

FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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PROGRESS ON VISITOR CENTER AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

By Kathy Woodward

The latest word from our contractors and Tom McFadden, Refuge staff liaison, is that Phase I, interior remodeling of the visitor center, is progressing well and is ahead of schedule. The framing, wiring, and sheetrock installation are completed and many of the rooms are painted. Finishing work and an overhaul of the heating and cooling system could be completed by the end of February.

Phase II, outbuilding demolition and conversion of the garage to exhibit space, is funded and entering the final planning stage. In conjunction with Phase II, a new access road from Lee's Hill Road to the visitor center will be constructed as well as the parking lot areas. Outdoor restrooms will be installed during the summer and the Friends are working with the Refuge staff to finalize funding for an outdoor pavilion. There are still some questions like: When will the Friends move in? What about opening the bridge on Pleasant Plains Road? Stay tuned...



August 2004: Purchase of site for future visitor facility announced by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Trust for Public Lands, & Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen.



June 2006: Refuge Manager Bill Koch reviews renovation plans at Phase I Design Review (photo by Tasha Daniels)



January 2007: Visitor Center Phase I Renovation: Outside view of front entrance (photo by Kathy Woodward)



January 2007: Visitor Center Phase I Renovation: Inside view of entryway. (photo by Kathy Woodward)

KEEPING UP WITH FRIENDS & THE REFUGE—NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS & UPDATES

ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING HELD

On December 2, 2006, 49 members of the Friends of Great Swamp met for the Annual Meeting and pot luck dinner. As usual, the food was scrumptious and, as usual, there was a well-balanced assortment. (How does that happen?) A short business meeting followed with "2006 Friends Group of the Year" President Judy Schmidt highlighting our accomplishments. This was followed by the election of directors. Re-elected for two year terms: Dennis Branden, Pat Giaimo, Laura Nally; elected for two year terms: Jane Kendall and Chuck Whitmore. The results of our first Silent Auction were announced; this effort raised \$819 for the new visitor center pavilion.

Barbara Heskins Davis was the featured speaker. She presented a fascinating account of the start-up of the Friends group in 1999, comparing some of the initial goals and objectives of the forming group with the actual achievements over the years. It was impressive to hear about the dedication and vision of those first "Friends" and to realize how very far the group has come in such a short time. Assemblyman (and Friends member) Jon Bramnick presented Barbara with a Joint Legislative Resolution recognizing her efforts in the creation of the Friends of Great Swamp.

INTRODUCING NEW BOARD MEMBER
JANE KENDALL

Jane has been enchanted with the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge for years... excited that we can have such a fabulous resource so near a major metropolitan region. She has volunteered at the Swamp in many capacities, especially enjoying activities that provide



Assemblyman Jon Bramnick presents Joint Legislative Resolution to Barbara Davis

contact with visitors. Several years ago, Jane created a "Heron" quiz for visitors to the Overlook's heron rookery. Jane's background is in leadership development, team building, and coaching. She co-founded and directed the Leadership Center at the New School in New York City. She has lived and worked in Europe and has conducted training and development work worldwide. Among her best skills are community building, creative problem-solving, and public speaking. Jane has a boutique consulting firm, Kendall & Associates, which assists organizational leadership in all sectors: private, public, and non-profit.

Jane lives on a small lake in Harding Township and in Greenwich Village. She is a fine arts photographer. She is the

co-chair of Friends of Harding Township Library and on the Environmental Stewardship Committee at Mt. Kemble Lake.

INTRODUCING NEW BOARD
MEMBER CHARLES F. ("CHUCK")
WHITMORE

Chuck was born and raised in western Oregon and lived for the most part at the fringes (or beyond) of Portland's urban area. This allowed him to spend lots of time in and around the woods, hills, streams, rain showers, and water puddles of that lovely area, and prepared him to appreciate the natural beauty found in other locations.

After serving four years on active duty (enlisted status) in the U.S. Navy, he completed his education in Washington State and New Jersey. His subsequent career as a

civil engineer was largely spent in the oil industry, in technical staff positions supporting the execution of large engineering and construction projects. He has lived in New Jersey, Texas, England, and Norway, and has traveled to many other locations.

Since attaining the happy status of retiree several years ago, Chuck has become active in three areas of volunteer service: the Board of Trustees of Friends of the Library of the Chathams, the Board of Directors of Friends of Great Swamp NWR, and English as Second Language Tutor for Literacy Volunteers.

When not occupied with those activities, Chuck likes to do a bit of recreational travel with his wife, dabble in photography, cook an occasional meal, or pursue a specialized woodworking objective.

THANK YOU

Thank you to **The Wildwood Foundation** for their generous donation and continued support.
 Thank you to volunteer **John Raab** for refinishing the door at the Friends' auditorium.
 Thank you to **David M. Beechner** and his employer **ITW** for the three-for-one match of his membership renewal.
 Thank you to **Dennis Branden** and his employer, **AT&T**, for their donation in recognition of his volunteer hours and for the team volunteer hours contributed by his fellow employees at the June **AT&T Cares** day at the Refuge.
 Thank you to **Eloise Gorski** for her donation in celebration of **Dennis Branden's** birthday. What a nice idea!
 To all of you who donated a little extra with your membership renewals—thank you.

KEEPING UP WITH FRIENDS & THE REFUGE—NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS & UPDATES

ANNUAL FRIENDS' TURKEY WALK

By Judy Schmidt

November 25 was a clear warm fall day as 40 of us took a Turkey Walk that was just ducky! That is to say that once again there were no turkeys to be seen, but we did see lots of ducks. At Pool 1, a large flock of wigeon circled and landed. Pintail, shoveler, coot and mallards were on the water. A great blue heron and kingfisher were hunting as were a red tailed hawk and a northern harrier.

