



Friends of the Great Swamp



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Fifteen Acres of Wooded Wetlands in the Great Swamp Is Donated to FrOGS!

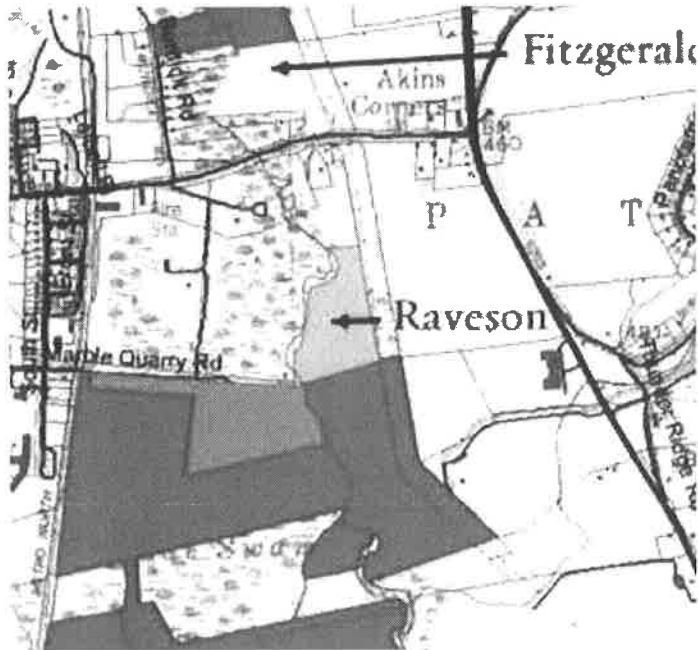


A Win-Win Deal for Development & Conservation

Tom Raveson donates 15.25 acres of wetland and buffer to FrOGS

by Judy Kelley-Moberg

In 1996 Tom Raveson, a developer and a long time resident of the Town of Patterson, acquired 66.82 acres south of Route 311 and west of Route 22 in the Town of Patterson. The parcel did not include the developed properties at the corner itself but ran westward from Route 22 over a marble ridge and included 15 acres of forested wetlands along the Croton River.



The section of Route 22 from Haviland Hollow Road up through Patterson is one of the oldest roads in Putnam County. It is clearly shown on Erskine's military map drawn for General Washington and was part of the military highway from Connecticut to the Hudson River. In the fall of 1778 several brigades of the Continental army camped in the fields on both sides of the highway. Today it gives the traveler one of the best western views of the Great Swamp and Pine Island as you move north through pristine farmland owned and maintained by the Jehovah's Witnesses'. The next visual attraction is Tom Raveson's property. It begins with a long, shallow pond "Swan Pond" tucked along the western edge of the road and then sweeps away from the wetlands up a marble ridge of overgrown fields and under the power lines to the Croton River. Nineteenth century maps of Patterson indicate that the property was pasture for the Haynes'

and the Jennings' farms. A farm barn still stood on the property. According to Pelletreau's History of Putnam County, the local militia may have trained on this property during the revolution. In recent years, beaver created the pond alongside the highway. Many people enjoy seeing the nesting swans as well as the egrets, ducks and Great Blue Heron that are seasonal residents there. This section of Route 22 still retains the charm of the areas agricultural heritage and creates a scenic entrance into the Town of Patterson.

There have been many suggestions about what residents would like to see on this land, but one has to realize that the land is one of the few commercial parcels left in the Town of Patterson and it has frontage on both Route 22 and Route 311. Tractor Supply began negotiations with Tom after doing a demographic study of the area. There were lengthy debates about the exterior design of the store. Tom even tried to get Tractor Supply to accept one that looked like a barn and silo but they would only use their own designs.



The building finally went up. It was set back on the "harder than expected" marble knoll across from the entrance to the A and P Shopping Center on Route 311. The old farm barn, which many people hoped could be saved, was removed and rebuilt on South Quaker Hill Road. Tractor Supply is leasing the new building and about 10-acres of land.



Tom was enthusiastic about the building and gave me a tour. He explained how it was constructed and the modern computer system that controls the heat and light. When I interviewed Tom on the phone he told me about his many careers and ventures, some successful and some not. He also talked about loving his home in Patterson and being aware of the differences he might make as a property owner and developer.

