



FrOGS

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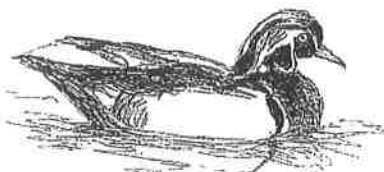
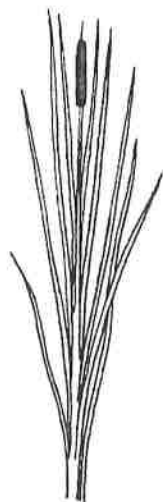
Fall 2002

FrOGS Sponsoring Special Exhibit Great Swamp in Van Go Mobile Museum

FrOGS will sponsor a special exhibit on the Great Swamp in the Carmel Central School district's Van-Go Mobile Museum. The traveling museum serves as an ambassador for the school system and the greater community. The Great Swamp is a unique, environmental treasure of Putnam and Dutchess Counties.

FrOGS exhibit, titled "Welcome to Our Home", will recreate the various habitats in the SWAMP that are "houses" to the birds, plants, and other animals that live there. The exhibit will feature special sections on fresh water marshes, shrub swamps, red maple hard wood swamps, flood plain forests as well as some upland forests, that are a key part of the ecosystem of the SWAMP.

The exhibit will run from September to November. To view or to have Van-Go visit your school or organization please call the Carmel School District at 845-878-3211.



FrOGS ART SHOW

And Celebration of the SWAMP

October 26th 1 to 6 p.m.

* Save the Date*

The Great Swamp is our local environmental treasure. FrOGS will celebrate the SWAMP with our Sixth Annual Art Show and other events on Saturday, October 26th from 1 to 6 p.m. at the Frances Ryan Thomas Memorial Hall at Christ Church, Quaker Hill, Pawling.

The Art Exhibit will feature art inspired by the SWAMP and its surroundings. The Nature of Things will be back with their live animal programs and there will be raptors, the Van-Go exhibit and refreshments.

Many local artists will be featured at the exhibit. There will be paintings, drawings, and woodcarvings. Many of the artists' creations were inspired by the SWAMP and show the artists feelings about the great beauty to be found in the SWAMP and among its creatures, plants, shadows, and secrets.

There will be a drawing and painting contest open to all area children. The contest is open to all boys and girls in the 2nd to 6th grades. The art created for the contest is based on life within the SWAMP, a bird, an animal, a flower, a tree, or the SWAMP itself.



Geneva Claire Hamilton with some of the art displayed at last year's show

Sibyll Gilbert Awarded Second Annual Michael Ciaiola Conservation Award

The highlight of the FrOGS Annual Meeting on May 9th was awarding Sibyll Gilbert the second annual Michael Ciaiola Conservation Award. This award is FrOGS highest commendation.

FrOGS chairman, Dr. Jim Utter, told the members gathered at Holiday Hills, "this year we have chosen someone whose name is synonymous with conservation in the Harlem Valley. That is Sibyll Gilbert."

"She has been instrumental in basically all the environmental movements in this area." Utter then continued to list many of Gilberts accomplishments in this area, focusing on her recent participation in getting Pawling West Mountain and The Great Swamp correctly included in the defined Hudson Highlands Maps.

One of Sibyll's most prominent achievements is the work she has done to acquire the Scudiere Preserve on Dutcher Avenue in Pawling. This valuable fresh water marsh is a very special habitat within The Great Swamp. Sibyll's participation on the Conservation Advisory Board is every bit as vigorous and important as it was thirty years ago.

All of Sibyll's listed achievements fail to portray her great love for nature and its creatures. For thirty years she has saved injured animals and birds. She has fed them, housed them, but most of all, helped to preserve their natural habitat so that they can look after themselves.

Celebrating INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY in the Great Swamp



On Saturday, May 11th, FrOGS dedicated The Great Swamp an Important Bird Area and celebrated with a series of hikes, events, and two canoe trips to “celebrate the SWAMP”.

In its first International Bird Day celebration FrOGS was joined by Audubon of New York, The Bedford Audubon Society, The Oblong Land Conservatory, the Putnam County Land Trust, the Nature Conservatory, The Waterman Bird Club, and Purchase College in a day long celebration.

The celebration started with a 4:30 a.m. hike, led by Barbara Butler, at Sharparoon, in the north flow of the SWAMP. Barbara started early to begin the Dutchess County Spring Bird Census with the calls of whip-poor-wills and owls. John Askildsen led another group at 7 a.m. in the Patterson Environmental Park as Barbara conducted her second hike of the day at Sharparoon. Other hikes were held at the Clough Preserve and Merritt Park.

