



# Friends of the Great Swamp



FrOGS

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Volume 13, Issue 2

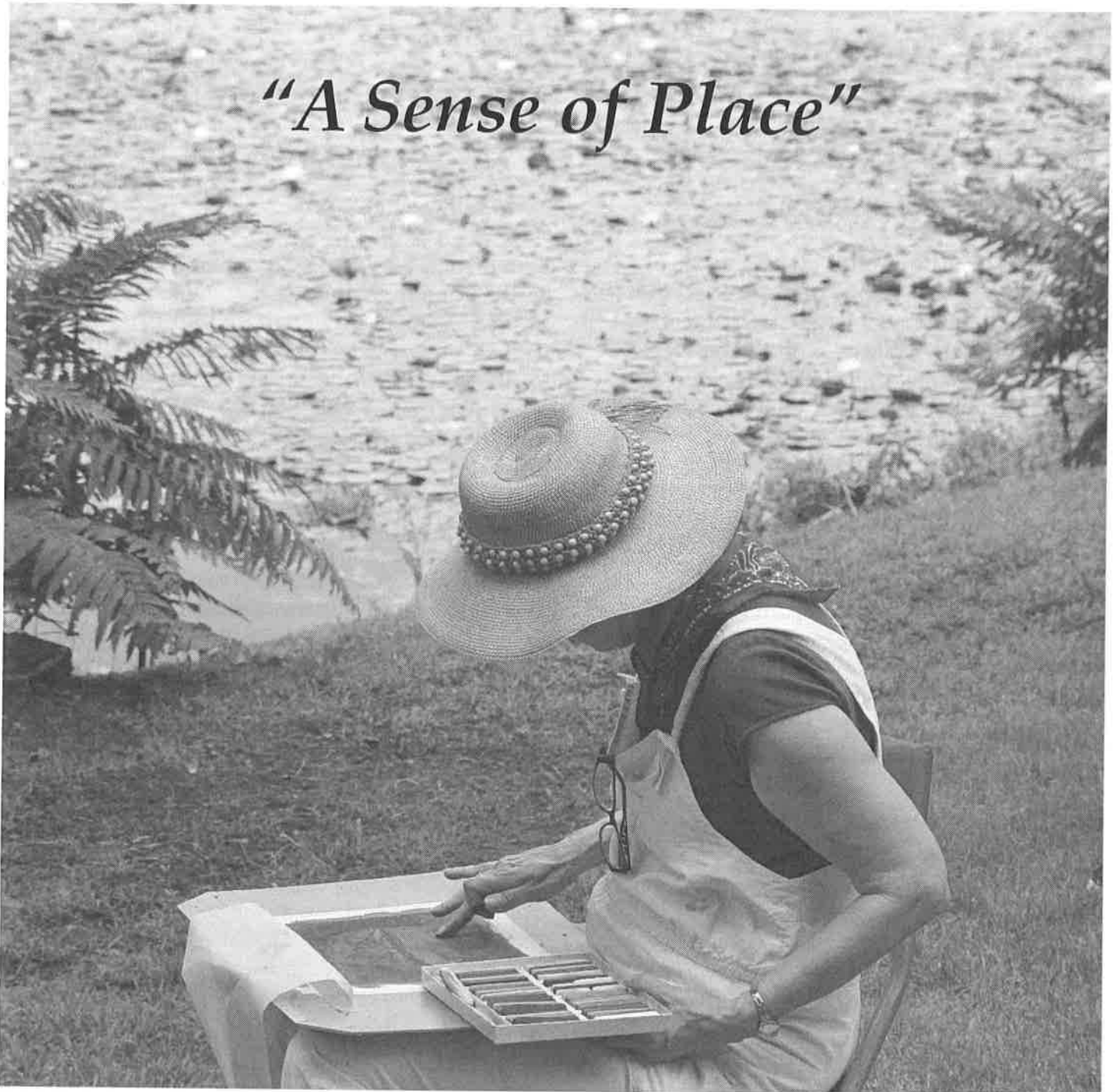
Fall 2012

[www.frogs-ny.org](http://www.frogs-ny.org)

