

FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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Friends of Great Swamp Newsletter—Contributors

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News...

FRIENDS GRANT MONEY USED TO REFURBISH WILDLIFE OBSERVATION BLIND



Photo: L-R—Kathy Woodward, Marcia Rymer, Neil Borman, John Wilmot, Judy Schmidt, Lisa Molinari

Last year, the newly formed Friends of Great Swamp successfully applied for a grant provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The funds from the grant were used to help with the renovations to the Great Swamp Wildlife Observation Blind.

The blind, originally donated by the Garden Clubs of America in 1965, was in need of repair after more than three decades of wear.

The structure has now been made handicapped accessible with the installation of a 90-foot ramp. Changes to the interior of the blind include new benches, new viewing ports for wheelchairs, carpeting and paint. The observation blind overlooks a pond where herons and kingfishers feed and wood ducks breed. The Friends group is proud of its contribution to the continuing enhancement of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

YEAR 2000 REPORT— FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP

Our second year was a busy one for Friends of Great Swamp...

We...

- Moved into an office at 148 Pleasant Plains Road which includes a bookstore and gift shop, information center, meeting room, and auditorium for programs.
- Opened our Friends Bookstore and Gift Shop, which was staffed on Saturdays from September through December to greet visitors, answer questions, and share information and maps of the Refuge.
- Launched our web site at www.friendsofgreatswamp.org sponsored by Assumption School, Morristown. (continued on page 6)

*Learning about Swamp Life...***A RARE VISITOR TO THE SWAMP**

Standing outside the Friends Office and Bookstore in mid-February, we watched as a large hawk sailed low over the meadow.

A flash of white at the base of the tail.

A Northern harrier!

No... wait a minute. It doesn't look quite right.

Landing in a solitary tree, the hawk showed us a large dark belly band. Sure enough, it was a rough-legged hawk—a rare visitor to the Swamp.

The rough-legged hawk is a large buteo of the Arctic regions, cousin to the common red-tailed hawk. It gets its name because its legs are feathered down to the toes, an unusual feature in a hawk.

This hawk has two color phases – a light phase and a less common dark phase. All phases have a broad dark band across the chest and black patches on the underside of the wrist. A white patch at the base of the tail is a good field characteristic.

The rough-legged hunts for small



Photo: Larry Ridenhour, Reprinted with permission from U.S. Bureau of Land Management – Lower Snake River District

rodents over fields and typically hovers while searching for prey.

Note: The rough-legged hawks have been seen with some regularity during this winter on the Auto Tour Route at Great Swamp. It is a thrilling sight to see them soaring in the sky showing their characteristic black markings or hanging suspended over the fields searching for prey.

FRIENDS WANT LIST

Was Santa good to you this year? If Santa brought you new flatware (forks, spoons, knives) or a new microwave and you're struggling with where to store the old ones, we can help. They are desperately needed at our Friends Office building. We are also in need of a functional (small) copy machine.

If you are willing to donate any of these items to Friends of Great Swamp, our treasurer will be able to provide you with a receipt reflecting a reasonable value. Then you will have another contribution to deduct on your 2000 tax return. Call Judy at (908) 647-2508.

DONATIONS

Thanks to Wild Birds Unlimited, Scotch Plains we now have a bird feeder and bird seed for the Friends Office and Bookstore. Located right outside the Bookstore window, the feeder attracted a large number of birds during the fall season, to the continuing enjoyment of the Friends staffing the Bookstore as well as our visitors.

Best sighting – red-bellied woodpecker.

Most challenging sighting – immature white crowned sparrow.

*Event...***TURKEY WALK A RESOUNDING SUCCESS**

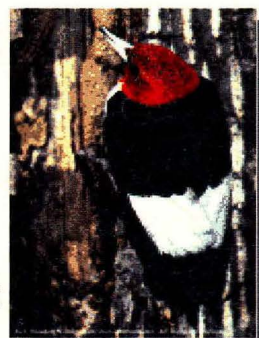
After a filling Thanksgiving feast, the Friends Turkey Walk, held Saturday November 25, was a great opportunity to exercise and enjoy the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

More than 50 Friends and visitors braved the brisk weather for a long walk around the wildlife impoundments. Although no one saw any turkeys, we enjoyed the changing scenery and running commentary by knowledgeable staff and volunteers.