There were many first time turkey walkers and some asked why it was called a turkey walk? The responses (take your pick) were: (1) because we were a bunch of turkeys taking the walk, or (2) because when we finish the walk, we go back and gobble up all the refreshments, or (3) because after eating so much for Thanksgiving, you have to walk off the turkey. Whatever the reason, it's a great way to introduce people to this wonderful place called Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.



Visitors Enjoy Annual Turkey Walk

FRIENDS EXPAND OUTREACH

Lots of people want to know more about Great Swamp and the Refuge. Our Friends group is presenting information about Great Swamp NWR to groups in the area. In the next months, volunteers will share our Friends video and news about the Refuge to a church group, a rotary club, a seniors meeting and an assisted living event. The programs will be customized for each group to meet their schedules and interests. If you know of a group that would like a presentation about Great Swamp NWR or if you would like to be part of the speakers corps, please leave a message at the Bookstore (973-425-9510) or call Kathy Woodward (973-635-1083) for more details.

DEMOLITION OF REFUGE BUILDINGS

If you've traveled on Pleasant Plains Road recently, you'll have noticed that two buildings are gone! The refuge staff demolished the house located next to the Friends Bookstore as well as the house just past the curve approaching the Overlook. Outbuildings behind the Friends Bookstore were also removed providing much needed parking space for Friends' events. Scheduled for demolition in early 2007 is the house on New Vernon Road which has been vacant for many years.

FALL HOMESTEAD CLEANUP

By Judy Schmidt

Saturday May 6, 2000 was the first Friends' Homestead Cleanup. On October 21, 2006, we held cleanup number 13 and once again we worked hard to make the refuge a better place for wildlife. The theme for this one could

have been "Don't Fence Me In" as ten volunteers and staff member Craig Bitler pulled up the old fencing at the turnaround by the north gate.

As we found out in the three hours we worked, removing old fencing is a hard job. It requires cutting vegetation which

has grown around and through the fencing, trimming trees, pulling buried wire out of the ground, then bending and loading strands of fencing into the trucks. While we worked, we were "serenaded" by a murder of crows (you always learn something new when you're a volunteer). It was hard work, but what a difference when the day was done.

We returned to the bookstore for lunch and good conversation.

Thanks to all of the volunteers who help with cleanups, the refuge is shedding the marks of man.



Volunteers Karen English & John Wilmot remove fencing

EARN-A-BUCK HUNTING RULES ARE WORKING—REFUGE DEER HUNT UPDATE

Story and chart by Leo Hollein

The eighth Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge deer hunt conducted under earn-a-buck (EAB) rules was completed in November 2006. The refuge EAB program has required hunters to "earn" a buck permit by first bringing in an adult doe. A hunter can only shoot one buck. There is no limit on the number of does and fawns that a hunter can harvest during the four day hunt. Prior to EAB, hunters were allowed to harvest two deer of any age or sex during each day of the hunt. Anecdotal observations and survey data indicate EAB is reducing the Refuge deer population.

Data Verify Herd Is Declining

Two sources of data have been gathered that measure the trends in the Refuge deer herd population. Both indicate a general decline in the deer population over the eight years of the EAB hunt rules. Chart 1 graphs annual data for the total deer harvest (diamonds) as well as the doe harvest (circles) for this period. The total deer numbers include antlered bucks, adult does and fawns. A linear regression of the hunt data was used to develop the trend lines shown in Chart 1. The total deer and adult doe harvests are trending lower. Interestingly, the line for the total deer harvest is noticeably steeper than for the adult doe line. This is understandable because adult does typically have twin fawns in the spring. Harvesting an adult doe during the fall hunt potentially reduces the herd by three deer in the spring.

Both the 2002 and 2006 hunt data varied significantly from the linear trend line. The record high harvest of 271 deer in 2002 is explained by the ideal

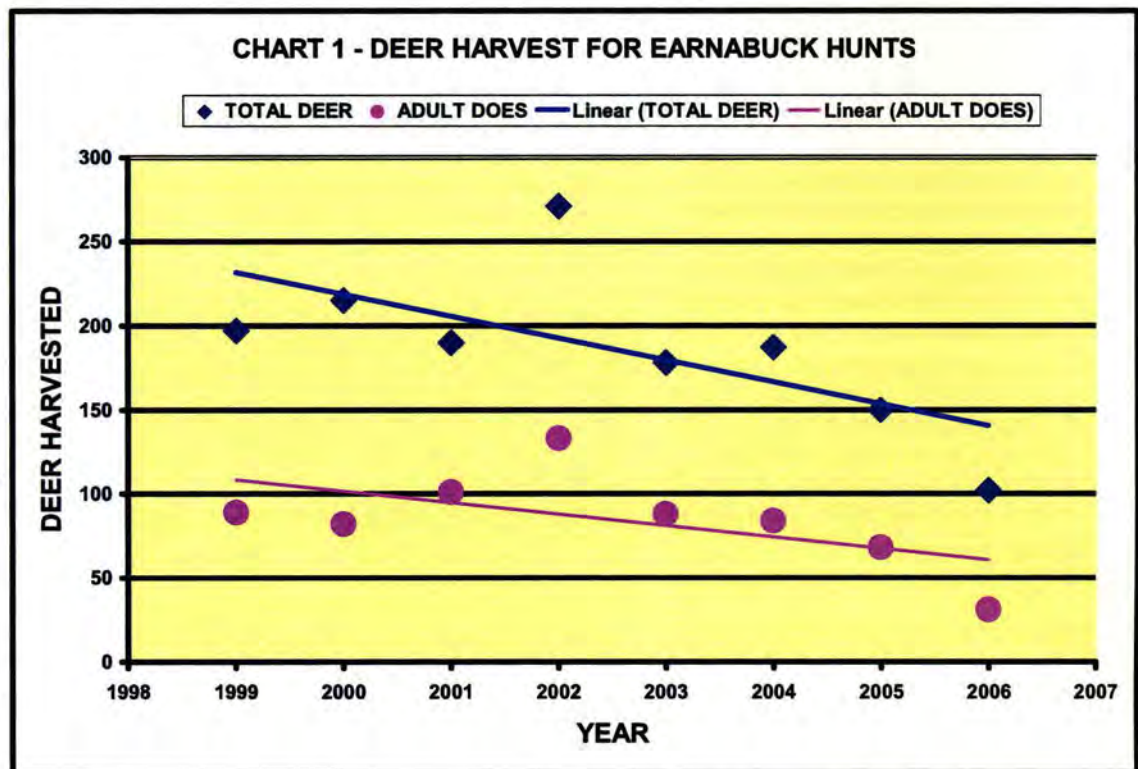
hunting weather. It was cold, calm and the ground was covered with fresh soft snow that enabled hunters to quietly slip up on both healthy and wounded deer. The near record low harvest of 102 deer in 2006 was due in part to poor weather conditions and to 20% fewer hunters. It was unusually warm and at times there was high wind and rain. Deer are less likely to be active in windy conditions. The rain and warm weather also reduces hunter mobility.

