

# Comments on Connetquot



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

shading the understory. What were cool spring breezes only a month ago are turning into the hot humid Long Island weather we know too well! As the warmer weather approaches, a calm falls over the preserve. The peepers are silent again. The bright yellow daffodils are only an Instagram memory. I hope you had a chance to see them in full bloom!

Spring was a very active time for the Friends. We hosted several Earth Day projects, “Fishing with a Friend” and “I Love My Park Day.” We had a lovely Women's History lecture and exhibit and a fantastic Studebaker lecture and car show. (More about that in this issue.) Many thanks to the many hands that helped make these events possible!

We put out a call for volunteers interested in history and had a great response. The History Team, as we affectionately refer to them, have spent hundreds of hours learning how to handle old documents and catalog them for proper storage and, ultimately, digitization. (Read more in this issue)

I'm delighted to report that the Friends of Connetquot were awarded a \$41,000 matching grant from the Environmental Protection Fund's Park and Trail Partnership Grants program to create the Educational Interpretive Center at the Historic Connetquot River State Park Preserve Trout Hatchery. The Interpretive signs will provide historic information about our hatchery and the Club Members that built it, as well as pertinent information such as water conditions, “match the hatch” for fly selection, and a basic “how to” on fly fishing. Our video equipment purchased as part of the LILRC Grant has finally arrived, and we will begin reaching out to those that expressed interest in our Connetquot History video project. Please contact us if *you* are interested in participating! The construction bidders' walkthrough for the tin ceiling restoration work was held in May, and I'm anxiously awaiting the opening of the bids.

The summer months bring smaller crowds to the preserve, which permits my mind and soul to find reflective hiking by the river, hearing only the rushing waters and the sounds of waterfowl. House tours and lectures are on summer break, which gives us time to work on creating some really exciting fall programs. Stay connected, and I'll keep you updated on the volunteer opportunities, our Members Only Open House, Women's Fishing Clinic and other programs we are working on. Not on our email list? Let us know!

Wishing you well.  
Tight Lines!  
Janet



## Historical Bits

Albert Loening was a member of the Southside Sportsmen's Club, an aviation pioneer and a prominent Long Islander. Thanks to FOC's Keith Snedecor for supplying Loening's obituary from the New York Times, Sept. 15, 1974.

### Albert Loening, Air Pioneer, Dies

Albert Palmer Loening, an early leader in the aircraft industry who developed and manufactured the first successful amphibian airplane in 1923, died Friday at his home on First Neck Lane, Southampton, L.I. He was 88 years old.

During the nineteen-twenties, the Loening Engineering Corporation delivered to the Army and Navy several hundred of the new planes, which Mr. Loening had developed with his brother Grover. The company subsequently became a part of Keystone Aircraft and the Curtiss-Wright Corporation.

Mr. Loening was a founding stockholder and director of the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation, now the Grumman Corporation, and remained on its board in an honorary capacity until his death.

When World War II broke out, Mr. Loening established an aircraft-parts manufacturing company in Sag Harbor, L.I., Agawam Aircraft Products, Inc. It was later acquired by Grumman.

Mr. Loening was born in Bremen, Germany, where his father was United States consul general. He went to school here and saw service on the Mexican border in 1916 as a regimental sergeant major.

During World War I Mr. Loening received a commission in the Aviation Section of the Army Signal Corps and was sent to France to establish a new military air base at Orly.

On retiring in 1931, Mr. Loening took up residence in Southampton, where he was a village trustee and Mayor for three successive terms. He was also a past president of the Southampton Hospital and the Parrish Art Museum.

Surviving, besides his brother, Grover, are his widow, the former Sarah Larkin; a son, Albert Jr.; a grandson, and another brother, Rudolph.



Photo: Geni.com

## A Vintage Program

by Jerry Trapani

On April 9, Bob Muller presented a lecture on the 115-year history of Studebaker wagons and automobiles. Bob regaled a full house with the history of the Studebaker family's immigration from Germany to America, becoming one of the most successful wagon and carriage builders by the end of the Civil War and later transitioning to automobiles lasting through 1966. The iconic Avanti model survived the demise of Studebaker and was built by another company into the 1990's.

