

FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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NEW VISITOR CENTER TO BE NAMED IN HONOR OF HELEN C. FENSKE



The new visitor center at the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, tentatively scheduled to open in the fall of 2008, will be named in honor of late conservationist Helen C. Fenske of Green Village, N.J. Formal approval of this request was granted on July 19, 2007 by Marvin Moriarty, Northeast Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In March, the Friends' Board passed a resolution endorsing the Refuge Manager's suggestion to name the center in honor of Fenske. The idea was enthusiastically supported by Fenske's family and several of the refuge's conservation partners, including New Jersey Audubon Society, Morris Land Conservancy, Ten Towns Committee, and Great Swamp Watershed Association, local municipalities and townships, and the New Jersey General Assembly, District 21.

"Helen Fenske is a name that is synonymous with the fight to save the Great Swamp from becoming a regional jetport back in the 1960s. Her vision and advocacy to conserve the natural environment of New Jersey will benefit and inspire future generations," said Refuge Manager Bill Koch.

Fenske spearheaded a grassroots campaign fifty years ago from the kitchen of her Green Village home that successfully raised more than \$1 million to purchase and donate nearly 3,000 acres of land to the U.S. Department of the Interior for the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Several years later, Fenske played a major role in the creation of the Great Swamp Wilderness Area, the first wilderness area designated on Department of Interior lands.

Fenske went on to become a statewide environmental advocate, serving as Assistant Commissioner in the N. J. Department of Environmental Protection. In this role, she promoted the creation of the Wallkill River and the Cape May National Wildlife Refuges, led efforts to protect the state's wetlands, championed the preservation of open space, and fostered the creation of numerous local environmental commissions across the state. She received many awards including the Department of the Interior's Conservation Service Award. Helen Fenske died on January 19, 2007 at the age of 84.

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

Friends Board & Refuge Management Hold Joint Planning Meeting

Each year the Friends Board and Refuge management get together to identify major issues and develop plans for the upcoming year. It is a terrific opportunity to discuss a variety of topics in an informal setting. This year the meeting was held on June 13 with dinner provided by the Friends.



Attendees (l to r) Dennis Branden, Bill Koch, Steve Henry, Chuck Whitmore, Susan Friedman, Pat Giaimo. Missing from photo: Judy Schmidt, Laurel Gould, Kathy Woodward, Dorothy Smullen.

New GSNWR Visitor Center

The major topic of discussion was the new visitor center. Refuge Manager Bill Koch provided an update on the progress with general discussion about exhibits, opening the bridge, a new Refuge staff position that has been approved to assist Tom McFadden, and what the Friends can expect in terms of volunteer staffing. There were more questions than answers but the existing Visitor Services Committee will continue its function, meeting with Tom as needed. Final thoughts from Bill Koch: "if we post hours, someone (Refuge staff or volunteers) must be there" and "grow and expand as we are able; we don't have to do everything at once".

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

All refuges are required by law to complete a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) by 2012; the CCP for Great Swamp is scheduled to begin in 2009. The final approved CCP describes the desired future condition of a refuge, providing long range guidance and management direction. The board learned that there will be many areas during the year-long process for the Friends to provide assistance, especially in the initial scoping phase where public input is gathered.

Refuge Projects

The Friends suggested developing a project "bank"—a listing of potential projects which could be used for Refuge Work Days, scout projects, or special activities. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Friends would create an initial list and submit it to the Refuge staff to build on. Steve Henry suggested that the new visitor center is an area to focus on for invasive species control, a refuge priority; it was agreed that the Friends would meet with Steve to develop a plan and strategy for this project. Steve also mentioned that he would like to see roadside cleanups done more frequently, especially along the busy Long Hill-New Vernon Road.

2007 Northeast Regional National Wildlife Refuge System Friends Workshop

One of the many ways the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supports Friends groups is through the sponsorship of regional and national conferences and workshops.

Kathy Woodward, Friends board member, was part of the planning team and attended the Northeast Regional National Wildlife Refuge System Friends workshop which was held April 13-15, 2007 at John Heinz NWR in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Over 70 Friends members and U.S. Fish and Wildlife staff, representing 40 refuges from the northeast region, met to hear about federal and regional updates and discuss Friends roles in times of declining budgets. Presenters included Marvin Moriarty, Regional Director Northeast Region; Tony Leger, Regional Chief; Trevor Needham, National Friends Coordinator; and Desiree Sorenson-Groves of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. Numerous concurrent sessions held Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning provided an opportunity for Friends to learn and develop skills. Kathy chaired a breakout group discussion on board development. A copy of the Summary Report is in the Friends Library at the Bookstore & Gift Shop.

First-Ever Friends Academy Held

In July, 2007 a new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service training seminar, the Friends Academy, debuted on the campus of the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Friends board member Kathy Woodward and 18 other members of Friends organizations, representing refuges from every region of the United States, were invited to this advanced training opportunity. The group learned about a wide variety of issues from Refuge System chiefs, nonprofit staff, and national nongovernmental conservation organizations. Topics covered included invasive species, effective communication and use of technology, impact of demographic changes, Comprehensive Conservation Plans, contaminants, and support programs of the Refuge System. One objective of the academy according to Refuge System Chief, Geoff Haskett, was to "further fortify the strength of the Friends movement." Kathy will share the information with the Friends board.

