



# Friends of the OSWEGATCHIE HILLS NATURE PRESERVE

Newsletter – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2021

## A Message from the President

A few weeks ago, the Friends' board got together at the Pitch Pine Park. It was a purely social gathering after months of meeting only via Zoom. One board member supplied fresh local oysters while others brought a variety of yummy snacks.



At some point Greg Decker picked up a caterpillar he had spotted and brought it to Al Burchsted, our in-house naturalist who promptly identified the tiny creature as a saddleback caterpillar. He also informed us that the spines could cause severe irritation to the skin. Greg promptly placed the caterpillar in a safer place where others could not come in contact with it, giving the rest of us the opportunity to observe and take numerous photos. (You can always tell when folks who love nature are gathered because they get so excited over a creature as small as this).

The saddleback caterpillar is so named because of its shape and markings. It is the larval stage of the *Acharia stimulea* or slug moth. The adult moth is not nearly so noticeable. It is glossy dark brown in color with dark markings and has a wing span of one to almost two inches. Ranging from Massachusetts to Florida, the caterpillar can be found on a wide a variety of vegetation, including maples and oaks.



Photo: University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

What makes this moth so remarkable that I chose to write about it? Nothing really – except that it was found in the Pitch Pine Park. Finding it there made me even more aware of what we are trying to achieve in developing this conservation area. In establishing the park, the Friends created a healthy, demonstration ecosystem to show the critical role such ecosystems play in providing habitats for rare insect species. Certain rare lepidoptera (the order of insects that includes moths and butterflies) can be found where pitch pines grow. While *Archaria stiumlea* may not be rare, it is a reminder of how critical it is to preserve and protect habitat, exactly what we are trying to do every day in the Hills.

So remember this little caterpillar the next time you hike in the Hills and take a moment to see what else is growing and living in this precious preserve.

*Kris Lambert*

Study nature, love nature, stay close  
to nature. It will never fail you.

– Frank Lloyd Wright

# FrogWatch Project in the Hills 2021 Observations

By Don Danila and Susan Gonzalez

In these newsletters we previously reported on our 2018-2020 FrogWatch observations made in the Preserve. FrogWatch is a nationally recognized program providing data on the distribution and abundance of frogs and toads in the U.S. and how they vary over time. We were both trained in FrogWatch sampling protocols and passed an online test showing that each of us could recognize the calls of all 11 species of frogs and toads found in Connecticut. (Visit <https://peabody.yale.edu/explore/collections/herpetology/guide-amphibians-reptiles-connecticut> for concise information on our state's frogs and toads as well as relatively short sound clips of their calls).

FrogWatch protocols call for 3-minute observations beginning 0.5 hour after sunset and recording all species heard and the intensity of their calls. This year we made observations once a month starting in March at six sites in East Lyme, including three in the Preserve. Our Preserve sites were Clark Pond at the beginning of the Red Trail and locations overlooking both Wetland (WL) #20, located off the Red Trail Overlook spur, and WL #24, found off the Green Trail. These sites are found within the southern part of the Preserve. As 2021 was a relatively wet year, we continued making observations at each of our stations through July.

In 2018 and 2019 we were disappointed that we did not hear any wood frogs calling during our night observations, even though people heard them during the day. Also, we heard no toads calling even though we knew that at least the American toad is found in the Preserve. However, both last year and this year we observed wood frogs calling at the WL stations during March, although only in WL# 24 in 2021, where a loud chorus was heard. Unlike last year, when a few American toads were heard calling at the WL sites in May, this year we only heard a toad at Clark Pond in April.

Many spring peepers were heard at Clark Pond in both April and May. Fewer spring peepers were calling at the WL sites in April, but their calling intensity increased at WL #24 during May. Only a few gray tree frogs were heard at Clark Pond in May 2021, whereas this species was abundant there in both 2018 and 2019. We even heard a few calling at the WL sites in those years, but not in 2021. Many American bullfrogs became active in Clark Pond in June, but their calling intensity dropped off in July. This year for the first time we heard green frogs not only in Clark Pond, but also at WL#24, although only one or a few individuals were heard calling there. Our sampling over the past 4 years has demonstrated how variable frog and toad abundance and distribution can be over time. All species monitored to date have shown this variability, which may be related to annual abundance differences and/or the timing of our observations. We hope to continue these observations next year to further document the frogs and toads residing in the Preserve.

2021 Results			
Month	Location	Species	Calling Intensity [see note below]
March	Clark Pond	None	-
	WL #20	None	-
	WL #24	Wood frog	3
April	Clark Pond	Spring peeper	3
		American toad	1
	WL #20	Spring peeper	2
	WL #24	Spring peeper	2
May	Clark Pond	Spring peeper	3
		Gray tree frog	1
	WL #20	Spring peeper	2
	WL #24	Spring peeper	3
		Green frog	1
June	Clark Pond	American bullfrog	3
		Green frog	2
	WL #20	None	-
July	Clark Pond	Green frog	1
		American bullfrog	2
	WL #20	None	1
		None	-
		None	-

1 = individuals could be counted with space between calls  
 2 = calls overlapping, but individuals could be counted  
 3 = full chorus with calls continuous and overlapping



© Crowley 2014  
Gray tree frog

## Haiku -- "Hike-u"

We invite you to submit a haiku poem about hiking in the Hills "Hike-u". *Haiku* is an unrhymed poem consisting of 17 syllables arranged in three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively.

Use five syllables in your first and third lines, and seven syllables in the second; you can use as many words as you want. Take a walk in the Hills and write a haiku about what you heard, saw, or felt! Here are some...

5 – *The Hills are peaceful*

7 – *Birds singing and streams gurgling*

5 – *A bit of heaven*

*Oswegatchie Hills*

*Rustling leaves among huge rocks*

*Lush sanctuary*

Send your poems to [info@oswhills.com](mailto:info@oswhills.com) for publication (just let us know if you wish to remain anonymous).

## Run for the Hills – Save the Date: May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022

**Plan to join the 5K or 10K Trail Run, or if you prefer just Hike for the Hills.**



### Fun for everyone!

Join your family, friends, and community members to support the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve on Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Tickets will be pre-sold or available the day of the event. The first 100 participants to pre-register will receive a Hills trail map bandana!

Look for the registration link and more information on [oswhills.org](http://oswhills.org) next February.

## The wet summer brought many beautiful mushrooms and amazing fall colors are on the way! Seen in the Hills!



Paul Parulis shared some amazing mushroom photos!

