



Friends of the Great Swamp



FrOGS

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The

GREAT SWAMP

SAVING a
LITTLE of
one of
THE
LAST
GREAT
PLACES



FrOGS Receives NACWA Grant

FrOGS has great news to announce regarding the protection of the Swamp!!

FrOGS and a coalition of fourteen partner organizations announce that the North American Wetlands Council has awarded FrOGS a grant of \$940,000.00 towards the acquisition of lands and conservation easements in the "heart of the Great Swamp" from willing sellers.

Several of the partners, the Putnam County Land Trust and the Oblong Conservancy, had already begun to protect habitat in the Swamp. This North American Council Grant allows FrOGS and its partners to continue those efforts.

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Van-Go Brings the Great Swamp to Schools

By popular demand FrOGS Great Swamp Exhibit was held over through December.

Children were fascinated by the animals, birds, and fish that they saw there. The exhibit titled, "Welcome To Our Home" recreates four different habitats within the Swamp and takes visitors on a tour of them. The bobcat and the coyote were among the most popular animals in the exhibit.

Judy Kelley-Moberg, Education Chairperson of FrOGS, thanked the Carmel School Board at their December meeting for the use of the Van-Go bus to mount the exhibit.

FrOGS would like to say a special thank you to Mark and Elizabeth Fonseca of Black Bear Taxidermy, Hopewell Junction, NY for loaning the animal mounts and Paul Theising for loaning the fish for the exhibit. We also want to thank Margie Picciano, art teacher, prime mover, and inspiration for the Great Swamp Exhibit.



Two different reactions to a "conversation" with a Bobcat. Great Swamp Exhibit in Van-Go Museum

NACWA Grant

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Water Quality

The "Heart of the Swamp" is the headwaters of the East Branch Croton River and the reservoir system that helps provide the water supply to over 9 million residents of New York City and Westchester County. The Swamp acts as a recharge area for local residential wells too. A high quality wetland area like the Swamp acts to filter out pollutants in the water. It is increasingly important to preserve the quality of the Swamp to provide water to our growing population.

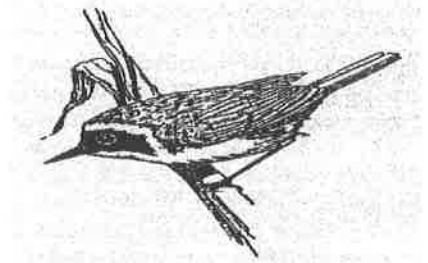
Matching Grant

The NACWA funds are one part of a required 2 to 1 match. The fourteen partners will be providing the matching funds with \$1.2 million coming from NY State. FrOGS has pledged \$10,000 dollars for acquisition as well as administrative funds to the grant.

Partners

A key feature of this project is the broad, diverse base of fourteen cooperating partners. These important partners are FrOGS (Friends of the Great Swamp), North American Wetland Council, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Putnam County, The Nature Conservatory, Putnam County Land Trust, Oblong Conservancy, New York State Department of Environmental Protection, Town of Patterson, Open Space Institute, Purchase College, Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, Bedford Audubon Society, Hudson Highlands Audubon Society, and Trout Unlimited Croton Watershed Chapter.

Saving the GREAT SWAMP



The goal of the project is the protection of the entire 6700 acres of Swamp. The NACWA Grant proposal specifically targets 925 acres in the "Heart of the Great Swamp". The 925 acres are in the widest portion of the Swamp and is a heart shaped area. Included in this area are the flood plain forest, most of the red maple forest, a section of wet meadow, shrub swamp, and related uplands. This area stretches, roughly, from south of the Patterson Environmental Park to Rte 22 and includes acquisitions and conservation easements. In addition to securing wildlife habitat the "heart" is central to linking protected areas on the ridges and sub drainages into crucial wildlife corridors.