LOOKING FOR A PROGRAM FOR YOUR GROUP?

*Take advantage of a new Outreach Service from the
Friends of Great Swamp NWR*

**Video
&
Presentation
about**

**Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
to
clubs and civic organizations**



Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

**Contact Kathy Woodward for more information
973-635-1083**

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

Tales of a Summer Intern at Great Swamp NWR

By Heather Barrett, Friends-sponsored Refuge Intern



Heather Barrett paddles the Passaic River looking for turtles
Photo by Susi Ponce

On the first day of my internship at Great Swamp, I grabbed a shovel and a pair of work gloves, got into a pick-up truck with other interns and Refuge staff, and arrived at a 4 x 16 x 4 ft wooden frame with chicken wire attached. This was a box to protect turtles while they nest and the eggs after they have been laid; however, this box was not being used in this location this year: we were moving it somewhere else on the Refuge. It must have been a sight to see with this box hanging out of the back of the truck with my red bandana tied to the end as we relocated the box. This satisfying act of using my mind and muscles for conservation became my inaugural first-hand experience with wildlife management, a long-time career aspiration of mine.

Many other experiences this summer have also fallen into this category. I spent time at the artificial habitat nest boxes for turtles, checking for signs of activity from both turtles and predators. I learned a great deal about turtles and their nesting behaviors from Refuge staff and from the turtles themselves. Excursions such as these offered me a closer look at wildlife, big and small, in the Refuge: great egrets, American bitterns, beavers, muskrats, mockingbird fledglings, and so much more.

Recently, I have been involved with raccoon trapping and duck baiting in preparation for wood duck banding in August. We have humanely

trapped and relocated six raccoons and two opossums. Also, I have spent a day here and there dabbling in other activities such as telemetry tracking of wood turtles, checking bluebird nest boxes, the Canada goose round-up, frog call survey, invasive species removal, and frog malformation survey. In addition to all of the biological activities with which I have been involved, I have worked on cleanups at the Wildlife Observation Center, on preparations for the new Visitor Center, and on general Refuge upkeep and maintenance.

Each of these opportunities has provided me with interesting stories, knowledge, and experiences that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I am grateful for all of these opportunities here at Great Swamp that have been made possible by the Friends' sponsorship.



SLOW DOWN! TURTLE X-ING

This past Spring the Refuge installed eight turtle crossing signs in an effort to reduce turtle mortality on the busy roads passing through the Refuge. Four signs each were placed on Long Hill Road and White Bridge Road mainly on pre-existing Refuge signs (see picture). These two roads were chosen because they incur the high-



est levels of automobile mortality for turtles (and for all other wildlife for that matter). The signs were posted from late May through early July, the period when turtles are most active and females become especially mobile as they look for suitable nesting sites to lay their eggs. When an adult female turtle is killed before laying her eggs, it's a double tragedy—both the female turtle and the potential next generation of turtles are gone. Colin Osborn, biological techni-

cian at the Refuge, says that despite the signs, they still found road-killed turtles—it would be unrealistic to expect no mortality, but they have also seen motorists stopping to move turtles to the

side of the road (always move the turtle in the direction it is heading and only if it's safe for you to do so). Colin feels the signs have been successful in raising awareness on the part of traveling motorists, getting drivers to pay more attention to the road and to slow down. He indicated that next spring they would likely increase the number of signs, placing them on additional roads. "We should be doing everything we can to help the turtles out," said Colin.

Watch for an upcoming article on turtles of the Great Swamp including some turtle survey results.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!! WILDERNESS AREA TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Responsibilities

Quarterly trail inspection, clipping brush, removing litter.

Benefits

Help the Refuge, get some exercise, enjoy the trails—you never know what you'll see.

Opportunities exist on several of the trails.
Great for an individual, a team of friends, or a family!

Call Tom McFadden at 973-425-1222 x 14
or e-mail tom_mcfadden@fws.gov

LOVE THE GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE? ADVOCATE FOR IT!

By Susan Garretson Friedman

If you're reading this, I'm sure you share my love of the Great Swamp NWR. My family actually moved to our present home in Gillette because we loved the Refuge so much. On one visit I said: "Wouldn't it be great to live near here?" About two years later, we did.

Then one day, while bicycling on Pleasant Plains Road, my husband and I saw someone with a scope outside the Friends Bookstore & Gift Shop, and stopped. As beginning birders we were eager to see the red tailed hawk in the scope's sights. Laurel Gould was the scope's keeper at the time, and before I knew it, we had not only joined the Friends Group, but I had agreed to volunteer as well. After volunteering in the gift shop for a couple of years, I recently moved up a notch in my commitment to the Refuge and the wonderful Friends group that supports it.

Friends Government Advocacy Committee

I write all this as an introduction, to explain how I moved from love of this special place to becoming more involved in defending it. Several months ago I agreed to put my habit of writing to my elected officials about topics important to me to use in service of the Friends and the Refuge. I became the initial member of a re-constituted Government Advocacy Committee. Government advocacy in this situation is pretty much what it sounds like: trying to advocate with the various government powers-that-be for the issues that are important to the health and well-being of the Refuge.