Pre-Hunt Deer Surveys Consistent With Hunt Data

Every August, Refuge Biologist Craig Bitler leads evening spotlight surveys to assess the deer population in the Refuge. August is well before the deer rutting (mating) season. Deer are not

route. Fawns are too small to be accurately tallied due to the height of the vegetation.

Adult does are the best measure of population trends as they and their female offspring occupy a territory of about 300 acres. Bucks will range over much wider areas especially in search of receptive does in the fall. Reducing the number of does in a territory will keep the deer population depressed for a number of seasons as does from other areas will not immediately move in to take advantage of the available habitat. This is good news for vegetation in the Refuge but not so for the surrounding suburbs that will not benefit from a lower density of deer in an adjacent territory.



prone to roam widely during this time. The surveys are done for as many as five evenings over the same route every year to assess the deer population trend on a consistent basis. The survey does not measure the absolute Refuge deer population. Adult bucks and does are counted at specific locations on the

Congratulations to Virginia Murphy
In the recently completed deer hunt, Virginia Murphy was the only female hunter. Virginia had a very productive hunt as she shot three deer including a beautiful eight point buck. Her husband agreed to have the deer mounted. Hopefully, he will get a matching buck in a future Refuge deer hunt.

WILDERNESS AREA KIOSKS EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT FOR JOE COWPER

By Laurel Gould

Joe Cowper comes from a long line of boy scouts including his father and grandfather, and this year he will achieve the Boy Scouts highest rank—Eagle Scout, the first in his family to do so. The assembly and installation of four kiosks in the Great Swamp Wilderness Area was Joe's Eagle Scout project. Since he was a young boy, Joe and his father have volunteered at the annual refuge roadside cleanup, an activity which he enjoyed, so it was a natural fit when Joe was looking for a suitable Eagle Scout project and Tom McFadden was looking for a way to install four kiosks at the Wilderness Area trailheads. Joe says this project was easy to get approved because it was so different and had such tangible benefits for the Refuge and the visiting public. As part of his project, Joe had to raise the money to purchase the cement (about 40 bags), the weed block screen, and the wood chips for finishing the area; he was also responsible for getting volunteers to help.

The kiosks were purchased for the Refuge by the Friends of Great Swamp with help from a donation by The Wildwood Foundation of Summit. Joe and his father worked together to assemble and install the first kiosk at the Orange Trail. However, the project turned out to be a little more difficult than anticipated. So Joe called on some of the friends that he had helped with past scouting projects. The final team turned out to be his parents, Rich and Mary Cowper, friends Brian Brandt, Chris Brandt, Ryan Ruhl, and Friends volunteer, Laurel Gould. The team dug holes for the posts (36 inches deep and two feet wide), assembled the kiosk panels and positioned them on the posts, mixed and poured concrete to hold the posts in place, raised and positioned the kiosks, then lifted and fit the kiosk roof into place. It was a major effort and took over four days of work.



Roof raising: Joe Cowper, Rich Cowper, Brian Brandt (under the roof section)



Waiting for the concrete to harden, then off come the braces. (l-r) Brian Brandt, Rich Cowper, Joe Cowper

Today Joe says he was happy to be able to do the project and help out the Refuge and the Friends. He says when he drives by the wilderness area parking lots, he thinks "Hey, I built that!" and knows the kiosks will be there, providing visitor information and enjoyment, for a long time.

Joe lives in Union, N.J. and is a senior at Union High School. His future plans include attending college in New Jersey with a major in criminal justice. But first, there's the senior prom!

191 SPECIES RECORDED IN 2006—LET'S DO IT AGAIN!

By Pat Giaimo

Thanks to all the observant birders, the 2006 Refuge bird count conducted by the Friends reached 191 species. This included 182 birds listed in the Refuge Bird Checklist and eight sightings of birds not listed, plus a ring-necked pheasant which was probably an escape. Some of the birds recorded but not included on the Bird Checklist were the redhead duck, lesser scaup, white-tailed hawk, black rail, snowy owl, boat-tailed grackle and saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrow although a few of these were in the "accidentals" section. The Bird Checklist includes 244 species of birds "that one may possibly encounter at Great Swamp", which makes the 2006 count of 191 species (78% of the checklist) an admirable accomplishment and shows great cooperation by both our dedicated and casual birders. The data will be submitted to the Refuge for possible use in updating the Bird Checklist at a future date. We are doing a 2007 bird count and would love to again have your cooperation. Let's compare numbers and species from one year to another. Can we top the 191 of 2006? Will the snowy owl stop by again? Share your sightings with us.