Attendees also enjoyed viewing five Studebaker automobiles on the lawn in front of the clubhouse on a beautiful afternoon. Special thanks to (clockwise from top left): Andy Marone (1910 EMF), Quinn Volgraff (1941 Commander), Rita Trapani (1963 GT Hawk), Gerry Duff (1970 Avanti) and Wayne Gunst (1928 Dictator). Members of the Studebaker Drivers Club of Long Island and the Vanderbilt Cup Region of the AACA supported the Friends lecture. Photos: T. Casey



## *FOC Receives Major Grant*

The Friends of Connetquot has been awarded a \$41,000 matching grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund's Park and Trail Partnership Grants program to create an Educational Interpretive Center at the historic Connetquot trout hatchery.

The grant, one of 27 awards totaling \$900,000, is administered by Parks & Trails New York, a statewide non-profit organization, in partnership with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. These grants go to Friends groups—nonprofits like ours, often made up entirely of volunteers—dedicated to the stewardship and promotion of New York's state parks and historic sites, trails and public lands. These groups raise private funds for capital projects, perform maintenance tasks, provide educational programming, and promote public use through hosting special events.

Parks & Trails New York Executive Director Robin Dropkin says, "With more and more people discovering the outdoors, and visitation to our parks, trails, and public lands soaring, the need for strong public/public partnerships has never been greater. The Park and Trail Partnership Grants help bolster the role of Friends groups in these vital partnerships."

This effort is part of a larger plan for the hatchery that Park Manager Sue Wuehler has been working on over the last three years. Staff and volunteers have been working to improve stream function by clearing obstacles from aging structures, culverts, ponds and tributaries that had been impeding the flow of water feeding the main river. Disinfection stations have been installed to prevent the spread of IPN and other diseases. Next spring, staff and volunteers plan to rehabilitate the aging historic trout hatchery rearing ponds for outdoor educational programs. The interpretive signs will provide historic information about this hatchery and the club members that built it, as well as information on, among other things, water conditions, "match the hatch" fly selection, and a basic "how to" fly fish. At the handicap-accessible fishing sites, we wish to construct and erect streamside panels and a kiosk dedicated to the preservation of the art of fly fishing.

The Environmental Interpretive Center will educate school groups and the public about the historic trout hatchery, native brook trout propagation, fly fishing, fly tying, entomology, freshwater wetlands, hydrology, resiliency, climate change, natural sciences and invasive species. The Observation Room overlooks the hatchery troughs where trout have been propagated for over a century at the South Side Sportsmen's Club. We wish to design and install an interpretive exhibit there so visitors may view trout propagation, care and feeding and learn about the work involved in restoring native brookies to Long Island rivers. Patrons will learn the long history of one of the oldest trout hatcheries in the country.

Knowledge of our history is vital to our ability to interpret the past and understand our place here and in the future. Connetquot Park touches thousands of lives every year while raising awareness of the natural world and inspiring people to appreciate and preserve our surroundings for generations to come.

To view a list of all of this year's awardees, visit: <https://www.ptny.org/our-work/support/park-trail-partnership-program/awardees>. Find more information on Park and Trail Partnership Grants at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org), or call 518-434-1583.

## *And Now for the Catch:*

These Partnership Grants must be matched in part with private and local funding. **Friends of Connetquot will have to raise an additional \$8,250 in matching funds**, bringing our total to \$49,250.

That's where you, our generous supporters, come in. Please consider a donation above your membership dues to help us meet our goal of raising the matching sum and fulfill our commitment.

We are a nonprofit organization (emphasis on the "nonprofit") dedicated to the preservation, conservation and history of the 3,473 acre Connetquot River State Park Preserve. We work to help park management protect a pristine environment, historic buildings and artifacts. We also support educational programs, fishing facilities and hiking and equestrian trails. None of this is possible without the continued support of members like you who treasure the wonders of Connetquot. Thank you!

**Give Us Your Best Shot:** Share your photos of the Preserve with us! Send us up to four photos in .jpeg or .png digital format, and for each issue we'll pick a winner who receives a year's subscription to the FOC newsletter. Photos must be current (within a year of submission) and shot within the park. Please give the approximate location of the scene, if possible. DEAD-LINE for next issue: September 6, 2022. Send your files to Tom Casey at: [2caseys@optonline.net](mailto:2caseys@optonline.net).