Swamp Protects Songbirds

The Great Swamp, including its magnificent riverine bottomland forest, reminiscent of southern swamplands, provides a critical habitat for a diversity of migrating and breeding birds. The "Heart of the Swamp" parcels that we hope to protect contain the majority of the state's largest Red Maple swamp forest and the widest corridor (up to 2 km). This is the most significant block of forested wetlands within the Swamp and includes sufficient uplands to protect both the wildlife values and the integrity of the wetlands. The great width of this area and the rivers meandering course through the broad flood plain provide important protection for the breeding habitat of over 80 species of birds including the neo-tropical songbirds. Many of these species like the Wood Thrush and the Scarlet Tanager need wide areas of deep forest to breed successfully. This section abounds with tanagers, rose-breasted grosbeak, orioles and many varieties of warblers.



A section of Red Maple Swamp Forest in the "Heart".

Wildlife Corridors

The width of the Swamp here, along with already protected areas on Cornwall Hill Road, Cranberry Mountain, and the Mike Ciaiola Park, creates a ridge to swamp area that is not only a refuge for birds but for our dwindling species of key mammals as well. Bobcat, mink, river otter, and beaver are still found in this area because of this ridge-swamp connection. Preserving lands in the Swamp keeps these corridors open and will allow these animals to thrive as well as numerous species of amphibians and reptiles.

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Highlights of the Great Swamp Art Exhibit

The Sixth Annual Great Swamp Art Exhibit and Celebration of the Swamp was attended by over 1500 people on both Friday and Saturday, October 25th and 26th.

Sue Kelly, Honorary Co-Chairperson, marveled at the variety of art and children's art that was exhibited this year. She was fascinated by the falcon and owls and praised FrOGS for its efforts to bring "the Swamp to the children" through the Van-Go museum.

The blue bus housing FrOGS art exhibit entitled "Welcome to our Home" was visited by over 800 people while parked at The Celebration. The "Welcome" was extended to 150 5th grade students from the Pawling Middle School by the coyote, bobcat, fish, birds and other wildlife that make the Great Swamp their home. FrOGS provided a guide to the exhibit and a pamphlet on the importance of wetlands to every visitor.



Congresswoman Sue Kelly, Honorary Co-Chairperson of the Art Exhibit with Jim Utter, Laurie Wallace and Hal Weisel, Wood Carver.



Students admiring large painting of Trout



The "Nature of Things"

On Friday and Saturday teachers from the Nature of Things brought live reptiles, including snakes and turtles, amphibians and small mammals to demonstrate and explain the life habits of these animals. This was a favorite activity for children and adults. They could not bring native species from the Swamp but brought their "cousins". These creatures live and function in the same ways as the Swamp's species do.

Celebration of The Swamp



Gwen Saylor and her Owl

Falcons and Owls

Gwen Saylor came with her Falcons and Owls. Gwen talked to the visitors of the "Celebration" about her birds. She then brought them outside. The Falcon was released to fly above the field next to the church. The "Hall" was emptied immediately as participants were thrilled to watch the Falcon.

Owls have always fascinated us as well. Barred Owls, Great Horned Owls, and Screech Owls all dwell in the Swamp. This year several artists chose the Owl as their subject and where able to illustrate it using their own feelings.

The Great Swamp Art Exhibit gives artists who are inspired by the Swamp's birds and other animals, as well as its fascinating plant life, an opportunity to express their feeling either on canvas, drawings, or photography.



Two different artists renderings of an owl



Hal Weisel explaining his carvings to children

More Art Show Events

Norman McGrath not only exhibited some of his photographs of the Swamp but also brought his slide show with its magnificent views of the Swamp. Norman has gathered all seasons of the Swamp over the years he has been photographing it. Jeff Hodges videos were shown too. Nancy Levine from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection fascinated young participants with her "fish stories" as she demonstrated the "sponge effects" of wetlands and the importance of maintaining a pure water supply, not only for fish but also for us all. Peter Dunlop fed us with all his excellent recipes.