2006—A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NWR

WHAT A YEAR WE HAD IN 2006!

The highlight was certainly being named 2006 Refuge Friends Group of the Year, an honor that was exciting, rewarding, humbling, and gratifying. This fiscal year (October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006) was also a very busy and productive year for the Friends. Take a look at the impressive listing of achievements—and pat yourself on the back. Your involvement and support, from membership dollars to volunteer hours, are what makes the difference. It's truly hard to imagine what the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge would be like without the Friends of Great Swamp. Thank you all.

FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NAMED 2006 REFUGE FRIENDS GROUP OF THE YEAR.

Six Friends board members, Refuge manager Bill Koch and Outdoor Recreation Planner Tom McFadden all travel to Columbus, Ohio to receive the award.



In Columbus, standing l to r: Evan Hirsche (President, National Wildlife Refuge Association), Judy Schmidt, Dale Hall (Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service), Bill Koch, Tom McFadden. Kneeling (l to r): Dorothy Smullen, Laura Nally, Laurel Gould, Kathy Woodward. Missing from photo (and behind camera), Lisa Molinari.

YOUR \$\$\$ AT WORK

The Friends receive money from memberships, bookstore sales, donations, and grants. We are proud of the level of support we provide to fund refuge projects, most of which would not otherwise be possible. Just look at what we funded in 2006.

- There are now four kiosks with full-color interpretive panels to tell visitors about the Wilderness Area.
- As the Refuge has changed over the years, visitor orientation maps at the Wildlife Observation Center (WOC) and Overlook became outdated; the Friends purchased three new color panels with updated maps of the refuge.
- You could see the sky through the kiosk roof at the WOC, so Friends paid for a re-roofing project and then painted the ceiling and re-stained the kiosk.

- Sometimes a project doesn't have a high cost, but does have a big benefit. This was the case with the cabinets built to hold our Sightings Clipboards at WOC and at the Bookstore. Visitors are delighted to be able to check out reported sightings and to share what they have seen.
- Winter is a quiet time at the swamp but visitors enjoy watching the busy activity at the bird feeders outside the blinds at WOC and outside the Bookstore; the Friends purchase the bird seed and volunteers fill the feeders.
- Interns help out in many ways during the busy summer months and provide much-needed assistance to refuge staff while gaining important educational experiences. The Friends again funded one of the summer interns.
- Recognition and celebration are important components of any volunteer activity. The Friends again co-hosted the annual volunteer recognition event for nearly 100 volunteers, guests, and refuge staff.
- The success of our Tree & Shrub Guide to the Boardwalk Trail has resulted in a fourth printing of the popular brochure; the Wildlife Tour Route Guide, which interprets the habitat along Pleasant Plains Road for visitors, is now in its second printing.
- As technology changes and the number of programs offered continues to increase, the Friends needed better multi-media presentation equipment. We received a grant for new equipment, which can be transferred to the new visitor center.



Wilderness Kiosk at Orange Trail

2006—A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NWR

VOLUNTEERS REALLY DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Sometimes refuge projects require something money can't buy—volunteer resources! In fiscal year 2006, volunteers donated a record 8,092 hours to the refuge. Volunteer hours are valued at \$18.04 / hour, so the time equates to a value of \$145,980—or four full time refuge employees! Volunteers really do make a difference.

Visitor services and education accounted for 44% of the volunteer hours contributed in 2006; which included:

- Conducting educational group tours, leading walks, helping with events, and giving talks to the public.
- Staffing the Wildlife Observation Center during the Fall and Spring migration seasons; coverage was expanded to four days a week. Volunteers donated 837 hours and greeted 10,556 visitors. Think of it! Ten thousand visitors received a personal welcome to the Refuge!
- The volunteers at the Bookstore are responsible for making sales which help fund refuge projects; but equally important is the responsibility to welcome visitors, nearly 4,000 in 2006.
- Some volunteer activities involve really hard (frequently really dirty) physical work, like the dedicated volunteers who assist with the annual roadside cleanup and with the Fall and Spring Homestead Cleanups. The Friends have adopted Pleasant Plains Road and volunteers spent two days cutting roadside vegetation, removing



WOC volunteers Mariana Hernandez (standing) greets visitors with help from Corey Johnson and Ruben Owens

invasive species, and brushing-out boundary signs.

- The Friends started a series of Refuge Work Days and volunteers spent many hours replacing railings on the boardwalk trails at WOC.
- Volunteers mow the grass, provide administrative support at Refuge headquarters, write for the newsletter and the website, serve on committees or the Friends' Board, maintain the bluebird trail, and much more.

FOSTERING PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION

This key component of our mission statement is supported by interaction with refuge visitors, the public, and the community. These activities require huge amounts of volunteer time and a real commitment, but are critical to success.

- This past year, the Friends conducted 21 educational walks for 930 visitors from schools, scouts, and the community, providing a first-hand educational experience. This year, for the first time, we went "on the road" presenting a program on frogs to 400 students.