The re-instituting of the committee happened at a very opportune time: the National Wildlife Refuge System budget was up for vote in the House, and then in the Senate; the new visitor center for the Refuge was underway both in construction and funding; and there was some heated local debate on the proposed remediation of the Rolling Knolls Landfill/Superfund site.

Refuge Action Alert Network

One of the first things I did to become more informed on all the issues was to sign up for

the National Wildlife Refuge Association's Refuge Action Network—a system of e-mail messages alerting subscribers to important issues that they can take action on. A sample message is provided to subscribers, which can be easily personalized and then, with a quick click, sent on to your own elected representatives. This service is part of RefugeNet, an online community to inform and enable Friends of refuges.

Joining the Action Alert e-mail list makes taking action easy. I encourage all Friends members to check out the web site and this free e-mail alerting service. The National Wildlife Refuge System needs your help. See Action Alert! box below.

thin, with no funding for projected staff increases. This is only one small example of the need for increased Refuge System funding nationwide.

Therefore, the first action the Committee took on behalf of the Friends and Refuge was to contact our Senators Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez, and Congressmen Rodney Frelinghuysen and Michael Ferguson to thank them for their support and urge them to continue to fight for and support passage of the proposed budget.

Congressman Frelinghuysen has always been very supportive of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, and in fact inserted an earmark for \$750,000 for the

Refuge into the recent Congressional Budget Appropriations Bill. The Committee has also written to thank him for this and another supportive gesture he made in July.

Great Swamp Tour

On July 21, coincidentally a Friends' Refuge Work Day, Congressman Frelinghuysen scheduled a visit to the new visitor center with Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett. He arranged for press and representatives of other local environmental partners to be present as he gave Deputy Secretary Scarlett an overview of the importance of the Refuge and plans for the new visitor center. Refuge Staff from

Great Swamp and Wallkill River and Friends Board members were also on hand. The Refuge Work Day volunteers also joined the reception after completing their project. Everyone had a chance to contribute their piece on the importance of the Refuge. Deputy Refuge Manager Steve Henry gave an excellent presentation on the current state and future plans for the Refuge.

Deputy Secretary Scarlett was very appreciative and receptive. As a birdwatcher and nature lover she understands the importance of preserving habitat and refuges. Her short speech also emphasized her concern about preserving nature for the next generation and the importance of impressing an understanding and love of nature on children so they can carry it forward.

(continued on page 5)



Action Alert!

Urge your Senators to fund the NWRs at \$451 million for FY08 – Act Now!

SIGN UP FOR

REFUGE ACTION NETWORK

Become a Refuge Advocate! Make Your voice heard!

Join the National Wildlife Refuge Association Refuge Action Network.

Read about issues affecting Great Swamp and other refuges nationwide.

Make your voice heard. It's easy to contact your elected officials and government decision makers.

Visit www.refugenet.org, and click on Refuge Action Network to sign up to become a member of this free service.

Sign up. Stay informed. Make your voice heard!

Proposed Refuge System Budget At Historic High of \$451 million

Recently the U.S. House of Representatives proposed an historic \$451 million budget for the National Wildlife Refuge System. This is much-needed funding. As you know, recent funding cutbacks have caused correlating cutbacks in services. Our Refuge Manager is now responsible not only for the Great Swamp, but also for two not-so neighboring refuges: Wallkill River and Shawangunk Grasslands. These refuges have had their staff drastically reduced due to budget restrictions. The time our refuge staff spend tending to those no-less-deserving refuges means less time for them to spend here, maintaining and managing the refuge as well as interacting and informing the public. And they are already spread

REFUGE ADVOCATE (continued from page 4)

The Deputy Secretary and Congressman were then taken on a brief but thorough tour of the Refuge with staff members. I tagged along to get a chance to introduce myself some more and establish a rapport so that they would remember me when I next wrote to them on behalf of the Refuge. Then Steve Henry and I followed them on their trip to Wildcat Ridge in the Highlands. This included a hike up to the beautiful overlook and I can report that both of them were in excellent shape!

These events are only the beginning of what will be an ongoing effort to impress our officials with the crucial importance of the Refuge, and also with their constituents' passion and love for the Refuge. If you are interested in helping by joining the committee, please email me at susangarretsonfriedman@gmail.com. And please consider signing up for the Refuge Action Alert. It's an easy way to make a difference for the National Wildlife Refuge System.



(L to R) Rodney Frelinghuysen, Susan Friedman, Lynn Scarlett, Steve Henry
Photo by Jane Kendall

EVERY LITTLE BIT COUNTS

By Dennis Branden,

For many of us, when we think of charitable gift giving, programs such as United Way, Good Will, Morris Street Mission and numerous other qualified organizations are all too familiar.

But how many times has Friends of Great Swamp NWR jumped to the top of your list? As a non-profit, tax-exempt organization as defined under the laws of the State of New Jersey and the United States Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)3, the Friends is well suited for charitable contribu-

tions. Many of us have made generous donations to our favorite charities either directly or through the companies we work for, but thinking about or asking how to help the Great Swamp NWR is something we hear often at the Refuge.

