

# WALLKILL RIVER VIEW

## Friends of Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge Newsletter



Liberty Marsh photo by Nancy Vala

### Have you renewed your membership?

Thank you for supporting the work being done in the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge. Renew or join with the Membership form on page 5.

### Facebook and Instagram

Check out updates, photos, and activities on the Friends Facebook and Instagram accounts.



## Friends Programs & Events

The Friends have been active providing public programs, contributing to the work being done in the refuge for wildlife, and organizing volunteers to accomplish a variety of tasks. Volunteers help with programs, check the trails, clean up litter, work in the pollinator garden, plant native plants, monitor nesting birds, open the Visitor Contact Station, and more.



### From the Friends Board

2025 was a busy year for the Friends. We held our annual programs starting with the Great Backyard Bird Count, held each February. Our programs through the year explored trees, birds, frogs, snakes, native plants, invertebrates, water quality, nature photography, and reached to the stars with our astronomy nights. We plan to continue our programs and add to them. A new addition in summer 2025 were “Family Fridays” where we invited children and their parents to participate in activities in nature. This event also ties in with our Junior Refuge Manager Program that can be done by families on their own or by participating in the programs we offer. You can find out more about the programs on our website, Facebook page, or visit the Contact Station at Owens Station Crossing.

One message we want to convey is that this refuge was established to protect the wildlife, the habitat, and the watershed. This benefits all of us whether it is providing open spaces where people can observe wildlife, enjoy walking the trails, or live in a healthier environment.

Let us know about your experiences: animals you have seen, sights and sounds of this wild land. Please share this message with others, including your government representatives. Wallkill River NWR is protected public land that offers a multitude of benefits. Let them know how you enjoy this land and its wildlife and why it is worth protecting for future generations.

### Jean’s Pollinator Garden: Join the Mugwort Mob



Last spring, in partnership with Rutgers Environmental Steward Alison Rohde and Friends volunteers started Mugwort Mob, a group dedicated to reviving Jean’s Garden at Owens Station Crossing in the refuge. Volunteers spent much of the spring removing mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) and other invasives to create space for native plants that support our local wildlife. By the end of the summer season these efforts began to pay off, with visitors to the garden reporting an uptick in birds, insects, and other wildlife taking advantage of the increased diversity of plant life. The Mugwort Mob was forced to go on a brief pause during the government shutdown but will be planning more events in the coming year.

If you’d like to help us as we continue to improve the garden, learn about native plants and habitat restoration, and be a part of a wonderful group of people, we would love to have you.

**Calling all gardeners who would like to help 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 [wallkillfriends@gmail.com](mailto:wallkillfriends@gmail.com)**

# ATLANTIC WHITE CEDAR BOG RESTORATION

**Lachlin Robertson, Wildlife Refuge Specialist**



This summer Wallkill River NWR partnered with East Stroudsburg University on the propagation of Atlantic White Cedars (AWC). I am happy to say that this partnership has led to the successful rooting of 65 out of 170 Atlantic white cedar cuttings. These 65 cuttings were once branches but are now individual saplings which will be planted in our rare, threatened, Atlantic white cedar bog for restoration purposes. Having the ability to create saplings from branches allows us to keep the AWCs' local ecotype as the dominant ecotype, which should also make restoration plantings more likely to be successful. I look forward to giving more updates on our Atlantic white cedar bog.



## Purple Martin Colonies

Wallkill River NWR volunteers have established purple martin colonies near the Dagmar Dale Trail and Owens Station Crossing. Both locations were active with nesting birds in 2025.

The largest of our native swallows, the martins winter in South America and begin their migration north in the winter months.

The purple martins returned early in 2025 with the first adult spotted at Owens Station on March 29th, timed perfectly with our Annual Members Meeting that day. Nesting activity started with the first egg laid May 18. By June, 46 nests at both locations were active. In total 218 eggs were counted. 150 young fledged from the nests.

The job of getting the martin house and gourds ready and the frequent nest checks are accomplished by volunteers. Thanks to Tom Millard, Tom Haas, Linda and Arty Scrima for their work tending to the colonies.

← continued



# Wallkill River NWR 2025 Photo Contest

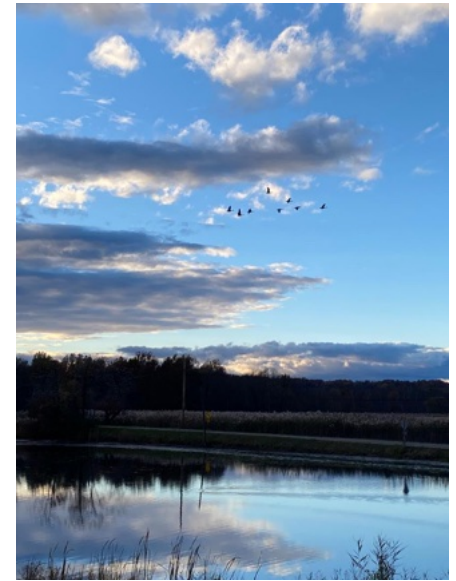
Pictured on this page are the first place winners in the four categories of this past year's photo contest. The annual contest invites all to submit their digital photos taken anywhere in the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge.



Camera Landscape by Dave Murphy



Camera Wildlife by Nancy Vala



Cell Phone Wildlife by Betty Scymanski



Cell Phone Landscape by Lorraine Trestka

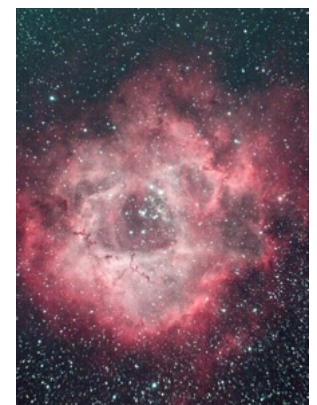


## Friends Nature Shop

Winter hours for the nature shop are variable and dependent on the weather. It is open whenever we have a program at the Owens Station location. Other hours will be posted on the Friends Facebook page.

## Astronomy Programs

Monthly astronomy programs will be held once the warmer temperatures have returned. People are welcome to bring their own telescopes and binoculars for star-gazing. Refuge volunteers will have other telescopes set up for all to use. Bring the family for a night under the stars. (Photo by Rich Huber of Rosette Nebula)



# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Contributor Levels

Seniors \$10 Bog Turtle \_\_\_\_\_

Students \$10 Bobcat \_\_\_\_\_

Individual \$20 Dragonfly \_\_\_\_\_

Family. \$35 Purple Martins \_\_\_\_\_

Donor Short-eared Owl \$36 - \$99 \_\_\_\_\_

Donor Great-blue Heron \$100 or more \_\_\_\_\_

Other Tax-deductible donation \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Please print:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

How would you like to receive our newsletter mail or email?

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

*Thank you for your support.*

Membership applications can also be done online from the website through PayPal. [www.friendsofwalkkillriver.org](http://www.friendsofwalkkillriver.org)

From:

**Friends of Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge**  
**1547 County Road 565**  
**Sussex, NJ 07461**



Photo by Nancy Vala