The Great Swamp had been declared an Important Bird Area by National Audubon but May 11th was the occasion for a special dedication ceremony. Dan Niven, National Audubon Society Important Bird Day Coordinator and Jillian Butler, Audubon New York’s Important Bird Area Coordinator, joined John Askildsen, President of Bedford Audubon Society to present Dr. Jim Utter, Chairman of FrOGS with the plaque designating the SWAMP. About 40 people attended the ceremony

Bird Banding Demonstration Highlight of the Day

More than 50 people attended the most popular event of the Day, the Bird Banding Demonstration, conducted by Dr. Jim Utter of Purchase College and Andrea Townsend of The Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

Bird banding plays a vital role in our research about birds and in the effort to save many declining species of songbirds. Bands are placed on captured birds, and then later recovered at key “stopover” sites where migratory birds nest and refuel for the next part of their journey. The Great Swamp is one of the most important “stopover” spots on the East Coast.

An “OOH” went up from the participants as Jim Utter gently removed the first bird, a Wood Thrush, from the nets. He checked the weight, sex and condition of the birds’ feathers. Badly tattered feathers are the mark of a recent arrival that has had a hard journey. He chose one of the children from the crowd to hold the Thrush while the bands were attached. Jim explained the process and the importance of the banding project. Bands on, the Thrush was released by the fascinated ten year old.

In Search of the Elusive Virginia Rail

The sun was just beginning to set over the SWAMP at Green Chimney Beach when a group of 30 gallant hikers crossed the bridge over the East Branch Croton River. While still on the boardwalk we observed our first birds, a pair of mallards intending to settle for the night in the marshy area under the boardwalk. American Bitterns have been spotted in this area of the SWAMP but none were seen at this time.

The early evening, like the early morning, is a great time to observe birds. We caught the flash of orange and black as a Baltimore Oriole flew high into a tree above us. A Red-Tailed Hawk made a few circles above the nearby field before departing. Taite Johansen, from Bedford Audubon, called out to see if there were any owls about. We were pleasantly surprised to hear the call of not one, but two Barred Owls.



Virginia Rail



Meadowlark

On the far side of the boardwalk the marsh transcends into wet meadow. Wet meadows are one of the most important and rarest habitats in the SWAMP. In Spring they are flooded, particularly after a wet winter. The primary vegetation is sedge but grasses begin to dominate the higher edges. In the summer the wet meadow is often dry and farmers traditionally cut the sedges down to graze their cows, destroying the nests of Rails and Meadow Larks and the hummocks of Bog Turtles.

It was almost dark when the group reached the section of meadow where we suspected that the rails were hiding. Rails are very secretive birds. They are medium sized, short tailed, and stubby winged. Their feathers are a combination of blacks, grays, and browns so that they blend in with the reeds and sedges where they forage and nest. They are so well camouflaged that they are seldom seen. They are mostly active at night and vocalize frequently to communicate and establish territories.

Dr. Jim Utter played the first of his Virginia Rail tapes. The "gick gick gick gidik gidik" on the tapes imitated the call of a rail entering the territory of the established residents. We heard an immediate answer by one of the resident rails who began to move to the edge of the sedge to check us out. For about 15 minutes we could hear him as he continued to listen to our taped rail.

Finally he moved to the edge of a sedge clump and looked around. His thick, dark body was just visible in the fading light. He blended into the sedges so well it was hard to distinguish him but he had definitely come out to have a look at us-or that tape recorder.

Marsh Habitat in the Swamp

Frank Scudiere Preserve, now Key Marsh Habitat Area, Saved by the Oblong Conservancy

Submitted by Sibyl Gilbert

Swirling swallows, hundreds of them, darting after a hatch of mayflies, wheeling ever higher and higher, whirling specks that disappear into the dusk. There is a chirpy trill of sparrows, the exuberant song of a tiny Marsh Wren, and close by, in the weeds, a cacophony of blackbirds.

The Oblong Land Conservancy became interested in preserving this marsh, as knowledge of its values became known. In addition to its ecological significance, it also provides vital flood control in this area of high population. The swamp also filters and cleanses the water and is part of the NYC Croton Watershed



Frank Scudiere Preserve

As the day fades, a chorus of a thousand peepers, the particular ki-dick, ki-dick call of a Virginia Rail, and the distant splash down of ducks landing in this safe haven to spend the night. The sounds of a marsh are like no other.

A marsh is a wetland that is normally flooded with shallow to deep water year round. Wetland plants adapted to this environment are rooted in the soil beneath, and the tops of the plants and their flowers emerge from the surface. They are called "emergents". The familiar cattail is a common emergent and one that supports the healthiest muskrat populations. They also provide nesting habitat for certain rare birds like the Least Bittern and the American Bittern, both wading birds, and the Marsh Wren.

