

RESEARCH • EDUCATION • CONSERVATION

## Let's Talk Turkey!



Photo by Judy Kelley-Moberg

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*Friends of the Great Swamp was founded in 1990, a non-profit volunteer organization. Our mission is to preserve and protect the health of the Great Swamp watershed through research, education and conservation.*

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# Have You Seen This Sign?

Photo by Judy Kelley-Moberg



In 2014, Oblong Land Conservancy (OLC) and Putnam County Land Trust (PCLT) obtained a Catalyst Grant from the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) to develop a Strategic Land Conservation Plan for the Great Swamp. FrOGS was invited to join the Land Trusts due to its knowledge of the

Great Swamp and its mission (since 1990) to protect and preserve the Great Swamp.

The groups drew up a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2015 defining the working relationships and goals of the collaboration. The MISSION of this initiative was, "To communicate the importance of protecting the Great Swamp and its essential resource—water", and its VISION was, "That every person in the watershed be aware of the critical role of the Great Swamp in protecting our water".

The Collaboration identified two projects and formed two subcommittees to support its goals:

Signage, to identify the boundaries of the watershed to the public, and Swamp Smart, to develop an educational program to promote an understanding of how the watershed protects our water. A steering committee comprised of two members from each organization was to guide the work, report to each parent organization and control funding.

Swamp Smart produced a brochure that explains the important role of the Great Swamp, along with an awareness "Swamp Smart Pledge" for residents. The Signage subcommittee designed signs, had them produced, and enlisted the support of four towns and two counties in placing the signs in the watershed.

In 2016, PCLT and OLC were awarded the Land Trust Alliance's National Land Trust Excellence Award in honor of their Great Swamp Watershed Collaboration, the first time the award recognized a land trust in New York State.



## In 2017, FrOGS lost several good friends, and we will miss them dearly.

### Bill Hamilton

Bill's culinary prowess shone brightly for many years at the annual Great Swamp Fall Celebration, as he and Edie served up delightful homemade dishes, soups and breads. He spread his wonderful enthusiasm as he supported us at many walks, talks and events through the year.

He and his wife Sheila enjoyed looking at what they nicknamed "Turtle Pond," part of the Muddy Brook tributary of the Great Swamp, from their home on the ridge above it. Working with FrOGS, PCLT and TNC on our first NAWCA project, they provided what is now Laurel Ledges Preserve at below market cost, pleased to have protected their Pond. The lovely trail system of the Preserve is a classy memorial to Bill and his family.

### Dave Pierro

As both an environmentally conscious member of the Patterson Planning Board and as a realtor, Dave applied his knowledge, conservation advocacy, and connections to

helping FrOGS in its conservation mission. He not only promoted the value of the Great Swamp, but was instrumental in protecting two critical parcels: the wet meadow parcel at the corner of East Branch Road at Haviland Hollow and what is now PCLT's 115-acre Dextra-Baldwin-McGonagle Preserve next to Ice Pond.

Dave and his wife Dawn also overlooked the Great Swamp from their back porch and Dave often talked about the importance of protecting it. We are grateful for all he did to advance that goal.

### Mike Purcell

Mike was an avid naturalist and environmental champion. He fought for watershed management and sustainability. He enjoyed his work with Friends of the Great Swamp, the Pawling Conservation Board, the Oblong Land Conservancy, and the Cornell Cooperative Extension. His passion was one of the driving forces behind FrOGS initiating the water quality testing program in the Great Swamp tributaries.



# Art as Activism *or* Trash for the Planet

by Judy Kelley-Moberg



Last year, art teacher Phyllis Chadwick was instrumental in inviting Aurora Robson, a nationally recognized sculptor and environmental activist, to work with the art department and the environmental science class at Pawling High School. Aurora believes we should, "Look at the debris we create, for what we do with it defines us!" She creates stunning sculptural installa-

tions from trash and uses her art to educate and encourage environmental action. She has taught college students to turn the plastic litter collected from nearby rivers and beaches into works of art. Profits from the sale of the art work are donated to local environmental organizations.

The Pawling School District recognized that students caring for the environment, creating art and making a difference in their community offered a powerful educational opportunity. The school board supported the collaboration between Aurora Robson as "artist in residence" with art teachers Phyllis Chadwick and Kerry Pinnelli, and ecology teacher Sara von Burg. It was decided that The Great Swamp would be the environmental focus of the project and FrOGS board members Nancy Clark and Judy Kelley-Moberg were invited to participate.

