our butterflies can indicate how man-made changes are affecting the health of the Swamp.

## Butterflies are Sensitive to Changes

Most Butterflies are resident species. Unlike birds, they are non-migratory. Butterflies live year-round near where the adult butterflies are seen. They have very limited dispersal tendencies and do not move far from where they were hatched. (The migrant "monarch" that travels to Mexico for the winter is a rare exception to this rule.)

## Wet Meadows—Shrub Swamp Habitats are Important

Wet meadow habitats and the shrub swamp areas are the most likely places to find butterflies. The most important "habitat" requirement for a butterfly species is the type and variety of food plants available for the "larval" or caterpillar stage of their life-cycle. There must be sufficient amounts of the "right" food plants at the site. Although some butterflies are generalists and their caterpillars eat many plants, most are "specialists" and eat only one plant family, some favor only one particular species. Most of the "host" plants favored by wetlands butterflies are found in our wet meadows.

It is the "specialist" species of butterfly that disappear if the caterpillar host plant disappears or changes. If a meadow is plowed or turned into a lawn—the host plant disappears and so does the butterfly. A meadow abandoned and allowed to grow to shrubs will no longer support the butterflies that formerly fed on the meadow plants. One species of Fritillary feeds only on bird-foot violets—a low growing wet meadow species. When tall grasses and brush grow up in the meadow, the violets are overshadowed and shaded by the shrubs and soon this butterfly species disappears.

Not only does the right plant food need to be available for the caterpillars but other aspects of the "mini environment" must be maintained for the butterfly species to survive in this location. For instance, special types of vegetation may be required for protective perches, hibernation spots or basking locations. Adult butterflies are less likely to have exacting requirements for flower nectar and may be able to utilize several different species.

## More Study Needed

The last butterfly study and census in the Swamp was completed in 1997. More monitoring of the population changes in the swamps butterflies as well as the specific requirements of particular species is needed to determine the best management plans for habitats in the Swamp that attract butterflies.





## SPRING CANOE TRIP 2005



**DATES:      APRIL 30, MAY 1,  
                     MAY 28, MAY 29**

Departures scheduled for:    **8:15am      10:15am      1:00pm      3:00pm**

The Great Swamp, one of the largest wetlands in New York State is less than 70 miles from New York City and meanders about 20 miles through the Harlem Valley. Canoe with **Friends of the Great Swamp** on the East Branch Croton River which flows through part of this vast 6,000-acre wetland.

Meet us at the Green Chimney's Beach off Doanesburg Road (formerly Putnam Lake Road) off Route 22. FrOGS member(s) will point out the plants, birds, and varied uses and values of this vast wetland. We may see the great blue heron stalking the swamp for fish. We may see migratory songbirds as they stop to rest or stay to nest, or catch a glimpse of the mink as he scurries about. Experience the natural beauty of the swamp.

All level paddlers are welcome. We will provide: Canoes, paddles, life jackets (bring your own if you wish) and a licensed Lifeguard. We suggest you bring bottled water, sunglasses and layered clothing, to accommodate temperature changes. We will canoe rain or shine. In extreme conditions we ask that you call for cancellation and rescheduling information.

**\$18.00 Adult Member -      \$11.00 Child (6 to 14 years)  
\$22.00 Adult Non-member -    \$15.00 Child (6 to 14 years)**

**FrOGS memberships, T-shirts, caps & maps will be available at registration.  
Volunteer paddlers and other helpers are needed and appreciated.  
Please let Evelyn know if you can help.**

**Reservations are a must and  
Space is limited so get your reservation early!**

**For information and reservations contact:  
Evelyn Chiarito at (845) 877-6498**



Or      [echiarito@aol.com](mailto:echiarito@aol.com) (please refer to FrOGS canoe trip)

Friends of the Great Swamp P.O. Box 373, Pawling, NY 12564    Email: [Pawling5@verizon.net](mailto:Pawling5@verizon.net)  
[www.frogs-ny.org](http://www.frogs-ny.org)

# A Walk on the Wild Side

*with Judy Kelley-Moberg and Rick Saracelli in the Winter Swamp*

By Evelyn Chiarito

On Sunday afternoon, January 30th, FrOGS Board Members Judy Kelley-Moberg and Rick Saracelli lead a winter hike through the Great Swamp to Pine Island. I have always wished to see Pine Island but didn't intend to go since the walk was listed as strenuous, however, Judy reassured me. A group of about 20 ranging in age from preteens to seventies met at the Patterson Recreation parking lot at the end of Front Street. There had recently been a fairly heavy snowfall and the ice on the East Branch of the Croton River, which Rick had dutifully checked, was frozen and safe to walk on. The weather that day was sunny, a little cool but comfortable. We all gathered in a circle and introduced ourselves.

