

The contribution of citizen conservationists—the many hundreds of individuals and members of the Great Swamp Committee of the North American Wildlife Foundation and the North Jersey Conservation Foundation—is most impressive. These citizens have contributed not only time through their own participation to this effort, but also more than a million and a half dollars for acquisition of this remnant of their natural heritage.

The Great Swamp, as it was when William Penn acquired it in 1667, is a giant bowl, the marshy remnant of a lake left by the ice age. Although man has pushed back its borders and has made sporadic intrusions deeper into the swamp, some 8,000 acres remain in natural forest, marsh, and meadow.

The converging climatic zones there produce an unusual variety of plantlife which in turn supports a wide range of animal and bird species. The area still harbors white-tail deer, mink, fox, raccoon, muskrat, and other mammals. At least 175 species of birds have been identified, and 75 are known to nest and rear their young there. For the botanist the range extends from a wealth of microscopic plant algae to a few magnificent stands of beech and oak—trees 14 feet in girth and believed to be as much as 500 years old—as well as wild flowers, aquatic plants, and flowering shrubs of breathtaking color and beauty.

A unique wild environment like the swamp has a great many values worthy of preservation. These are made all the more significant when the natural area is surrounded by megalopolis. I would like to categorize just a few of these values.

1. *Education*.—As the only natural wilderness in the vast and growing New York metropolitan area, the Great Swamp offers a priceless outdoor laboratory and classroom for the use of the scientists and college and high school level students of a community of some 30 million inhabitants. At a time when pollution of our land, air, and water has become a critical national problem, these studies have become more urgent than ever.

2. *Water*.—The Great Swamp forms a major source of the Passaic River. A swamp tends to be a natural regulator of water supply, holding runoff and releasing it gradually. Without it, the Passaic would be far more subject to excessive fluctuation in water level, and this in turn upsetting other natural processes would increase the problem of pollution.

3. *Atlantic Flyway*.—Waterfowl use the Great Swamp as a resting place on the way through during migratory season and, in the case of some species such as wood duck, nest there. These uses have been increasing in some areas of the wildlife refuge where the Fish and Wildlife Service has been restoring water levels in some areas partially drained by earlier human encroachments.

4. *Environmental values*.—The value to the surrounding community is too obvious to need much amplification. In its natural state this area provides a stretch of open greenery amidst increasing congestion and pollution; it has scenic beauty and is a wilderness breeding ground and haven for wildlife for the more heavily used park and recreation areas that are adjacent to it.

5. *Wilderness*.—In its own right the Great Swamp—only 30 miles from Times Square—is a unique wilderness opportunity. No similar