This issue's winners are **Tom McCoy**, for the cover photo taken at the Fishing with a Friend event on Memorial Day, and **Frank Smith** for his peaceful shot on the back cover.

Entries will be judged by the Friends of Connetquot, Inc., and their decision is final. Each image submitted must be the original and unpublished work of the participant, who must also be its copyright owner. The participant shall retain copyright to the image entered for the competition. By submitting an image for the competition, the participant will be regarded as having granted the organizer the right to use the image in print, broadcast and/or electronic media without any fee payment, for the purposes of promoting the competition or promoting the Friends of Connetquot, Inc. Where any image is so used by the organizer, the participant will be credited accordingly.





# HOOF BEATS

by Carole Scialdone



Riding the Connetquot trails in the summer is so invigorating! The contrast between the green leaves in full bloom and the deep blue sky is breathtaking. The Park is alive! There are so many birds chirping loudly to let us know they are back, or maybe just stopping by as they migrate through. The turkeys and geese have paired off and can be seen with their poults and goslings. We haven't seen any newborn, spotted fawns yet, but expect to soon. We've spotted lots of osprey and several bald eagles fishing around the big pond and several types of turtles nesting in the sand on the side of the trails.

The 2022 bridle path permits are on sale at the park booth on Sunrise Highway. The permit is \$50 per horse, per year. Getting your permit gives New York State a way of evaluating the equestrian use of our Park Preserve. This information is used to allocate funding and staffing for the park. Permits are to be attached to the horse's saddle or pad at all times while in the Preserve. If a horse gets separated from its rider, the permit can help Park staff identify the horse's owner. Riders without permits will be denied use of Connetquot's bridle paths. Please support your Park Preserve and get your permit today.

We are so very lucky to have the ability to share this fantastic Park Preserve with our horses and fellow equestrians. It is truly a gem, and we are blessed to have unfettered access to all its natural beauty. "I care to live only to entice people to look at Nature's loveliness." ~John Muir

Photo: Looking over Bunces Bridge through Heart 2 Heart's ears. *Carole Scialdone*

## *What's Happening in the Park*



Park Superintendent Susanne Wuehler enjoyed a large turnout for I Love My Park Weekend, May 7-8, when volunteers performed maintenance on the lower brook, oiled teak benches, weeded the pollinator garden and polished Clubhouse woodwork.

Also, FOC board member Keith Snedecor donated the American flags displayed on the Grist Mill and Clubhouse, Rita Trapani's framed Club photos have been hung in Clubhouse Room #2, the parking lot has new Earth Day plantings, and park staff continues working on perimeter fence repairs and tree pruning throughout the Preserve. Thanks to all volunteers and staff!

*Photo: Sue Wuehler*

Membership expiration dates now appear on your mailing label on page 8.  
Please continue to support us!

# Then and Now - History Team takes Steps 1 and 2

by Janet Soley

Records and archive boxes dating back to the 1800s have been stored in rooms throughout the Preserve. It's sad to see them literally rotting away due to the lack of a proper storage environment. This spring, thanks to the fantastic response to our call for volunteers, the History Team was created. The team is comprised of 20 very talented and knowledgeable volunteers who took on the task in earnest to resolve the situation.



Team members receiving instruction of the handling of historical material.

**Step 1** - Learn how to properly handle and catalog these historic papers. Archivists from the Long Island Library Resources Council spent a day at Connetquot training the team.

**Step 2** - Volunteers selected boxes to examine based on their interests and began digging into history. What fun! Each box contained a puzzle leading back in time!

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Comments from team member Janice Fischer on examining material from 1938-1941, when Idle Hour was Peace Haven: "As I worked on organizing the Peace Haven documents in the Dowling Collection, I was mesmerized by 'Then.' Then the place was filled with drama, intrigue, mystery, crime and immortality. The documents told a story more powerful than a reality TV show or an Academy Award winning movie. I felt honored to be part of CRSPP's efforts to preserve local history."