About 15 acres of the land Tom acquired in 1996 is located between the Tractor Supply property and the Croton River. This dogleg-shaped section is cut off from the rest of the property by the strip of land owned by NYSEG that runs beneath their power lines. The entire 15-acre parcel is a floodplain covered with randomly spaced red maple and ash trees. Seeps from small wetlands along its eastern border

trickle out into the floodplain and work their way to the river. The southern-most edge of the property sits directly across the river from the Patterson Environmental Park. FrOGS had considered the property as a target parcel in Phase II of the NAWCA Grant. Tom Raveson and FrOGS' chairman Dr. Jim Utter began to talk. Tom said, "There was no doubt in my mind that the 15 acre parcel was ecologically valuable and environmentally sensitive and can't be developed." Tom also said that in his experience, "You can't always count on the local and state laws for protection. It was a no-brainer, that it be donated to FrOGS." He was surprised to learn that this is the first property FrOGS has ever owned outright. The rest of the properties acquired by FrOGS through the NAWCA grant have been turned over to The Putnam County Land Trust, The Oblong Land Trust, The State of New York (DEC), and the Town of Patterson as part of FrOGS' mission to protect the integrity of the Great Swamp.

It is always cause for celebration when everyone gets a piece of the pie. The Great Swamp gains another connected piece of protected wetlands and buffer, outdoor enthusiasts another section of wilderness along the river to enjoy, the river stays a little cleaner, Tom gets a return on his investment, and the town has a new commercial establishment that will attract people to the area. It doesn't always happen this way. The owner/developer has to take pride in what he has created as well as being concerned about its affect on the community and the environment.

Thanks Tom.

Garbology Report

by Liz Cowan

It's the end of November and we have just completed the fourth road litter pickup of the year. FrOGS (and other organizations) are working with the county agency Keep Putnam Beautiful to clear unsightly garbage off our streets on a regular basis.

I want to thank all the people who gave up part of their Sunday mornings, and who, armed with big orange bags and long handled garbage grabbers cleared away the junk that had been thrown out of car windows or dumped by the

roadside by the not-so-thoughtful.

We will be continuing these cleanups in April 2010, and we need more volunteers to help us. Pickup dates will be announced in future FrOGS Newsletters or from me at cowanpatterson@aol.com. Please try to spare some time for this worthwhile project.

Littering is anti-social, looks ugly and can be dangerous. Please be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

There's A Bear In My Backyard!

by Judy Kelley-Moberg

Matt Merchant, Senior Wildlife Biologist, NYS DEC, and head of the "Bear Program" and Sportsman Education Program for Region 3, was the speaker at FrOGS' Annual Meeting on November 22. FrOGS' chairman Dr. Jim Utter gave an overview of the organization's activities for the year, two new board members were introduced and Laurie Wallace gave the treasurer's report. (See annual Meeting Summary)

After the business meeting, Matt took center stage with a power point presentation and talk about



black bear behavior and the history of the DEC Bear Study Program. There used to be 3 distinct bear ranges in NYS (the Adirondack, the Catskill and the Allegany) from the late 1800's up to 1995. Ranges are areas where breeding females and young are consistently found. Male black bears, especially young males, often roam well outside these areas. The home range for female black bears is about 10 square miles and 100 square miles for males. It was clear that the ranges of females and

family groups were expanding as farmland reverted to forest.

In 2000 the DEC established a Black Bear Management Team to develop a comprehensive statewide management plan. In 2007 the Bear Ranges in NY were redefined into two, the Northern Adirondack Range and a Southern Range, which merged the Allegany and Catskill Ranges, and added the Taconic Highlands. It's estimated that there are presently over 2,500 bears in the Southern Range. The east of Hudson, Taconic section, which includes Dutchess and Putnam County, is also seeing bears that have migrated across state lines from Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Matt said, "There are a lot of bears in your area!" The audience was surprised to learn that some of the 14 bears trapped in Dutchess County were released in State owned lands in Putnam.