Pointing your gift giving to the Friends is one way to help. Contributing directly or utilizing your employer's giving campaign, matching donation, or corporate grant programs are excellent ways to make a difference. Many employers look to contribute to the commu-

nities in their operating territories through financial support to foster growth in the areas where employees live, work and serve customers. Many companies are now using online web sites to provide an easy and convenient way for employees to contribute to the non-profit organizations of their choice. This has become a simple and efficient way to support those organizations and issues that are important to employees and the communities where they live and work.

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THANK YOU

Donations are made to the Friends of Great Swamp in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. All donations are used to help fund projects which benefit the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Thank you to all who have donated...

Dennis Branden, AT&T United Way, Employee Giving Campaign; Steve and Sally Chew, Chew Family Foundation; Udayan and Sheela Vinod Foundation; 2006-07 Rising 5's; Bob Brandt; Robert G. Collins.

Thank you to volunteers Leo Hollein, Jack Higgins, and Chuck Whitmore who directed donations from the ExxonMobil Foundation to the Friends of Great Swamp. ExxonMobil recognizes volunteer hours through their Volunteer Involvement Program.

- In honor of Hildaguard Kimmick for her birthday: Penny and Mat Buchner
- In honor of Friends President Judy Schmidt for sharing her love of nature with others: Sue Gandy
- In memory of Bob Thompson: Nancy Thompson
- In memory of Hazel Hinds: Anthony & Dorothy Ciufu, Edward & Mary Chabak, Friends and co-workers of her grandson Benjamin Hinds, Winifred C. Stark, The Noel Family—Gary, Nadine & children, Pamela Ann Chabak, Laurel Gould, Judy Schmidt

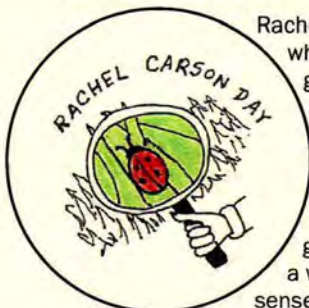
To all of you who added a donation to your membership renewals—thank you so much: Steve Gruber, Laura & Joe Nally, Roz & Stan Rothman, Peter N. Savino, Grant Price & Frances Wu, Rosemarie Widmer, James S. Smith, Kevin Ward Family, Chuck & Barbara Whitmore, Marjory & Bill Tyndall, Thomas & Sally Abbott, Allen Marshall, Helen Hoffman Levine.

THE FRIENDS HAVE BEEN BUSY—TAKE A LOOK AT SOME RECENT EVENTS

RACHEL CARSON FAMILY DISCOVERY DAY AT GREAT SWAMP NWR

By Judy Schmidt

Did you ever look at a leaf, mushroom, or a bug under a magnifying glass? If you do, you can see the veins on the leaf, the gills on the mushroom, and the antenna on a bug. That's what the close to 90 participants from 21 families did on May 27 when they celebrated Rachel Carson's birthday with the Friends of Great Swamp NWR.



Rachel Carson believed that we should develop a "sense of wonder" in children and that's what we hoped to do. Each family received a nature Journal and each child a magnifying glass and then went out on the trail to the Friends blind to see what they could discover. With the help of volunteers along the trail, they looked closely at nature and made lots of discoveries. There were frogs, turtles, snakes, dragonflies, carpenter bees, mushrooms, insect galls, moss with capsules, lichens, scat, flowers, and birds—all having their pictures drawn or a written description entered in the journals. The young naturalists then went back and looked up their discoveries in our field guides. Everyone had a great time exploring nature. If you want a great experience, take a walk with a child, a journal, and a magnifying glass and watch as they develop their sense of wonder in nature.



Young naturalist exploring nature



Pat Hamilton shows live fish to captive audience.

KIDS FISHING DERBY

By Jack Higgins

On Saturday June 16, more than 30 youngsters accompanied by over 50 parents and grandparents descended on Southard Park pond in Basking Ridge for the annual Great Swamp Fishing Derby.

Tom McFadden and the Refuge staff were on hand to help with the hook baiting, the fish un-hooking, and they also rescued two snagged turtles. Bill Ayres and Lee Delitzscher helped with the registrations and the awarding of prizes. Dorothy Smullen and Laurel Gould were the official photographers, and Judy Schmidt and Pat Giaimo worked the grills, serving the complimentary hot dogs, chips and lemonade to all participants.

The fish were provided by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish & Wildlife and use of the park by the Bernards Township Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Pool. Most of the equipment and all of the prizes for the fishing derby were provided by donations from Ray's Sport Shop, Jersey Devil Organics, The Fisherman Magazine, Franks Tackle and Wal*Mart. The Friends of Great Swamp NWR again served up a complementary lunch.

Patricia Hamilton, a senior biologist with the N.J. Department of Fish and Wildlife was on hand with a stocking truck from the Hackettstown State Fish Hatchery. Pat provided information and literature on the state stocking programs, and with the aid of a large glass aquarium, showed off a number of blue gill and pumpkinseed sunfish, black crappie, yellow perch, and some fairly large catfish. She then enlisted the aid of the youngsters to help stock the pond with buckets of fish. It was noted that many of the youngsters seemed to have more fun throwing the fish into the pond than in trying to pull them out. All in all, a very nice day outdoors!