The shoreline, beach and the outlet stream at Lakeside Park, were the target area for the cleanup. Students in plastic booties and gloves, armed with shovels, nets and buckets scoured the stream and lakeshore for debris. Their finds included metal pipes, hubcaps, fishing lures, tons of plastic items and even a baby snapping turtle.



Back in the classroom, the students cleaned the trash, painted, wired and stapled the fragments together to create some unusual sculptural forms: swimming fish, a bottle cap turtle, a metal pipe lighthouse, water pouring from a spigot, a clock



from a hub cap, and more. Aurora spoke about her work and her vision on the evening the student work was auctioned off in the high school library. The students presented a check for over \$300 to FrOGS from the sale!



Bravo, Pawling High School! Just think of the results if this idea spread to high schools and colleges all over the world and became part of the curriculum.

Check out the 6-minute YouTube video, "Aurora Robson: The Great Indoors".



# Let's Talk Turkey

by Judy Kelley-Moberg

Last winter, my neighbor Jill and I felt sorry for the flock of wild turkeys that came down off the ridge to eat the corn Ed scattered out behind the old June Farm homestead. The flock, over 50 birds, was wandering around in circles in the snow looking for Ed's handout, but Ed and his wife had moved and the house stood empty.

Jill started at the farm with a full 50 lb. bag of cracked corn and then passed the bag down the ridge to me. The turkeys followed. The long east facing ridge drops down to the wetlands around Muddy Brook, a major tributary of the Great Swamp.

This is great turkey territory. The forested uplands still have a few patches of open fields and the mature maple, beech, hickory and oak are great roost trees. In a good mast year, you can skate around on the acorns. Folds in the ridge's bedrock bleed captured

water downhill into springs and seeps that eventually reach the brook. In late winter the seeps keep the ground soft for good digging and the turkeys tear up the leafy forest floor in search of worms, snails and insects. Their diet includes amphibians, berries, fruit, greens, tree buds, seeds of all kinds, and of course, acorns.

There are several sub-species of turkey; ours is the Eastern Wild Turkey, almost gone by 1940 and reappearing in our area in the 1980's. The males, or "toms", weigh about 20 lbs. and stand up to 4 ft. tall with

long, powerful legs for digging, running and launching into flight. A sharp claw-like "spur" on the back of the leg can inflict damage in a fight.

The tom's beard is made of bristles (modified feathers) that emerge from a single follicle in the middle of his breast. A bristle from this year's tom almost hit the 10-inch mark. Their long tail can be fanned in a mating display, used as a rudder in flight, and a counter balance when teetering on a telephone wire or a tree branch. As the toms move, multiple layers of glossy dark brown body feathers flash with iridescent shades of bronze, red and green. Flight feathers are striped with white and the blunt tip of each tail feather is edged with brown. The females, or "hens", are a dull

brown and much smaller than the males. You can tell a turkey's sex by the shape of its droppings. Toms leave J-shaped droppings, while hens leave a spiral snail-shaped deposit. I checked, and it's really true!

A tom's head has a vocabulary all its own. You can tell his mood by the color of his fleshy head. The very top is a chalky blue/white. Rings of small fleshy red lumps, or "caruncles," start at the back of the head and cover the neck, ending with several large fleshy pouches on the breast. The "dewlap" or "wattle" is a flap of skin attached to the throat. Atop the beak near the forehead, nestled in a cluster of short bristles, is a small cone of flesh called a "snood". When alarmed or excited, blood engorges all these fleshy parts and they turn cherry red, including the snood, which elongates and drapes down over the beak. When toms are very alarmed or disturbed, their heads can turn completely white.

In the winter, turkeys travel in a group called a crop, dole, gang, posse or raffle. I've seen mixed "gangs" mostly hens, with over 30 birds and a dominant tom acting as lookout. A male "posse" might contain only 4 or 5 birds.



Photo by Jill Eisenstein.

Judy feeding her wild turkeys.

# Calendar of Events

The most up-to-date list of events can always be found on our Facebook page: [facebook.com/FrOGS.NY](https://facebook.com/FrOGS.NY).