The appearance of a red-headed woodpecker was a bonus!

The event was so well received, it has been dubbed the First Annual Friends Turkey Walk.

Join us November 24, 2001!



Red-Headed Woodpecker delights Turkey-Walkers!

What Friends Do...

FRIENDS VOLUNTEERS ARE PAINTERS...AND POETS

On January 6th and January 20th, 2001 Friends members joined Refuge staff in some much-needed painting at Refuge Headquarters.

Sprucing up Refuge Headquarters

by Judy Schmidt

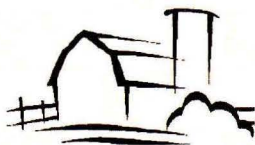
Refuge Headquarters is looking neat,
 As 9 of us did quite a feat.
 On January 6, with two shades of tan,
 We took the paint out of the can.
 We did the walls and ceiling too.
 When we were through, it looked brand new.
 There are 4 more rooms still to be done.
 If you want, you can join our fun.
 Just check our Web Site for the next date.
 Then call Judy at (908) 647-2508.



What Friends Do...

COME CELEBRATE EARTH WEEK 2001 AT THE SWAMP

- ✍ Would you like to do something worthwhile to celebrate Earth Week this April?
- ✍ Would you like to visit parts of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge not open to the public?
- ✍ Would you like to make new friends – and get a full body workout?
- ✍ Yes? Then join us April 28 for our Second Annual Homestead Cleanup.



When the Refuge was created, many homesteads were purchased and the buildings were demolished. However, debris was frequently left on the site. The purpose of the Homestead Cleanup is to help restore these sites to their natural condition. It is labor-intensive work—but a very satisfying effort.

Members and their friends will meet at 8:00 am on Saturday, April 28, 2001 at the refuge building (the cement building) which is located on White Bridge Road between New Vernon and Pleasant Plains roads. Drive down White Bridge Road and look for signs. Please wear boots and sturdy clothes including work gloves. Bring lunch—we'll provide drinks. Call Cleanup Coordinator Judy Schmidt at (908) 647-2508 for more information and to sign up.

What Friends Do...

FRIENDS EXTEND OPEN HOUSE TO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTERS

December 16th was a wet, drizzly day as members and friends of the Summit Nature Club participated in the 101st annual Christmas Bird Count sponsored by the National Audubon Society. Great Swamp NWR is a part of the Great Swamp-Watchung Ridges Circle, a 15-mile wide area which was first included in the Christmas Bird Count in 1945. Under the overall direction of Pete Axelrod, coordinator for the count, three teams were assigned to cover various parts of the Refuge, tallying the total number of each bird species seen.

The Friends extended an open house invitation to participants in the Great Swamp area to stop by for warmth and hot refreshment. Despite the dismal weather, the Swamp team led by Bill Boyle (author of *A Guide to Bird-Finding in New Jersey*) reported a LeConte's sparrow, a very rare bird in New Jersey. For more information about the Christmas Bird Count as well as the preliminary listing of the sightings from the 2000 count, visit www.birdsource.org. P.S. – Bill Boyle is currently working on a complete revision of his book to be published in 2002.

At the Bookstore...

NEW BOOKS AND GIFTS, NEW SPRING HOURS, AND LOTS OF VISITOR INFORMATION

- ◊ Watching the harriers cruise over the meadow during a sunny afternoon.
- ◊ Enjoying the deer, turkey, songbirds, woodchucks and other wildlife in the fields and wood-edges.
- ◊ Talking to the nicest people who are enjoying one of the nicest places – the Great Swamp.

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? Well, this is a typical day for Friends members who volunteer at the bookstore.

The Bookstore was open almost every Saturday from September through December with more than 300 visitors stopping by. Comments have been overwhelmingly positive – visitors to the Refuge are enthusiastic and appreciative at having information and volunteers available on weekends. However, in order to stay open on Saturdays in 2001, we need additional volunteers to help out in the bookstore.

If you are interested in spending a few hours on a Saturday, please let us know by calling Judy at (908) 647-2508. Hours are flexible and training is provided for all new volunteers.

