


October - December 2009



# WINGBEATS

Audubon Society of the Capital Region



## Saratoga Spa State Park Master Plan ~ Watch for it!

by Dave Gibson



Members and directors of Capital Region Audubon have long taken an interest in the now 2500-acre Saratoga Spa State Park, and worked and dreamed for the day when the Park's natural, cultural and recreational history and assets were comprehensively inventoried and assessed, and opportunities for public awareness, understanding and appreciation of these resources maximized. The long-sought Master Plan for this "queen park" of our region may be released soon, following a year-long period in which NYS OPRHP sought public comments for possible incorporation in the Plan. Capital Region Audubon made extensive comments, and here are some of the topics we thought were most important for inclusion in the Plan:

**Context:** Saratoga Spa State Park's place as a major park and protected area within the landscape of both the City of Saratoga Springs and Saratoga County should be thoroughly described, including linkages with other important green

space, recreation areas, wildlife corridors, streams and rivers, large wetland complexes, old-growth forests, etc.

**Key Indices of Biological Diversity in the Park:** Saratoga Spa State Park has some remarkable biological and landscape (as well as cultural and recreational) features, including groves of old growth trees, a variety of wetland types, streams of remarkably good quality, and meadows harboring the endangered Karner blue butterfly, to name just a few.

**Growth of the Park:** The Park should seek to expand along the Kayaderosseras on both sides of the Creek, and on both sides of Route 9, via willing sellers wherever possible.

**Endangered Species:** State and state/federal endangered butterflies and their habitats, such as the Karner blue butterfly, deserve particular study, specified management objectives and monitoring. Conflicting human uses should be removed from the area, and management actions taken to ensure not only species survival and propagation, but habitat restoration and expansion wherever possible.

**Erosion:** Serious erosion is occurring along Geyser Stream adjacent to SPAC, undermining important natural and cultural features of the Park. The causes of this erosion should be carefully determined, management alternatives studied and steps taken to remediate the damage and prevent its reoccurrence.

*Continued on page 3...*

### In This Issue ...

2009 ASCR Programs	2
Saratoga Park Continued	3
ASCR Announcements	3 & 4
Wingbeats Going Green	4

## Audubon Society of the Capital Region



**Cordially Invites You To Attend Our  
Year 2009 Programs & Field Trips**



### ASCR Programs

**Unless Otherwise Specified,  
Programs To Be Held At:  
*William K. Sanford  
Colonie Town Library***

#### **Resource Exploitation, Finch Nesting Events & a Look at Red Crossbill Vocal types in NYS**

**Monday, October 5, 2009 @ 7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker: Matt Young - Colonie Library**

**\*\* A joint program of the Audubon Society of the  
Capital Region & Hudson Mohawk Bird Club**

Matthew A. Young wrote the finch (i.e. siskin, grosbeak, crossbills) species accounts for the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas and his research interests involve the study of Red Crossbill vocal types in North America with a focus on the types that occur in the east. He is currently an Audio Production Engineer at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Matt did his SUNY ESF masters research at The Great Swamp Conservancy. He is a Kingbird Regional Editor and he sits on the Board of Directors at Lime Hollow Nature Center and Central New York Land Trust.

#### **Owl Prowl Social**

**Saturday, December 12, 2009 @ 6:00p.m.**

**Trip Leaders: Craig Thompson,**

**Alison Van Keuren and Scott Stoner**

**Location: 5 Rivers Environmental Edu. Ctr.**

**\*\* A joint program of the Audubon Society of the  
Capital Region & Hudson Mohawk Bird Club**

The Audubon Society of the Capital Region invites members and friends to Five Rivers' annual "owl social". Great Horned and Eastern Screech Owls are often heard calling around dusk at this time of year in the deep pine woods. On this informal outing, local bird experts will lead field parties to several likely owl roosts along Five Rivers' trails. Field parties will gather at a roaring campfire at the Vlomankill Pavilion to compare findings. Complimentary hot dogs and hot drinks by the warm glow of the hearth will answer the question "who cooks for you?". We'll meet at 6:00 PM at the Visitor

Center for a brief introduction, then walk about 1 mile through habitat that has been productive for owls in the past, to the Vlomankill pavilion. The owls are never guaranteed, but a good time is nearly a certainty! This program is open to the public free of charge. In case of inclement weather, this program may be cancelled. Reservations are needed in advance [so we know how much food to buy]. Please call (518) 475-0291 to register by Wednesday, December 9.