\*\*\*\*\*

Volunteer Ritamarie Weigand listed some of the major historical finds she uncovered sorting through eleven boxes of the collection:

1. WWII scrapbook belonging to Dr. John Payton Adams, future and last husband of Muriel Vanderbilt, daughter of William K. Vanderbilt III.
2. Large, irregular-sized b&w photograph of the Oakdale train station, around the turn of the early twentieth century.
3. 1923 cancelled U.S. passport belonging to Lucy Pritchard Sawyer Thompson, wealthy widow of William Thompson, the Vice President of Texas Shipping and Texas Oil companies, which became Texaco. Lucy Thomason's dream was to start an artists' colony, which she did after purchasing Idle Hour, the former Vanderbilt Estate in Oakdale, in 1926.
4. A developer's advertisement for free day trips from Brooklyn, NY to view lots for purchase at Vanderbilt's Idle Hour estate, plus several price lists.
5. Minutes of the first board meeting of the Idle Hour Artists' Colony on August 21, 1926.
6. Signed letter on United States Senate letterhead to Mrs. Lucy Thompson from U.S. Senator from New York, Royal S. Copeland, dated 1925.
7. Several paid bills from a horseshoeing establishment, dated 1903 and 1907.
8. Several handwritten letters on D.F. Barry letterhead to Lucy Thompson from Barry's wife, Margaret, dated 1902 and 1903. D.F. Barry was a world-renowned photographer of the American West whose portfolio includes Sitting Bull, General George Armstrong Custer and Buffalo Bill Cody.
9. Matted 1892 cover of "Harper's Weekly."
10. Several maps of the Idle Hour Artists' Colony, including one listing the residents during the 1930s.
11. Several b&w photographs of Bronco Charlie Miller, who claimed to be a Pony Express Rider and performer with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.
12. Placemats and menus from the beloved local restaurant, Bronco Charlie's, on Montauk Highway, which opened in 1946, closed in 1994 and was bulldozed in 2009.
13. Filled-in applications to the Daughters of the American Revolution, dated 1920, including genealogy going back to the American Revolution.



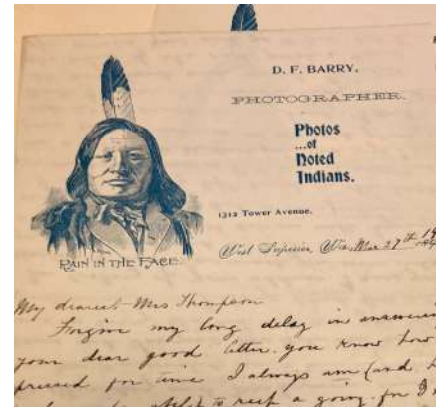
Linda Villano and Keith Snedecor sorting artifacts. *Photos: Janet Soley*



## Then and Now (Continued)

14. 1918 letter to Mr. William Thompson from the Sons of the Revolution.
15. 1916 Republican National Committee Certificate of membership to William Thompson.
16. Two Town of Islip Official Tax receipts to Lucy Thompson dated 1927 and 1928.
17. "Colonial Daughters of the Seventeenth Century, 1929-1930" hardcover handbook.

It's a lot of fun looking back in time at names and places we have grown up with. More to come in the next newsletter! The team will continue to catalogue throughout the summer as schedules permit. Interested in joining the team? Fill out an application on our webpage, [www.friendsofconnetquot.org](http://www.friendsofconnetquot.org). We have lots more antiquities to go through!



D.F. Barry letter and artwork.  
Ritamarie Weigand

## Out and About in the Park



**Fishing with a Friend:** What fantastic weather we had for our first Fishing with a Friend Day on Memorial Day. Many thanks to everyone who attended and a special thank you! to Angelo Peluso for the book donation for our raffle. Ed Gross not only hooked a nice trout, but he won the book. Enjoy the read!



Left: Linda McParland holds a fine catch.  
Janet Soley  
Right: A fly at the ready. Tom McCoy

**OUCH!:** Board Member David Reisfield reported a sad case of a deer being stuck in the Connetquot Park gate on the north side of Veterans Highway. David called park staff, who responded very rapidly, and the bloodied, exhausted young buck was able to run off once finally freed.