SECOND SUNDAY... WITH FRIENDS—TREE IDENTIFICATION

By Laurel Gould

Sunday, June 10 was a beautiful summer day—and since it was the second Sunday of the month, 34 visitors showed up for the Friends of Great Swamp regular Second Sunday program. This day, the focus was on trees and our speaker was David Welch, Certified Tree Expert (CTE). David began the program by taking some leaves from a tree branch that he had brought with him, passing them around and challenging the audience to identify the species. It turned out to be the invasive Norway maple and David showed everyone the "drop dead" test for identifying this tree. Following the talk, the group took a walk into the management area of the refuge to learn how to identify some common trees. We took a short side trip to stand in awe in the midst of a red oak forest that, according to David, wasn't supposed to be found in a habitat like the swamp!

Watch for Part 2 of this program when David returns to teach tree identification using buds and bark on the Second Sunday in January.



David Welch (right) demonstrates leaf ID techniques

THE FRIENDS HAVE BEEN BUSY—TAKE A LOOK AT SOME RECENT EVENTS

REFUGE WORK DAY—BATTLING INVASIVES

By Judy Schmidt

You know Spiderman and Batman—now get ready to meet Invasive Species-man (and woman). These are the volunteers who showed up on July 21 to do battle with the No. 1 bad guy of refuges—invasive species! Invasive species are pushing out the native species on refuges across the county—and they need to be stopped. So at Great Swamp NWR, here come the volunteers to help do the job.

On a perfect summer Saturday, 15 volunteers came ready to do battle. They were armed with pruners, cutting shears, weed whackers, and gloves. Working in groups, they waged war on the autumn olive, Japanese barberry, and multi-flora rose that were taking over the Overlook area on Pleasant Plains Road. As anyone who has come in contact with these plants knows, it was not an easy battle, but the volunteers held their own and by the end of the work day you could once again read the signs, see the pond, and enter and leave the parking area with a clear view.

Way to go volunteers!



Volunteers (l to r) Rich Dufort and Kevin Ward tackle multi-flora rose.

A NIGHT WITH FRIENDS AND A FRIEND OF THE NIGHT

By Monica Felsing

I had been looking forward to the June 26 Friends of Great Swamp bat program for weeks. I knew my husband wouldn't be joining me that evening. You see, bats are not one of his favorite things. However, when I arrived at the swamp, I found I had plenty of friends.

We mingled a short while before caravanning to a wide creek where we set up a 30 foot high, thin black misting net across the creek for capturing bats. Marilyn Kitchell, a second year master's research intern, whose project is to study the federally endangered Indiana bat on the Refuge, invited volunteers into the swampy mud to help her with netting, roping and attaching three ten foot poles to be placed on each side of the creek. She skillfully guided the volunteers step by step. What teamwork! When it was done we drew up the netting until we would return after dark and went to enjoy dinner and Marilyn's bat program.

The discovery of Indiana bats at the refuge last summer was the initial topic of the program. Marilyn explained to us that juveniles and reproductively active females captured last summer indicated that there was a maternity colony of Indiana bats. With this discovery, Marilyn began her two year study on the distribution of Indiana bats and identifying habitat for the maternity colonies to better manage the species.

We learned about the essential roles some species play in keeping populations of night-flying insects in balance. Did you know that one bat can eat one half its body weight in hundreds of insects in a night, and large colonies catch tons of insects nightly? Not to mention the hundreds of mosquitoes from our own backyards each night! Also, throughout forests, the seed dispersal and pollination activities of fruit and nectar eating bats are vital to the survival of forests, supporting plants that are crucial to entire ecosystems. These busy creatures that we benefit so much from are true friends of ours.

It was almost dark when we caravanned back to the misting nets and unrolled them in order to capture the bats. I had never been at the swamp at night. It was a very still night and hundreds of fireflies lit up the fields and sky accompanied by a loud chorus of bullfrogs. We put out chairs, sprayed on some mosquito repellant, sat down and waited. Like clockwork, every fifteen minutes, we followed Marilyn to check the nets.

Finally, after having gone back and forth a few times, we had a bat spotlighted in the net. Marilyn and her assistant carefully removed it and carried it back to be examined. This bat was madly chattering as they took all kinds of measurements and put a band on it for tracking purposes. Marilyn pointed out to us the physical characteristics that identified this as the big brown bat species. She then



Setting up the mist nets. Marilyn Kitchell (bottom left)
Photo by Linda Drace Byland

stretched out the bat's chiroptera, the scientific name for hand-wing, to show its fingers within the membrane of the wing. We also learned this was a lactating female who had been hunting insects to feed her young before we interrupted her! Bats are known to eat more when they are mothers.

Although I was hoping that we would have captured an Indiana bat, I was grateful for this up close and personal encounter. I couldn't help being mesmerized by this little creature. If there was ever a case for beauty being in the eye of the beholder, this was it. We didn't want to stress her out anymore than we had to, so Marilyn decided to release her. She held her up high and within seconds our friend of the night returned to the darkness.