Judy Kelley-Moberg and Jill Eisenstein, Editors

## GREAT SWAMP ART SHOW & CELEBRATION!

*"A Sense of Place"*



Artist Cindy Katz at Turtle Pond in Patterson

Photo by Don Turner

A “sense of place” is all about a personal experience of a particular place in time and space. Artists, scientists, paddlers, sportsmen, hikers and birders have noticed some changes in the Great Swamp over the past ten years. The regrowth of the forests has encouraged the return of ravens, followed by beaver and now black bear. We have been surprised by the great number of migrating waterfowl passing through the swamp. Several rare plants and animals have recently been found in the watershed, including a brand new species of leopard frog. Water quality and temperature studies have increased our knowledge of the rivers and their tributaries. Our sense of the Great Swamp should reflect its past, and document the changes we see around us today in order to understand its future.

—Judy Kelley-Moberg

## A Bear Visits on the Fourth of July

*Adapted from an article published in The Millbrook Independent*

*by Gordon Douglas*

Our Fourth of July started with a series of loud bangs on the side of the house. It was not early fireworks but a large black bear smashing the heavy plastic box which protected two trash cans containing sunflower seed bird-food bags. It collapsed under the bear’s assault. A few whacks to the trash cans and the bear walked off with an already-opened bright blue plastic bag of sunflower seeds. He rambled up the grassy path alongside our lilac bushes and lay down to enjoy his breakfast.



I first saw the bear from the bottom of the path about thirty feet away. The birdseed bag was between his front legs. He looked at me

with disinterest and also ignored the frantic barking of our neighbor’s dog, which was soon hustled inside. He then put his entire head into the bag leaving only his ears showing. It was terribly hot and the bear was panting. My first guess was that he weighed 300 lbs, but later in the day when he walked across the lawn to get a drink of water at the lake, I got a better look and decided he could easily weigh over 400 lbs. Bears grow for the first five years of their lives and can reach 500+ lbs; the record is over 1,000 lbs. He was probably fairly young for an animal that can live for 18 years or better. Near the end of the day, the bear came back to the path where he had eaten the birdseed — but left, as I had moved the bag behind steel cellar doors. We did not see him again. All he left behind was a large pile of scat and an area of flattened grass where he had laid down to eat his breakfast.

When the bear crossed the lawn, we realized that he had lost his left front paw. I had recently read that there is an epidemic of illegal bear trapping. Bear body parts are sold to Asia where they are considered medicinal. This bear’s leg had healed well, but it presented a tragic sight hobbling along on three legs or on the stump of its forepaw. My heart went out to this magnificent crippled creature.

As our forests re-grow bears are coming back. Getting along with black bears calls for some knowledge and common sense. Instructions on what to do and not to do when a bear is around are available from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). But here are a few pointers: We should take down our bird feeders in the summer, as the bears are out and about and the birds don't need to be fed during the growing season. We should never feed them by leaving food or garbage out where they can get it. Unless familiarized with humans because they've been near our homes and eating our food, most bears will either flee when they see us or pay us little attention. We should not approach them, especially when a mother bear may have cubs with her; mother bears are very protective of their young. Black bears can be fine

neighbors if we know how to deal with them wisely. They are very intelligent, and can help us cut down on the overabundant deer population by culling fawns. People in the Adirondacks live with and enjoy the black bears; I think we can, too.



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## FrOGS Welcomes New Board Members

### John Foley

John was raised in Sherman, Connecticut, and spent much of his youth exploring the woods and streams on the NY/CT border. He has worked for the Fisheries Division, and is now a naturalist/assistant park ranger with the Parks Division of the Connecticut DEEP. He is a Master Wildlife Conservationist and was recently elected to the board of directors of the Naromi Land Trust in Sherman.

