

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Headquarters:
Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
241 Pleasant Plains Road
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920
973/425 1222
www.fws.gov/northeast/greatswamp

Helen C. Fenske Visitor Center
32 Pleasant Plains Road
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920
973/425 0215

Federal Relay Center
for the deaf and hard-of-hearing
1 800/877 8339

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>

September 2008



Great Swamp

*National Wildlife
Refuge*





*Great Swamp
National Wildlife
Refuge, established
in 1960, lies 26 miles
west of New York City's
Times Square and
seven miles south
of Morristown,
New Jersey.*

Monarch butterfly
© John and Karen Hollingsworth

Wood duck, cover photo
James Prince, USFWS

Welcome

Swamp woodland, hardwood ridges, cattail marsh, and grassland typify this approximately 7,700-acre refuge. The Swamp contains many large old oak and beech trees, stands of mountain laurel, mosses and ferns and species of many other plants of both northern and southern botanical zones.

The refuge has identified more than 244 species of birds according to their seasonal occurrence. Mammals found on the Refuge include the white-tailed deer, river otter, muskrat, mink, beaver, raccoon, skunk, red fox, coyote, woodchuck, gray squirrel, opossum, cottontail rabbit, and the federally endangered Indiana bat. An interesting variety of fish, reptiles, and amphibians, including the federally threatened bog turtle and the state endangered blue-spotted salamander, are also found on the refuge. The following lists are available at refuge headquarters: Bird, Mammal, Reptile, Amphibian & Fish, and Wildflower.



Origin of Great Swamp

Roughly 25,000 years ago, where the Wisconsin Glacier reached its furthest point south and stopped, the creation of Great Swamp began.

The melting glacier withdrew northward leaving a barren landscape of sand and gravel strewn in long ridges that blocked the outlet of an ancient river basin. Water, melted from the glacier, flowed into the basin behind this natural dam to form Lake Passaic—a giant lake, 30 miles long and 10 miles wide.

Eventually, the retreating glacier uncovered a second outlet at what is now Little Falls Gap, and the lake waters drained out along the Passaic River. The lake disappeared and was eventually replaced by extensive marshes and swamps which would be named Black Meadows, Great Piece Meadows, Lee Meadows, Troy Meadows, Long Meadow, Bog and Vly Meadows, Hatfield Swamp, and Great Swamp.

History

For a barrel of rum, 15 kettles, 4 pistols, 4 cutlasses plus other goods, and 30 pounds cash, the Delaware Indians in 1708 deeded a 30,000-acre tract, including the Great Swamp, to English investors.

Later, settlements dotted the area and during the Revolutionary War local settlers fashioned wagon wheel parts with wood cut from the Great Swamp. By 1844, farms appeared on cleared uplands; farmers drained marshlands; and “foul meadow hay” became a major crop.

Small farming operations such as these became uneconomical and gradually disappeared. Consequently, much of the cleared upland returned to woods and the lower flat areas reverted to swampland. Various modern uses have been planned for Great Swamp: flood control in the 1920s; drainage projects

in the 1930s; and a major jet airport proposal in 1959.

It was the threat of the jetport that enabled the Great Swamp Committee of the North American Wildlife Foundation to muster the aid of a significant number of volunteers. This effort raised more than a million dollars to purchase nearly 3,000 acres, which were donated to the Department of the Interior. These acres formed the nucleus of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Through the years, additional acres have been added to the original tract. In 1966, the refuge was designated a Registered National Natural landmark.

Refuge Management

Wildlife Management

Great Swamp was established as an area to provide migration, nesting and feeding habitat for migratory birds. The western half of the refuge is intensively managed to maintain optimum habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Water levels are regulated; grasslands and brush are mowed periodically to maintain habitat and species diversity; nesting structures for wood ducks, bluebirds, and other birds are provided; other habitat management practices are employed; and research studies are conducted. To minimize disturbance to wildlife, public access in this area is limited to Pleasant Plains Road and trails at the Wildlife Observation Center.