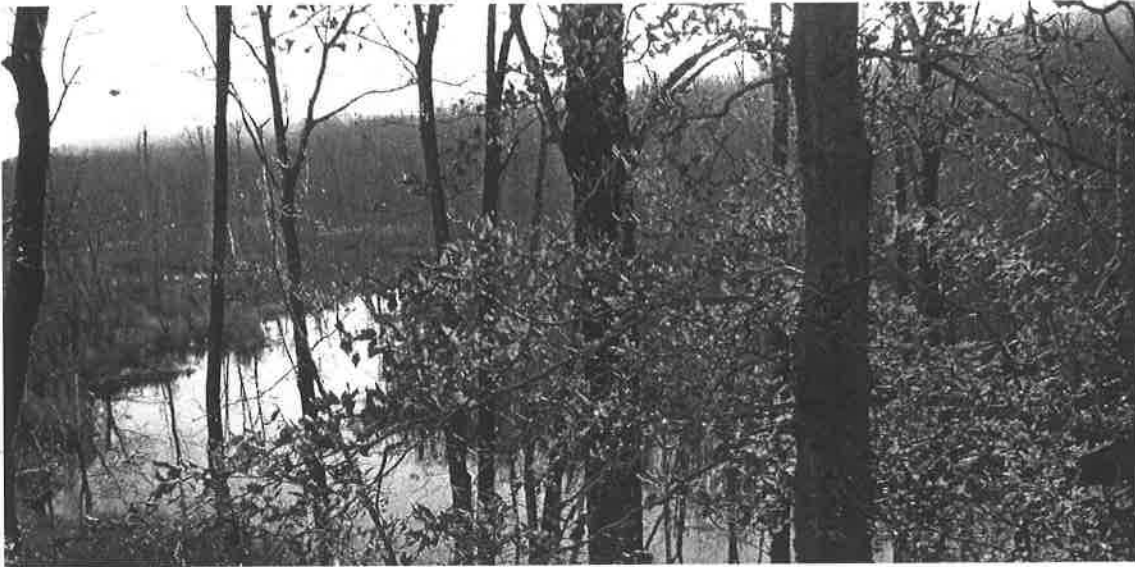
FrOGS would also like to thank Beth Coursen, David Roberts, and Lauri Taylor for acting as guides and teachers for our fifth grade students on Friday. A special thanks also to our set up and take down crew: Jeff Green, Rick Carr, Peter Carr, Charlie Olsen, Manny Greer, Ted Baughman, and Cindy Hess. Without these wonderful volunteers we would not have had such a wonderful show!

Oblong Land Conservancy and FrOGS Efforts to Preserve Wetlands along the Swamp River

Submitted by Sibyll Gilbert

Worthless, inaccessible swamp, or a precious gem in a hidden place? Along an 18000' foot section of the Swamp River, there are two landlocked parcels of wetland totaling 44 acres with two small, very steep islands graced with beech, oak, and hemlock.

As a back up, just in case, Gordon Douglas went and pre-registered for the auction. The Oblong Land Conservancy had agreed to let Gordon represent them and bid for the parcels with a limit established lest Gordon become carried away with his zeal for the Swamp.



Section of the Swamp River and wetlands that the Oblong Land Conservancy and FrOGS are trying to preserve.

These islands resemble pyramids rising like a mirage from the floor of the Swamp. Efforts to preserve this section of the Great Swamp are likely to precipitate changes in Dutchess County's policy regarding its tax delinquent properties.

Gordon Douglas and I made a site inspection of these "Island" properties several years ago and the Oblong Land Conservancy made a futile attempt at that time to save them at auction. This year, abandoned by their owner, the parcels re-appeared on the auction list. This time the Dutchess County Environmental Commission and FrOGS joined the effort.

Time For Quick Action

Dutchess County Legislative Chair, Brad Kendall, met with myself, FrOGS Chair, Jim Utter, and Dover Supervisor, Jill Way, to discuss the issue. Mr. Kendall agreed to try to assist us in our mission. A few days later the Dover Town Board adopted a resolution that the Dutchess County Legislature remove the two parcels from the auction list and preserve them permanently. The Oblong Land Conservancy Board approved accepting and stewarding the parcels, which was another critical issue. Our immediate goal was to have these parcels removed from the auction list until Dutchess County could act further. Holidays intervened and the auction was set for the following day!!

At 4:00 p.m. Gordon phoned me. He had gone to the office to register and had been informed that just 5 minutes before the "islands" wetlands parcel had been removed from the auction list. Brad Kendall had accomplished his mission.

This is, of course, just the first step in the process. We will keep our partners, FrOGS, informed as to its final resolution. Our goal is to have the Dutchess County Legislature follow the example of Putnam County and make it easier to preserve these key wetland properties as open space.