Matt described the method used to catch bears and the data that's collected by the DEC. A five- gallon

pail is cabled to a tree. A 7-inch hole in the top is encircled with a noose. Inside the can is a spring loaded bait arm with a doughnut for bait. The snares are checked daily. The bears are then tranquilized, weighed, tag tattooed with colored cattle tags and a small tooth behind the canines is taken. The growth rings in the tooth will tell the bears' age much like tree rings. Radio collars are placed on some of the bears to monitor movement, survival and reproductivity. Sometimes planes are used to track these bears since the signal (beep) can only be picked up by antenna within 1-2 miles of the collared bear. Unfortunately GPS monitoring collars cost about \$ 4,000 dollars each.

We learned a lot about the lives and behavior of black bears. They are omnivores and about 80% of their diet is herbaceous. They are also opportunistic and will eat carrion and small mammals. In the spring they will take fawns as well as eating early plants like skunk cabbage. In summer they feed on berries, greens, and colonial insects. Apples, grapes, cherries, acorns and bechnuts are part of the fall diet. Bears have been tracked great distances from one food source to another. They have a short digestive track so most of what they eat goes right through them.

Black Bears have one of the keenest senses of smell of all animals, about 100% greater than humans. Their curved claws enable them to scale trees and make them good climbers compared to other bear species. Matt passed around a claw so we could see how hooked it was. They also use their claws and teeth to leave signs for other bear on trees and telephone poles. Bears are good swimmers and can cross both lakes and rivers.



Female black bears (sows) breed sometime in June or July every other year. The litter size is usually 2-3 cubs that are born in the den sometime in January or February. The cubs weigh only about 1 pound at birth and about 4-5 pounds when they leave the den with their mother sometime in March. They are weaned in August and den up the next winter with their mother. By the time they are two years old they are on their own. Young males (boars) will wander in search of new territory and are those most often sighted. Matt mentioned that a 20-year old sow tracked in NY was still having cubs. Her teeth were so ground down that she had begun breaking into houses for food.

Matt told the audience that black bears are not true hibernators but go into a light sleep and are easily aroused. They may den up in a hollow tree, a hole in the bank, rock dens, and even in the open under brush piles. Males weigh around 300 pounds and females 160 pounds. They will lose 1/3 of their body weight over the winter. Most of the recorded bear fatalities are due to hunting or collisions with cars.

Although the information on the life of black bears was very interesting, the most important message of the presentation was educating us about how to get along with the increasing bear population in our area. In other words, the real possibility of finding a 300-pound black bear in your backyard! Matt told us that traditional bear population management was just counting the number of animals but now it involves adaptive input management. Positive public input includes those who enjoy seeing "wild" black bears in their area and also those who still actively hunt bear in many sections of the state. The negative side of increasing bear populations is fear of bear attack and damage to commercial agriculture and residential property. Matt indicated that black bear attacks are extremely rare and should not be a real concern. If you are a hiker and worried about a bear encounter, you can make noise (whistle, sing, talk, carry a small air horn) or bring a dog along to scare off any bear in the area. Matt said that if you get too close to a bear, it would let you know by its behavior. It may chomp its teeth, drool, make distressed noises, stamp its foot and make bluff charges. Back away slowly. Bears are naturally afraid of people and will avoid contact.

Most negative contact between bears and homeowners can be avoided. They will be attracted to uncovered garbage, dumpsters, pet food left outside, food left in cars and bird feeders that are in use all year. Feeding the birds in the winter when the bear are in their dens is not a problem. Once bears have homed-in on a source of easy food provided by

humans it's hard to break them of the habit. They become "nuisance bears" and can become destructive, breaking into cars and houses in search of the food source. To prevent this from happening we must "cut off the food source"! Use bear proof receptacles while camping, put latches on garbage cans and bins, keep garbage inside as long as possible and put an ammonia soaked rag in plastic bags. An electric fence will stop them from entering the property. Nuisance bears are trapped, marked with a paint gun, and hazed with pepper spray and rubber buckshot when released to make sure they move away. Despite the hazing, some bears continue their bad behavior and eventually have to be put down. Commercial agriculturists can legally kill bears if they are destroying their beehives or corn crops.