Wilderness Area

The eastern half of the refuge was designated by Congress as a National Wilderness Area in 1968. This was the first Wilderness Area on Department of Interior lands. Generally, no permanent structures, motorized vehicles, or equipment are allowed. Even mechanized forms of transportation such as bicycles are not allowed. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked hard to

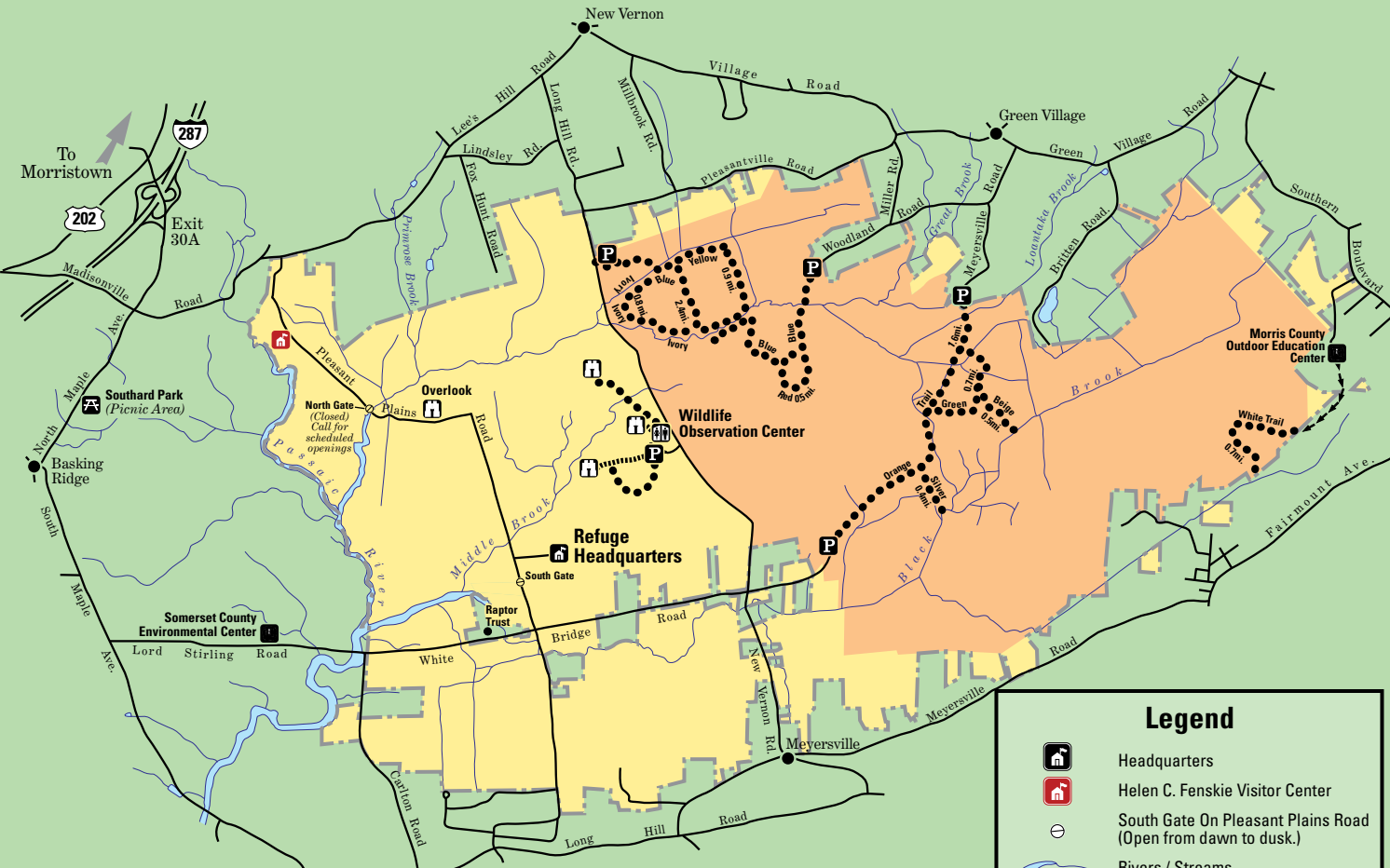
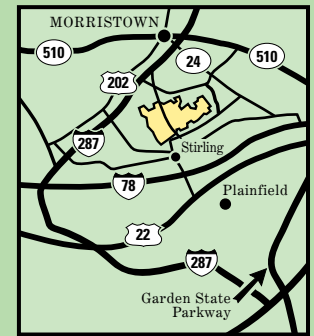
James Prince, USFWS



