

SWAMPS

“Swamp” is the general term for any wetland dominated by woody vegetation (trees or shrubs). Swamps are perhaps the most common wetland habitats in the region. They can vary greatly in structure and hydrology—some have small pools between woody hummocks, while others lack hummocks and have little or no standing water; some have dense shrubs beneath a forest canopy, while others have a few widely spaced shrubs and trees; some retain standing water for much or all of the growing season, but most dry up at some point during the spring or summer. Swamps of all kinds can support **high levels of native biodiversity**, and are important components of the ecological landscape.



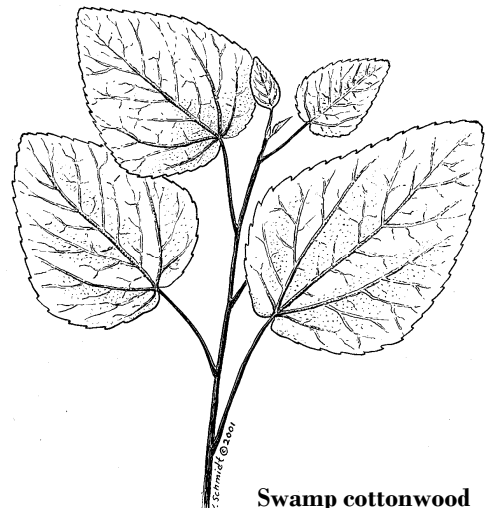
Cardinal flower



A. Reinmann 2006

TYPICAL PLANTS

- Red maple, slippery elm, green ash, black ash, swamp white oak, pin oak, black tupelo, eastern hemlock, eastern red cedar
- High bush blueberry, swamp azalea, winterberry holly, silky dogwood, shrubby willows, northern arrowwood
- Sensitive fern, tussock sedge, skunk cabbage



Swamp cottonwood

SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

- Swamp cottonwood
- Wood turtle, spotted turtle, blue-spotted salamander, four-toed salamander
- Wood duck, red-shouldered hawk, great blue heron, white-eyed vireo

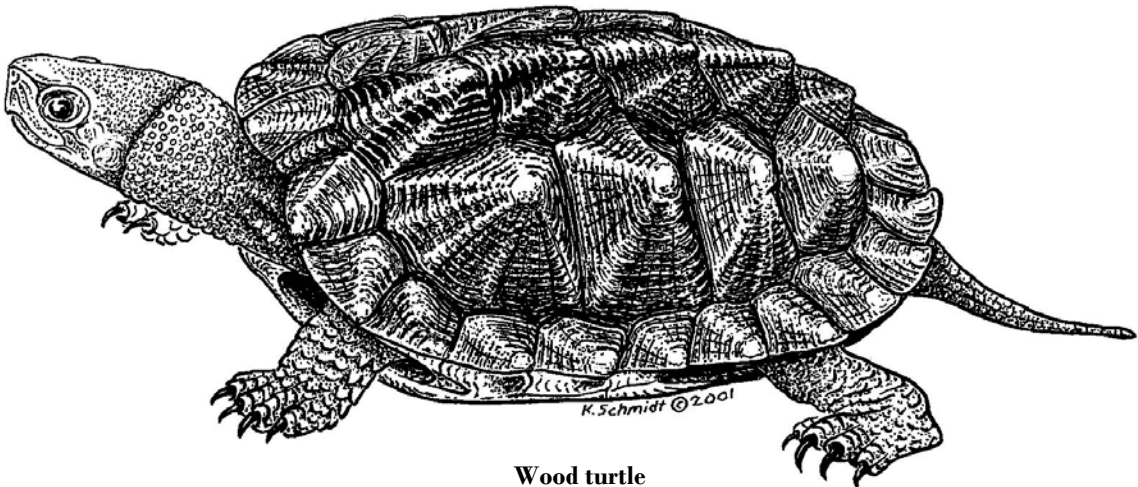
These are just a few of the species of regional or statewide conservation concern that are known to occur in swamps. See Kiviat & Stevens (2001) for a more extensive list.

THREATS TO SWAMPS

Many swamps are located in low-lying areas where human land uses are most concentrated. While some swamps may be protected by federal or state laws, that **protection is usually incomplete** or inadequate, and most swamps are still threatened by a variety of land uses. They are often **drained, filled, or converted to ponds**, and can be easily damaged by **polluted runoff** from agricultural land, lawns, roads, construction sites, and poor logging practices.

CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Protect swamps from filling, draining, or conversion to ponds.
- ❖ Maintain broad buffer zones of undisturbed vegetation and soils around swamps.
- ❖ Preserve connectivity between swamp habitats and nearby upland and wetland habitats to provide safe travelways for amphibians, turtles, and other wildlife that use a variety of habitats.
- ❖ Maintain existing water volumes and timing of groundwater and surface water inputs.
- ❖ Prevent nearby soil erosion, soil compaction, and contamination of surface waters from activities such as logging, construction, and ATV use.
- ❖ Restrict logging activities to seasons when the soils are frozen, and many wildlife and plant species are dormant.



Wood turtle

References

- Semlitsch, R.D. and J.R. Bodie. 1998. Are small, isolated wetlands expendable? *Conservation Biology* 12(5): 1129-1133.
- Kiviat, E. and G. Stevens. 2001. Biodiversity assessment manual for the Hudson River estuary corridor. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Albany. 508 p.