Duck walk during National Wildlife Refuge Week. Photo by Steve Byland

- Second Sunday programs were expanded to July and August; there are now programs all year long.
- This year at the 7th annual Fall Festival we hosted 472 visitors for a full day of walks, programs, exhibits, frog jumping, knee painting, free food and more.
- We celebrated National Wildlife Refuge Week with guided Sunset Walks so visitors can experience the awesome migration of thousands of ducks. We helped at the Refuge Fishing Derby and helped host a Bat Blitz!
- The Discovery Den is a wonderful place for families to spend some time while visiting the Refuge. A volunteer committee spends many hours developing seasonal themes and creating hands-on activities and exhibits to entertain and educate visitors.
- The Swamp in a Box outreach program entered its second year with an increased circulation of "boxes" to local schools and community groups. A state-certified teacher workshop was held again this year to help teachers use the boxes effectively in their classroom curriculum.
- As you have guessed by now, volunteers are a key resource for the Friends and the Refuge. Volunteer training sessions provide orientation and educational opportunities to enrich the volunteer experience. Two volunteer training sessions were held this past year.

PHANTOM BIRD—THE BROWN CREEPER

Photo and article by Blaine Rothbauer, *Natural Eyes—Wildlife & Landscape Photography*

The Great Swamp has a vaporous denizen that is there more often than not, but goes unnoticed in the same manner. With the stealth of the invisible man, this resident of our bottomlands sneaks about like a phantom garbed in a leaf-like robe. This is the brown creeper (*Certhia americana*) the sole member of the tree creeper family to reside in the Americas. Creepers are closely related to gnatcatchers (*Polioptilinae*), wrens (*Troglodytidae*), and nuthatches (*Sittidae*). Behaviorally speaking, they all seem connected by their foraging habit of gleaning insects from bark and bough.

My first encounter with this life form came as a child. Seeing the bark of an ash tree shimmer like a mirage, I did a double-take before I realized it was even a bird. More curious was the fact it was moving up the base of the tree seemingly without legs—creepers keep these short appendages well hidden under a thick covering of feathers. Knowing the common birds in my neck of the woods like I did made the discovery of a new bird an exhilarating experience; it was like exploring a new continent for the first time. Watching this bird glean the bark clean of indistinguishable insect minutia with a bill shaped like some sort of a recurved surgical instrument was absolutely fascinating. The bird's short bursts of flight from tree base to tree base, a common foraging tactic, add to its arsenal of deception. Even its vocalization, a frail tumbling "seesooysooysoo" is another guise, a cryptic hint of its passing.

I am convinced the creeper has taken up residence in the Great Swamp for every aspect of its life history. The bird's breeding biology dictates a propensity for old growth coniferous swamps and woodlands that are dominated by deadwood. This habitat description mirrors much of the interior deadwood sections of our Refuge. The fact that I see adult creepers in the swamp foraging the

base of trees in late spring and summer are a sure sign that this species breeds here. Brown creepers conceal their remarkable nest structure behind loose tree bark, in tree crevices, or where ivy or accumulated debris offer cover. This hammock-like structure is usually placed low to the ground. The nest itself is a loose cup of twigs, rootlets, wood fibers and moss, often lined with feathers, fine bark and even wool when it can be found. Sounds cozy to me.



A bird voyeur's best shot of catching a glimpse of a creeper is in winter. The brown creeper is often sighted with its genetically connected brethren, nuthatches, wrens, titmice and chickadees, who help secure them in the habitats in which they forage. This behavior is termed intraspecific flocking, and serves all the species in the flock. It is better to have many eyes to the sky when the leaves have dropped in order to keep a close lookout for airborne predators like the ever-present woodland accipiters—goshawk, cooper, and sharp-shinned hawks.

Global bird declines worldwide are garnishing the headlines of ecological journals these days so it may be refreshing to know that the brown creeper's population is on the rise. It seems to be taking advantage of newly created and favorable habitats left in the wake of introduced pestilence. The mortality of trees due to gypsy-moth invasion, and

mortality of American elms due to Dutch elm disease have caused an expansion of the creeper's range in mid-Atlantic states, Midwest, and California. You could say that one bird's dead tree is another's castle.

To this end the Refuge staff has done a great job throughout the management area to increase biodiversity by manipulating habitat types. This can have a measurable effect on the more obvious species that we encounter, like great blue herons and woodcock. For the

more esoteric denizens of the swamp like our creeper, the wildlife managers have intentionally left many dead trees untouched throughout the management area which helps maintain a more complete ecological functioning. Dead timber benefits entire guilds of animals that gravitate to these micro-sites in order to help nurture their biological needs. People who own large tracts of land within the Great Swamp watershed would be wise to

learn from this technique and allow trees to completely fulfill their life cycle; this in turn will help ensure the survival of the many species that engage them.

When it is my privilege to encounter this bird upon the wood I will always stop and watch, as if it were my first time, for the honor to be in its presence is all mine. I think the naturalists of old were much more in tune with nature's pulse compared with those of modern day. Listen to this beautiful narrative by Winsor Marrett Tyler in 1948 as he describes the brown creeper's movement through a forest.

"The brown creeper, as he hitches along the bole of a tree, looks like a fragment of detached bark that is defying the laws of gravitation by moving upward over the trunk, and as he flies off to another tree he resembles a little dry leaf blown about by the wind."

—man that's good!

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM FACES FINANCIAL CRISIS

By Laura Nally and Laurel Gould

The National Wildlife Refuge System is in a crisis situation. Severe funding shortfalls and budget reductions are impacting every refuge in the system including the five national wildlife refuges here in New Jersey. How did this come about? What does it mean for New Jersey and Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge? What can you do?

It is no secret that the Federal budget has been impacted by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, homeland security needs, as well as natural disasters that have occurred in recent years. An outcome of this is that the National Wildlife Refuge System has been experiencing severe funding and staffing shortfalls with declining budgets—a trend that is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Refuges have managed for a number of years to “do more with less”; however, the situation is now so critical that this approach is no longer feasible. According to a Fact Sheet issued by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service last August: “If the Service does not act decisively now, it will become unable to effectively operate most wildlife refuges within a matter of just a few years.”