You can also sign up for email updates via our website: [frogs-ny.org](https://frogs-ny.org)

Additional events can be found at: [OblongLand.org](https://OblongLand.org), [PCLT.net](https://PCLT.net) and [GreatHollow.org](https://GreatHollow.org)

## Trail Camera Workshop

Sunday, February 11 (2 PM)

Lecture Room in the Merritt House, Great Hollow Nature Preserve, Route 37, New Fairfield, Connecticut. Trail cams are valuable for surveying and studying the behavior of elusive and nocturnal wildlife. The workshop will cover the many types of cameras on the market and how to use them, followed by a slideshow of wildlife captured by trail cameras at Great Hollow.

## Walk in the Winter Woods

Saturday, February 24 (10 AM)

Meet at Great Hollow Nature Preserve, Route 37, New Fairfield, Connecticut. Co-sponsored by Great Hollow. Moderately difficult. Please wear appropriate foot gear, as parts may be slippery. Ages 6 and up. Pre-registration is advised: call Jill at 845-878-9603.

## FrOGS Annual Meeting

Sunday, March 4 (1 PM)

At Patterson Library Community Room, featuring a special slide show presentation by local photographer Norman McGrath: "The Great Swamp—25 Years of Change".

## "The Natural History of the New England Cottontail"

Sunday, April 8 (1:15 PM)

Trinity Pawling Gardiner Theater, Route 22, Pawling. Learn from expert Dr. Amanda Cheeseman about our native rabbit, once plentiful but now listed as "threatened" by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the efforts to try to save it.

## Bird Walk on the Boardwalk

Saturday, April 21 (7:30 AM)

Meet at Native Landscaping, 991 Route 22, Pawling. In conjunction with the Waterman Bird Club. Take an early morning walk across the Appalachian Trail Boardwalk and through the forest to the Great Oak to look for our earliest arriving migrating songbirds. Bring binoculars.

## Putnam County Land Trust's 49th Annual Benefit Dinner & Auction

Sunday, April 22 (4:30 PM)

At Centennial Golf Club, 185 John Simpson Road, Carmel. A great event with music, food and an exciting live auction. The proceeds help fund land protection in Putnam County. Please contact PCLT at [events@pclt.net](mailto:events@pclt.net) or call (914) 621-8466 for reservations and further details.

## Bird Hike at Pawling Nature Preserve

Sunday, April 29 (8 AM)

Join FrOGS and the Waterman Bird Club in a search for warblers at the Pawling Nature Preserve. Meet at the parking lot on Route 22 just north of Native Landscaping in Pawling to carpool to the Reserve. Reservations requested; call Laurie at 845-270-0538 or email [laurwally@aol.com](mailto:laurwally@aol.com). Families welcome.

## Bird Walk at Nellie Hill Preserve

Saturday, May 5 (8 AM)

Join FrOGS and the Waterman Bird Club for another family birding event. Meet at the Nellie Hill Preserve parking lot on Route 22 in Dover. Reservations requested; call Laurie at 845-270-0538 or email [laurwally@aol.com](mailto:laurwally@aol.com).

## FrOGS Needs Your Help!

The generosity of our members and supporters extends FrOGS reach and effectiveness.

### There are two great ways to help...

DONATION

Remember your donations are tax deductible! Send yours to:  
Friends of The Great Swamp, P.O. Box 373, Pawling, NY 12564

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend \$100       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$250   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$500    | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____    |   |   |

VOLUNTEER

We can always use another helping hand! Let us know which activities you're interested in helping with. You can pick more than one.

- |   |  |                                   |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Celebration         | <input type="checkbox"/> Canoe Trips     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mailings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Activities     | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Studies  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suggest an activity: _____ |  |                                   |

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

So we know whom to thank...