WELCOME GREAT EGRETS

Photo and story by Leo Hollein

For the last several years, from spring through the fall, visitors to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge were able to enjoy viewing great egrets (*ardea alba*) in the ponds and waterways. At times, over a dozen great egrets could be observed at a single location. A great egret is a large, all white member of the heron family that has a yellow bill and all black legs and feet. It has long stilt-like legs as well as a very long slender neck. A photo of a great white egret stalking prey in pool 1 is shown below. These large white members of the heron family are slightly smaller than great blue herons (*ardea herodias*) that are nearly four and one half feet tall. Both these species use their long legs and necks to hunt in shallow water where they feed primarily on fish, frogs and snakes.

The published bird list for the Refuge is available at the Refuge headquarters and at the Friends Bookstore & Gift Shop. It was most recently updated in 2001. It lists great egrets as occasional (seen only a few times during the season) from the spring through the fall. During the winter, the great egret is listed as rare (may be present, but not every year). Great egrets are migratory and usually do not winter in significant numbers any further north than South Carolina. Great egrets were most commonly observed in the past during the spring when an occasional egret would fly over during migration. Great egrets were also more reliable in the fall as part of a pattern of post breeding season dispersal typical of egrets.

The presence of a number of great egrets throughout the breeding season, therefore, is a new phenomena for the Refuge. It raises the question as to whether the great egrets are nesting in the Great Swamp like their larger kin the great blue heron

*The presence
of a number of great egrets
throughout
the breeding season
is a new phenomena for the
Refuge.*

that nest in large colonies

(rookeries) in tree tops. On the

Refuge bird checklist, great blue herons are listed as common (likely to be seen or heard in suitable habitat) from spring through fall and uncommon (present, but not certain to be seen) during the winter. As long as there is open water in the winter there will be some great blue herons present in the swamp.

Great egrets are also colony nesters that build large stick nests. They are confirmed to nest in New Jersey ¹ only along the coast in shrubs and trees near water. They nest with other herons and egrets especially on uninhabited islands in costal bays.

Some inland nesting is, however, considered possible. Great egrets like some other water birds do not breed until their second or third year. Since no great egret rookeries (that should be easy to spot) have been sighted in the Refuge over the last several years, it is likely that the great egrets in the Great Swamp are "bachelor" birds that are too young to breed. However, keep looking for great egret rookeries as it is possible great egrets could become nesters on the Refuge in the future.

Footnote

1 – J. Walsh, V. Elia, R. Kane and T. Halliwell, Birds of New Jersey, New Jersey Audubon Society. 1999, pp. 85-87.



THE SWAMP SCENE—FRIENDS NEWSLETTER HAS A NEW NAME!

Thirty-eight names were entered in the Name the Newsletter contest—thank you to all who submitted suggestions.

In August, the Friends Board was faced with the task of selecting the new name from this list—looking for one that best captured the purpose of the newsletter, the focus of the Refuge, and the spirit of the swamp. The name: The Swamp Scene was chosen; the winner was Kathy Woodward.

A special thanks to George Helmke who suggested the contest and collected all of the names for board review. Look for the new name in the next newsletter!

WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING—REFUGE STYLE

By Tom Ostrand

The Friends of Great Swamp Refuge Rovers team scoured the Refuge for bird species on May 12, during the annual World Series of Birding. After 12 hours of searching on a beautiful day, we tallied 97 species.

The big day went something like this. Teri Catalano, Karen English and Tom Ostrand started the day at 3:45 a.m. at the Wildlife Observation Center listening for owls and rails. Pete Axelrod joined us at 4:45 a.m. and the rest of the team assembled at the Friends Bookstore & Gift Shop at 6:00 a.m. We all birded together until 9:00, then split into two groups till noon. Following a lunch break, we all walked out to the Friends blind. The final daytime run was through the management area west of Pleasant Plains Road.

It was 3:45 a.m. at the Wildlife Observation Center. Karen, Teri, and Tom were greeted by a beautiful rising crescent moon and a symphony of tree frogs. We walked out to the closest blind, hoping to hear a sora or Virginia rail, but instead heard an impressively loud and deep 'Bullfrog Rhapsody'. Catbirds, robins, and swamp sparrows started singing. A few minutes later we left the parking lot, and started the drive into the management area. The first stop was along the road near the blue tower. With the sky still completely dark, we heard twittering tree swallows, a single call of a screech owl, and an energetic pumping American bittern. Pete joined us just in time to hear the unmistakable common moorhen call from the marsh. We stayed near the tower for another 15 minutes, hoping without success for a sora, Virginia or king rail, or least bittern. As the sky started to grow lighter, Karen spotted a great sight: large numbers of bats skimming for their breakfast just above the water in front of us. More birds were waking up: we picked out mallards,

wood ducks and a lone pair of black ducks flying overhead. Common yellowthroats were singing from the cover of the reeds and yellow warblers flew back and forth between the low bushes. As we slowly continued along the road towards the Friends shop, we heard the beautiful spiraling song of a veery, the high-pitched squeaks of blue-gray gnatcatchers, and the familiar whistles of cardinals. We reached the shop around 5:30, turned down Pleasant Plains Road, and then entered the management area on the west side. With the sun still just below the horizon, the sky behind us was filled with brilliant pink clouds. We didn't get too far into the management area, because we needed to be back at the shop by 6:00 to meet the rest of the team. But we had time to notice a flock of greater yellowlegs pop out of the marsh, to watch dozens of wood ducks and mallards taking off for the day's feeding grounds, and to hear the reedy trills of a marsh wren.