Judy gave a short talk on where we were going and introduced Sariena Masiero, whose grandfather, Roy Smith along with friends from Patterson, had built an 8'x11' log cabin on Pine Island in the mid 1930's. They kept a journal referred to as "The Pine Island Chronicles" in which Roy, his friends, visitors to the cabin, as well as their beloved dogs (yes, their paw prints are in the journals) recorded their adventures. They fished, hunted and just spent time enjoying and observing the Great Swamp, its solitude, flora, fauna, and beauty. I can't help but think that maybe the spirits of those "swampers" came with us on the walk that day. I could see that it was a sentimental journey for Sariena.

We walked towards the river which flows south through the Swamp and then traveled southwest towards Pine Island. The snow was a little difficult to walk in and some of the hikers used snowshoes. Some trees close to the riverbank had thinning ice around their trunks. You could look through and see the river running swiftly beneath the ice. We could still see Route 22 traffic but soon left it behind as we proceeded south. The swamp was bathed in white and looked so vast, so peaceful and pristine with leafless trees and some fallen trees. Judy pointed out various animal tracks visible in the snow, different swamp bushes, a large tulip tree and also answered hiker's questions. Rick kept checking ahead to keep us on track and make sure everyone was fine and no one got separated. The swamp can be disorienting if

one is unfamiliar with it and occasionally visitors have to be rescued. Liz Cowan's pretty dog scampered ahead of us finding many interesting scents. We did misplace two of the young boys who wandered up onto Pine Island to explore but they had their eyes on us and reappeared very soon.

We all agreed when Rick and Judy inquired if we wanted to climb up the steep slope on Pine Island so we could see where the Hawks Rest Cabin once stood. The incline is rather steep and I found it somewhat difficult but with frequent stops along the way and allowing the other more fit hikers to go ahead, I made it to the top. The descent was equally steep and especially with the snow, one did have to be careful. It was best to place your foot sideways. Actually, someone did go sliding down the slope. Edie Keasbey brought along her hiking stick, which I would strongly recommend. A few days later we went to the Institute of Environmental Systems in Millbrook and purchased two good sturdy hiking sticks. I have been using mine every time I go out hiking and find it a tremendous help. When we got back to the river again, Rick asked if anyone wanted to go further south towards Muddy Brook. Most of the group decided to do so and a few of us decided to head back to the parking lot.

Everyone had a wonderful time thanks to Judy and Rick for taking time out of their busy schedule to lead us on a hike in the winter swamp. Thanks to the various groups along with FrOGS who have worked so diligently to preserve this sanctuary. I feel that Roy Smith and his friends from Patterson who sixty-five years ago recognized and wrote in their "Chronicles" about this special place, "The Great Swamp" and "Pine Island," would be pleased to know that their island still is and will remain a "Sanctuary."

With public and political support, I hope that other special areas of the swamp, both north and south, will be preserved for the enjoyment and use of present and future generations. Perhaps someday these generations will also be sharing in the reading of our "chronicles" of FrOGS and "The Great Swamp."

# *"Thank You" Party 2005*

Three dozen FrOGS members attended this year's "Thank You" party held on Sunday, March 13th for the artists and volunteers who participated in last October's highly successful Great Swamp Art Exhibit and Wildlife Celebration.

The event, which also doubled as an introductory viewing of FrOGS's new offices in the recently renovated Lawlor building, the former Patterson Hall on Route 311, was held in Lawlor's handsome new meeting room from 2 to 5 PM.

The mood of the party was instantly set as the guests approached the Lawlor building, which has been stunningly restored both inside and out to become one of the finest buildings in our area.



After viewing the sunny new FrOGS office, the guests proceeded to the party where there were displays and drinks and refreshments.

(Note: The new FrOGS office needs a desk and shelving - commensurate with the high quality of the Lawlor building. It would make a fine, tax deductible donation.)

Chairman Jim Utter thanked the artists and volunteers who had made last year's Event such a resounding success.

Utter singled out the co-chairs of the Exhibit and Celebration: Edie Keasbey, Evelyn Chiarito, Laurie Wallace, Nancy Clark, Rosemary Decatur and Bill Hamilton, who ran the food and refreshments so successfully.

Jim also thanked the Event's founder, Mae Greene. Next year, the Exhibit and Celebration's eighth, will be held on October 21, 22, and 23.