A similar incident happened at the park within the month, with the first animal having to be euthanized. The overpopulation of deer on Long Island is leading to more frequent, unfortunate situations like this. *Photo: David Reisfield*



**Calling All Artists:** Coming this fall, in collaboration with the Islip Arts Council, the Friends of Connetquot will be holding a Juried Art Show featuring the nature, history and beauty of Connetquot River State Park Preserve. It is expected that the artwork will be on view from September 13 – October 2. The show will be displayed in the park along with an accompanying reception and concert on September 24 from 2-4 PM. The

call for artists/prospectus will be forthcoming. Details will be posted to the Friends of Connetquot website as soon as they are available.





## Board Spotlight: Janice Fischer

Last November Janice Fischer began assisting board member Jo-Ann Carhart with the organization of artifacts FOC has saved from the old Dowling College collection, noting that, “The Friends of Connetquot Board has my deepest respect and admiration for this historical undertaking. It has been my privilege to transport back in time via these documents.”

She has since created 35 pages as an index to the part of the collection focused on the late-1930s Peace Haven movement at the Vanderbilt Mansion in Oakdale. On June 12<sup>th</sup> she presented the FOC program, “Idle Hour: Home of the Royal Fraternity of Master Metaphysicians” at the park.

A retired teacher of AP World History and advisor to Connetquot High School’s Model United Nations program, Janice was selected by the Harvard Club as one of the Best Teachers on Long Island and was designated a field expert in the creation of UNA-USA’s Global Classrooms curriculum.

An Oakdale resident since the 1960s, Janice raised three sons here and now is teaching her grandchildren about the bay and local history. As a board member, she would like to initiate an effort to make high school students more aware of the wonderful history of the park while promoting our scholarship program. She hopes to speak to students through the various high school honor societies and create opportunities for them to volunteer and participate.

Janice adds, “Connetquot River State Park Preserve has intrigued me for decades, for it is Earth pure and beautiful as nature intended.” Welcome to the board, Janice!



### Board of Trustees Executive Board

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### Mission Statement

The Friends of Connetquot is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, conservation and history of the 3,473-acre Connetquot River State Park Preserve. We work to help management protect a pristine environment and historic buildings and artifacts. We also support educational programs, fishing facilities and hiking and equestrian trails.

The records of the Friends of Connetquot can be viewed in our room at the Preserve. The New York State Office of Charities Registration holds copies of the annual charities reports required by law.

PLEASE NOTE: Automatic defibrillators are available in the administration office, the BOCES room, the main building and at the hatchery. Preserve staff is trained in their use.

For Emergencies in the Preserve: Call the New York Park Police at 631-669-2500.

Also notify the Entrance Booth at 631-581-1005.

### BECOME A FRIEND OF CONNETQUOT

Fill out the membership form below and mail to: **Friends of Connetquot, Box 472, Oakdale, NY 11769.**

Already a member? Give the gift of membership to a friend.

Membership dues include our newsletter, Comments on Connetquot, free interesting programs, special events, and the satisfaction of supporting a beautiful Preserve that is a historical and ecological treasure. Special Contributors receive all the privileges of membership plus a listing on the Donors Plaque. Patrons and Benefactors also receive lifetime membership.

#### Annual Membership Dues:

(Check the category that applies.)

#### Special Contributor:

Senior Citizen (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_    Donor (\$500)  
Individual (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_    Patron (\$1000)\*  
Family (\$30) \_\_\_\_\_    Guardian (\$2500)\*  
Supporting (\$50) \_\_\_\_\_    Benefactor (\$5000)\*  
Sponsor (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_    (\*) Life Membership

New Membership  Gift Membership  Renewal

Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ made payable to:

**Friends of Connetquot, Inc.**

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

**(Gift membership only) Please send a gift card that reads:**

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Please renew your membership if it has expired. Together you and the Friends of Connetquot can have a powerful impact on revitalizing the Connetquot Preserve for future generations.