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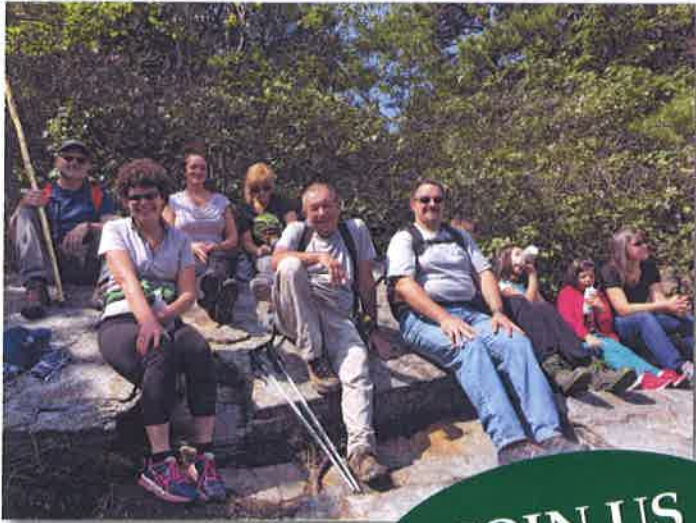
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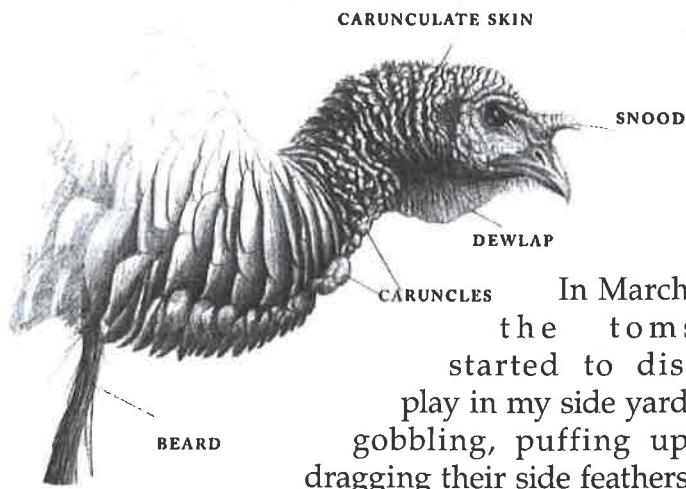
# FrOGS 2017 ~ Research • Education • Conservation



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IN 2018!







In March, the toms started to display in my side yard, gobbling, puffing up, dragging their side feathers, shaking, and fanning their tails.

The hens seemed unimpressed and scurried about, eating corn as fast as they could. I noticed that the same 4 toms always displayed close together in a group. As they strutted around, another gang of toms tried to move into their space. The first group formed a "body wall" and pushed the newcomers off the field. The defeated toms were year old "jakes", distinguished by the longer central tail feathers in their fans. Unlike most species, turkeys practice "team-courtship". The two groups of toms were probably composed of siblings or kin. Displaying together instead of singly gives them a better chance of one mating and passing along their shared genes. Males and females have an opening to their intestinal, urinary and genital tracts called a "cloaca". Sex between turkeys is called a "cloacal kiss".

After mating, the gangs disperse. Hens lay 8-15 eggs, one a day, in a shallow nest in brush or a protected

place on the forest floor. They hatch in 28 days and the young leave the nest in 12-24 hours. Young birds, or "poults", trail along behind their moms. An average turkey's life span is about 3 years. Last year, I watched a tom with an injured leg trying to keep up with the group and another who struggled to keep its balance and fell behind. Both disappeared by March.

This December, a large group of hens hung around for a while (one with no tail), and left. Varying their base location probably decreases predation from fox, bobcat and coyote. Early each morning, five toms wait for me to come out to scatter corn. I make some ridiculous clucking sounds and the dominant tom runs up to me, making a series of loud purring sounds and checking me out before the others will come down the hill. The yard is torn up and smells like a chicken coop, but it's still fascinating to watch their behavior and to walk among them.



## The Great Swamp Club

**Fun with rocks, water, turtles, mammals, birds and more!**

Retired art teacher Margi Picciano is teaching children in grades K-4 about the Great Swamp in Camp Herrlich's after-school program at Pawling Elementary School. The 6-week program, developed in conjunction with FrOGS naturalists, involves guest presenters and hands-on activities that introduce students to the Great Swamp watershed and the animals that rely on it. The students leave with journals, coloring books, rocks, crafts, and unforgettable memories about this special place.



Guest presenter Linda Gould talks about turtles.

Photo by Margi Picciano

# Summer Blockbuster: Mapping Invasive Plants

By Mary Rice and Jill Eisenstein

Armed with a very long and flexible tape measure, clipboards, pencils, forms, and Smartphones with a special app, we exited the car in the parking lot of Wonder Lake State Park in Patterson. What a curious looking pair! One of us said she hadn't worn this much protection since on safari in Africa: special pants and long sleeves to fend off thorns and poison ivy, bug spray to discourage mosquitoes and ticks, long socks and boots, hats. But we were on a mission. We had committed to helping with the Blockbuster Survey for Lower Hudson PRISM (The Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management).

