

Friends of Great Swamp



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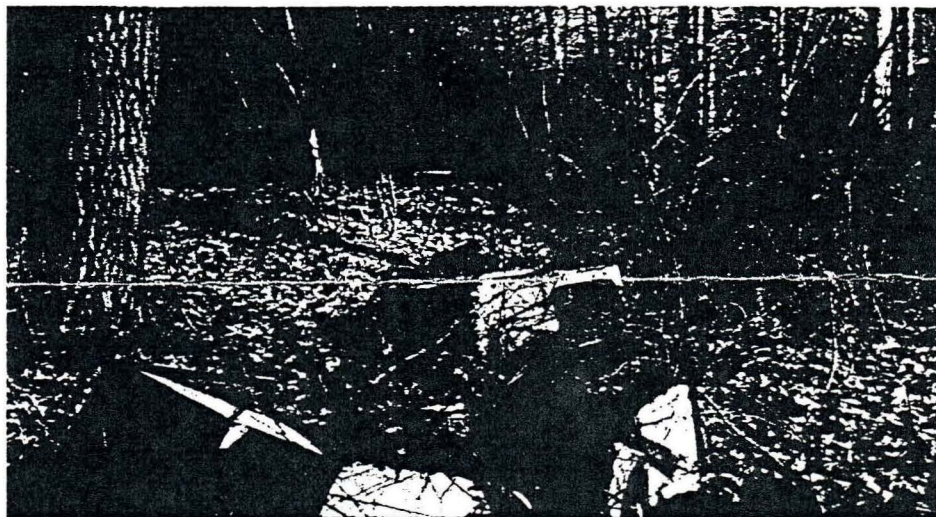
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FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Issue Two

March 2000



We need your help to clean up the garbage found at the old
homestead on White Bridge Road.

Come On Out And Give Us A Hand!

SATURDAY MAY 6, 2000 9:00 a.m.

Meet at cement factory, (The large industrial building found halfway between the Wildlife Observation Area and the Refuge Headquarters.) on White Bridge Road in the Millington/Meyersville section of GSNWR. Brown bag it for lunch as we would like to complete this site in one day by approximately 2:00 p.m.

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge was created by the hard work of many people. They banded together to stop the threat of another airport called the JETPORT from being built in the Great Swamp. In this process many old homesteads had to be purchased. The houses were demolished, but, not all of the refuse was disposed of. This is where the Friends of GSNWR can help. We need the help of our entire membership to help clean up this site. The debris consists of a lot of rusted metal such as old washing machines, tractor parts, tires, glass bottles and etc. It is scattered and we would like to consolidate it, put it into dumpsters and truck it away. Please wear work boots, work gloves, and dress accordingly for the weather. If you plan to attend please call refuge headquarters at (973) 425-1222 and leave a message with either Tom McFadden or Tony Cullen. The rain date will be Sat. May 13.

At no time since the establishment of the first refuge on Pelican Island in 1903 have the American people had such an opportunity to shape the future of these precious natural resources. At no time in history have the American public been as concerned as they are today about the importance of protecting these public lands. This is your chance for an opportunity to insure that wild places and critical wildlife habitat are pristine, properly managed and protected.

Please attend this worthwhile project, as your refuge needs you!

Board of Directors

We are pleased to announce three new members to our Board of Directors. They are Mr. Bert Horner, Long Hill Township, Sue Reed, Green Village and John Wilmot, Cherry Hill. They will bring new ideas and energy to our organization.

Book Nook:

BIRDING FROM A TRACTOR SEAT by Charles T. Flugum

Here is a collection of essays written between 1952 and 1964 by a farmer who discovered a tractor seat was an unexpected vantage spot to see birds at close range. Apparently birds consider the driver part of the machine and do not associate the tractor with danger. Flugum introduces the reader to many birds with "up close and personal" stories about each. The book will bring back memories of your first encounter with some of the birds and give you new insights into others. J.S. (Editor's note: This book is currently out of print but is available through local libraries and, used, from <alibris.com>. Enjoy!)