John's work in the Wildlife Division assessing Wood Turtle habitat in Fairfield County earned him the nickname "Turtle Whisperer." He has been working with FrOGS' Michael Musnick for 5 seasons monitoring Wood Turtles within a Great Swamp tributary that originates in CT. As a FrOGS' board member, John plans to focus on Wood Turtle research, riparian habitat management and wetland ecology and conservation.

### Beth Herr

Beth Herr has been a naturalist for over 35 years. She recently retired after 25 years of service with the Conservation Division of Westchester County Department of Parks. Beth lives in Putnam County where she serves as Chair of the Kent Conservation Advisory

Committee, Friends of Kent Library, and Friends of Trailside Nature Museum. Her ability to draw people into the natural world is simply extraordinary! She has created displays and led many of FrOGS' most popular field trips. Beth is also a talented artist, and is currently working on a book about Ward Pound Ridge Reservation. She and her beekeeper husband, Ralph, are curious about all things natural and enjoy exploring the trails of the Hudson Highlands.

### Don Jiskra

Don grew up in the Midwest, where he learned to fish and enjoy being outdoors. He and his wife, Claudia, and two sons, Zack and Luke, moved to Pawling in 2003, where he quickly fell in love with the water resources and rich biodiversity of the forests. He serves as Conservation Chair and on the Board of Directors of Mid-Hudson Trout Unlimited, on the Program Advisory Committee for Environment and Energy at Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County (CCEDC), and as a volunteer for the Oblong Land Conservancy. For Trout Unlimited, he implemented a stream temperature monitoring program using technology he helped develop with CCEDC.

# The 2012 Great Swamp Art Show Celebrates a "Sense of Place"

Saturday October 20th from 11 AM - 5 PM and Sunday October 21st from noon - 4 PM at the Thomas Memorial Center, Christ Church, Pawling

The Art Show and Celebration has slowly added and deleted features over the years to become a standard venue that features art, animal demonstrations, children's activities, a slide show, displays, good eats and charming live music. After all these years, we wondered if people left the show with any better understanding of the Great Swamp. Could they have answered any of these questions?

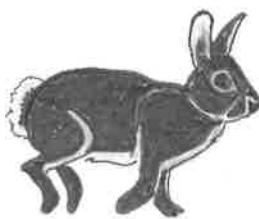
Where is it? How did it form? What does it look like? Is its water dirty and smelly or clear and clean? What animals and plants live there? What's unusual or special about it? What can we do there? How can we get there and see it? Why should we protect it?

This year's show will help visitors develop "a sense of place" about the Great Swamp through the eyes of the artists and exhibitors. Take a walk with us on a visual tour of its habitats and learn about the plants and animals that live there and why it's such a valuable resource.

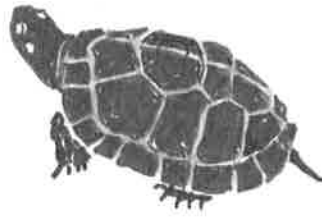
**Art teachers** from the 12 schools and 5 school districts in the watershed were encouraged to focus on animals that live in the Great Swamp. They were sent information on four threatened or endangered animals that live in the swamp:



The medium sized **Indiana Bat** with mouse-shaped ears, a pink nose, and pink lips, hibernates in caves in the winter and roosts under the loose bark of dead trees in the floodplain of the swamp.



The **New England Cottontail**, our only native cottontail, with rounded dark edged ears and a dark spot on its forehead, has lost its shrubby wetland habitat throughout most of New England and still finds cover along the edges of the swamp.



A dark brown turtle with a bright orange blotch on its cheeks, the **Bog Turtle** is New York State's smallest turtle.

This secretive turtle doesn't travel far from the protection of the grassy hummocks found in wet meadows scattered throughout the swamp.



Glistening silver threads edge the orange and brown wings of the tiny **Northern Metalmark Butterfly**, last recorded in New York State

in 1860 but found in the Great Swamp in 2007. Its caterpillars will only eat the leaves of the Round leaved ragwort found in wildflower meadows above the calcium rich rocks of the Great Swamp.