We had seen or heard 30 different birds when Holly Dunbar and Kevin McCarthy joined the group. Pete and Kevin went back into the management area towards the tower, and the rest of us started up Pleasant Plains Road towards the Overlook. We continued past the bridge encountering American redstarts, Canada and blackpoll warblers, common yellowthroat, dingfisher, several orchard and Baltimore orioles, green heron, and along the stream under the bridge, a solitary sandpiper and a pair of Northern waterthrushes. The team then split. Holly, Karen, Teri and Tom went back into the management area,

while Pete, Kevin, Laurie Gneiding, and Justin Whitehurst headed for the Orange Trail. Back in the management area, we watched a couple of red tailed Hawks circling far overhead, and then noticed that one was much larger than the other. A look through the scope showed it was an immature bald eagle. In the marsh we saw a pair of kingbirds, lots of tree swallows, and a pileated woodpecker that flew out of the woods and crossed the entire marsh right in front of us. Lunch break was livened up by black and turkey vultures soaring over the parking area.

After lunch, we headed to the Friends blind, where fish crows were squawking, and a lone least sandpiper was working the mud-flat. Around 2:00 p.m. we returned to the west management area to complete the morning's abbreviated route. Not far in, a willow flycatcher sang "fitz-bew", and further on we saw rough-winged swallows circling. At the far corner of the route we had beautiful views of a great crested flycatcher perched on the top limb of a dead tree. As we watched it, suddenly a sora called from the marsh, and a few yards farther on, a savannah sparrow landed on the road in front of us. By 3:30 p.m., our daytime birding was finished, and the team members had dispersed for a well-deserved rest.



Teri and Karen returned to the Swamp in the evening and found a pair of common night-hawks near the new visitor center. As they slowly drove back down Pleasant Plains road, a woodcock began peenting, flew across the road in front of the car, and spiraled up into the sky. A fabulous end to a beautiful day.

WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ROUND-UP

By Laurel Gould

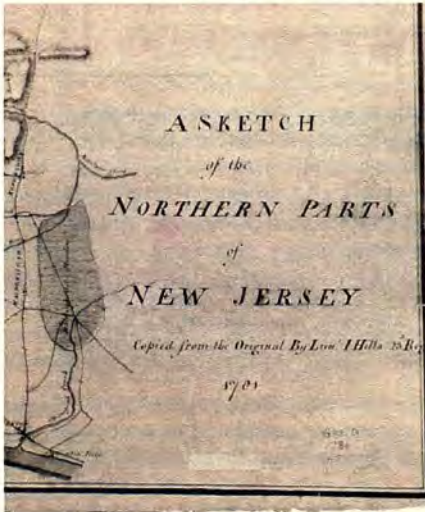
Each year the Refuge issues special use permits to official World Series of Birding Teams. These birders are allowed access to closed areas of the Refuge for scouting and for the 24-hour World Series of Birding held this year on May 12. In return, all teams are required to submit a Refuge bird checklist indicating the species they have heard or seen during this time. This data is compiled annually and provides the Refuge with information that can be used to identify trends or support specific habitat management practices.

Now these are some of the very best birding teams in the country but most of them come to the Refuge on the lookout for very specific species. In fact, when you take a look at the various checklists that were turned in, many indicate birding hours between midnight and 2:00 a.m.! Nevertheless, this is valuable information as there are not many other times when data is collected at this hour. So, given all of this, the results are not surprising. Of the 20 teams: 17 reported a marsh wren, a small bird known for singing in the early hours; 16 reported Virginia and sora rails; ten reported king rail, 13 least bittern, American woodcock, eastern screech owl, and barred owl; 6 reported common moorhen, 9 solitary sandpiper, and 1 reported American coot. These are not birds that show up on the Bookstore's weekend sightings list! Warblers were reported by only a few of the teams (remember the hours) but 21 of the possible 35 wood warbler species were reported including the yellow-breasted chat and the prothonotary warbler. Altogether, 135 different species were reported on the Refuge during these few days in May. It's not often you get some of the best birders in the country to do a birding survey for you!

AS WE'VE HEARD TELL... A HISTORY NOTE: LIEUT. HILLS' MAP

By Chuck Whitmore

Volunteers and visitors who spend time at our Refuge know, from personal experience, what a special place the Great Swamp is. It's interesting to see that this place also caught the attention of early mapmakers, whose records add a historical perspective to our appreciation.



One early map, preserved among the holdings of the Morris County Library, gives a good representation of the Great Swamp and surrounding area at a time shortly before the American Revolution.

This map covers northern New Jersey (south as far as Trenton), and includes closely adjoining areas of "The Provinces" of New York and Pennsylvania. The full title of the map is shown on the accompanying illustration.

tion, where the words "Copied from the Original By Lieut. I. Hills, 23d Regt." can barely be made out together with the date of 1781. The date at which Lieut. Hills made his original version of this map is not known, but it may have been nearly a decade before 1781. The 23rd Regiment of the British Army seems to have been in North America from about 1773 until after its 1781 capture by Continental forces at the Battle of Yorktown, Virginia. In one account, the Regiment is listed as having been in New York during 1773, at which posting Lieut. Hills might reasonably have been busy mapping northern New Jersey.

