



THE GREAT SWAMP NEWSLETTER

RESEARCH • EDUCATION • CONSERVATION

NATURE'S COLOR PALETTE

Fall Colors Come From More Than Just Trees



Poison Ivy



Goldenrod



American Cranberry

Volume 22, Issue 4 Fall 2024

Contributors: Paul Andrews, Judy Kelley-Moberg, Kathryn Jaliman, Sharon Nakazato, Hunter Nigey, Ted Kozlowski

Friends of the Great Swamp was founded in 1990, as 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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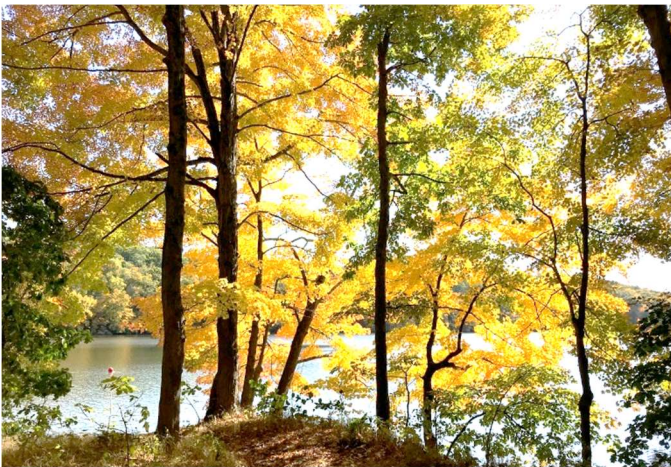
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AUTUMN ARRIVES

By The Editors

Autumn in The Great Swamp is a fantastic time of year. The landscape comes alive with new colors every week. Poison ivy, wild flowers, weeds, then trees. Nuts and seeds are dropping throughout the forests. Berries are ripening. A multitude of migratory birds are passing through to their winter grounds. Frosty mornings. Apple picking. Hot cider. Pumpkins. Warming fireplaces. Bears are gorging. It's an ideal time to go wandering about the many trails in The Great Swamp to revel in this treasure in our backyards, either alone or at a group event.

Autumn is also the perfect time to bring attention to all the benefits The Great Swamp provides with our 28th Annual Great Swamp Celebration and Art Show on October 26–27. We hope you can make it!



Song for Autumn – Mary Oliver
from Poetry Magazine 2005

Don't you imagine the leaves dream now
how comfortable it will be to touch
the earth instead of the
nothingness of the air and the endless
freshets of wind? And don't you think
the trees, especially those with
mossy hollows, are beginning to look for

the birds that will come — six, a dozen — to sleep
inside their bodies? And don't you hear
the goldenrod whispering goodbye,
the everlasting being crowned with the first
tuffets of snow? The pond
stiffens and the white field over which
the fox runs so quickly brings out
its long blue shadows. The wind wags
its many tails. And in the evening
the piled firewood shifts a little,
longing to be on its way.

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

Please fill out and return this form or visit frogs-ny.org

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

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

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SIGHTINGS IN THE SWAMP

A Mosaic of Colors

By Hunter Nigey

Imagine, you're venturing into The Great Swamp. Rocks underfoot, a canopy of winding branches above, and a ceiling made of the most vibrant greens, reds, yellows, and oranges – fall has come.

You stare at the picturesque scene before you, and question why some plants, especially on the floor before you, seem to have changed before many others. A plant, well known for its irritating touch, catches your attention. Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) leaves change color much faster in the fall than other species. The reasons behind this are deeply rooted in poison ivy's relationship with the sun and the chemicals within its makeup. In the fall, when photosynthesis begins to decline as a result of fewer sunlight hours, chlorophyll production also declines. Anthocyanins, pigments found in most plants that cause vibrant red and purple hues, are found in high concentrations in poison ivy. When chlorophyll production slows down, anthocyanin production increases and leads to poison ivy's early color change.