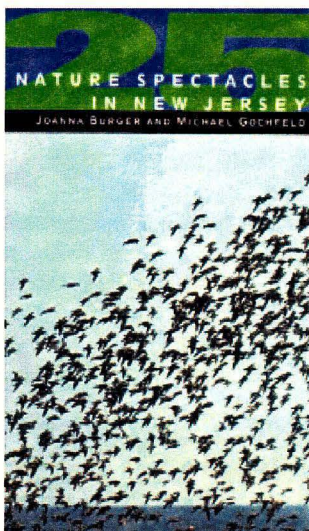
BOOKSTORE HOURS FOR SPRING 2001

The Friends Bookstore and Gift Shop will be open from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturdays beginning March 10th. Stop by—

- ◊ We have rest rooms and free coffee.
- ◊ We stock field guides and nature books for adults and children.
- ◊ We have gift items from local artists including pottery, bird note cards, feather pins, and, of course, T.R. Bear.
- ◊ We also have maps, brochures, Refuge checklists, and other interesting visitor information.



Photo: Whisper, the bookstore dog, and T.R. Bear relaxing with a good book.



BOOK NOOK...

Whether you get New Jersey wanderlust or enjoy armchair travel, a new book just released by Rutgers University Press gives you a variety of trips ranging geographically from Sunrise Mountain to Cape May and, seasonally, from chorusing frogs in our own Great Swamp NWR to migrant snow geese at Brigantine/Forsythe NWR.

The book is filled with information for a variety of readers. In each chapter, there is a thorough and interesting description of the natural event, where to observe the spectacle, and how and when to get to the location. The facts are fascinating yet very readable. Nice additions include an appendix of scientific name and supplemental readings about each subject.

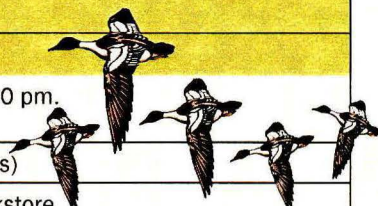
The new book is titled *25 Nature Spectacles in New Jersey* by Joanna Burger and Michael Gochfeld.

Now available at our Friends Bookstore and Gift Shop – and remember Friends members receive a 10% discount on all purchases.





DATES TO REMEMBER

March

March 10		Spring Re-Opening of Friends Bookstore and Gift Shop – 11:00 am–5:00 pm. New books and gift items—Calendars and selected items on Sale!
March 17, 24, 31		Friends Bookstore and Gift Shop open – 11:00 am–5:00 pm. (Saturdays)
March 20		Friends Board of Directors Meeting. 7:15 pm – Friends Office and Bookstore.



April

April 1	 Member Event	Spring into the Watershed, Noon – 4:00 pm. Conservation related exhibits, tours, demonstrations at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters at 152 Pleasant Plains Road and at Friends Office and Bookstore at 148 Pleasant Plains Road.
April 7, 14, 21, 28		11:00 am–5:00 pm. Friends Bookstore and Gift Shop open. Special refuge tours scheduled each Saturday. Meet at 1:30 at Friends Office and Bookstore, 148 Pleasant Plains Road.
April 7	 Member Event	Annual Great Swamp NWR clean-up. 8:30 am–12:30 pm; meet at Refuge Headquarters. Bring your friends, family, and co-workers. This event is coordinated by the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. For more information call Tom McFadden at 973-425-1222 (ext. 14). (Rain date is April 14 th).
April 1, 8, 22, 29		11am–4:00 pm Guided walks at Great Swamp NWR Wildlife Observation Center. Information available at Refuge Headquarters.
April 17		Friends Board of Directors Meeting. 7:15 pm – Friends Office and Bookstore.
April 18	 Member Event	7:00 pm–9:00 pm Frog walk at Friends of Great Swamp Office and Bookstore. Rain date, April 25. (see story on the cover of this issue)
April 28	 Member Event	8:00 am. Second Annual Homestead Cleanup. Meet at refuge building (the cement building) on White Bridge Road between New Vernon and Pleasant Plains roads—look for signs (see story on page 3 of this issue)


May

Saturdays in May		Friends Bookstore and Gift Shop open – 11:00 am–5:00 pm.
May 8		2003 Centennial Joint Planning Meeting. 7:15 pm – Friends Office and Bookstore.
May 12		International Bird Migratory Day.
May 15		Friends Board of Directors Meeting. 7:15 pm – Friends Office and Bookstore.