*(continued on page 7)*

# The Care and Feeding of the Great Swamp and its Watershed

*This is the first in a new series of articles concerning landowner stewardship of our backyards and how we can protect the health of our families and our neighbors*

## CLEAN WATER IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

Most of the residents of eastern Putnam and Dutchess Counties lack public water supplies, and homes rely on the use of private wells, tapping groundwater supplies. This most precious water resource lies under the homeowner's land, where it may be vulnerable to pollution of every kind, and the same land is usually also the receptor of that home's wastewater.

Those residents with community water supplies, or public systems (like the Village of Pawling), also need to be aware of the need to protect the resource. Preventing pollution is always less expensive than treating. Public and private community systems are subject to periodic water quality tests, and those reports are available to the consumers. Bear in mind, though, that smaller systems are subject to less stringent testing standards than larger communities. These tests cover a limited number of the more common contaminants. To have your private well water tested, contact your county department of health or the Dutchess County or Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District, for a list of certified labs in our area, and other information.

The most common contaminants in local groundwater are nitrates and bacteria. Most often the source comes from septic systems, yours, or a neighbor's. If the soil in the area of the septic leach field is too pervious (consisting of coarse particles that promote fast drainage), pollution is more likely to occur to the groundwater. On the other hand, in heavy clay soils, with a lack of proper drainage, septage waste and other surface pollutants tend to lead to surface water contamination, which can also eventually find its way into the groundwater. In cases where the bedrock lies just beneath the surface, contamination can easily find its way to the groundwater through fissures in the rock. In such areas, it also may be important to avoid the use of pesticides and inorganic lawn fertilizers (another source of nitrates). Any lawn fertilizer should be used with discretion.

Every homeowner should know the location of their septic system and understand its basic functions. Periodic pumping of the septic tank is the one most essential homeowner duty to protect the water supply.

Your well should be uphill of your and the neighbor's leach fields. 100' is the minimum standard. If the leach field is uphill of the well, a minimum distance of 200' of separation is required.

Surface contamination can infect the well at the well head. To prevent this, the well head should be located with a least 6" clearance above ground level. The solid protective covering (the casing) should extend a good distance below ground to prevent entry of surface contaminants. If you can hear water dripping inside the well (at the well head), that is a sign of cracks in the casing.

Remember that everything that you apply, spray or dump on your land, or pour down your drains may cause serious and expensive problems if they pollute streams or your water supply. Protect your family's health. Pollution is everyone's business.

**DID YOU KNOW...**  
Having your septic tank pumped out every 3-5 years is the one most important thing you can do to protect your well water.

By Sibyll Gilbert

# Some Common Butterflies of the Great Swamp

Season they are Likely to be seen	Name	Habitat
June	Long Dash Skipper	Wet Meadows
May-Sept.	Viceroy	Associated with Willows
May-Sept.	Meadow Fritillary	Wet Meadows
May-June	Olive Hairstreak	Associated with Junipers
July	Acadian Hairstreak	Associated with Willows
July	Black Dash	Wet Meadows
July	Mulberry Wing	Wet Meadows
July-Aug	Appalachian Brown	Wet Meadows

## *"Thank You" Party 2005* (continued from page 5)

Dr. Utter then outlined some of FrOGS plans for this year including the new "Adopt a Stream" program, field work to reaffirm the Great Swamp as an official "Important Birding Area", and the progress on the North American Wetland Council grant.

After Utter's comments Evelyn Chiarito and Sariena Masiero talked about the strange history of Pine Island, which is in the heart of the Great Swamp.

Masiero, along with her cousin Debbie Robbins, has donated the extensive, illustrated diaries written by their grandfather and his friends in the 1930's based on their experiences and observations of the Great Swamp when they had a cabin there.

Sariena concluded by reading her grandfather's story of the mysterious yearly visit to the Swamp of an Indian squaw and her baby - and a glowing white feather. The party guests were left to draw their own conclusions.

*Friends of the Great Swamp* is an organization dedicated to *Preserving the Great Swamp* through educational programs, scientific projects and special events and making all aware of this wonderful resource in our midst.

The generosity of our members and supporters extends FrOGS reach and effectiveness. Contributions support the efforts of the Education Committee, the Spring Celebration and this newsletter.

Please consider a tax deductible gift to FrOGS.

Send your gift to: **Friends of the Great Swamp**  
**P.O. Box 373, Pawling, NY 12564**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Day \_\_\_\_\_ Night \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

### **WE NEED HELP**

If you can lend a hand with any of the following, please check off the box and we will call you.

- Spring Celebration  Publicity  Mailings  
 Education Committee  Art Show  Other