To respond to this situation, Region 5, which oversees 71 Refuges in 13 states from Maine to Virginia, developed a downsizing plan that allows a ratio of 75% for salaries and benefits and 25% for operating expenses. To meet this ratio it is necessary to eliminate perma-

nent positions, reassign personnel, de-staff some refuges, and share staff among others. This decision was not an easy one for the Region 5 management.

*“If the Service
does not act decisively now,
it will become unable to effectively operate
most wildlife refuges
within a matter of just a few years.”*

There were many Regional workforce planning meetings including two tele-conference calls with Friends groups to explain the proposed approach and why it was necessary.

The impact in New Jersey will be noticeable. Several years ago, Great Swamp and Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, in northern New Jersey, were “complexed”, with Great Swamp becoming responsible for the management of Wallkill along with the Shawangunk Grasslands NWR in New York. The new plan goes even further. Although Great Swamp is slated to gain one public use position, Wallkill will be reduced to one full-time position, a biologist. Other functions must be assumed by Great Swamp staff or volunteers. Refuge manager Bill Koch estimates that as much as 25% of

Great Swamp staff time could be spent assisting Wallkill. In addition, some Great Swamp Refuge staff will also assume additional responsibilities assisting other refuges in the Region. The other refuges in New Jersey are severely impacted. Cape May NWR will lose an administrative position; Supawna Meadows NWR, administered by Cape May NWR, will lose a biologist position as it is de-staffed; Edwin B. Forsythe NWR will lose one law enforcement and one public use position; the Barnegat Division of Forsythe will be placed in “preservation status”, with no staff assigned. If changes in budget levels do not occur, as many as 60 staff positions in Region 5 could be eliminated. If this plan sounds drastic, it is. And Refuges across the country are adopting similar plans to try to meet their conservation mission.

The impact of the budget cuts has finally reached our elected representatives in New Jersey. Every member of the New Jersey delegation to Washington has signed a letter which was sent to the Department of Interior Secretary, Dirk Kempthorne, expressing their concern at the loss of commitment to the National Wildlife Refuge System. They are encouraging the Department of Interior to provide more funding for land acquisition before the land is lost to development, and for personnel to assure that the system is capable of fulfilling its commitment to wildlife.

IF YOU CARE ABOUT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES—HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO HELP!

- Write to your senator or representative—they are representing you! There is a sample letter at the Friends Bookstore to assist you—or take a look at the Budget Cut Survival Kit at refugenet.org where there is also a sample letter and lots of background information.
- Join the Friends of Great Swamp or the Friends of Wallkill River—or both! Give a gift membership to a friend. Membership dues pay for projects at the Refuge which otherwise might go unfunded.
- Consider an additional donation to the Friends—for the same reason. See the Friends 2006 Accomplishments (p. 6-7) if you want to see what a difference Friends can make!
- Volunteer. There are many opportunities in maintenance, habitat management, invasive species control, surveys, leading walks, staffing the Bookstore or Wildlife Observation Center, or joining the new speakers outreach (see article on p. 3).
- Support the National Wildlife Refuge Association. As a member of the Friends, you are automatically a member of NWRA. Go online to Refugenet.org and sign up for the Refuge Action Network, a great way to keep up with the latest news and to easily contact elected officials and government decision makers.

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”—Theodore Roosevelt

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON—MORE THAN AN ARTIST

Article and photo by George Helmke

Had John James Audubon been a saint he would surely be the patron saint of naturalists, especially birders, and perhaps even of today's environmental movement. Although he was known primarily for his paintings of birds, and to a lesser degree of mammals, he was also a prolific writer. Accounts of his travels on the American frontier show how times have changed and they provide insight to the effect of our enormous population growth on the natural world.

Audubon was a man of enormous curiosity. While engaged in the monumental task of painting the birds of America to show people of the 19th century their appearance, he studied their behavior. His paintings, unlike contemporary bird identification pictures, show birds in their natural habitat either feeding or in some normal activity. He studied their breeding and nesting habits; he

examined their stomachs to understand their choice of food. In some instances he reported on the palatability of their flesh. He was a pioneer in ornithology. He had the determination to follow through on his goal of making the birds of America more widely known.

After being born April 26, 1785 on what is now the Caribbean Island of Haiti, his father, a French naval officer, took him to France at an early age. There, where he grew up, he was schooled in traditional subjects and also in art and music. In 1803, at age 18, his father sent him to manage property he owned in Mill Grove, Pennsylvania. In Mill Grove he met and married Lucy Bakewell.

In the early years of their marriage Audubon, with partners, worked as a merchant doing business in the Ohio Valley, which was at the time the American Frontier. While working as a merchant he further developed a lifetime interest in painting birds and studying their habits. It may have been a chance meeting with the Scottish ornithologist Alexander Wilson, whose paintings he thought inferior, that inspired him to redouble his efforts at bird painting and to publish them as Wilson had done. Leaving Lucy to manage for herself and their two sons as a schoolteacher, he traveled the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to paint birds of the huge Middle American Flyway. At times he supported himself as a portraitist and as a teacher of art and music.

Audubon drew birds as life size images, invariably from birds that had been killed. He positioned them in lifelike positions against a softwood background using long, sharply pointed wires. Most of his early bird paintings were done with watercolors. He later developed the technique he favored, that of using colored chalks and rubbing the image with a cork stump to achieve the softness in the feathers. In many paintings, assistants painted in the backgrounds and foliage.