The Great Swamp has few extensive marsh areas. Marsh areas are rare in this region. The Dutcher Avenue swamp was formerly the Henry Dutcher Farm. Old air photos show the patchwork of agricultural fields, which are now under water. The other extensive marsh in The Great Swamp is located north of Ice Pond in Patterson

The Oblong Land Conservancy is committed to preserving open space and providing access to those preserved areas.

The conservancy purchased the key unprotected parcel consisting of 22 acres of the marsh from Dorothy Scudiere in 1998. Adjacent are 1-1/2 acres of wetlands owned by the town and 6 acres owned by NYSEG and some additional permanent open space.

73 species of birds have been recorded here. The species of "special concern", the Least Bittern, is believed to nest in the Swamp and the American Bittern uses this habitat as well.

Five species of turtle have been observed including several species of "special concern" in N.Y.S: the Spotted Turtle, the Wood Turtle, and the Box Turtle. 32 species of butterfly have been observed.

The creation of the Frank Scudiere Preserve saves this essential marsh for future generations.

FrOGS and PCLT Sponsor Students

Students from Syracuse University and SUNY Purchase Study Fish and Macro-Invertebrates in the SWAMP.



Students testing the water in Muddy Brook

Students from Syracuse University joined Environmental Science students from SUNY Purchase to work in the SWAMP to gather data regarding fish, macro-invertebrates and water quality. By studying the biodiversity of the ecosystem, identifying the species of fish and macro-invertebrates, and determining their health, the students will help evaluate the water quality and health of the streams study.

Bob Lund, of The Putnam County Land Trust, was contacted by the students of Syracuse, led by Steven Coghlan, and made arrangements with PCLT and FrOGS to sponsor their weekend in the SWAMP. Students from Jim Utters classes' at SUNY Purchase joined them.



Purchase students testing East Branch Croton River

They caught fish to identify and size. They checked the numbers, species, and health of the macro-invertebrates in the streams feeding the SWAMP. They also performed several water quality tests.

Ice Pond, Mendel Pond, and Ray Lake were studied as well as Muddy Brook, Haviland Hollow Brook, and Brady Brook. Final results will be tabulated and analyzed at the end of the summer research season. Haviland Hollow Brook and Brady Brook showed signs of breeding Brook Trout.

Preserve Wet Meadows and Adjoining Upland Meadows

It is especially important to preserve wet meadows and adjoining upland meadows as part of the diversity of the habitat of the SWAMP. These areas are the first to be "cut for growing" and look attractive to developers for houses and commercial property, as they are drier in the summer and fall. However they are home and habitat for several important species, like the Virginia Rail and Eastern Meadowlark.

These birds are rare in this area and bring more diversity to the SWAMP area. The endangered bog Turtle is also a resident in these habitats and may use the upland meadow as much as the sedge clumps in the wetter meadow area.

FrOGS Welcomes Two New Trustees!!

Lauri Taylor

Lauri Taylor is the Senior Environmental Planner for the Putnam County Division of Planning and District Manager for Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District. She is also the chair for the Putnam County Water Quality Strategy Committee. She has a B.A. in Environmental Science and has 14 years of experience in her field. In her environmental planning position she works with all municipalities and environmental groups. She also has experience in environmental education, for all ages. Lauri has a great interest in all environmental issues and specifically, the SWAMP. She is an avid kayaker and birder who also enjoys photography, hiking, camping, and world travel.

Richard Saracelli

Rick Saracelli has been a friend of the Great Swamp for years. He has served as the Environmental Park Caretaker for the Patterson Environmental Park for more than twenty years. Rick, who lives with his wife and children, in Patterson, near the SWAMP, was instrumental in the remediation of the Patterson Park in 1976. He worked with the Town of Patterson, who lent men and machines from the highway department to aid volunteers working to create the park. As park caretaker, Rick oversees progress at the park and protects it.

Rick is also a Lieutenant in the FDNY where he has served proudly for 33 years. After working for many years in Harlem he is currently assigned to Ladder 49 in the South Bronx.

Rick is an avid sportsman who canoes, bikes, and skis, as well as being an avid protector of the SWAMP!

FrOGS Thanks the Contributors to This Newsletter:

Gordon Douglas for his photographs and article.
Sibyll Gilbert for her article on the Scudiere Preserve.
Judy Kelley-Moberg for her drawings.
Karen O'Neill for her editing.

Friends of the Great Swamp is an organization dedicated to Preserving the Great Swamp through educational programs, Scientific projects, 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 Number: Day _____
Evening _____
Email Address _____

We Need Help!

If you can lend a hand with any of any of the following, please place a check on line and we will call you.

_____ Spring Celebration _____ Publicity
_____ Education Committee _____ Mailings
_____ Art Show _____ Other