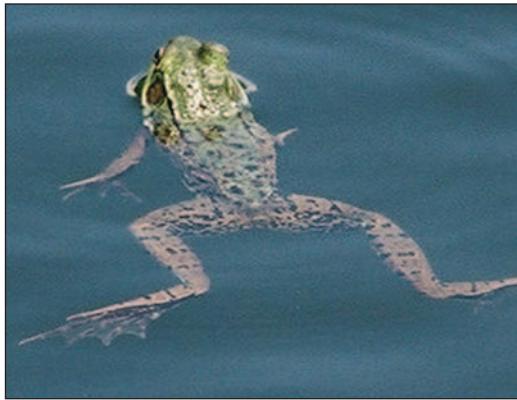


WETLANDS TO MAKE A SPLASH

Wetlands, where water covers the soil for all or most of the year, just happen, right? They're usually the natural result of thousands of years of precipitation in pockets of land shaped to hold moisture longer than surrounding terrain. Historically, such swamps, bogs, marshes and meadows were seen as off-limits to a growing America—inaccessible, insect-ridden, useless for habitation.



Today, the perception is quite reversed. These are "nurseries of life," according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—providing "habitat for thousands of species of aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals...water lilies, turtles, frogs, snakes...waterfowl, fish and mammals. Migrating birds use wetlands to rest and feed...and as nesting sites."

"That's only part of their value," said Steve Coonradt, Blenheim-Gilboa Power Project environmental scientist. "They absorb and slow floodwaters, can be great spots for fishing, boating and hiking, and make great classrooms."

Five years ago, when B-G engineers determined that they had to cover and dry up more than six acres of wetlands on the lower slopes of



Above, at B-G's popular wetlands, school groups use nets to get up close and personal with tiny, elusive residents. Left, a net-shy frog prefers privacy.

the project's Brown Mountain, the federal government said to go right ahead—as long as those six acres could be replicated elsewhere on the power project grounds.

"The subsurface of the mountain, particularly those acres leading away from the power project, supporting B-G's transmission line towers, is porous," Coonradt explained. The immediate risk was remote—but, geologically speaking, it was likely over time—that the loose terrain several hundred feet below the surface, coupled with the lubricating effect of water from many small hillside creeks and pocket wetlands, would trigger a landslide. "And that would topple the towers, severely damaging B-G's vital electricity contribution to the state's transmission grid."

So the challenge was to create wetlands where none existed. "Work began in 2001, with about two of the required six acres constructed near the

continued on back

VN NOTES

NYPA Observes 75th Anniversary

NYPA is marking its 75th anniversary during 2006 with a variety of activities designed to gen-



erate awareness among employees and the public about NYPA's history and current role in New York State's energy picture.

A week-by-week listing of key dates in Power Authority history is being posted on NYPA's web, www.nypa.gov, for internal and external audiences. The listings go back to NYPA's creation in 1931 and before, and include milestones such as completion of power projects and key legislation, as well as anecdotal developments. The Power Authority is the largest state-owned electric utility in the nation.

During the year, a book will be produced outlining NYPA's history from its inception to the present, including major occurrences in recent years. They include significant investments in energy-efficiency projects and clean energy technologies. There also will be a video with historic footage of the Power Authority's development over the years.

continued on back

19th Century 'Base Ball' at B-G, June 17

On Saturday, June 17th, the Roxbury Nine Vintage Base Ball Club will engage in an authentic 19th century base ball contest on the front lawn of historic Lansing Manor. The admission-free event will begin at 12:00 Noon. The Roxbury Nine hail from the nearby Town of Roxbury in Delaware County, where they regularly host visiting vintage base ball clubs on their home field at Kirkside Park.



New York Power Authority

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WHAT'S COMING UP AT THE BLENHEIM-GILBOA VISITORS CENTER

APRIL

9 Easter Bunny-Photo Ops
 23-May 6... NYPA 75th Anniversary Video

MAY

6-7 Revolutionary War Re-enactment
 13-14 Annual Quilt Show

JUNE

11 DARE Antique Car Show
 17 19th Century "Base Ball" Demo

JULY

16 .. Schoharie Valley Antique Auto Show

Information: 1-800-724-0309

75th Anniversary

continued from front

On April 28, one day after the official anniversary, several observances keyed to employees will be held at NYPA power projects and facilities around the state, including Blenheim-Gilboa.

Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt signed legislation creating the Power Authority on April 27, 1931. ♦

B-G Hosts Envirothon

Schoharie, Schenectady and Albany County schools will send teams of students to participate in a daylong, hands-on Envirothon competition at the Blenheim-Gilboa Power Project Visitors Center on April 27.

"The idea is as solid as it is simple," said Steve Ramsey, NYPA community relations manager at B-G. "It combines hands-on education with the excitement of a good competition and the fun of spending a day in the outdoors." This year's special theme is managing water in a changing climate.

The winning team from each county will compete at the state Envirothon at SUNY Oswego on May 24-25 and the state winner will go on to the 2006 North American Canon Envirothon at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada, July 23-29. ♦

B-G Wetlands

continued from front

project's visitors center, across the reservoir from the generating plant," said Coonradt.

Now, in the early spring of 2006, the site is maturing as planned, as an environmental laboratory for visitors and regional schools.

Construction wasn't as easy as the view of pasturelike land and shallow ponds might indicate. "The question was how to hold water on a downsloping hillside property during dry months in particular," said Coonradt. Designers excavated below intended grade levels, installed thin waterproof sheets of clay powder over every inch, covered it with soil



and let nature take its course. Water flows into the area from nearby hills and flows out, when levels are high, into the reservoir below.

The site has seen rising interest from Central New York communities as it matures, shaped by nature, filling year-to-year with the fruits of air- or water-driven seeds, and even from the dirt-covered tire tracks of trucks during construction.

B-G's rural setting has permitted natural life to flourish, and native species of wildflowers, frogs, insects, birds, turtles, deer and other wildlife have been drawn to the haven of dependable water, shelter and a reasonable degree of privacy. B-G staff this year is developing new signs, wheelchair-accessible crushed stone pathways, maps and explanatory brochures to both enlighten the visiting bipeds (that's us) and caution against treading off the paths, onto sensitive (and muddy) areas of the site.

"Several features have drawn particular visitor interest," said Coonradt. "We've installed footbridges of recycled plastic materials.



New paths and bridges allow visitors to inspect mid-state New York's natural aquatic and insect world. Left, a deer-in-residence does his own inspecting.

They're more durable than wooden ones and are better environmentally."

Fencing on the wetlands perimeter will shield delicate plant roots from hungry deer for the next several years until they are established. Elsewhere on the property are rows of white cedars, enclosed in fencing. During food-scarce winter months, the deer, which are abundant, can feed on branches growing beyond the mesh enclosure. As warm weather approaches and the nearby visitors center parking lot fills, Coonradt and other B-G staffers have words of (1) welcome to all; (2) friendly warning to give snapping turtles, which migrate, live, mate and hibernate among these regional wetlands, plenty of space out of respect to their biting power; and (3) reassurance that although vibrant insect life explodes in spring, swarms of swallows and other birds can be depended to keep nature in balance. "And around here, that's the point," said Coonradt. ♦

About Valley News

Valley News is produced periodically by the New York Power Authority to update our neighbors on activities at our Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Power Project and its visitors center, and as a community newsletter for residents of the Schoharie Valley.

If you have questions, comments or suggestions, please contact Steve Ramsey, NYPA's community relations manager, at 518-287-6380, fax 518-287-6381, or at steve.ramsey@nypa.gov. ♦