High school students (11th and 12th graders) who enter the Annual Peter Dunlop Art Competition have always been asked to interact with nature in their vision of the Great Swamp. Almost all of the past winners have not only shown great artistic ability but also given us a real "sense of place".

**Participating artists** were sent a map and a brief description of a variety of landscapes (habitats) they might visit in the Great Swamp. The north and south flow contain river views shaded by arching canopies of red and silver





maples, shrub swamps, open marshes, wet meadows, streams and ponds. They were invited to attend "Artists' Rambles" at Turtle Pond (part of the Muddy Brook tributary in Patterson), and the open marsh crossed by the Appalachian Trail boardwalk in Pawling.

**Exhibitors and activities** will focus on the Great Swamp watershed. FrOGS' board members will give mini-talks on turtles, geology, fish and water quality. Jim Eyring will educate us about raptors and fly his birds. Cherie Ingraham's "Chucky Goodnight" will use the clay sculptures of animals made by children at the show to teach them to care about the

environment. Debbie Mumford's live animal program "The Nature of Things" will focus on reptiles and amphibians of the swamp. Norm Mc Grath's "Great Swamp" slide show, Jane Greer's animal silhouettes, the inter-active macro identification table, Beth Herr's turtle exhibit and Michael Musnick's Wood Turtle project will all be there as well as exhibits from the Putnam County Land Trust, the Oblong Land Conservancy, and Native Plant gardeners. FrOGS' tee shirts and hats will be on sale. Great Blue singers Steve Kaplan and Shirl Lawrence will entertain, and Bill Hamilton will coordinate refreshments.

by Judy Kelley-Moberg  
photos by Dr. Jim Utter and Don Turner,  
drawings by Nancy Clark

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**Artists and photographers of all ages, there is still time to record your vision of the Great Swamp as it burns with the flaming hues of early autumn! Landscapes (identified) are great but you can also capture the plants and animals (big and small) that catch your eye, as well as the fishermen, paddlers and folks who are also part of the unique landscape of the Great Swamp.**

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## Wood Turtle Report: Nesting 2012

**A** total of 18 nests were successfully protected this year, beating last year's record by one. With last year's hatching success rate of only 12 turtles, we needed to devise a new plan to stop not just the above-ground egg predation, but the probable underground predation from the Short-Tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*). We tested two different methods for improving hatching results: 1) We manually transferred half of each clutch of eggs to an already pre-dug, newly-designed 6-sided shrew excluder, leaving the remaining eggs to be protected by the old 5-sided excluders.

2) We applied bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) urine powder (bobcats are a major predator of shrews) on the ground around the older units. The new excluders

appeared to have performed properly, but the bobcat urine proved unsuccessful.

Even with the help of the new excluder, a total of only 20 turtles hatched. A large number of this year's eggs appeared to be infertile. Aside from the new excluders, the biggest difference that might have affected egg fertility was the weather. Last summer was cool and wet, especially in August, with some nests getting inundated with water. This summer we had record-breaking hot temperatures and excessive dryness.

For 2013, to be on the safe side, we will probably use finer mesh hardware cloth on the new excluder to deter some of the smaller mammalian burrowers that might raid the turtles' nests.

Michael Musnick and John Foley

# FrOGS Receive Training on Water Quality Assessment

by Jill Eisenstein

July 21 dawned warm and clear, and FrOGS' citizen scientists headed for the Swamp River in Pawling to be trained to do stream sampling for water quality assessment.

Kelly Nolan, Director of Environmental Services of Watershed Assessment Associates based in Schenectady, and his Senior Aquatic Taxonomist Chris Fishel showed nine trainees how to collect and record information utilizing protocols developed by the EPA and the New York State DEC Stream Biomonitoring Unit. The protocols include procedures for stream sampling of benthic (bottom-dwelling) macroinvertebrates, gathering information about the physical condition of the stream channel, and measurements of water chemistry. These standardized procedures are designed to keep data uniform and consistent throughout the state and allow for statistical analysis and comparison.