Another plant you may recognize as the prolific pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) draws you in with its colorful berries and long stems. In the fall, this toxic plant's leaves change from bright green to striking shades of purple, yellow, and red. While its leaves are truly gorgeous, what attracts both humans and animals alike



Pokeweed – photo by P. Andrews

are the pokeweed's berries. Animals native to The Great Swamp such as raccoons, deer, skunks, box turtles, opossums, and several bird species rely on the berries for nutrition and vitamins. However, humans, dogs, cats, and many other domesticated species can be poisoned by all parts of the pokeweed, from the roots to the leaves and the berries themselves. The reason why humans are so drawn to the pokeweeds alluring berries lies not in their nutritional value, but in the vibrant dyes that can be created from them. Long ago, Native Americans

would collect the pokeweed berries in the late summer or early fall when the colors were most vibrant, and dye many fabrics with them through a careful process to avoid being poisoned. Today some people also use the pokeweed berries as a dye but are extremely cautious about how they do so and in their preparation of the plant. Reflecting on this, you admire the plants' beauty once more and continue your voyage through the woods.



Jewelweed – photo by P. Andrews

The final plant you stumble upon, jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), has many hummingbirds fluttering around its alluring orange flowers. As you get closer, the hummingbirds zip away causing jewelweed capsules to burst, and give you a chance to admire the plant before you. Jewelweed, also known as the touch-me-not plant, has an admirable method of dispersing its seeds. In late spring and early fall, viewers can catch sight of the plants' carefully packaged seed capsules exploding and flinging seeds around the area (about 2 to 6 feet away from the original plant). You admire this process and begin to take notice of the jewelweed's other features. Its bright yellowing leaves, luminous flower, and strong stem combine to create a most beautiful plant.

Having learned so much about the plants in The Great Swamp, you leave the scenic landscape. Hues from the flora decorate the ground with bright shadows, as though they were waving you goodbye. Memories of The Great Swamp fill your mind until you can come back to admire the mosaic of colors once more.

GOING NUTS IN THE WOODS

By Ted Kozlowski, Forester and Patterson Environmental Conservation Inspector

As the leaves fall and forest trees prepare for their long winter nap, they have one last important gift to provide the forest ecosystem. They will leave a legacy in the embodiment of ripened nuts and seeds that will not only ensure the future generations of the tree species but will provide a source of food that will sustain the creatures that reside in the forests during the winter months ahead. On a more human level, they will also provide us with some tasty treats. Nothing like chestnuts roasting on an open fire.

From early spring through the summer, the flowering trees such as the oaks, maples, hickories, tulip trees, walnuts, hazelnuts, and others will produce flowers that will get pollinated and then mature into a seed or nut as the seasons progress. Some seeds (such as red maples) will mature in early summer while many others will wait till fall. Once mature, the ripened fruit or nuts will either drop to the forest floor or be plucked by any mammal or bird that can get up into the tree canopy. To ensure that the primary goal is to get the ripened fruits to germinate and grow new trees, the trees will produce large numbers of fruits (nuts or seed) so the odds are in favor of some escaping the dietary demands of the wildlife that depend upon them and actually germinating. Some trees such as the oaks will have what are called “mast” years, where enormous amounts of acorns are produced. Last year’s production was considered a mast year and acorns were quite abundant. Mast years occur every 2 to 5 years and while the exact reason is not clear, it probably has to do with environmental conditions and an evolutionary way to assure species survival. All the forest dwelling mammals and many species of birds will consume nuts and seed produced by our native tree species, including the conifers.

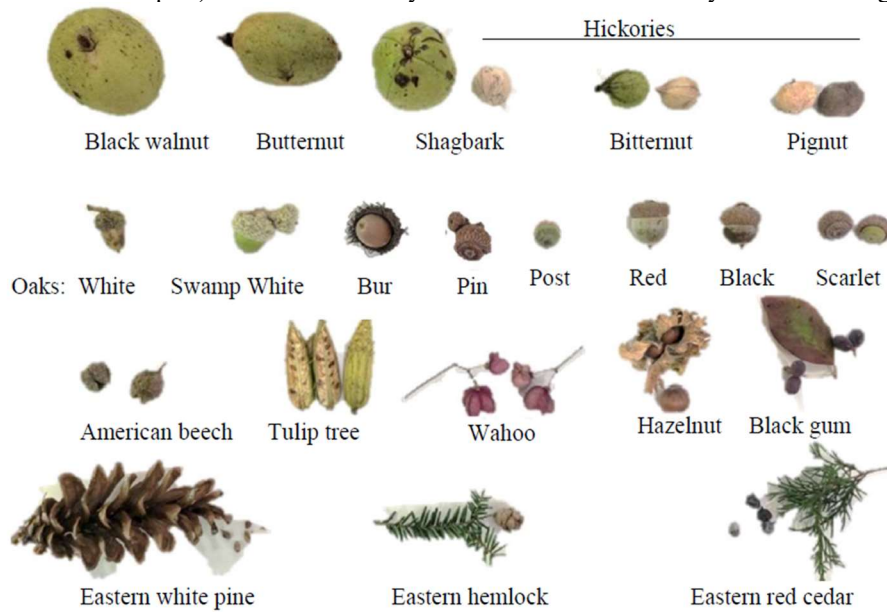
The following native tree species in our local forests will provide nuts, berries, or seeds in the fall:

The Walnut Family: These are the largest nut-producing trees in our area and include black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), butternut or white walnut (*Juglans cinera*), shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*), mockernut hickory (*Carya tomentosa*), and bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*). Shellbark hickory (*Carya laciniosa*) has the tastiest nut, but I have not seen it around The Great Swamp. Most woodland mammals and wild turkey, wood ducks, blue jays, and woodpeckers will consume the nuts hidden within the thick walls of the husks. The shagbark and mockernut hickory are

the most preferred by animals and humans in our area. Bitternut hickory is aptly named and quite bitter with pignut not far behind. Butternut is not a very common tree and is threatened by a fungal disease. It may eventually be placed on the Federal Endangered Species list.

The Oaks: We have a nice variety of oak species (*Quercus*) growing in our area and an important one that grows in The Great Swamp. Oaks are divided into two types – red oaks (red, black, scarlet, pin) and white oaks (white, chestnut, swamp white, bur, chinkapin, scrub). The major difference is that red oak leaves are more pointed and their acorns take two seasons to ripen. They also have more red fall leaf colors. The white oaks have more rounded leaf tips, take one season to ripen acorns and have more yellow and orange fall colors. The white

oak acorns are highly prized by wildlife and are preferred over the reds because they contain less tannin, which makes them tastier. But red oak acorns are still eaten by wildlife as well. Swamp white oak grows in our wetlands and is a great asset to that ecosystem, but it also can grow about anywhere in our area.



American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) – This climax forest

tree is in jeopardy from beech leaf disease, which is seriously impacting our beech trees. It is so bad that I could not find a single beech tree that was producing nuts this season. Although the nut is small, the tree is very common in our woods and most wildlife species depend upon the nuts from this tree. I have been experimenting with some measures that Davy Tree Company and Ohio State University are trying and I hope to write an article in an upcoming issue on what you can do for your beech trees.

Tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) – This large growing tree species dates back to the dinosaur period and is quite tall and common in and around the Great Swamp. Its tulip-shaped flower produces a fall seed crop consumed by many birds and small mammals.

Eastern Wahoo (*Euonymus atropurpureus*) – I bet most of you never heard of this one and it is related to the invasive exotic burning bush (but wahoo is NOT invasive). It is a small native tree found in and around wetlands in our area and prefers more shade. It produces a small nut within a red berry that is consumed by birds and small mammals in late summer. It also has nice red fall colors.

Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) – Also known as a filbert. It is a nut we consume and it is native to our area. Wildlife (birds and mammals) love hazelnuts as they have a very high nutritional value.

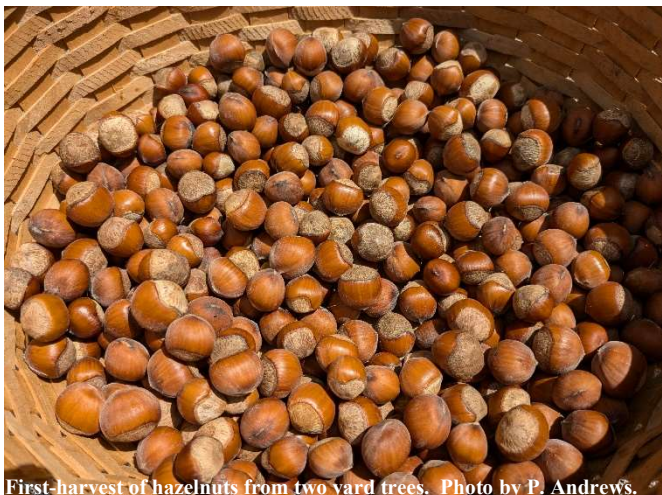
Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) – Also known as tupelo, this native wetland tree has some of the best fall foliage around (deep reds and purple). Not only do many species of birds and mammals love the nutritious berries, but so do the pollinators who get them started. Tupelo honey is not just a Van Morrison song but a great tasting and profitable honey in the south.

Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) – Our official state tree and one of the most beautiful trees in our forests can also produce an abundance of fall seed for many species of birds, small mammals and even a few insects. Other native maples producing fall seed are boxelder (*A. negundo*) and striped maple (*A. pensylvanicum*).

The Conifers: (White pine - *Pinus strobus*, Eastern hemlock - *Tsuga canadensis*, Eastern red cedar – *Juniperus virginiana*). These native conifers produce an annual crop of seed that are a reliable source of food for birds and small mammals. Bluebirds love red cedar berries in winter.

As homeowners and concerned persons, you can help these trees and our wildlife resources by doing some simple things:

1. Try to eliminate any invasive plants and vines growing on our native trees.
2. If you see seeds and nuts falling along your road, sweep or blow them off the road and into the woods where hungry critters can enjoy the bounty without getting run over.
3. How about eliminating some of your lawn area and planting some native nut and seed trees instead?
4. During your fall cleanup, don't bag up and toss raked-up nuts, seeds, and pine cones. Disperse them in the woods.
5. Many parking lots use red and scarlet oaks in their plantings (Home Depot in Brewster for example) and they produce large quantities of nuts that pile up and get smashed by vehicles. I try to scoop some up and use them for my bird feeding stations and disperse some in my woods. Try it.
6. If you wish to collect some nuts or seeds to germinate you must stratify them (expose to cold) by placing in a slightly moistened baggie and leaving them in your refrigerator till spring. You can pot them in soil and heal them in your garden for the winter, but be sure to protect them from foraging critters with screening.



First-harvest of hazelnuts from two yard trees. Photo by P. Andrews.

THE GREAT SWAMP CELEBRATION AND ART SHOW: CONNECTING COMMUNITY TO THE NATURAL WORLD

By Judy Kelley-Moberg

Founded in 1990, FrOGS's mission is to preserve and protect the health of The Great Swamp Watershed through research, education, and conservation. At the time, residents in the Watershed knew little about the Swamp and its value to their communities. Mae Greene, who wrote a column about local events in the Pawling News Chronicle Press, was aware of the studies and meetings about the values of The Great Swamp through articles written for the paper by FrOGS Board member Gordon Douglas. In 1996, Mae approached FrOGS's chairmen Tom Keasbey to suggest using her connections with local artists to hold an art show at Christ Church on Quaker Hill in Pawling focused on the Great Swamp. Some board members questioned the idea, but by 1998 Mae's show had grown into The Great Swamp Art Exhibit, and it continues today as The Great Swamp Celebration and Art Show.

Over the ensuing 28 years, the event has connected and educated artists, students, residents, and thousands of visitors about the value of the wetlands for providing clean water and a healthy habitat for native plants and animals. Exhibits and events have included: Debbie Mumford's "Nature of Things" that introduced children to live animals, Jim Eyring from Pace University's Raptor Center flying his birds of prey outside to delighted viewers, students from the local nursery schools to high school entering art focused on the Swamp, Cherie Ingraham and "Chuckie Goodnight" using clay sculpture to teach children about animals, kids discovering macroinvertebrates in stream water, FrOGS-designed T-Shirts for sale, Jeff Hodges showing his videos of otters and wet meadows, FrOGS proudly playing its video about The Great Swamp narrated by Pawling local James Earle Jones, John Foley giving turtle talks, the giant human frog dancing with children, and high school students competing for the prestigious Peter Dunlop Art Award.

The "28th Annual Great Swamp Celebration and Art Show" will take place on **Saturday and Sunday, October 26 and 27** at Christ Church on Quaker Hill (17 Church Road, Pawling, NY). The Celebration will be open from 11:00 am until 5:00 pm on Saturday and Noon until 4:00 pm on Sunday. Admission is free to all. Please come and enjoy the amazing artwork, crafts for sale, educational exhibits, live animals, raptor shows, and games for kids.

For more information on the schedule of events for the "28th Annual Great Swamp Celebration and Art Show", The Great Swamp, FrOGS, and other upcoming events such as hikes and paddles, visit www.frogs-ny.org.

A CHINWAG WITH DOREEN O'CONNOR

By Sharon Nakazato

If you're a fan of the Art Shows at FrOGS's Annual Great Swamp Celebrations, you likely remember the outstanding work of Doreen O'Connor. A repeat prize winner and First Place in Painting last year, Doreen's colorfully delicate evocations of the flora and fauna of the Great Swamp bespeak her intimacy with them all. As a most avid plein air painter Doreen agreed to talk with FrOGS's outdoor painting events coordinator Sharon Nakazato about her life as an artist and particularly en plein air.