June–September

Saturdays in June		Friends Bookstore and Gift Shop open – 11:00 am–5:00 pm.
June 19		Friends Board of Directors Meeting. 7:15 pm – Friends Office and Bookstore.
July 17		Friends Board of Directors Meeting. 7:15 pm – Friends Office and Bookstore.
August 21		Friends Board of Directors Meeting. 7:15 pm – Friends Office and Bookstore.
September 18		Friends Board of Directors Meeting. 7:15 pm – Friends Office and Bookstore.

October

October 14-20	 Member Event	National Wildlife Refuge Week. Sunset walks— watch for more information.
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November

November 1	 Member Event	Deadline for 2001 Photo Contest.
November 24	 Member Event	2 nd Annual Turkey Walk— watch for more information.

FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ABOUT FRIENDS GROUP EVENTS
VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.FRIENDSOFGREATSWAMP.ORG

HAPPENINGS ON THE REFUGE — AN UPDATE FROM PAUL STEBLEIN, DEPUTY REFUGE MANAGER

Since publication of the last Friends' newsletter, I have had the opportunity to savor the "Swamp" in its true natural splendor. The Great Swamp is a green oasis in the developed sprawl of northern New Jersey. However, at any time of day or night, you can hear the drone of traffic from nearby highways and the whine of aircraft flying to and from the airports of New York City. During two winter storms in the last couple of months, mother nature shut down the highways and airways, and buffered any other sounds with a blanket of snow. It was exciting being out in the storm to only hear the sound of wind and blowing trees, and only smell the fresh snow. It's great to be here! And yes, we do have some other happenings on the Refuge.

Renovations at the Refuge Headquarters Continues

There is a clear improvement in the look of Headquarters these days, thanks to the great help of staff and volunteers. All of the offices with carpeting have had their walls patched and painted, old carpeting removed, and new carpet installed. The exhibit hallway has also been repainted with the handy expertise of Friends. The remodeled offices are being put back in order before completing the final leg of the renovations. Two areas still slated for work are the lunch room with back offices and the conference room. Again, thank you to the Friends and volunteers who came out on two Saturdays to make a difference.

Fewer Bumps on the Headquarters Access Road

You have probably noticed that the access road to the Refuge Headquarters is smoother than it used to be. The paving work was completed last November by a contractor. Refuge staff began the construction of drainage ditches on the sides of the road, which will be finished this spring. The construction area will be seeded with native plants, so it should look "natural" by early summer.

Funding for Habitat Restoration from Asbestos Landfill

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff from Great Swamp NWR and the New Jersey Field Office of Ecological Services have completed a Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment. The plan spells out how the Service plans on using funds resulting from a court settlement for a natural resource damage assessment involving the Asbestos Dump Superfund Site (Operational Unit 3). The majority of funds from the \$4.5 million settlement will be used to acquire land for the Great Swamp NWR and restore habitat. Additional funding will be reserved for removing abandoned buildings and restoring habitat on those disturbed sites, controlling invasive species, constructing a boardwalk for public use, and implementation of a grant program for conservation projects off of Refuge lands. Several projects are slated to be completed this calendar year. Although the deadline for public comment on the plan is February 26, 2001, the plan will still be available for review at Refuge Headquarters, or I can send you a copy by e-mail in PDF format (viewable with Adobe Acrobat Reader).

Paul F. Steblein
Refuge Manager, Deputy
Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
P: 973-425-1222, x16
E: paul_steblein@fws.gov

DID YOU KNOW...

- ? Pelican Island, off the coast of Florida, was the first National Wildlife Refuge. It was dedicated in 1903. The Refuge System will be 100 years old in two years.
- ? In 1976, Great Swamp NWR had 3 known pairs of nesting bluebirds. Now, we have one of the largest breeding populations in New Jersey with 160 bluebird boxes on the Refuge.
- ? Squirrels can jump 8 feet sideways, 4 feet straight up, and more than 15 feet down. (Good luck putting up bird feeders!)
- ? Spring peepers, which make a real racket on warm spring nights, are only $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.
- ? Blue jays stash food in the ground and are probably more important in replanting oak forests than squirrels.

