

What is Quakertown Swamp?

The swamp is a 518-acre wetland formed by water perched near the soil surface. The diverse habitat includes open water, shrub wetland, cattail marsh, wet meadow and forested swamp. The entire swamp is underlain by diabase, or trap-rock, an igneous intrusion that forms the boulder-strewn landscape in this part of the county.

Where is it located?

The swamp is located 2 miles southeast of Quakertown along Bog Run, a tributary to Tohickon Creek. The swamp spans the upper Bucks County townships of West Rockhill, East Rockhill and Richland. It includes wetlands all along Bog Run from just west of Rte. 309 to its confluence with the Tohickon Creek north of Rte. 313.

Why is it important?

Quakertown Swamp is the largest inland wetland in Bucks County and is designated by the Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area. It is home to the largest great blue heron rookery in eastern Pennsylvania and provides habitat for 91 bird species. Virginia rail and marsh wren, both rare in Pennsylvania, have been seen recently in the swamp. Despite use of the area for colonial era potteries, and more recent trap rock quarrying, large portions of the swamp remain relatively undisturbed. The swamp also benefits the larger watershed by storing floodwaters and helping to maintain the water quality of Bog Run.

What is a wetland?

Marshes, bogs, swamps, wet meadows, and shallow ponds are all different types of wetlands. Each supports different kinds of plant communities. *Swamps* have a preponderance of trees or shrubs, and *marshes* contain non-woody plants like cattails. In all types of wetlands, the soils are saturated or covered by water for long periods of time during the growing season. Three things make a wetland: water, either on or near the surface, soil that formed under wet conditions, and plants that either require wet conditions or tolerate water.

What good is a wetland?

Wetlands provide many values that are important for people:

- They can store water during floods, preventing costly flood damage to downstream areas.
- Their dense plant growth absorbs some pollutants from water, helping to maintain good water quality.
- They are critical habitats for fish and wildlife, providing food, cover and nesting areas for more than 500 species.
- Many endangered and threatened species of plants and animals require wetlands to survive.
- They protect biodiversity by serving as storehouses of genetic material; some of these species may prove critical to us in the future as sources of medicines and useful chemical compounds.
- They provide opportunities for recreation, including hunting, fishing, hiking, bird watching and just enjoying natural open spaces.



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How can you help Quakertown Swamp?

- Get to know the wetland better – spend some time there and learn about the plants and wildlife.
- Pick up litter and debris in the wetland along public roads.
- Tell your neighbors and friends about the value of wetlands and of Quakertown Swamp.
- Be aware, and let others know, that fill and debris may not be placed in wetlands without state and federal permits.
- Support the Quakertown Swamp Partnership in its efforts to protect the swamp. The Partnership is a cooperative effort of many organizations and individuals interested in preserving the valuable resources of the swamp.



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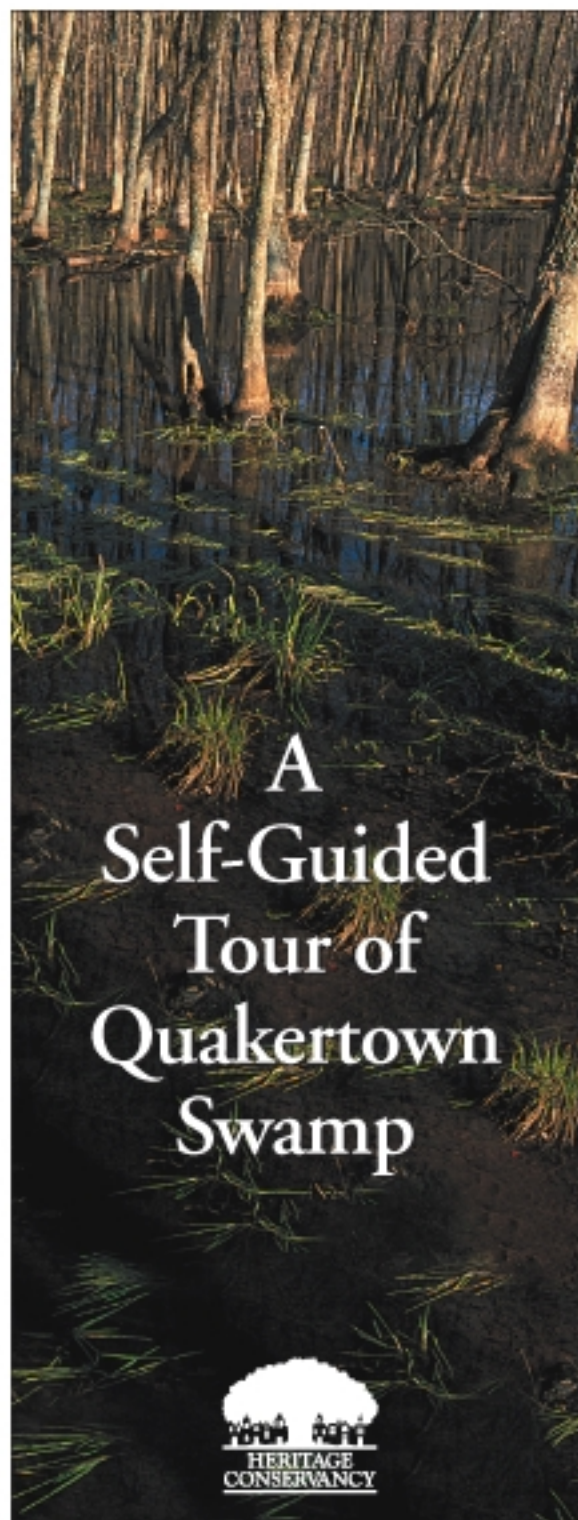
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Self-Guided Tour

With the exception of the State Game Lands, Quakertown Swamp is entirely on private property. Please do not enter private property without the landowner's permission.

