



WINGBEATS

Audubon Society of the Capital Region



Audubon Members: Take Action Now !

by Dave Gibson



For thirty years, New York State law has permitted snowmobiles on our “forever wild” Forest Preserve. That permission was forged through a political compromise, but the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan assured the public that snowmobile trails would have the character of a foot path and that there would be no material increase in the mileage of these trails and roads open to motorized uses. Further, the public was assured that any plan for snowmobiling in the Park would provide a rigorous inventory of existing snowmobile trails. Those assurances are challenged in the Comprehensive Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park just issued by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

For instance, in return for unspecified closure of some interior trails in the Forest Preserve to motorized use, the Plan proposes to cut tens of thousands of trees to create new **12-foot wide, contoured snowmobile trails** near major highways. We find that:

- The State’s Plan ignores a vitally important court decision about the “forever wild” clause of the State Constitution. That decision states, in part: “sports which require a setting that is man-made are unmistakably inconsistent with the preservation of these forest lands in the wild and natural state...” (Justice Hinman in McDonald v. The Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, 1930). Current Forest Preserve policies and guidelines dictate that snowmobile trails are to be kept narrow (8 foot width) and have the character of a foot-path, a suitable standard for the Adirondack Park and in accord with the Constitution.

The State of New York should promote that standard and our existing low speed, narrow, beautiful wild forest trails. Instead, this Plan conceptually proposes to cut a large number of trees in order to accommodate faster, wider snowmobiles for recreational use on groomed trails and road-like paths without proposing a constitutional amendment.

As we view it, our DEC has no power to create 12 foot-wide mini-roads for recreational snowmobiling in the Adirondack Forest Preserve. If the People desire to use their great Forest Preserve for such recreation, the approval of the voters in the form of a constitutional amendment is necessary.

• The Plan minimizes the environmental impacts of 175,000 registered snowmobiles (statewide registrations) on the quality of Adirondack Park air, snowmelt, water, wildlife, noise and human health, safety and quality of life in Adirondack communities. Ozone pollution is a well-documented issue in some parts of the Adirondacks. Although EPA will require snowmobiles to become cleaner later this decade, 2-stroke engines (still the most common engines in snowmobiles) are one of the largest unchecked sources of hydrocarbon pollution nationwide. Snowmobiles are said to emit the same volume of hydrocarbons and nitrous oxides as 1,000 cars and as much carbon monoxide as 250-500 cars. Studies in Yellowstone National Park find that snowmobiles annually dump large amounts of fuel and oil and that snowmobile emissions accumulate in the snowpack. The Plan does not contain...

Continued on Page 3

In This Issue...

2004 Programs & Field Trips	2
Audubon Council Spring Assembly	3
MAdirondack Spring: A Gathering of Stars	3
NYS Breeding Bird Atlas - The Final Year	3
Birds of the Hudson River Estuary	4

Audubon Society of the Capital Region



**Cordially Invites You To Attend Our
Year 2004 Programs & Field Trips**



Audubon Programs

**All Programs to be held at:
William K. Sanford
Colonie Town Library**

Thursday, March 11, 2004, 7:00-9:00 pm

*The Adirondack Forest Preserve: From
Wilderness, to Invasive Species, to Over-Use
of Resources, to Snowmobiling: A Report
from the Wilderness Advocate.*

Speakers: Kevin Prickett

Location: Colonie Town Library

Kevin Prickett, Wilderness Stewardship Advocate of The Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, will present a slide presentation about Unit Management Planning for the 2.7 million acre Adirondack Forest Preserve. Governor Pataki announced in 2004. What are the results? Are we applying the highest standards for managing our "forever wild" lands in the Adirondacks? What are the policy issues at stake? What can we all do to educate ourselves?

Kevin Prickett is a full-time resident of the Adirondack Park, residing in the Town of Wilmington. He joined the Association's staff in 2002.

Thursday, April 8, 2004, 7:00-9:00 pm

Ten Best Native Trees

Speaker : Frank Knight

Botanist, photographer, and former DEC educator, Frank Knight will give a slide illustrated talk on his "ten best" native trees, and other plants. This is both a program and an Audubon botanical field trip in later spring. This is a good time to think about arbor day plantations or landscape enhancement for yards.

Thursday, May 13, 2004, 7:00-9:00 pm

Postcards From The West

Speaker : Larry & Maryde King

Hudson-Mohawk

Bird Club Programs

Monday, March 2, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

*The HMBC Merlins Report on
2003 World Series of Birding*

Speaker : Deb Smith & The Merlins

Location: Colonie Town Library

On May 10, 2003, a team of 4 young men represented the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club in the Youth Division of New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding. Come hear about their adventures. Along the way, they listed 109 species and visited some of the hottest birding spots in the Northeast. They collected pledge money of over \$1400 for The Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, the conservation cause of their choice.

Monday, April 22, 2004, * 8:00 p.m. *

Seabird Restoration

Speaker: Steve Kress

Location: Fuller Rd Fire Dept. 1342 Cntrl Ave.