SN: How, why, and in what way have you been involved with FrOGS?

DO: I just like the organization. My first paint out with FrOGS was at the Patterson Environmental Park, and then at Great Hollow. And then I entered the Show in the fall. Besides the opportunities to paint in beautiful places, I like that I can learn from fellow artists and develop a circle of friends who are fellow painters. Another plus for me is I live in the Great Swamp Watershed so I can paint in my back yard and be eligible for the Art Show.



"Loosestrife and Pollinators" by Doreen O'Connor

SN: Is there anything you feel you've gained from plein air painting that you would not have gotten from your other art activities such as the mural painting that you do as a professional?

DO: Just being out in nature makes me happy. I like painting nature in different moods. I can zone out and forget the world. And it helps when you are grieving. You can paint and cry at the same time. You can also paint and laugh at the same time!

SN: Are there any challenges you plan to take on in the future?

DO: I really want to improve my works a lot more.

SN: (Surprised) I see you at the top of your game!

DO: No, I still have to work and work a painting. I see some people get it down in just a few

brushstrokes. Like in Asian painting — two strokes and the artist has a cat! I want to be able to do that.

BRIEF BIO: Doreen spent a good part of her childhood on the family farm in Dutchess County. After gaining degrees in art education, she taught art in junior high, then, upon completing a post-graduate degree, worked for a historic house museum for 20 years. In 1990 she started her decorative painting business doing faux finishes, murals, etc. She moved back to take care of the farm in 2001 on her father's death. Having sold the farm several years ago she resides in the upper Great Swamp Watershed area and continues to paint landscapes, florals, and old buildings en plein air as well as taking decorative commissions. Doreen is a member of artEast, Lower Hudson Valley Plein Air Painters, and FrOGS.

Contact info: email: 1oconnordodo@gmail.com; tel: 914-588-4182; website: 1doconnorwildflowers.com



"Storm Clouds Over the Great Swamp" by Doreen O'Connor

RODENTICIDES THREATEN SWAMP LIFE

By Paul Andrews

Here comes fall and with it, here come the mice scurrying into our homes seeking food and shelter for the winter. Instead of gorging on our vegetable gardens and compost piles, they're now after our pantry supplies. Humans have lived alongside and battled with rodents for millennia. A common, long-practiced approach to rodent control is poisoning. The first commercial rodent poisons appeared in the 1850s and included products based on arsenic, cyanide, strychnine, thallium, various metal phosphides, and red squill (a cardiotoxic plant). In the 1950s, anticoagulants such as warfarin became the poison-of-choice for rodent control. These compounds cause rodents to bleed to death internally, a process that can take multiple ingestions and multiple days. Rodents soon evolved resistance to these first-generation anticoagulants and new compounds were developed, termed second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARS) that were more potent (can kill after a single ingestion) and that remained in rodent tissues much longer. SGARS on the market include brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone, and difenacoum.

The problem with SGARS is that they have become a significant threat to non-target wildlife. Although more lethal than first-generation anticoagulants, the exposed rodent may live up to a week before succumbing and in that time can eat multiple doses. Coupled with the slow elimination from the body, this allows these toxicants to build up to supralethal concentrations in the animal's tissues. Predators and scavengers that feed on the rodents, whether dead or alive, are then sickened by these potent chemicals. Extensive evidence shows that these rodenticides are being detected in animals throughout the food web, including hawks, eagles, owls, falcons, vultures, fox, coyotes, raccoons, and bobcats. Seventy-seven percent of 65 dead raptors found in and around New York City parks from 2018 to 2023 had detectable levels of one or more rodenticides in their livers. SGARS have also been detected in shellfish, cod, insects, and lizards.

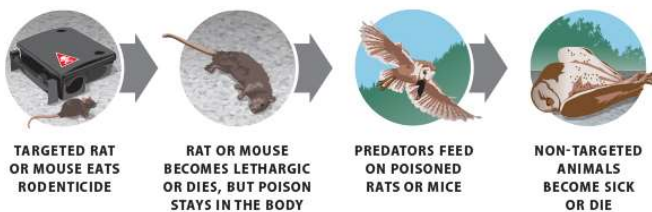


Image from the Government of British Columbia.