Event...

WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR FIRST ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST

Congratulations to the winners of the 1st annual photo contest! The Friends received many wonderful photographs of the Great Swamp and its wildlife. And the winners are...

Best Wildlife Photo – Teresa Lee, Green Village. Teresa took her prize-winning photo of a green heron at the boardwalk entrance to the Wildlife Observation Center. Teresa was almost as surprised as the heron, but she still managed to snap this prize-winning shot. Teresa visits the Great Swamp almost every weekend but will be moving to Europe in the near future.

The Friends Choice Award – Rosemary Spadaro, Basking Ridge. Rosemary took this contest seriously! She, and husband Joe, visited the Great Swamp on many occasions at various times of day to take photos, including one trip at 5:00 am to watch the sun come up! Rosemary's winning photo of the small blind at the Wildlife Observation Center is quite unusual – it's a beautiful sunny day, but there are no people in the photo. Rosemary says she visited the blind several times in order to capture it without anyone on the boardwalk. This is Rosemary's first photo contest and she is ready to start defending her title.



Photo (L-R) Rosemary Spadaro, Kathy Woodward, Theresa Lee (kneeling)

Best Landscape Photo – Kathy Woodward, Chatham Township. Kathy is a frequent visitor to the swamp. She took her photo on what she describes as a "typical New Jersey Fall day" looking west from the bridge on Pleasant Plains Road. Kathy commented "I do think the Swamp is a place of great beauty. Capturing that is so hard." Kathy plans to keep taking pictures, especially in the Swamp.

Special Thanks to Colonial Camera Shop

Friends of Great Swamp thanks Colonial Camera Shop for their generous support of our photo contest. The Framery, the custom framing division of Colonial Camera, managed by Stephanie Guidetti, provided six custom-framed photos (enlargements done at the Fuji Corporation lab in Hackensack NJ) —one for each of the winners and a set for the Friends office and Bookstore.

Owner Bill Judge is a photographer himself and a frequent visitor to the Great Swamp. "It's a relaxing place to go and get away from it all," he says. "I just love to go sit in the blind and watch." Colonial Camera is a fascinating place to visit. Located in the Village Shopping Center in New Providence, they offer a wide range of camera and photo services, processing, digital imaging center, frames and, of course, custom framing. All framing work is done on the premises.

“
*I do think the
Swamp is a place of
great beauty.
Capturing that is so
hard...*
”

Visit Colonial Camera and tell them you are a Friend!

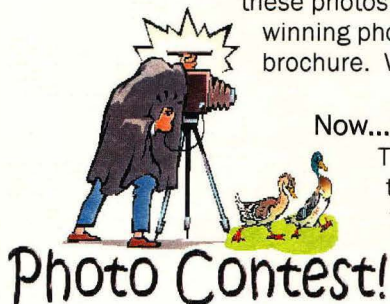


The custom-framed enlargements of the three winning photos are on display in the Friends office and Bookstore; these photos may also be seen on our web site at www.friendsofgreatswamp.org. Rosemary Spadaro's winning photo of the small blind also graces the centerfold of our just published Friends of Great Swamp brochure. Watch for your copy in the mail soon!

Now... get your cameras ready!

The second annual photo contest has already begun! The rules are the same as last year – (1) the photo must be taken within the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (2) amateur photographers only (3) give us the story behind the photo (4) deadline is November 1, 2001.

More details will be available on our web site and in future issues of the newsletter. But don't wait – spring is a great time for great shots in the Great Swamp. Yours may be one of the prize-winning photos for 2001!



*What Friends Do...***A THANK YOU LETTER TO THE FRIENDS...**

One of the benefits of being a Friends member is the opportunity to help visitors enjoy the Swamp. Here is a thank-you letter from one group who visited with us last October.