Start your tour at State Game Lands #139 near the intersection of Muskrat and Rich Hill Rds. A small parking area is located on Muskrat Rd. near the intersection. Take a ten-minute walk past the gate and follow the trail to a man-made pond (1). On the far side of the pond is one of the largest scrub-shrub wetlands in southeastern PA. If you wait, you may see a variety of turtles, frogs, ducks and possibly even a muskrat or beaver. Songbirds, including warblers and flycatchers, can be heard in the woodlands to the south. When you return to the parking area, turn to the right and walk along Muskrat Rd. for 50 yards. Look to the left to view an extensive heron rookery (2). Great blue herons have created a growing nesting colony here since 1994.

If you are adventurous, walk back to the intersection and turn left onto Rich Hill Rd. Follow Rich Hill Rd. to the overpass. Before the overpass climb up the embankment on the left to reach the railroad tracks. Be alert! One of the two tracks is still active and extreme care should be used in walking along the tracks. At the tracks continue to the left for about 100 yards until you see a culvert that drains water from one side of the tracks to the other. From this point enjoy the panoramic view of the swamp (3). In the distance on the left you see the heron rookery and the pond on the Game Lands. To the right is an extensive cattail marsh. You may see the dome shaped muskrat lodges formed from the cattails. Return to the parking area to continue the tour.

Turn left from the parking area onto Muskrat Rd., cross Rich Hill Rd. and bear right at the stop onto Weikel Rd. Turn right at the second stop sign onto Bethlehem Pike and make the first left on Green Top Rd.

Continue on Green Top Rd. until you pass under Rte. 309. Along the road ahead you see the rocky woodland that drains to Bog Run. Stop briefly before you reach the stop sign to see oak, hickory, sugar maple and sassafras growing between the boulders (4). Bog Run begins its flow in the woodland to the right.

Turn right at the stop sign onto Catch Basin Rd. Turn right at the stop sign onto Whaland Rd. and continue to the stop sign at Rich Hill Rd. Turn right and proceed to Rte. 309. The beginnings of the swamp and Bog Run are off to the right. Turn right onto Rte. 309 and bear right onto the exit ramp. If traffic permits, slow on the ramp to notice the common reed which is abundant along the pipeline in and around the swamp (5). This plant, *Phragmites australis*, is one of a group of aggressive, invasive plants that replace and degrade the habitat when the swamp is disturbed. Bog Run passes under the ramp in the wooded area at the bottom of the hill.

At the end of the ramp move to the left lane to turn left onto Green Top Rd. and then left again onto Old Bethlehem Pike. At 4/10 mile the pipeline clearing is to the left and the swamp is to the right (6). Streams originating in the wooded hillside to the south feed into the swamp.

Turn right at the next intersection onto Rich Hill Rd. and continue 1/2 mile to ponds on either side of the road. The woodland beyond the ponds is wet for long periods and you will see that some plants form hummocks to rise above the water (7). Pin oaks, which tolerate these wet conditions, can be identified here by their downward-slanting lower branches. These woodland pools are important breeding habitat for amphibians including wood frogs, spring peepers, toads, and salamanders. You may hear their calls up to 1/2 mile away on rainy spring evenings.



Continue along Rich Hill Rd., crossing under the railroad overpass and turning left onto Rock Hill Rd. The expansive cattail marsh viewed from the railroad embankment is now to your left. Turn left onto Rocky Ridge Rd. and proceed about 2/10 mile to a narrow crossing of Bog Run (8). The stream flow here may be undetectable because the land of the swamp is so flat. You may see large wooden bird boxes in the woods here. These boxes attract wood ducks which prefer to nest in trees over water.

Follow the road as it curves to the right and turn right onto Paletown Rd. At Rte. 313 turn right and proceed about 4/10 mile. At the bottom of the hill you may pull off the road to the right before the bridge (9). To the left you may see a pond recently enlarged by beaver. The flowers of purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) can be seen here in the summer. This is another invasive plant that destroys wetland habitat by replacing the native wetland species. The marsh here contains many standing dead trees, called snags. The snags are important habitat for birds, providing both nesting and resting spots. These snags indicate that the water level was once lower.

Continue along Rte. 313 to the next intersection and turn left onto Axe Handle Rd. Follow Axe Handle Rd. around to the left to the last crossing of Bog Run (10). To the left you may see lizard tail, a wetland plant named for its unusual flower. To the right Bog Run flows into the Tohickon Creek. Proceed to the intersection of Thatcher Rd. Turn left and follow Thatcher Rd. back to Rte. 313.

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