PRISM is focused on early identification and rapid response to minimize or eliminate the incursion of invasive plant species in our region. We walked our selected area, called a "survey block", and recorded invasive plant species and their relative abundance, marking GPS coordinates along the way so that if the PRISM team needed to respond to their presence with controls or eradication, they would be easy to locate.

Did you know that young plants often look very different from older ones of the same species? We had attended a training, but were glad to have the field guides with close-up pictures and descriptions to help us identify the various plants we encountered. We look forward to becoming seasoned veterans that can know what to expect in different micro-environments, and what plants look like at various stages of their growth.

FrOGS participates with a number of other agencies and organizations concerned with ensuring the survival of native plant and animal species in the Great Swamp watershed. One of the greatest threats to native plant and animal species is the proliferation of invasive species, which can be introduced either accidentally or intentionally. When exotic plants are imported without the natural insect or animal controls that keep them in check in their

own native environments, they have an advantage over our own natives.

In our area, deer and other herbivores prefer to consume the native plants they have adapted to, leaving the invasive species alone. Migratory birds depend on berries with a nutritional balance of fats and sugars to sustain them on their journey. Because the berries of introduced species often lack these necessary nutrients, many birds also leave them alone. Hence, the invasive plants often spread unchecked and compete with native plants for sunlight, nutrients, water, and air...and often win.

The Lower Hudson PRISM is one of eight regional partnerships in the state of New York, all funded by the Department of Environmental Conservation through the Environmental Protection Fund. Each PRISM is hosted by a non-profit organization; ours has been hosted by the NY-NJ Trail Conference since 2013. For more information, visit [lhprism.org](http://lhprism.org).

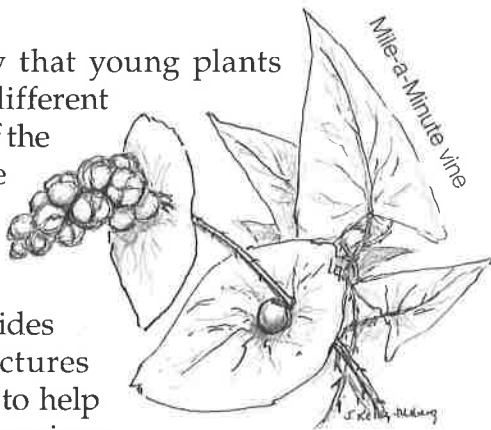
PRISM offers opportunities for citizen scientists to be trained in identifying and reporting emerging and established invasive plant species. Data collected is submitted to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to better prepare for control.

We plan to stay on the survey team next year. It offers a healthy walk, an opportunity to learn, and the satisfaction of knowing we are helping the environment. Come join us!

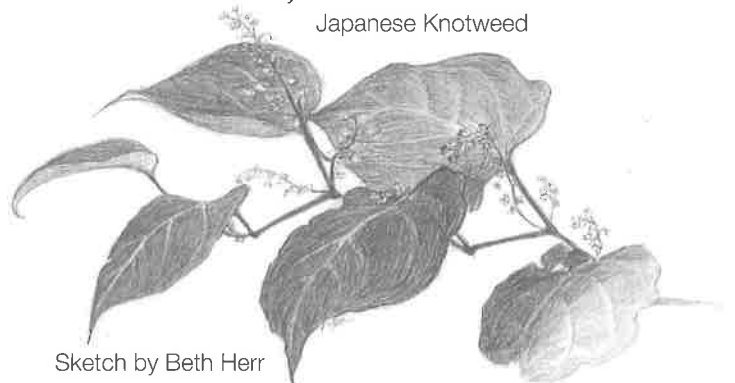


Black Swallow-Wort

Sketch by Nancy Clark



Mile-a-Minute vine



Japanese Knotweed

Sketch by Beth Herr



# You're Counting WHAT??

By Carena Pooth, Waterman Bird Club

Each year, in the same two week period, tens of thousands of people all over North America participate in National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The purpose of this annual census is to gather data that reveals bird population trends, which in turn can help scientists understand effects of climate change, industrialization, human expansion, and other factors.