Dr. Stephen Kress will discuss the exploitation of Maine seabirds for food and feathers and discuss why seabirds require management to encourage re-colonization. He will review techniques for restoring colonies of seabirds.

Audubon Field Trips

BIRDING 101-- Early Notice

We will offer a short course in birding in June. Specifics will be in the next newsletter and on our website. We expect this course to consist of an evening or two of indoor instruction, followed by a half-day field lesson. Topics will include: intro to birding, techniques, optics, field guides and handbooks, identification tips, and beyond birding.

Refreshments will be served. As always, we encourage you to bring your friends and family. For directions or details, call Greg Rucinski at the Colonie Library at (518) 458-9274.

Continued from Page 1

...or seek scientific information about impacts on Adirondack health, safety or the environment.

- **The Plan is not actually "comprehensive."** The plan fails to document the existing extent of snowmobiling in the Adirondack Park. It fails to inventory or assess hundreds of miles of town-owned and privately-owned snowmobile trails, including the large part of the Adirondacks with conservation easements that may permit snowmobiling. Further, the Plan contains an illegible map of all Forest Preserve trails. The public must be given better information to assess the existing trail systems in the entire Park before any new trail proposals are put forward.

- **The Plan removes existing limitations** on the number of miles of snowmobile trails in the State Forest Preserve (currently an 850 mile limitation), a mileage restriction required by the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. Further, it provides evidence that the number of miles of trail on Forest Preserve now exceeds 1,000 miles. **The Adirondack Park must continue to have and to monitor restrictions on the mileage of publicly owned, Forest Preserve trails open to motorized uses.**

- **The Plan fails to plan for how to keep ATVs** from using the wider mini-roads. This illegal, damaging use is widespread throughout the Park. This Plan must be guided by a clear state policy on use of ATVs in the Adirondack Park. That policy does not yet exist. The Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks opposes the use of ATVs anywhere on the New York State Forest Preserve.

Take Action! This Plan fails the Adirondack Park and the high standards we should all expect for the Park. Please write a letter to let the DEC know your views. Submit comments by March 31, 2004 to:

Rob Messenger
NYS DEC
Bureau of Forest Preserve Management
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4254
Fax: (518) 402-9028
e-mail: lfadk@gw.dec.state.ny.us

**** Public Hearings will also be held, check out ASCR's website for locations and times at: www.CapitalRegionAudubon.org**

Thank you!
Please contact us with any questions.
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AUDUBON COUNCIL SPRING ASSEMBLY

Audubon members are invited to attend the Spring 2004 Audubon Council of New York State Assembly, to be held March 26-28 at the Gideon Putnam Hotel and Conference Center in Saratoga Springs. Highlights include review and adoption of Audubon Policy Resolutions for 2004, an IBA update, and special guest Governor George E. Pataki, who will receive the Hoyt Award. ASCR Board member Bob Budliger will lead conference field trips to Vischer Ferry and the Wilton Preserve. All in all, it will be a great weekend of conservation and fellowship. For information about registration, lodging, meals and agenda, log on to nasny@audubon.org, or call the Audubon New York office at 869-9731.

MAdirondack Spring: A Gathering of Stars

Join your favorite Adirondack singer / songwriters and cultural artists in a celebration of spring at Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady on March 20, 2004. *MAdirondack Spring: A Gathering of Stars* will help support and celebrate the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks' new headquarters, Adirondack Research Library and educational Center for the Forest Preserve at the former home of the late Paul Schaefer, visionary 20th century advocate for the Adirondacks.

For more information, call the Association at (518) 377-1452, or go to www.proctors.org, hit Calendar / Shows, click on *MAdirondack Spring*.

NYS Breeding Bird Atlas—The Final Year

The final year of the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas has just begun, and there's plenty of work yet to be done. Those of you who have been working on Atlas blocks already understand the documentary importance of this citizen science effort, and also know just how personally rewarding atlasing can be. Atlasing helps to build our knowledge of bird habitats, behaviors and songs. It also gives us a reason to investigate new areas, and brings us into contact with local landowners and other people who are interested in birding and conservation.

In the four years of fieldwork since 2000, atlasers have documented breeding for more than 245 species, including species not recorded as breeders in New York's first Atlas Project: Trumpeter Swan, Black Vulture, Merlin, Sandhill Crane, Wilson's Phalarope, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Dickcissel. More than 1,000 hard-working volunteers have already surveyed over 4,500 (85%) of the 5,334 survey blocks in the state. A special focus for 2004 will be to survey the approximately 800 under-reported Atlas blocks. To find out more, visit the Atlas web page of the New York State Ornithological Association at www.nybirds.org.

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The Hudson River Environmental Society
in Conjunction with
The American Museum of Natural History
and
Audubon New York
Announces:

Birds of the Hudson River Estuary

Thursday, 29 April, 2004
The American Museum
of Natural History,
New York, NY

Exploring which species use these habitats, how
each population has changed over time, the
threats to their continued existence, and ongoing
protection efforts.

Look for more information
online at www.hres.org

***** For Programs, Field Trip, & Further General
Environmental Information, Visit Us on the Internet at:
www.CapitalRegionAudubon.Org**



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