When Audubon had completed a sizeable portfolio of American birds he sought a publisher for his work. Not finding a one in the United States, in 1826 he sailed for England. There he exhibited his paintings in England and Scotland to enthusiastic audiences and was warmly welcomed. He found engravers for his work first in Scotland, then in London. While production was in progress he canvassed England, Scotland and France for subscribers

who were required to pay 183 pounds for the so-called *Double Elephant Folio*, a collection of reproductions each measuring 29½ X 39½ inches. He also prepared for the publication of his *Ornithological Biography*.

His return to America, after an absence of 3 years, was the beginning of a 20-year period in his life in which he received many honors. He was elected to the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the American Philosophical Society. He dined with President Andrew Jackson. In the 1830s and 40s he was a celebrity! Other trips to England began in 1830, 1834 and 1837. He traveled widely in America, adding to his portfolio of *Birds of America*. Then, extending his interest to mammals, and working with his talented sons Victor and John Woodhouse, he produced *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*. In 1843 he traveled his farthest west to the Yellowstone River.

Audubon's home in later years was on the Hudson River in rural uptown Manhattan. He died in 1851 following a stroke, having realized that wildlife was diminishing and that a change in our relationship with the natural world was needed. Earlier he had not been averse to using his gun for food and for birds to paint. Nevertheless, his genius inspired the bird, wildlife and land preservation movement in America, a concern of all friends of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Friends of Great Swamp is an independent, non-profit organization organized in 1999. Our operations and activities are managed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors. As our mission statement indicates, our focus is Refuge-centric — we support the goals, projects, and mission of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

To become a member of the Friends of Great Swamp, fill out the information on this form, and mail with your check to:

Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
241 Pleasant Plains Road, Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920
Ask about our school or group memberships.

Annual Membership

Membership Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Family - \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual—\$15
Gift	<input type="checkbox"/> Family - \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual—\$15
Renewal?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Donation—Thank You! \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

E-Mail Address _____

Gift Membership From: _____

(If this is a gift, please include your full name on the line above so we may notify the recipient)

We need more friends . . .



Members are important!
Give a gift of membership
to a friend.

Become one of the 379 members of the Friends of Great Swamp.

Memberships help support the mission and projects at Great Swamp.

Members also receive the following benefits:

- Quarterly Newsletter
- 10% discount in Bookstore & Gift Shop
- Notification of coming events
- Feeling of accomplishment in supporting the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

Gift Memberships will include a certificate redeemable at the Friends Bookstore & Gift Shop for a Great Swamp pin or patch.

Friends of Great Swamp
National Wildlife Refuge

Is an independent, non profit organization
dedicated to

Promoting the conservation of the natural
resources of the Refuge

Fostering public understanding and
appreciation of the Refuge, and

Engaging in activities that will support the mission of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

Friends of
Great Swamp
National Wildlife Refuge

JANUARY 2007

Friends of Great Swamp NWR
241 Pleasant Plains Road
Basking Ridge NJ 07920



FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH—SEPTEMBER 2007

BOOKSTORE & GIFT SHOP

Saturday & Sunday, 11:00 am—5:00 pm

Books & nature gifts. Great Swamp t-shirts & sweatshirts. Prints, pottery, photos, & jewelry by local artists. Refuge maps & information. Check the sightings board—or add to it. And remember... the coffee's always on. Closed July & August.

DISCOVERY DEN

Saturday & Sunday, 11:00 am—5:00 pm

Located in the Friends Bookstore & Gift Shop, the Discovery Den has loads of free fun activities, exhibits, nature crafts, puzzles, & games for families. Ever changing seasonal activities. Stop and stay awhile! Closed July & August.

MARCH

Sunday, March 11, 2:00—4:00 pm

SECOND SUNDAY... WITH FRIENDS: TURTLES OF NEW JERSEY

Join Dr. Wayne Frair and some turtle friends for this indoor program followed by a short guided walk into the management area of the Refuge (normally closed to the public). For all ages. Discovery Den activities on turtles. Refreshments.

Saturday, March 17—Sunday, June 17

SPRING MIGRATION STAFFING SEASON

During the busy spring migration season, volunteers staff the Wildlife Observation Center and the Overlook to provide visitor information. It's a great time to visit the Refuge—or, if you are interested in volunteering, let us know. It's fun, rewarding, and full of surprises.

Thursday, March 22, 5:00 pm—Dark

WOODCOCK WATCH

The Greater Watchung Nature Club and the Friends share this evening of romance as American Woodcock take their mating flights. And you never know what else we'll see!

Saturday, March 24, 8:30 am—Noon

REFUGE WORK DAY

Refuge Work Days are also great work-out days. We'll work wherever we're needed to keep the refuge (and ourselves) in shape! Join us.

Sunday, March 25, Noon—4:00 pm

VOLUNTEER TRAINING—FOR NEW & EXPERIENCED VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers—or those interested in learning more about volunteering at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge—are welcome to this spring training session. Includes an interpreted field trip into the management area. Bring lunch; beverages & dessert will be provided. Registration requested.

APRIL

Saturday, April 7, 8:30 am—Noon

ANNUAL REFUGE ROADSIDE CLEANUP

Help spruce up the Refuge for Spring. Volunteers are needed to pick up litter and debris along Refuge roads. Meet at Refuge Headquarters, 241 Pleasant Plains Road.

Sunday, April 8, 2:00—4:00 pm

SECOND SUNDAY...WITH FRIENDS: THE FROG CHORUS

Come learn to identify frogs by their calls! We'll watch the Great Swamp frog video then walk into the management area of the Refuge (normally closed to the public) to put our listening skills to the test. For all ages. Discovery Den activities. Refreshments.

APRIL *(continued)*

Friday, April 20, 6:30 pm

ANNUAL VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION EVENT

Volunteers celebrate and are recognized at this annual dinner co-sponsored by the Friends & the Refuge. By invitation.