The Black Bear Management team has been meeting with local stakeholders (recreationists, environmentalists, homeowners, landowners, agriculturalists and local officials) in areas with increasing bear populations to talk about their concerns. Hunting bears was not seen as an important interest in our area although opening a bear-hunting season for areas east of the Hudson to adjust the bear population has been proposed. Matt seems to feel that a better solution is to increase public information about how to coexist with bears. His "DEC Bear Management Team" hopes to use informative billboards, talks, posters, brochures, DVDs in libraries and schools, to lessen the negative impact of the growing bear population.

In closing, Matt indicated that the DEC would like to gather more information on the bear population east of the Hudson in the Taconic Highland area. Where are people consistently seeing bears and what behavior is observed? Public input is needed to determine the current and future bear distribution in this area and the appropriate bear management response from the DEC. They would like to get a handle on the population before problems occur. Report bear data to the Wildlife Helpline (845)-256-3098 at the DEC headquarters in New Paltz or Matt Merchant (845)-256-3063. Email: mlmercha@gw.dec.state.ny.us.



NEWS FROM THE GREAT SWAMP ART SHOW AND CELEBRATION FrOGS "Plein Air" Paintout and Art Auction

by Laurie Wallace

Everyone woke up Saturday morning and "It was NOT raining" in fact the sun was peaking through the early morning fog and it was going to be a glorious day! It was a Saturday and FrOGS first "PleinAir" Paintout Event. FrOGS was sponsoring a special paint in the outdoors day for painters, sketchers and photographers, hoping to catch early Fall color in the Great Swamp, Swamp River and the surrounding uplands of the Harlem Valley.



Working en plein air—French for "in the open" requires intense focus and concentration and the resulting work reflects the energy of the artist concentration as well as the reflection of light at the scene and the moment. Artists worked at sites in the Patterson Environmental Park, along Muddy Brook and the Swamp River, roadside by the marshes abutting Rte 55 and at Swan Pond and upland meadows, headwaters of the Swamp in the Harlem Valley. Even artists working side by side never produce the same image, never see the light in the same way. In pastel, watercolor, oil and photograph some astounding works were created and a great day was had by all even as the cloud cover crept back and the skies turned purple and grey later in the afternoon. "We had fun" and we are definitely going to do this again next year!



On Saturday evening there was the buzz of excited voices and tension in the room as Ivan Cohen, "Auctioneer Extraordinaire" held up the first painting. FrOGS was adding a live auction benefitting FrOGS to its event at the Art Show and Celebration of the Swamp. We were auctioning the paintings, sketches and photographs created by of our local artists at the "Plein Air Day" FrOGS sponsored a few weeks earlier. In all, seventeen works were sold. The artists were happy and excited to see their works appreciated and all of the FrOGs volunteers who helped had a great time at the reception party and the event! Kudos to the Correll family for the great hors d'oeuvres.



Pawling High School student artist winners of the Peter Dunlop art competition, November 09.
Right to Left: First Place—Samantha McNerney, Second Place—Charles Flores, Third Place—Lindsay Rosachi

Friends of the Great Swamp's dedication to educational activities and communication, our scientific research and working with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and our 14 partners in the NAWCA Grant to buy and preserve lands in the SWAMP depends on our members' donations in cash and kind. FrOGS is an all volunteer organization.

Here is a summary of where your donations were spent in 2009:

Newsletter \$4,340
 Postage 1,870
 Turtle Research 2,500
 Other Educational 2,275
 Insurance 1,770
 Tax Prep. 1,150
 Office & Copying 250
 Memberships/WEB 320
Total Operating 14,475

Land Acquisition \$1,275
 Appraisals/Survey 1,600
 Land Acquisition costs came from FrOGS match to the NAWCA Grant. These funds were made possible by FrOGS members' donations to the Fund. All the funds from the federal portion of the NAWCA Grant have been spent.

Please continue to support FrOGS in 2010 by renewing your membership or becoming a FrOGS member now.

Thank you to all our new and renewing members, contributors to our NAWCA Fund for Land Acquisition and to the Patrons of the Art Show and Celebration of the Swamp who have so graciously given their time and support in 2009.

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|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
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