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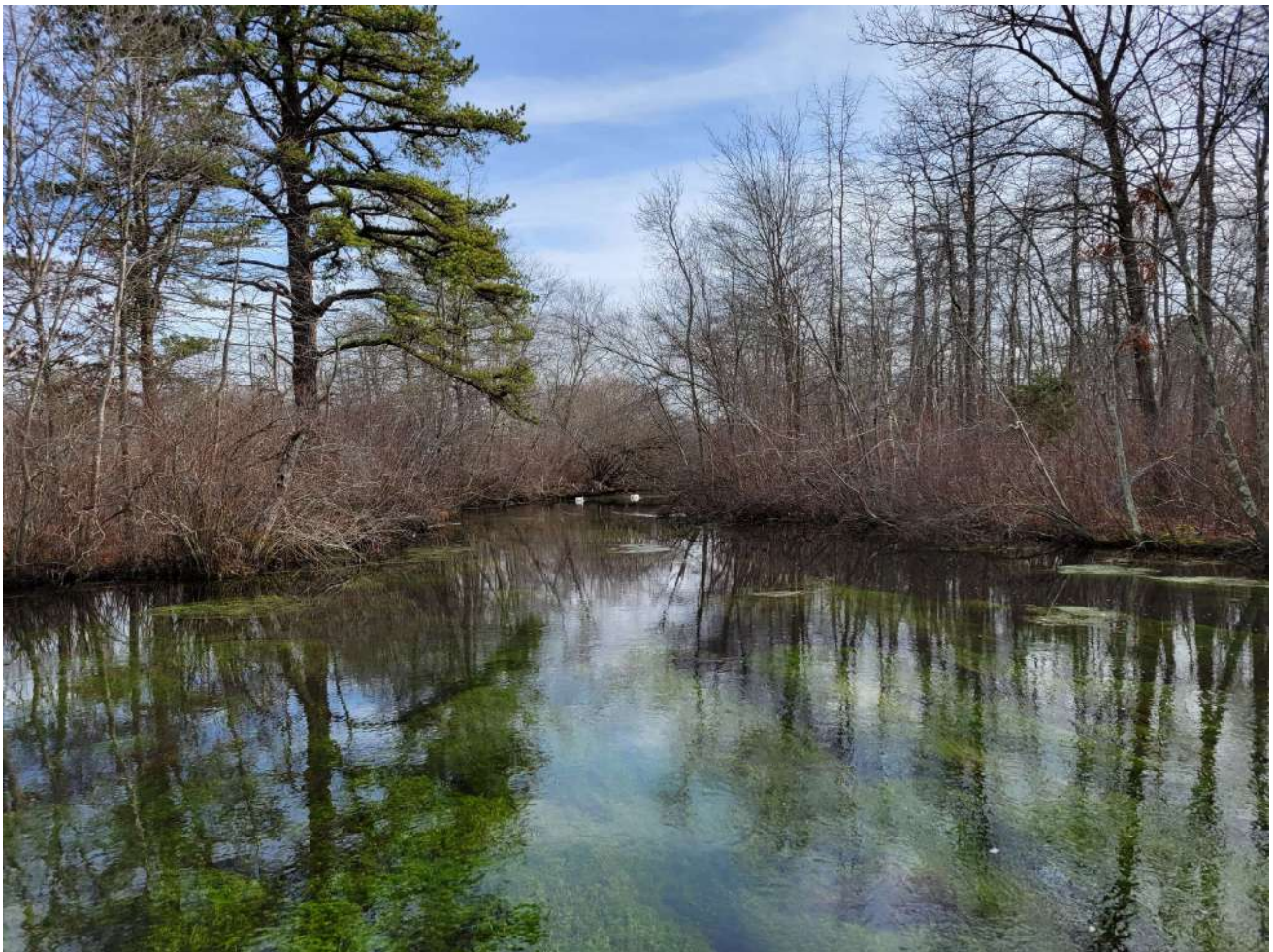
FOC Awarded  
\$41,000 State Grant  
See page 3.

History Teams Delve  
into Park Research  
See page 5.

Meet New FOC  
Board Member  
Janice Fischer  
See page 7.



FRIENDS OF CONNETQUOT  
BOX 472  
ONKDALE NY 11769



Winter's last gasp on the Connetquot as the understory branches redden in anticipation of spring. *Frank Smith*