Saturday, April 21, 8:30 am—Noon

SPRING HOMESTEAD CLEANUP

Get some exercise and fresh air while you clean up man-made debris from the Refuge. Hard physical work, but rewarding. Lunch will follow for all volunteers.

Thursday, April 26, 5:30—7:30 pm

TEACHER WORKSHOP—FROGS OF GREAT SWAMP

For teachers. An evening workshop, complete with field trip, on frogs of the Great Swamp. Earn continuing education credits. Registration required.

MAY

Fridays in May, 5:00 pm to Dusk

HERON ROOKERY (& BITTERN) WATCH

Join NJ Audubon naturalists at the Overlook every Friday in May (beginning April 27). Last year, the herons abandoned their nests when a red-tailed hawk moved in. Will the herons be back this year? Come and find out. Meet at the Overlook on Pleasant Plains Road. For all ages.

Saturday, May 12

WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING—REFUGE STYLE

The Refuge Rovers "teams" will again attempt to best their all-time record of 125 species. Reservations required.

Sunday, May 13

SECOND SUNDAY... WITH FRIENDS—INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY (IMBD)

"Birds in a Changing Climate" is the 2007 IMBD theme. Birds have long been indicators of environmental change. Join us for a closer look at this relationship; with hands-on activities for kids. Indoor program will be followed by a guided bird walk into the management area (normally closed to the public). Free IMBD posters for attendees. Discovery Den activities. Refreshments.

Sunday, May 27, 1:00—3:00 pm

RACHEL CARSON FAMILY DISCOVERY DAY

During her career, Rachel Carson was a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service employee and today would have been her 100th birthday. We'll celebrate with a special Discovery activity. Learn how to create a family nature diary (we'll supply the journals). Meet at the Wildlife Observation Center.

FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH—SEPTEMBER 2007

JUNE

Saturday, June 2, 8:30 am—Noon

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

Celebrate National Trails Day with trail clearing and trail maintenance at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

Sunday, June 10, 2:00—4:00 pm

SECOND SUNDAY... WITH FRIENDS: TREE IDENTIFICATION

Learn how to identify trees by their leaves and flowers. We'll start with an indoor program and then go out into the "field" to test our skills. For all ages. Discovery Den activities. Refreshments.

Saturday, June 16, 10:00 am—1:00 pm

TAKE-ME-FISHING

Fishing event for kids 15 and under. Poles will be available. Free lunch. Sponsored by Friends & Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Meet at Southard Park, Basking Ridge.

Sometime in late June to early July

MEMBER-ONLY EVENT—FRIENDS GO BATTY

Learn all about the bats of Great Swamp in this evening program. Then we'll go outside, set up some mist nets, and see what happens next! Date and time to be announced.

JULY

Sunday, July 8, 2:00—4:00 pm

SECOND SUNDAY... WITH FRIENDS: BUGGY SUNDAY

There are more insects in the world than all the people and animals put together! Come learn more about these six-legged critters, big and small. Indoor program will be followed by a guided bug walk into the management area. Discovery Den activities for kids. Refreshments.

Saturday, July 14, 9:00 am—Noon-ish

MEMBERS ONLY—PROGRAM PLANNING FOR THE FALL

New this year! Help plan the Friends events and activities for the Fall / Winter season—and beyond! Bring your ideas and your program suggestions. Join the Board for this hands-on planning session. Coffee, tea, and refreshments all morning. Get involved!

New!

Saturday, July 21, 8:30 am—Noon

REFUGE WORK DAY

The "Pleasant Plains Road Crew" will be on the job again sprucing up the road and removing invasive species.

AUGUST

Sunday, August 12, 2:00—4:00 pm

SECOND SUNDAY... WITH FRIENDS: BUTTERFLIES

There are over 70 species of butterflies on the Refuge checklist. How many can you identify? Learn from the experts, followed by a walk into the management area. Discovery Den activities. Refreshments. For all ages.

Saturday, August 18, 8:30 am—Noon

REFUGE WORK DAY

Refuge Work Days are also great work-out days. We'll work wherever we're needed to keep the refuge (and ourselves) in shape! Join us.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday, September 1—Sunday, November 4

FALL MIGRATION STAFFING SEASON

See details under March 17—Spring migration staffing.

Saturday, September 8, 10:00 am—3:00 pm

EIGHTH ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL

Wow! Eight years and going strong! Our annual Fall Festival is a day filled with fun, talks & walks, exhibits, kids activities, free food—and more! For all ages. Join us...

Sunday, September 9, 2:00—4:00 pm

SECOND SUNDAY... WITH FRIENDS: FALL WILDFLOWERS

Fall wildflowers are abundant, highly visible, and challenging to identify. Join us for this two-hour wildflower ID walk. Bring your field guide. For beginners of all ages. Discovery Den activities for kids. Refreshments.

Saturday, September 29, 9:00—Noon

VOLUNTEER TRAINING—FOR NEW & EXPERIENCED VOLUNTEERS

See details under March 25 Volunteer Training.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Refuge Group tours are available for schools, scouts, and other youth or adult organizations. Contact Judy Schmidt, at 908-647-2508 to schedule a tour.

If a field trip to the Refuge is not an option, ask about our **Swamp in a Box** loan program—an easy way to bring the Refuge into your classroom; contact Dorothy Smullen, at 908-647-5740 for more information.

We have a new **Speakers Outreach Program**, where volunteers bring a customized presentation about Great Swamp to your group meeting. Leave a message at the Friends Bookstore if you are interested.

EVENT INFORMATION

- All programs are free.
- Registration is not required unless noted.
- All programs meet at the Friends Bookstore & Gift Shop unless otherwise noted.