SGARS have been banned in California and British Columbia. Bills restricting access are under consideration in many states, including New York and Connecticut. The EPA has banned pelleted forms of SGARS and will be releasing its final environmental evaluation in November with more restrictions pending.

Rodent Control Options

- Clean up yard debris, cut tall grass and weeds
- Open up bird houses for the winter to prevent mouse nesting
- Store trash, bird food, and pet food in tightly covered bins
- Seal home entry holes with steel wool and caulk
- Store cereal, grains, and nuts in rodent-proof containers
- Snap traps – all manner of design, not good outdoors
- Sticky traps – causes extreme stress, considered inhumane
- Live traps – now what do you do with the trapped animal?
- Corn gluten pellets – blocks intestines of rodents only
- Repellants*: herbal sprays and sachets, mothballs, ultrasonic plug-in, cayenne pepper powder, cinnamon powder, cinnamon oil spray, vibrating posts
- Companion plantings – marigolds, daffodils, mums, mint
- Suffocation with CO₂ – pack dry ice around burrow entries
- Get a cat (indoor) or rat terrier (outdoors), and welcome snakes to your yard!

* Repellent listing is not an endorsement of their effectiveness

Given the proven threat to wildlife, please consider removing rodenticides from your antirodent arsenal. Even when used inside, poisoned mice can exit the house and become prey. Your actions can help protect the beautiful raptors and predatory mammals in The Great Swamp from a miserable sickness or death. Instead, try the rodent control options listed in the boxed text. I had a rat problem in my compost bin and put out rat-sized snap traps. One trap disappeared, presumably attached to the paw of an angry raccoon or opossum. Slugs ate the bait and slimed the traps. Mice triggered the release but were completely missed by the snapper and then ate all the bait. Killed a song bird. Conclusion: snap traps no good for outdoor rats! I then packed dry ice around two burrow holes and covered with dirt. It seemed to work, no more rat. I put out trays of corn gluten for the basement and garage mice several years ago, but have no evidence a single pellet has ever been eaten. Voles were feasting on my root vegetables and beans this summer so I put out vibrating screw posts. This week a tunnel and entry hole appeared within 8 inches of a post! Arrrgh! Humans fight against rodents will go on forever; hopefully though, poisons will not be part of your battle plans. When all else fails and you are at wit's end, pour yourself a frosty beverage and watch the movie *Mouse Hunt* for a good laugh.



Additional info:

ConservationEducation.org <https://tinyurl.com/2kt3fdba>

Science magazine <https://tinyurl.com/mvzv83fp>

EPA: <https://tinyurl.com/4vuddsbm>

Mouse Hunt: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mouse_Hunt

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Art Show Submissions Due!

Monday October 7

See the Prospectus on our website for details.

Great Swamp Celebration and Art Show

Saturday – Sunday, October 26 – 27

At Christ Church on Quaker Hill. Premier Art Show, raptor flying, educational exhibits, games for children, swamp animals, kayak raffle. Fun for all ages!

Great Hollow Nature Preserve

Oct 19, Hollow Fest (12:00 – 3:30)

Oct 26, Kid's Nature Night (5:30 – 7:00)

Nov 2, Bat Cave Hike (11:00 – 1:30)

Dec 2, Winter Solistice Hike (1:00 – 2:30)

artEast Studio Tours

October 19-20 (11:00 – 5:00 pm)

October 26-27 (11:00 – 5:00 pm)

Visit local artists at their studios in Patterson, Homes, Pawling, Wingdale, Dover, and Amenia. Support the artist community that enriches our towns and hamlets along The Great Swamp

Dutchess Land Conservancy Webinars

"Earth Matters" Webinar Series, all about trees and forests

Nov 13, Wednesday (6:00 – 7:30 pm)

Dec 4, Wednesday (6:00 – 7:30 pm)

Jan 8, Wednesday (6:00 – 7:30 pm)

For details see: <https://www.dutchessland.org/get-involved/events-and-programs>

Audubon Deer Pond Hikes (Sherman, CT)

Oct 17, Fall Bird Walk, Thurs (10:00 – 12:00)

Nov 1, First Friday hike (10:00 – 12:00)

Nov 9, Second Saturday hike (10:00 – 12:30)

For details, see: <https://www.ctaudubon.org/deer-pond-farm-programs-classes/>



The most up to date list of events can always be found on our Facebook page:
facebook.com/FrOGS.NY

You can also sign up for email updates via our website:
<https://frogs-ny.org/mailchimp-newsletter/>