Members Only - Black Brook Snag Walk

April 8, 2000 (Rain or Shine) 9:00 am
Meet at Cement Factory, White Bridge Road

We will walk Black Brook from New Vernon Road to Pleasant Plains Road, looking for snags and possible beaver dams. The information we gather will be shared with Long Hill Township and Morris County Mosquito Control Commission so they can reduce pools of standing water. This will help control the breeding pools used by mosquitoes.

This is not a trail walk. Boots are a must. Come see this part of the Swamp which is not open to the public. (We may even see a few warblers.)

Did You Know?

Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds are one of nature's most fascinating creatures. Even though they are the smallest birds, they migrate long distances from their wintering grounds to mate and spend the summer. Depending on the species, they migrate up to 2,000 miles after wintering in as far away as south America. Hummingbirds gain more than 50% of their weight in fat to ensure adequate energy for the long trip north. These fat reserves are very low when they arrive, which may be before nectar is readily available.

Homemade nectar is easy to make. Use one part granulated sugar to four parts boiling water. Mix well so the sugar is thoroughly dissolved. Let the mixture cool before filling the feeder. The sugar water should be replaced and the feeder cleaned every two to three days. Never offer honey, artificial sweeteners or solutions with red food coloring.

Hummingbirds are bold little creatures, so hang your feeder close by and enjoy!

Your Assistance Is Needed!

The U.S. FWS - Division of Refuges, has proposed a National Wildlife Refuge System postage stamp series for 2003. This stamp series would generate national awareness of the Refuge System during the year of its 100th Birthday!

Criteria for stamp approval:

- anniversaries in multiples of 50 years
- events of a historical nature
- events and themes of national appeal and significance

Justification for stamps:

- In 2003, the National Wildlife Refuge System will be 100 years old
- Historical significance related to President Theodore Roosevelt, Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Paul Kroegel and others.
- The Refuge System is the only system of lands set aside for wildlife
- Diverse habitat can tell story of Refuge System through series of stamps
- Over 93 million acres are included in the Refuge System and home to millions of migrating birds, and hundreds of endangered species
- Over 35 million people visit to enjoy hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, education and interpretation

To date the FWS has:

- On September 8, 1997, Secretary of Interior, Bruce Babbitt wrote to the Stamp Committee in support of having a 2003 refuge system stamp series
- Letter from Stamp Advisory Committee received October 1, 1997 stating proposal will be under consideration
- Follow-up letter from Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife sent to Stamp Advisory Committee on July 26, 1999

How Friends can help:

-If you support the idea of a stamp series on the Refuge System for 2003, NOW is the time to express your support to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee! Proposals for stamps are accepted and approved several years in advance.

-A sample letter is provided below. Please feel free to cut and paste this letter, and add your own statements to correctly represent your feelings for the Refuge System.

-Please notify Deb McCrensky at FWS (Deborah.McCrensky@fws.gov) when you take action or if you have written previously in support. We hope to quantify the support that this stamp series receives so that we can have an idea of where the proposal stands.

-If you have questions about the stamp series, please contact:

Deborah.McCrensky@fws.gov

-Please send letters of support to:

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee
c/o Stamp Management

Answers to Refuge Trivia

1. Jetport
2. Glacial Lake Passaic
3. The Swamp Devil
4. William Penn

Sample Letter for Support of a Postage Stamp in Celebration of the Refuge System's 100th Birthday:

U.S. Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Room 4474E
Washington, DC 20260-2437

Dear Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee Members:

The National Wildlife Refuge System began when President Theodore Roosevelt designated Pelican Island, a tiny island off the coast of Florida, as the first national wildlife refuge in 1903. Nearly a century after that designation, the System has grown to 520 refuges that spread across this great nation of ours - over 93 millions acres. You can find a national wildlife refuge in every state and U.S. territory. These lands are unique and set us apart from our sister agencies, such as the national parks and forests, in that These lands are the only Federal lands that were set aside specifically for "wildlife first."