*Dear Mrs. Laurel and Ms. Judy
Thank you for sharing your time and knowledge of the Great
Swamp Wildlife Refuge with the Cub Scouts of
Pack 22, Saint Thomas the Apostle, in Bloomfield,
New Jersey.*

*The boys enjoyed seeing the film, the very high
flying snow geese, bluebirds and the boardwalk
hike.*

*Most amazing was the beaver captured that morn-
ing by the biologist. It was very thoughtful of him
to explain and answer questions about the beaver.*

*Thanks again for the program, and for staying
with us most of the day. I didn't expect it and it
was most appreciated by the boys who affection-
ately refer to you as Judy and the Swamp ladies.*

*Sincerely,
Jim Mulligan
Pack 22
Saint Thomas the Apostle
Bloomfield, New Jersey 07003*

December 4, 2000

Pack 22
Saint Thomas the Apostle
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
152 Pleasant Plain Road
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Dear Mrs. Laurel and Ms. Judy,

Thank you for sharing your time and knowledge of the Great Swamp Wildlife
Refuge with the Cub Scouts of Pack 22, Saint Thomas the Apostle in
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The boys enjoyed seeing the film, the very high flying snow geese, bluebirds
and the boardwalk hike.

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Thank you again for the program and staying with us most of the day. I didn't
expect it and was most appreciated by the boys who affectionately refer to you
and Judy as the Swamp Ladies.

Sincerely,

Jim Mulligan

Pack 22
Saint Thomas the Apostle
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

*Matthew Nicinich
Donna
Jimmy Mulligan*

Daniel Kochka

Matthew Hyle

Kevin H. Lewis

Brian Tedoff

*Michael
Kochka*

YEAR 2000 REPORT (CONT'D)

- Wrote a successful grant application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Used grant monies to stock our bookstore, purchase educational displays, and help with restoration of the blind at the Wildlife Observation Center.
- Hosted Sunset Walks on six evenings during National Wildlife Refuge Week.
- Published a quarterly newsletter.
- Led numerous guided tours for groups of all ages.
- Held membership programs including a Fall Open House, Night Sounds lecture and walk, Photo Contest, post-Thanksgiving Turkey Walk.
- Worked with the Refuge staff on Projects including Homestead Clean-up, work projects at Refuge Headquarters.

It was an eventful year and we'd like to thank all of our members who, through their support, contributed to these achievements. As we move into 2001, we are looking forward to meeting more members at events, at work projects, and through visits to our office / bookstore.

Kathy Woodward, President

The good news is the Friends Groups keeps growing, and growing, and growing!

We now have over 225 members with new members signing up every month. We would like to extend our welcome to all of our new members and thank our second year members for renewing their membership.

To those who have not yet renewed, won't you take a moment now to fill out the Annual Membership Form below and send it along with your check? We really do appreciate your support. Without you, there would not be a Friends Group.

FRIENDS OF GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership offers ways to get involved at many different levels. Members...

- receive a quarterly newsletter
- have opportunities to participate in special events
- contribute to the improvement of the refuge for all visitors.

If you would like to become a member of the Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, please fill out the information on this form, and mail with your check to

Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
152 Pleasant Plains Road, Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920

Yearly Membership

Membership Type ☐ Family ^{\$25} ☐ Individual ^{\$15}

Renewal? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Membership is tax deductible!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

E-Mail Address _____

Occupation (Optional) _____

I would be interested in volunteering (check one or more)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buildings & Grounds | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sales/Bookstore | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs & Events |

The Friends is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation as defined under the laws of the state of New Jersey and the U.S. Internal Revenue Service under section 501-(c)-(3).

MARCH 2001 NEWSLETTER

Spring
Issue...Open
Now!

Friends of **Great Swamp** National Wildlife Refuge



FREE CONCERT

When: April 18th, 7-9:00 pm

Where: Meet at the Friends Office and Bookstore, 148 Pleasant Plains Road

Who: Performance by the frog chorus of Great Swamp.

Following an introduction by Mike Horne, Refuge biologist, we will go out and enjoy the spring songs of the frogs and toads of the Great Swamp. By evenings end, you will be able to identify the many singers of the spring night chorus. No reservations necessary. Rain date: April 25th.

There's lots more going on at the refuge—see inside!