



Friends of the Great Swamp



FrOGS
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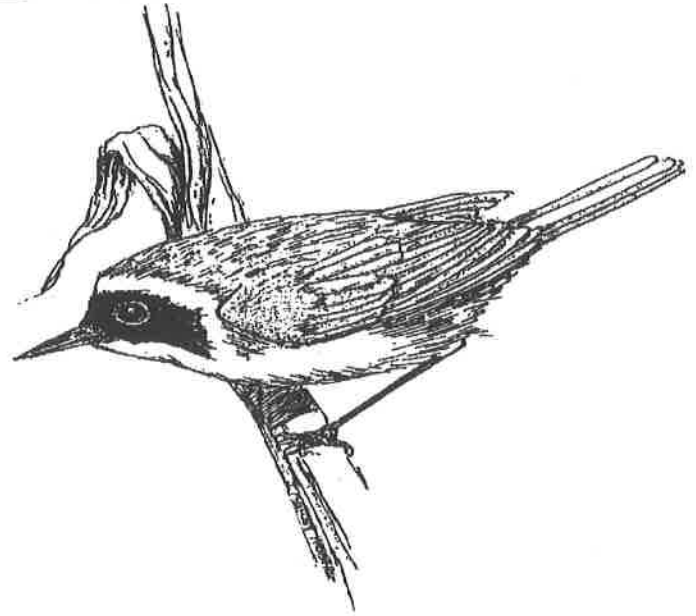
Volume 3, Issue 1
Spring 2002

Welcome our **WANDERERS**

back to the

SWAMP

Join FrOGS for
International Bird
Migration Day



Join in celebrating the return of our songbirds back to the SWAMP. Help FrOGS celebrate International Bird Migration Day on Saturday, May 11th. See the center pages of this newsletter for all the events planned for that day!

Sharparoon, A Treasure Just North of Pawling

by Gordon Douglas

On a drizzly Sunday afternoon in February, I joined a group of FrOGS and their guests for a walk at the Mission Society's 1000+ acre wilderness camp in Dover.

Situated in the heart of the Great Swamp, Sharparoon, the the property is often called, is a haven for wildlife and a favorite research area for biologists such as Dr. Jim Utter, Chairman of FrOGS and associate professor at SUNY Purchase.

We started out along the Swamp River, the north flow river of the SWAMP. Here we found an interesting group of native shrubs and small trees. Alder are attractive large shrubs that are easily identified in winter by their clusters of small 1/2 inch long blackish cones. Alder provide cover for wildlife, browse for deer and seeds for birds.



The multitemed highbush blueberry near the alder display bright red buds in February. They will have white flowers in June and later edible blueberries prized by birds and small animals. Our cultivated blueberries originated with the wild highbush blueberry.

In the water nearby red osier dogwood gave the wetlands a pervasive alozarin red glow. The small willows mixed with them will change the predominant swamp color to green, come the spring.

We passed a fine stand of white pine which had been planted around seventy years ago in the mistaken belief that white pine purified the water. You will see these stately evergreens around reservoirs. Naturally white pine live further north.

Barred and Long-eared owls like to roost in pine groves so our guide, Judy Moberg looked --unsuccessfully-- for the white droppings of those owls on the tree trunks. However within moments, she spotted an owls three-inch long "pellet" Since owls can not digest fur or bones, they regurgitate a pellet composed of these items. Poking the pellet with a twig, Judy showed us the tiny jawbone of a shrew and other bones.

The full sized trees in the Swamp are red maples. They like the wet areas that are often partially flooded in the winter and spring. Wood ducks like to nest in

continued on Page 6

Canoe the Swamp

*With FrOGS on Sunday, April 28th from Green Chimneys Beach. Trip is almost full, call Jodie at 845-855-3063

*With PCLT on Sunday, May 5th Call Judy Terlizzi at 845-228-4520

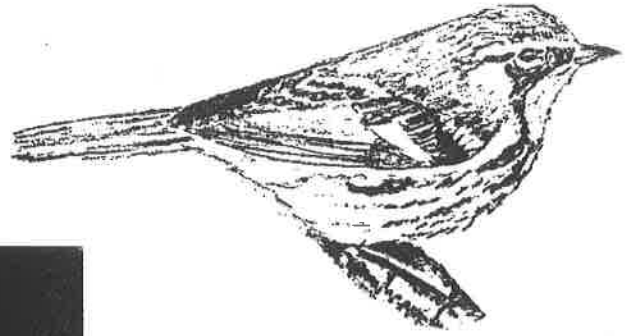
*On Bird Migration Day 1:30 and 3:30 PM trips. Call Jodie at 845-855-3063



Welcome our Wanderers back cont.