Count areas are circles 15 miles in diameter. The Pawling circle includes southeastern Dutchess, northeastern Putnam, and parts of Fairfield and Litchfield counties in CT. Roughly bisecting the circle, the Great Swamp figures prominently in the Pawling CBC and usually turns up some of the "best" birds.

On the date chosen, volunteers spend the entire day in their assigned area, keeping track of all birds seen or heard. The results are compiled and



submitted to Audubon.

This year's totals were slightly lower as the count day was windy, extremely cold, and all the lakes and ponds were frozen over. Some notable species found in recent years include: Green-winged Teal, Peregrine Falcon, Palm Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark, and—a true rarity—a Yellow-headed Blackbird.



By Judy Kelley-Moberg

## YOU CAN COUNT, TOO!

Devoted birders turn out each year for the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, regardless of the weather, to search for the ordinary as well as the unexpected. But here's an opportunity for families to get involved: the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has developed an international online count called The Great Backyard Bird Count, (GBBC) from February 16-19. For details see [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org).

## Welcome to Our New Board Members!

### Mary Rice

Having grown up in Larchmont and learning to sail on Long Island Sound, Mary has always loved being in a boat on the water. She has also been involved in environmental conservation since participating in the first Earth Day in 1970. A few years later, she moved to Putnam County and has been here ever since. Her career with the Putnam County Dept. of Health allowed her to work closely with the DEC in educating citizens about the environmental harm caused by improper disposal of pharmaceuticals, electronic waste and hazardous materials.

"Joining FrOGS has given me a way to help conserve an important resource," she said.

### Julie Toscano

Julie is a firm believer in preserving natural spaces for both environmental and health reasons. She has a global customer service role in the financial services industry, but loves spending time with her family enjoying the outdoors—hiking, cycling, skiing, and paddling. Since moving with her husband and two boys to Patterson ten years ago, she has been looking for a way to give back.

"I thought being involved with an organization such as FrOGS might be a good way to link my business mindset and strong program management background with preserving and promoting natural spaces," she said.

### Ken Luhman

Ken has spent most of his life outdoors, from hiking with the Boy Scouts, to time served in the United States Army. His outdoor hobbies include hiking, cycling, snowshoeing, skiing, hunting, fishing, kayaking, and gardening. When he is not working at his job as Facilities Manager for a private school in Greenwich, Connecticut, he is usually in the Great Swamp.

"I feel protecting the environment is a responsibility, in part for being able to enjoy it. I truly believe in protecting and preserving what we really love," he said, adding that he considers volunteering to help an organization like Friends of the Great Swamp an honor.

## FROGS NEEDS YOUR HELP!

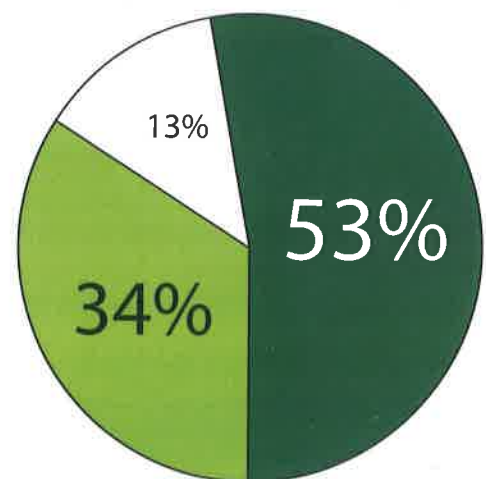
We hope you enjoy this latest edition of our newsletter and learn a little more about this precious resource. Everyone who lives in or visits the 60,000+ acre watershed of the Great Swamp benefits in some way from the tireless work of the FrOGS volunteers. We do not have any paid staff, and we have a volunteer board that governs the allocation of funds. The pie chart gives you an idea of how those funds were allocated in 2017.

**You can help us continue our valuable work, and support our primary goals of Research, Education and Conservation by making a donation *now* via our website [frogs-ny.org/donate-2](http://frogs-ny.org/donate-2)**

If your employer has a Matching Gift program, please also remember to submit a request to double the value of your donation.

If you have suggestions or particular FrOGS activities that you would like to see, please contact us by email ([info@frogs-ny.org](mailto:info@frogs-ny.org)) or by postal mail (PO Box 373, Pawling, NY 12564).

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## BECOME A MEMBER OR DONATE TODAY!