The volunteers were divided into 4 groups and armed with appropriate collecting nets, GPS units, Hydro Lab and YSI multi-probes, and papers on which to record statistics. The ten

sampling sites included three locations in the Swamp River, two locations in Burton Brook, and one location each in Hiller Brook, Brady Brook, Stevens Brook, and two unnamed streams. In some locations, FrOGS installed temperature monitoring devices designed by Board member Don Jiskra. Samples from each of the sites were sent back to Watershed Assessment Associates' lab for analysis, and the results are expected mid-winter.

The data obtained from these sites will provide a baseline document of the water quality in the Great Swamp and its tributaries, making it possible to conduct trend analyses, point and non-point pollution source evaluations, and assess impacts of developments along the Great Swamp corridor. FrOGS had contracted with WAA to conduct a biological assessment of water quality at seven sites in the north flow in 2010; results are posted on our website.

The newly-trained stream samplers will be collecting data from more tributary sites as the money for analyses becomes available.



Photo by Don Turner

# Calendar of Events

## September thru November 2012

### SEPTEMBER

#### Saturday & Sunday September 29 & 30 at 6 PM Full Moon Duck Watch

At the Great Swamp Wildlife Conservation Area on Cornwall Hill Road in Patterson. Help FrOGS count flocks of migrating Black ducks, Mallards and Wood ducks. (May be repeated October 6/7) Call Beth (845) 228-5635 or Dr. Utter at (845)878-0081

#### Saturday, October 6 at 9 AM

#### Guided Tour of the Peckham Quarry in Patterson

An Oblong Land Conservancy's First Saturday Program. Walking down into this deep limestone/marble quarry is an amazing experience. Registration at [www.facebook.com/oblongland](http://www.facebook.com/oblongland)

### OCTOBER

#### Sunday, October 14 at 2 PM

#### LIFE EVERLASTING—

#### The Animal Way of Death

At the Gardner Theater in the Arts Bldg. at Trinity Pawling School, award winning author, Bernd Heinrich, Ph.D. Professor emeritus in the biology department at the University of Vermont and writer/illustrator of national bestselling books about animal behavior, biology, ecology, evolution, nature writing, and running will introduce his latest book. Don't miss this great storyteller whose scientific inquiry reads like poetry. See FrOGS' website or call Beth Herr (845) 228-5635 for more information.

#### Sunday, October 14 at 2 PM

#### Dragonfly Bog Musical Story

The Pawling Library is sponsoring Marian Grudko's musical story "Dragonfly Bog" for children over six at the John Kane Homestead in Pawling. To register call the library (845) 855-3444

#### Saturday October 20, from 11–5 PM and

#### Sunday October 21, from noon–4 PM

#### The Great Swamp Art Show and Celebration

At the Thomas Memorial Center, Christ Church, Pawling. From the light on Route 22 in Pawling take Quaker Hill Road to the end, go right 1/4 mile and follow signs to the show. See the newsletter for details. Artists call Nancy Clark at (845) 878-9248.

### NOVEMBER

#### Saturday November 3, from 1–3 PM

#### Getting Ready for Winter

A moderate nature hike (under 2 miles) along the Appalachian Trail to Nuclear Lake in Pawling with naturalists Beth Herr and Judy Kelley-Moberg. (fine for families with school age children and senior hikers) To register call Beth (845) 228-5635 or Judy (845) 878-7740

#### Saturday, November 10

#### Roadside Geology and Extreme Botany in the Harlem Valley

After meeting at the Native Plant parking lot on Route 22 in Pawling we will car caravan to the limestone seeps at Nellie Hill Preserve, the cathedral-like Stone Church in Dover and the white sands of the Perry Preserve. For registration and time call Beth (845) 228-5635 or Judy (845) 878-7740

Please renew your membership to continue to receive the newsletter.

**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, research and this newsletter.

Suggested Contributions: *(All Contributions are tax deductible)*

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|---|---|
| <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 |

Send your contribution 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.

- |   |                                      |                                   |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Celebration     | <input type="checkbox"/> Canoe Trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Other    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Art Show    | <input type="checkbox"/> Mailings |