From the first days of March, when the red-winged blackbirds return and remind us of Spring as they stake out their territories with their song, we can count on a new arrival each week.

The next "blackbird" to look for in March is harder to spot—the Rusty Blackbird—black in breeding plumage with a pale eye and no red wing, but grey with



Exhausted, with torn and battered feathers this Black-throated Green Warbler looks to the Swamp to dine on insects and rest for the next leg of his journey

with fuel for the journey. They fly generally at night and rest and refuel during the day.

Making the hop across the Gulf leaves many down to weights of as little as a half ounce. They must find refueling habitats or will not complete their journeys. Scientists are beginning to recognize the importance of key refueling areas hugging the Eastern side of the Appalachians and along the coast to the survival of these birds—both those that stay and breed here in Putnam and those that go on further north. After the Gulf Coast and the eastern shore of Virginia—habitat is broken up by the intense urbanization of the Middle Atlantic States. The Great Swamp is the next stop on this important leg of the journey. The large unbroken wooded swamp ringed by ridges that funnel the birds toward the

continued on page 6

rust mixed on the head for the females and males not in full plumage. The Rusty Blackbird favors the wooded swamp, and does not breed here but is passing through on their way to nesting in Canada. Rusty Blackbirds can be found in the wooded sections of the Swamp from Rte. 22 north to the Patterson Environmental Park. Their numbers have declined so much in the last decade that they are listed as a "species of special concern".

Migration is critical to the life-cycle of our songbirds and many species of shorebirds and waterfowl as well. They depart in the fall when colder temperatures kill their source of food, mostly insects. Their journeys take them to Mexico, Central and even South America.

The distances flown by these migrants—warblers are tiny, barely 3 or 4 inches long and weighing a few ounces—total from 3,000 to 5,000 miles. The longest and most dangerous leap is across the Gulf of Mexico. Because of their tremendous energy needs, they eat and load up

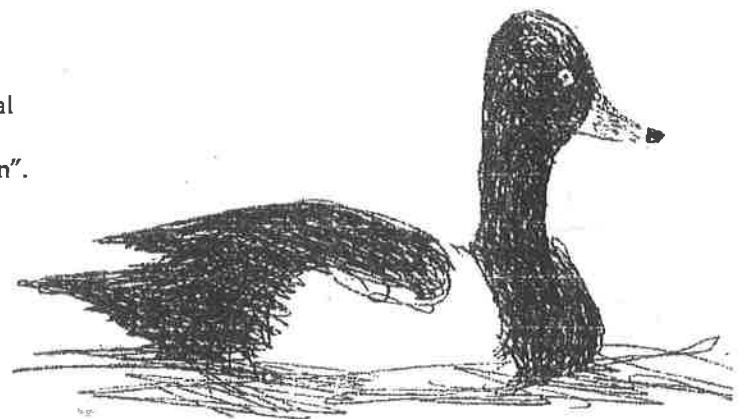
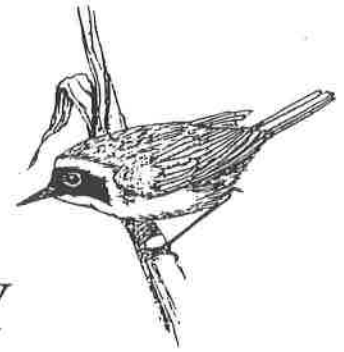


Illustration by Jean Hannon Douglas

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY



SATURDAY MAY 11, 2002

IN NEW YORK'S GREAT SWAMP

A DAY FULL OF ACTIVITIES TO ENJOY THE BIRDS
OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY LOCAL TREASURE

AN AUDUBON SOCIETY DESIGNATED *IMPORTANT BIRD AREA*

4:30 AM Join Barbara Butler and the Waterman Bird Club at **Sharparoon** as they start the Spring Bird census for Dutchess County. Why so early, you ask. Because the whip-poor-wills and owls are calling for the last time before settling in for their daytime rest. This is one of the only places in the region that whip-poor-wills still breed. Meet at the main building of the **New York Mission Society's Sharparoon Reservation** on Dover Furnace Road (County Route 26), west from Route 22 north of Wingdale.

7:00 AM Catch up with Waterman Club's early birders to see some of the great bird diversity found in the fields, forests and riverine habitat at **The New York Mission Society's Sharparoon Reservation**. Meet at the main building on County Route 26.

