The Trail Wood Kiosk Project was made possible by: Hollis Declan Leverett Memorial Fund, The Last Green Valley, University of Connecticut and Willimantic Rotary.

The Edwin Way Teale Memorial Sanctuary
Trail Wood

Six. Seven Springs Swamp

Seven seems a magical number at Trail Wood. “Seven paths lead away from the white cottage with black shutters under the hickory trees,” Edwin Way Teale wrote in 1978, “Seven paths winding away, radiating toward different points of the compass.” Here, traversing the bracken waters and nutrient-rich mud via a meandering plank walkway, the visitor can pass through the South Woods site the Teales christened “Seven Springs Swamp,” so named for the “seven springs [that] send rivulets trickling down the incline to unite in the narrow lowland” that forms the swamp proper.

Here, along neighboring slopes, the Teales observed Broad-winged Hawks returning to their nesting sites overlooking the swamp, “home from South America after a round trip of thousands of miles over land and water.” Their ringing “where-oo-oo” calls echoed, and still echo, across the musky, placid water. The “stick nest[es]” with “green foliage attached” observed by the Teales can still be observed now. Though nearly invisible in spring and summer, their remnants, a testament to the continuity of the undisturbed natural world, are easily spotted in winter in the large crooks of towering hardwood trees.

Immature Broad-winged Hawk, *Buteo platypterus*, in flight

In spring, when the swamp air fills with that early sign of spring, the unmistakable smell of blooming skunk cabbage, the hawks will return, once again “frogging along the brooks, hunting chipmunks in the woods,” with the swampy lowland an epicenter of their daily life.

In 1938, twenty-one years before the Teales’ arrival to Trail Wood, Edwin wrote, “I never want to own a palace or a yacht but I do want to own a brook, a woods and a lovely swamp.” Seven Springs Swamp helped to fulfill that desire.

In spring, when the swamp air fills with that early sign of spring, the unmistakable smell of blooming skunk cabbage, the hawks will return, once again “frogging along the brooks, hunting chipmunks in the woods,” with the swampy lowland an epicenter of their daily life.

In 1938, twenty-one years before the Teales’ arrival to Trail Wood, Edwin wrote, “I never want to own a palace or a yacht but I do want to own a brook, a woods and a lovely swamp.” Seven Springs Swamp helped to fulfill that desire.

The first of the Four Seasons book series, this project took the Teales on a 17,000-mile road trip, and provided needed distraction during the period of grief after the loss of their son David in World War II. All four books in the series were “Dedicated to DAVID Who Traveled with Us in Our Hearts.”

Skunk Cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus*, gets its name from the unpleasant odor it emits, which is especially noticeable when the plant is injured. The scent is a way for the plant to attract pollinators that are attracted to rotting meat. Most animals avoid skunk cabbage because it causes a burning sensation when eaten. Skunk cabbage emerges from late February through May in woodlands, wetlands, or near streams. It has a remarkable ability to produce heat that allows it to emerge and bloom even when the ground is still frozen. During the winter when temperatures are freezing, the flower buds can warm up to 70°F, which melts the snow around the plant. The flowers appear before the leaves and are characterized by a mottled maroon hood-like bract called a spathe, which surrounds a lush-like structure called a spadix.