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# WALLKILL RIVER VIEW

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## Friends of Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge Newsletter



Friends volunteers have been active during the year: helping with trail cleanups, educating people about the refuge and the wildlife it protects, offering a variety of public programs, and supporting the work of the staff. There is much more planned in the coming months. Read on about future programs, volunteer opportunities, and projects.

Winter River View from  
Winding Waters Trail

Photo by Karen VanDyk

**Friends Members Make the Difference.**

**Have you renewed your membership? Thank you.**

## Upcoming Events

**Winter Fest** December 9th  
 Annual nature craft workshop. Adults can make evergreen swag and children have several crafts and activities to do. Register for a workshop time. Free for members

**Winter Raptor** December 30th  
 The indoor presentation with live raptors, followed by outdoor bird watch at Liberty Marsh.

# Winter Fest

at Wallkill River NWR



**Crafting from Nature for Adults and Children**

**Hot chocolate Treats**



Register online for one of 2 workshops  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0948A9AF2BA5FB6-winter4>

Suggested donation \$5 per adult crafter; free for Friends members and children. New members welcome!

Suggest adults bring garden/work gloves

Create natural decorations for your home

**Saturday, December 9** 136 Owens Station Road, Sussex, NJ

Register for the **10:30** or **11:30 AM** workshop

All are invited to celebrate the season and come for a day of nature crafts. Workshop times will start at 10:30 AM and 11:30 AM. All materials are supplied and instruction for adults to make an evergreen swag. Activities and crafts for kids to make a deer or color a winter scene. For more information:

Phone (973)702-7266 ext. 15

Website [www.friendsofwallkillriver.org](http://www.friendsofwallkillriver.org)



**Vote Your Favorite Photo in Refuge Contest.** December 1st – 15th.  
 Photos submitted this year for the contest can be viewed and voted for on the Friends’ Facebook page.

Can view Contest photos on website:  
<https://karensnatureandfamilyphot.smugmug.com/Folder-Wallkill-River-National/Friends-of-WRNWR-2023-Photo-Contest/n-qkr23f>




## Winter Raptors

**Saturday, December 30 2 pm**

136 Owens Station Road, Sussex, NJ

Indoor presentation on the hawks and owls found in the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge featuring **live raptors**. Suggested donation of \$2 per person, \$5 per family. Following the talk, participants can travel to Liberty Loop to view raptors in the refuge. Bring binoculars and dress warmly for outdoor part.

FREE to current Friends Members.  
 New Members Welcome

friendsofwallkillriver.org

(973)702-7266 ext 15

**IN 2024:** Great Backyard Bird Count, Wallkill River Watershed and Aquatic Life, Walk in the Woods: all about Trees, Planting Native & more

## Construction for Climate Resiliency

Like most areas in New Jersey, the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge has seen severe and damaging impacts from storms affecting our trail system throughout the refuge. The Refuge was impacted by back-to-back heavy rain events in 2018 which led to widespread flooding throughout the region. Multiple trails within the Refuge were inundated with flood waters for several days and multiple culverts which cross the Dagmar Dale Nature trail either failed or sustained structural damage from the flood event. The Liberty loop trail experienced water flooding the wetland impoundments and overtopping the trail system. Portions of the Winding Waters Trail embankment eroded into the river.

**Trail repairs planned for 2024 will require trail closures, which will be announced when the project schedule is set.**

The Refuge, along with our partners at the Federal Lands Highway Division of the Highway Administration, received funding to repair portions of the Liberty Loop, Dagmar Dale and Winding Waters nature trails. The proposed repairs on the Dagmar Dale Nature trail will involve replacing failed culverts which cross under the trail, resurfacing and regrading damaged portions of the trail surface, and installing confinement systems along trail soft spots. Repairs on the Liberty Loop Trail will involve deep patch repairs of trail side slopes, installation of a cellular confinement system, repair and rehabilitation of the trail surface, and turf re-establishment. Where segments of the Winding Waters Trail embankment eroded into the river, work will involve rehabilitating and resurfacing impacted portions of the trail surface and turf re-establishment. All proposed work would occur within areas previously disturbed by the original construction of each trail.



Damaged culvert on Dagmar Dale trail

This large-scale trail construction project is anticipated to start in the spring or early summer of 2024. The project will impact the short-term access to portions of the trails during construction and we ask that you please obey any trail closures during this project. Our end goal is to create a stronger, safer and more climate resilient trail system for you and future refuge visitors.

-Anna Harris, Deputy Refuge Manager

## ASTRONOMY AT THE REFUGE

Are you interested in learning more about Astronomy? We need volunteers for the upcoming 2024 season of Astronomy programs at the Refuge. A small group of astronomers has been hosting monthly observing sessions at Owens Station during the spring, summer, and fall, which have been popular.

We would welcome additional volunteers to focus a telescope on features of the night sky. The group will train volunteers in how to use a telescope and teach them interesting objects that can be seen in the night sky that are visible during the different seasons. This will include constellations, the Moon, the planets, double stars, star clusters, galaxies, and nebulae.

You don't need to be able to teach astronomy to the public, we just need someone to operate the telescope. Anyone interested, please contact the Friends at 973-702-7266 ext. 15 or Richard Huber on 516-578-1521.



Night Sky Photo by William Smisko

## PURPLE MARTIN COLONY

After the first successful year of the new colony at Owens Station, the martins returned to occupy all 18 nesting cavities with a total of 78 eggs laid. Then a Cooper's Hawk started harassing and catching the birds. Many abandoned their nests and eggs. A few tried to re-nest. There were a total of 98 eggs laid, 48 hatched, and 33 fledged for a 30% egg to fledge rate.

-Tom Millard, volunteer

Thank you to our volunteers that pitched in through the year along the trails, at our programs, at the Visitor Contact Station, monitoring nesting birds, working in the gardens, and so much more.

## JEAN'S POLLINATOR GARDEN

Calling all gardeners who would like to help us revive the garden at Owens Station. We are looking to do the usual spring cleaning and then seed and plant native species to attract bees, butterflies, and birds. If you are interested in volunteering or finding out more, please email [walkillfriends@gmail.com](mailto:walkillfriends@gmail.com)

Photos by Nancy Vala



## FRIENDS NATURE SHOP

Volunteers are opening the Friends' shop on Sundays in December from 11AM to 2 PM. It will also be open Saturday, December 9th during Winter Fest.

There are newly added items, gifts for the nature lover, and items unique to Walkkill River National Wildlife Refuge. Members receive a 10% discount. Purchases help to support projects in the refuge.



## Friends of Walkkill River National Wildlife Refuge Membership

Your support makes it possible for the Friends to continue with programs and projects. Friends of Walkkill River National Wildlife Refuge is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. All donations are tax-deductible.



### Membership Application

New member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Corporate membership: \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Family membership: \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Individual membership: \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

Senior/Student membership: \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

Tax-deductible Donation \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Mark here for gift membership

Please print:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

How would you like to receive our newsletter mail or email? *Thank you for your support.*

Memberships are valid from January 1 through December 31 of each year.

Please make checks payable to **Friends of Walkkill River NWR**

Mail to : 1547 County Route 565 ♦ Sussex, NJ 07461

Joining the Friends has many benefits:

- Your dues provide the funds for programs and conservation projects
- Members receive a 10% discount at the Friend's Nature Shop
- Access to members-only events
- Early sign-up for registration programs