7:00 – 9:00 AM John Askildsen and the Bedford Audubon Society will lead an exploration of the wetlands and forests of **Patterson Environmental Park**, one of the most popular public access points of the Great Swamp. You will be part of John's **Bird-a-Thon** Team in its search to find 140 species in one day. The Bird-a Thon is an Audubon phenomenon that is sweeping the nation. Meet at the parking lot at the south end of Front Street, past the Metro North station, in the Village of Patterson. Front Street runs south from Route 311 along the west side of the railroad tracks.

8:00 – 10:00 AM. Join Dr. Jim Utter of Purchase College and FrOGS with Andrea Townsend of the Institute of Ecosystem Studies for a demonstration of bird banding and a walk along the floodplain at **Green Chimneys' Wildlife Conservation Area** on Doansburg Road (County Route 65). Learn how birds are captured and banded to study their migration and breeding. This will afford an unusual opportunity to see many beautiful birds up close and personal. Park near the barn.

9:30 AM – 12:00 Noon. Meet Bill Wallace Jr. and the Putnam County Land Trust to search for rare migrants and breeders along the headwaters of Haviland Hollow Brook in **Putnam County's Merritt Park**. This beautiful wooded trail covers habitat occupied by such interesting breeding species as acadian flycatcher, winter wren, black throated blue warbler, cerulean warbler, and Louisiana waterthrush. Meet at the parking area for the park on Haviland Hollow Road, just west of the Connecticut state line.

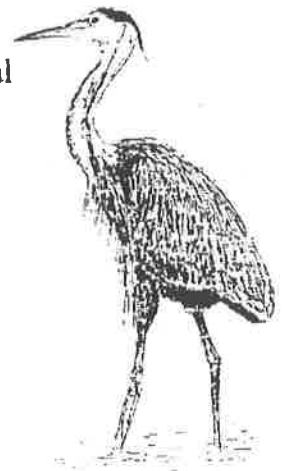
9:30AM – 12:00 Noon. Jillian Butler, Assistant Director of **Audubon – New York's** Important Bird Areas program, will lead a walk through the Clough Preserve along a lively shrub swamp out to the Ice Pond, a **PCLT** Preserve. Meet at the Brewster's John F. Kennedy School parking lot on the right side of Foggingtown Road. Foggingtown Road is at the traffic light, 0.4 miles north of Route 312 on Farm to Market Road (County Route 62).

10:00 AM – 12:00 Noon. Join Dr. Jim Utter of Purchase College and FrOGS with Andrea Townsend of the Institute of Ecosystem Studies for a repeat of the 8:00 demonstration of bird banding and a walk along the floodplain at **Green Chimneys' Wildlife Conservation Area** on Doansburg Road.

12:30 PM. Dedication Ceremony honoring the Great Swamp as an official Audubon Society Important Bird Area of New York State. Joining us from Cornell University will be Jillian Butler, Assistant Director of Audubon – New York's Important Bird Area Program and John Askildsen, President of Bedford Audubon Society. The ceremony will be held at the edge of the East Branch Croton River in the **Patterson Environmental Park**. Cars should be left in the parking lot at the south end of Front Street in the Village of Patterson. (See directions for 7:00 walk.)

1:30 PM. and 3:30 PM. One of the best ways to bird the Great Swamp is by canoe. Join one of the two opportunities to explore the interior of the swamp for birds during this period of reduced avian activity. There is a \$15 charge per person to cover costs of canoes and a life-guard. Limit of 16 people so reserve your spot by calling 845-878-0081. These trips are for serious birders, other trips are offered by FrOGS and the Putnam County Land Trust on April 28 and May 5. See their web sites for details.

7:00 – 9:30 PM. Join us on a dusk to dark pursuit of evening calling birds and local owls. Meet at the Green Chimneys School's beach parking lot on the west side of Doansburg Road.



Cosponsored by:

- *Friends of the Great Swamp (FrOGS)
- *Audubon – New York
- *Bedford Audubon Society
- *Oblong Land Conservancy
- *Purchase College
- *Putnam County Land Trust
- *The Nature Conservancy
- *Waterman Bird Club

Oblong Land Conservancy News

Oblong recently purchased a 5.5 acre parcel consisting of a beaver pond and more than 1100' of road frontage on Rt. 55 and Old Rt. 55. The property is located between the two highways, at their western junction. This is in the area of the Park Service lands (where the Appalachian Trail crosses Rt. 55) and these are preserved wetlands that harbor a rookery of great blue herons, beaver lodges, an otter family and other flourishing wildlife that can be viewed from this public highway.