FrOGS would like to Thank:

Gordon Douglas for his photos.

Jean Hannon and Judy Moberg for their drawings.

Karen O'Neill for her editing.

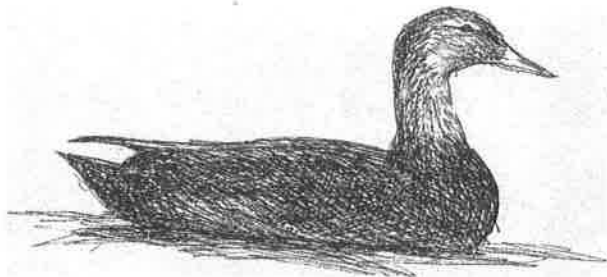
The Swamp As a Refuge for Waterfowl

The NACWA Grant funds will help acquire lands important for ducks and other waterfowl.

The Great Swamp is an important habitat for ducks as well as songbirds. Three species, with declining populations in the eastern U.S., are abundant here. Wood Ducks and Mallards find the Swamp an excellent place to breed. Black Ducks migrate through from their nesting areas and find the Swamp an ever-increasing refuge on their trips south.

Migrants Use Swamp as Stop Over Area

When the first cool winds blow through the Swamp from the north, the Wood Ducks and Mallards depart for warmer climates. The Swamp becomes a temporary home for Black Ducks and other migrants.



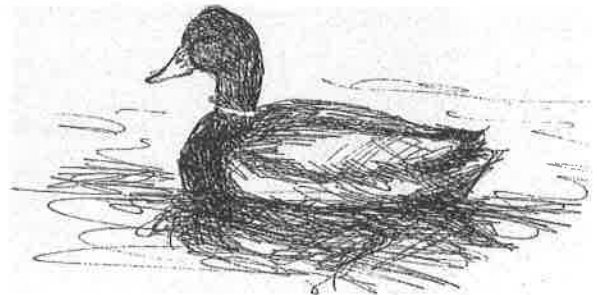
Dwindling Black Duck numbers have been a concern to wildlife refuge managers in the North Atlantic Flyway for years. Breeding grounds in Canada and wintering areas in Virginia and North Carolina are relatively secure but the essential resting and stop over wetlands in the Middle Atlantic States are not. Rapid and encroaching growth has reduced the number and quality of freshwater marsh areas. These are more important on the return trips south as many young ducks are making their first long flights and need more time to rest and quality marshes for refueling. The "Heart of the Great Swamp" and its many fingers from the North Flow to Ice Pond have become among the last remaining refueling stops north of Maryland. Migrating ducks are hard to count as some stay a few days, others, weeks. Wildfowl observers are seeing more and more ducks in the Swamp during these key migration weeks.



Breeding Ducks Depend on the Swamp

Wood Ducks are found in the wooded Swamp areas bordering the East Branch Croton River and in the wooded and shrub Swamp areas north of the Ice Pond. Wood Ducks choose the Red Maple Swamp Forest and adjacent flood plain of the River because of the abundance of trees with suitable nesting cavities. They prefer holes that are at least 20 feet above the water surface and 2 to 3 feet deep inside. The larger, older Red Maples found in this section of the Swamp are ideal. They are also shy ducks and prefer areas far from human activity.

Wood Ducks declined to near extinction because of hunting pressures in the early 1900's and because of loss of habitat. The habitat of the Swamp is ideal for them. There are rough estimates of 30 to 50 nesting pairs. These estimates are low and FrOGS will be making an effort in the coming year to get a more accurate count.



We think of Mallards as the familiar green-headed ducks of city park ponds. Few realize that Mallards in the wild have declined greatly in the last dozen years and are now a species of concern.

Mallards are surface feeding ducks. They feed by dabbling for plant stems and roots in shallow water marshes, preferably with good cover of reeds or grasses. Mallards can be found in the wooded Swamp too but prefer the adjacent shrub swamp and marsh areas around the Muddy Brook drainage, Haviland Hollow Brook, the swampy area north of Ice Pond and in the North Flow. Protecting this habitat is key to the Mallards continued success here.