The National Wildlife Refuge System will celebrate its centennial on March 14, 2003 - one hundred years of history that includes one hundred years of people, wildlife, and habitat. We (I) understand that a proposal has been submitted to your Committee urging your consideration to support a series of postal stamps commemorating these special places. (Name of Friends Group), a "friend" of (name of refuge) would like to add its support of a postal stamp commemorating the 100 years of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Interview With the Manager :

When I entered the Great Swamp on Pleasant Plains Road, Sunday, several weeks ago, I saw four cars pulled off on the right edge of the road, just past the driveway into Headquarters. People were looking through 'scopes, while others were scanning with binoculars. Everyone was excited by the variety of ducks and shore birds on the new pond adjacent to the road.

I interviewed Refuge Manager, Bill Koch, recently, for this newsletter and asked him about the pond. He explained that the 3 ½-acre impoundment was created as part of the ongoing habitat enhancement in the Refuge and had been around for awhile. Several years ago, the staff transformed the old field, which had "wet pockets", by building a berm of soil around the edge. They wanted to create a shallow, hard-bottomed body of water, which would support moist soil vegetation, a combination not found elsewhere on the Refuge. Initially, the berm was uneven and allowed collected rainwater to run too quickly into the adjacent brook. After some further landscaping, two years ago, the basin was ready. To assure constant levels of water during migration, a pump was installed to transfer water when needed from the brook. However, last year, nature did not cooperate. The summer was extremely dry and all parts of the Swamp experienced very low water levels. There was no water in the brook to pump. The drought broke suddenly with Hurricane Floyd, which caused extensive flooding in the Swamp. But, when the water levels returned to normal, the depression was filled and started attracting migrants immediately. On that Sunday afternoon, we saw green winged teal, bufflehead, pintail duck, American widgeon and killdeer.

The pond will be used primarily to support migrating birds. The water level will drop in the summer but the area will be kept moist to encourage vegetative growth. Water will be added for the fall when birds will rest and feed on weed seed and plant matter. As the plants fall and decay over the winter, the stage will be set for aquatic insect and invertebrate growth in the spring, just in time to provide a high protein source for the migrants and hatchlings of resident fowl.

Bill is proud of this impoundment and is eager for visitors to enjoy the views it affords. From March 26 through May 14, the Headquarters will be open on Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Come get a close look at the water and look for shore birds you probably wouldn't see anywhere else on the Refuge. And, if you talk to a staff member, thank them for their efforts for wildlife and our pleasure.

Refuge Trivia

1. What was the Refuge saved from?
2. What was the Great Swamp before it became a swamp?
3. What myth is attributed to the Swamp?
4. On the original deeds of the homesteads acquired, what historian did the deeds date back to?

Answers on page 3.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

April 8, Black Brook Walk (rain or shine) Meet at cement Factory on White Bridge Road, 9:00 am. Wear boots.

May 6, Clean up of old homestead trash piles on Refuge. Meet at Cement Factory on White Bridge Road, 9:00 am. Work clothes and gloves.

June/July/August, Blind Restoration Project

Species Spotlight

The **American woodcock's** scientific name, *Scolopax minor* means the little lover of bogs and swamps. It is a mottled brown bird whose protective coloration blends in with the dry leaf pattern of the forest floor. The woodcock's most prominent feature is its two and a half inch long bill which allows it to probe the earth for its favorite food, earthworms. The best time to catch a glimpse of the American woodcock here at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is just before dusk during March and April when the males are performing courtship displays.

Males perform daily courtship displays at dawn and dusk in small open territories called **singing grounds**. Singing grounds are located within small forest openings. The displays consists of intermittent bouts of ground calling (**peenting**) separated by spiraling flights above the singing ground distinguished by a combination of wing twittering and loud chirping (**flight song**). These displays function to attract females for mating and to advise other males that this territory is occupied.