Great Swamp

National Wildlife Refuge

Morris County, New Jersey

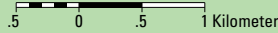
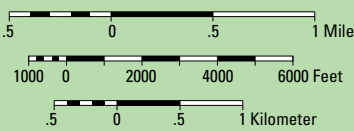


Legend

- Headquarters
- Helen C. Fenskie Visitor Center
- South Gate On Pleasant Plains Road (Open from dawn to dusk.)
- Rivers / Streams
- Parking Lots
- Wilderness Area
- Management Area
- Heated Comfort Station
- Refuge Boundary
- Observation / Photo Blind
- Trails
- Boardwalk Trail

Hikers Note

Beginning or End of Trail (Trail symbol only, Not on Map)



remove remaining traces of man such as roads, old house sites and dumps. Drained wetlands were restored. The Wilderness Area provides a more primitive outdoor experience for the general public and serves as an outdoor classroom and laboratory. Hiking on approximately eight and a half miles of trails or free roaming is permitted. By limiting use in this sensitive area to foot travel, the wilderness experience can be preserved.

Visitor Activities

People are encouraged to observe, study, photograph, and walk with nature in designated public areas. The best times for observing wildlife are early morning and late afternoon. Because of large numbers of visitors in spring and fall, wildlife viewing on Sunday afternoon is often less rewarding.

Waterproof footgear or old sneakers are recommended during most seasons in the Wilderness Area. Mosquitoes, ticks, and deer flies may be numerous from May to September, so insect repellent and protective clothing are advisable. Ticks can transmit Lyme disease, which has been found in the area.

Wildlife Observation

The wildlife observation center, located off Long Hill Road, is particularly good for photography and wildlife observation. It has approximately one mile of trails, an interpretive trail, an informational kiosk, blinds for observing wildlife, and restrooms. Please, quietly stay on the boardwalk to avoid disturbing wildlife so others may also have a chance to view the wildlife. Pleasant Plains Road, from refuge headquarters to Great Brook Bridge, is also particularly good for viewing wildlife in varied habitats from your vehicle.



Great horned owl

© Dr. E.R. Degginger, FPSA

Tours

To prevent groups from disturbing one another and the wildlife, all groups are encouraged to schedule their visit with the office. Groups of 10–15 individuals may schedule a guided tour. Movies and slide talks can also be scheduled for groups of up to 50. There are no regularly scheduled programs.

We Need Your Help

Wildlife have no restrictions. They have free run of the entire refuge, day

and night, because this is their home; people, as visitors, must be regulated.

Hours

Visitors are permitted only in the designated areas during daylight hours, unless otherwise posted.

Trails

are open to foot travel only.

Pets

must be on a leash not exceeding 10 feet and are permitted only along Pleasant Plains Road and in parking areas.

Vehicles

should be parked only in designated areas.

Collecting,

disturbing, or destroying plants, animals, or parts thereof, is prohibited.

Camping

Camping is not permitted on the refuge. Two county parks in the area that do allow camping by permit are Mahlon Dickerson and Lewis Morris. For information, contact the Morris County Park Commission at 973/326 7600.

Litter

Please don't—maybe you can recycle it! Picnicking is not permitted.

You are responsible for knowing all refuge regulations. If you are unsure, please inquire at headquarters.

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge exists today because people care what happens to wild animals and natural places.

Bog turtle

Courtesy Rutgers University



Visitor Information Refuge headquarters is located on Pleasant Plains Road. Office hours are from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. During spring and fall, the refuge headquarters may be open additional hours. Please call ahead for information. This general leaflet is also available in Braille for loan-out only.

Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center, operated by the Morris County Park Commission, is located on the eastern side of the refuge off Southern Boulevard in Chatham Township. The Center offers a varied

natural science program of classes and guided tours and provides one mile of trail and boardwalk for the public. Details can be obtained at the center. Telephone 973/635 6629.

The Environmental Education Center, operated by the Somerset County Park Commission, is located on the western border of the refuge in Lord Stirling Park. The park has a varied program of environmental education courses, guided field trips, and 8½ miles of walking trail. For details, telephone 908/766 2489.

Robert Johnson, USFWS