When Dutchess County foreclosed on this small, but critical 5.5 acre parcel, for nonpayment of property taxes, the Oblong quickly responded by buying it from the County. It is now permanently preserved. The Pawling Town Board officially recognized Rt. 55 as a local Scenic Road in 1987, in ground breaking action, the first local designation of a scenic road in this region

Beavers at Rt. 55 in Pawling

Public indignation was expressed last June 2001, when NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) removed the beaver dams that created the extensive ponds in the Rt. 55 area west of Pawling.

The great blue heron rookery, otters, fish and a great variety of wildlife were devastated as the waters eceded to puddles. DOT justified the removal of the beaver dams, charging that the maintenance was required because high water levels threaten the structural integrity of the highway.

Following discussions with DOT environmental staff and subject to the DOT's new environmental initiatives, new methods of controlling water levels at this beaver dam site have been instituted. It is hoped that this will enable the beavers, the other beaver dependent wildlife, the public interest in ecology, co-exist. Proving that our professional engineers and public servants and our wild friends, the original dam builders, the beavers, may be able to co-exist. Our thanks to NYS DOT!

Submitted by Sibyll Gilbert
Vice Chair, Oblong Land Conservancy



Welcome our Wanderers cont.

lowland where insects are just hatching is essential to thousands of birds, particularly to warblers and other songbirds on their way north. Shrub swamp area bordering the wooded sections and small ponds in the drainage of the Swamp provide more excellent "refueling habitat"

The Ring-Necked Duck and others that breed in the north of Canada can be found from late March into the middle of April on Mendel Pond. Ring-Necked Ducks are also a species of concern. Black Ducks, Ruddies, and Common Mergansers are seen regularly stopping in the Swamp or on Ice Pond or Putnam Lake. Wood Ducks gather and breed in the Wooded sections of the Swamp in large numbers.

The Palm Warbler, a bright yellow warbler with a rust spot on its head is an early visitor the the Swamp. The Palm warbler prefers the shrubby areas of the Swamp and can be seen at the Clough preserve and PCLT's Twin Hills Preserve.

The Pine Warbler another bright yellow warbler with greyish wings also seeks the shrub swamp early for food--then nests in the upland areas bordering the Swamp. The Pine warbler, and another species in danger, the blue Cerulean breeds in the upland woodlands bordering the Swamp. Merritt Park is a good place to look for them.

Over 90 species of birds migrate though the Swamp on their way to the Adirondacks, Maine and further north into Canada. Another 90 have been documented to breed in the Swamp.

Sharparoon cont.

the hollows found in the older red maples. Judy explained that wood ducks like to nest far above the flooded swamp but prefer a swamp near an upland area, preferably one with oaks acorns. To support these beautiful birds and other wildlife we need to save more than just the Swamp itself.

Development Issues in Patterson

The Burdick Farm 81 Lot subdivision was approved by the Planning Board recently for 49 lots, but the NYC Department of Environmental protection (DEP) issued their Findings Statement to Deny. This effectively kills the project because the DEP will not issue approvals. The applicant can always sue! County Executive Bondi has listed this property for Open Space acquisition.

Peckham's rock quarry in Patterson still wants to expand, but local residents are opposing this strongly. Now Peckham wants to develop a 42-acre piece next to the quarry for a mini Clocktower Commons retail-office complex.

Small commercial projects continue to be proposed on lots on Route 22 that will have an impact on the Swamp. Anyone interested in following these issues: the Planning Board meets on the first and last Thursday of every month at 7:30 PM in the New Town Hall on Rt. 311 in the hamlet.

Come to the

FrOGS ANNUAL MEETING

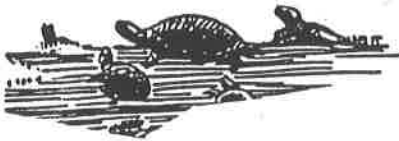
Thursday, May 9th at 7:30 PM
Holiday Hills, Pawling, N.Y.

Special Speaker: Tom Gilbert
Ch. Hudson Highlands Coalition

FrOGS Board Members Attend Hudson Highlands Meeting

Gordon Douglas, Judy Moberg and Edie Keasbey attended the meeting of the Hudson Highlands Coalition on April 8th at the Bear Mountain Inn to hear the latest news regarding conservation efforts of the Hudson Highlands Regional Coalition to preserve large tracts of land stretching from the Pennsylvania border through northern New Jersey, the New York Highlands and into Connecticut.

The Great Swamp is one of the priority areas in the Highlands. Learn more from Gordon, Judy and Edie at the FrOGS Annual Meeting on May 9th.



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 supporter extends FrOGS reach and effectiveness Contributions support the efforts of 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: _____
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
_____ Education Committee	_____ Mailings
_____ Art Show	_____ Other