Female woodcocks normally lay a clutch of four mottled brown and pink eggs in April. Nests are often within 100 meters from the singing grounds where young alder, aspen, and birch trees provide cover. After an incubation period of 19-22 days, the eggs will hatch. The chicks are able to leave the nest soon after hatching. During this time they will require a habitat of fertile and generally poorly drained soils that contain abundant concentrations of earthworms. By four weeks the chicks are nearly fully-grown and are no longer dependent on the female.

Woodcock have very specific food and cover requirements, and as a result the quantity and quality of available habitat largely govern population numbers. The loss and degradation of habitat is the major woodcock management problem in North America. Impacts to woodcock habitat include decreases due to changing agricultural and forest practices, shifts in land ownership patterns, advancing natural plant succession, urbanization and industrialization.

Wilderness is:

Wilderness is vast, surprising, open.

Wilderness is quiet, a gift, a treasure.

Wilderness is our connection with the earth.

Wilderness is where the world carries on nicely without our help.

Wilderness is the last of the original loveliness on the finite space of the planet-once gone, gone forever.

Wilderness is to be left alone.

Wilderness is a place that unmask the veneer of the day to day life and Frees the spirit.

Wilderness is the spring that nourishes the soul.

Wilderness is a source of friendship.

When asked to describe Wilderness, the above statements are what several women wrote. What is your definition?

WANTED:

VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST ANOTHER VOLUNTEER IN SETTING UP A WEB SITE FOR OUR FRIENDS GROUP.

WILLING WORKERS TO HELP CREATE AN EDUCATIONAL UNIT ABOUT THE REFUGE.

Call Judy Schmidt (908) 647-2508 for more information.

Message from the President:

Spring has sprung! And although it's been a bit chilly thus far, we can sense the approach of the warm, even balmy days that will herald the beginning of another season of growth and regeneration in the Great Swamp...and in our own backyards for that matter.

But I want you to leave your own backyards for a while, and spend a day on the Refuge with other Friends. We'll be kicking off what promises to be an active and rewarding first year as a working Friends group.

I've personally been able to visit other refuges whose Friends groups have raised in excess of 1.5 MILLION dollars in their efforts to enhance the educational value of their particular refuge resources. I have seen dioramas, museum quality displays, educational programs, multimedia programs, guided tours via tram, and a world-class education center, all put together because the local Friends group and the refuge staff wanted it to happen.

What's exciting to me is the fact that the most successful group I've talked to thus far started its Friends organization with essentially the same resources we have – space for a small book sales display at the headquarters building, a small but growing group of interested volunteers, and a passion. Even with so few ingredients, the potential is astounding.

We're making progress:

We've received a letter from our friends at the IRS indicating that they have received and are reviewing our application to operate as a non-profit corporation.

We are incorporated in the state of New Jersey

We've written our first grant proposal, and should hear about that by the end of April.

We're moments away from having our own office space on the refuge.

We're approaching the 150 mark for membership...and we haven't pushed very hard yet.

And we've been busy lining up our initial projects on the refuge.

What are they? Ah! I thought you'd never ask!

May 6th we will be cleaning up some homestead trash piles on the refuge. Sounds like a potential treasure hunt to me! We'll be meeting at the Cement Factory on White Bridge Rd. at 9:00 am.

During the June-August period we will be tending to some observation blind and boardwalk restoration/upgrading projects. Ramp construction, handrail construction, and interior fix-ups will be the order of the day.

On the less labor intensive front (physical labor, not mental labor), we'll be looking for interested individuals to chair or serve on committees handling such vital activities as publicity, website development, outreach, resource development, and the myriad other detail-oriented functions which will bear on the ultimate success of our organization.

I've got my runnin' shoes on...how about you?



**Come on Out to Our Clean up On May 6
and Wheel have a Great Time!**

**For More Information About the Friends Group Contact:
Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
152 Pleasant Plains Road, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920**