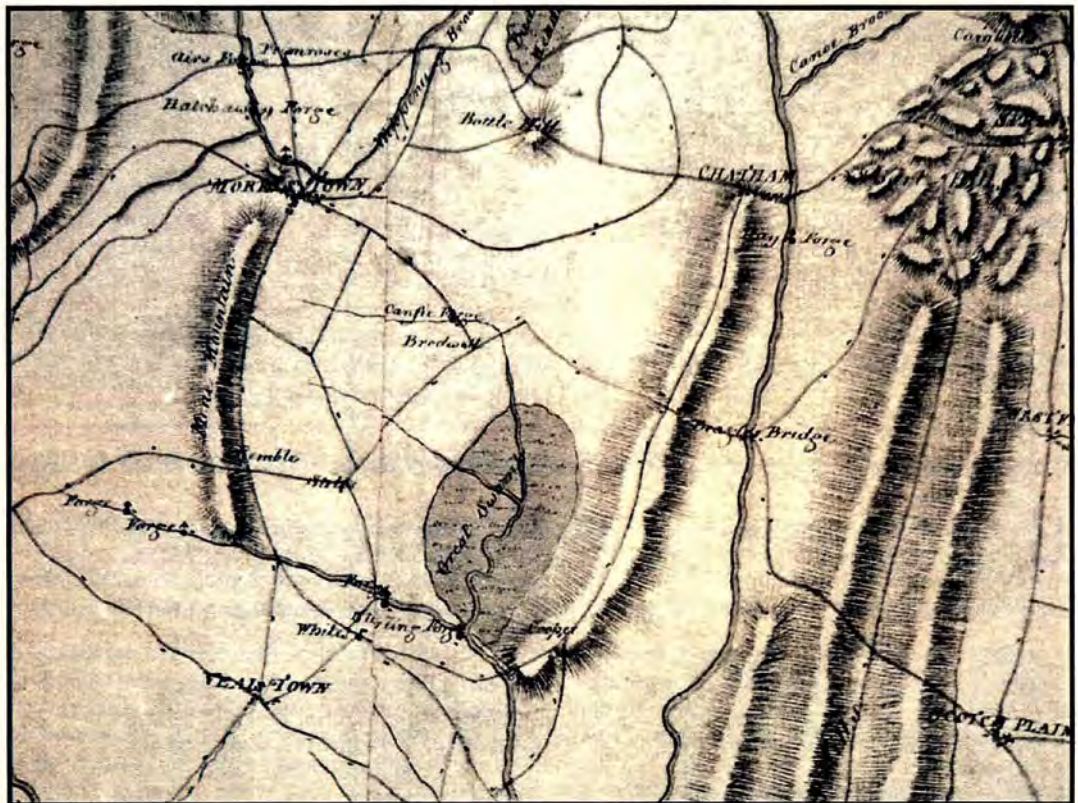
The illustration shows a small part of Lieut. Hills' map (with orientation unchanged), in which a central shaded, oval-shaped area is designated "Great Swamp", much as it might be on a present-day map. The 1781 copy also shows clearly the ridge of Long Hill, extending from the Passaic River at the lower edge of the shaded area upward to "CHATHAM". Farther to the right on the map is the north-flowing downstream reach of the Passaic River, as well as the two long ridges of First and Second Watchung Mountains.

Besides the upper reaches of the Passaic River, two streams of the Great Brook sub-watershed are shown on

the map. The energy of these streams was put to use as indicated by the five "forge" locations in the Great Swamp area. These forges were among many others that operated in Northern New Jersey during the area's iron-mining and iron-working heyday, and which were so important to the successful outcome of the Revolutionary War. The locations of several individual home or farm sites are also indicated on the map by family name. One that continues in current usage is "Kemble", to the left of the Great Swamp at the base of the ridge that still bears the name.

One geographical feature that is not shown on Lieut. Hills' map (except for the "Bottle Hill" feature where Madison now lies) is the ridge of Loantaka Moraine running between Chatham and Morristown. This feature may have been overlooked by Lieut. Hills because it is less topographically abrupt than Long Hill, the Watchung Mountains, and other ridges that he shows; but then as today it forms the northeasterly rim of the basin which gives definition to the Great Swamp. The Loantaka Moraine determined the placement of modern roadway and railway lines, which could hardly have been imagined by early mapmakers.

Looking back, we might imagine Lieut. Hills beholding the Great Swamp as an area with a heavy forest cover and vigorous population of wildlife. The dots he placed nearby on the map to show the towns of Vealtown (Bernardsville), Morristown, Chatham, Scotch Plains, and others were the early stages of European-pattern development. In his time the Great Swamp itself must have seemed an inhospitable area, not particularly attractive for settlement or development. Today we can rejoice that it has been preserved for the benefit of remaining wildlife and plant life species—and for a vastly expanded human population.



Note that the map must be rotated about 30 degrees clockwise for a north-south line to be straight up-and-down on the page.

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 384 members of the Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

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 coupon redeemable at the Friends Bookstore & Gift Shop for a Great Swamp pin or patch.

Friends of
Great Swamp
National Wildlife Refuge

AUGUST 2007

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.