### Field Trips

#### **Birding Vischer Ferry**

**Sunday, October 4, 2009 @ 9:00 a.m.**

**Trip Leaders: Craig Thompson, Alison Van Keuren**

**Location: Vischer Ferry Preserve, Clifton Park**

Join us on a field survey of fall migrants at Vischer Ferry Preserve, one of the Capital District's premier birding destinations, as we help the Town of Clifton Park celebrate River Days. Suitable for the birding novice, this "citizen science" outing will continue our chapter's "Adopt An IBA" initiative at this site. Bring binoculars. The program is free, but please contact Craig at 756-3610 by Wednesday, September 30 to register and get directions. In the event of inclement weather, this program will be canceled.

#### **Saratoga County Christmas Bird Count**

**Saturday, Dec. 19, 2009 Sunrise to Sunset**

**Contact: Craig Thompson, 756-3610**

#### **Albany County Christmas Bird Count**

**Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009 Sunrise to Sunset**

**Contact: Alan Mapes, 439-8046**

#### **New Year's Day Bird Count**

**Friday, January 1, 2010; 9:00 AM**

**Location: 5 Rivers Environmental Edu. Ctr.**

**Trip Leaders: Craig Thompson, Alison Van Keuren**

On this outdoor study, bird experts will lead field parties along Center trails in search of resident species as well as late migrants. Billed as "Albany's First Morning", this popular field foray has recorded 70 different bird species since its inception in 1980. The program is geared for the birding novice and is free of charge. Participants are urged to bring binoculars and dress for outdoor activity. In the event of severe weather, this program may be cancelled. Please call the Center at 475-0291 for more information.

**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.**

## Saratoga State Park, from page 1 ...

**Maps and Interpretation:** Strengthening natural history awareness and appreciation of the Park's outdoor landscape and ecological features among park patrons should be a high priority of the Master Plan. The spring waters of the Park remain the basis for its original acquisition, protection from commercial exploitation, and designation as a reservation and later a State Park. This "creation story" of the Park deserves continual re-examination and creative interpretation. Maps and signage of the Park fail to show the full range of biological and cultural diversity there, or opportunities for public information, awareness and interpretation of key features. Interpretive signs have great potential to increase public interest in and awareness of these Park amenities and habitats. There is potential for a trail across the former landfill, through the swamp wetland, connecting to an observation platform with interpretive signage out into the marsh. With improved maps, self-guided trails, information kiosks, as well as personal service interpretation, the Park could become an important natural/educational area within the Saratoga-Capital District Region.

**Nature and Waters Interpretation: Staffing Capacity:** Staffing, contractual services and volunteers to provide these important public services and programs should be an important planning component of the Master Plan.

**Management Framework, Relevant Laws and Regulations:** Saratoga County has been allowed by OPRHP in the past year to bulldoze, excavate and otherwise invade parts of Saratoga Spa State Park as a through route for a county water system. It was astounding to see the damage being done to Park resources by this project, and by the apparent lack of public notice or understanding in advance of the excavation. The Master Plan should describe how Park management and use is controlled by State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR), OPRHP statute, regulations, Parkland alienation laws, Land and Water Conservation, and other relevant statutes.

**SPAC:** As much as possible, the Master Plan should guide how SPAC and Park management work together to achieve mutual goals, and complement rather than hinder or undermine each other's objectives.

**Tree Nursery and DEC:** The Master Plan should carefully review the shared history, and current goals and objectives of the adjacent NYS DEC Tree Nursery, and explore creative ways to partner with the Spa Park and its management objectives.

## ASCR Announcements

### Fall Audubon Council Meeting Set

ASCR members are cordially invited to participate in the Fall Audubon Council of New York State meeting, which will take place October 30 - November 1 at the Thayer Hotel in West Point. Highlights of the weekend will include field trip options to Important Bird Areas at Doodletown/Iona and Croton Point Park. For more info, contact Audubon NY at 869-9731 or log on to <http://ny.audubon.org>

### Saratoga Spa State Park Draft Master Plan Published

NYS OPRHP has completed a Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Saratoga Spa State Park. Copies of the Draft Plan/DEIS are available for review at the Park Office, at the offices of the agency contacts and at the Saratoga Springs Public Library, 49 Henry Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. An online version is available at: <http://www.nysparks.com/news/publicdocuments/> A public hearing was held on September 17. Written comments may be sent to Thomas B. Lyons, Director, Resource Management, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Agency Building One, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12238 and will be accepted thru October 9, 2009. You may also comment on the plan by email at [SaratogaSpa.Plan@oprhp.state.ny.us](mailto:SaratogaSpa.Plan@oprhp.state.ny.us)

### 2009 Montezuma Muckrace

ASCR's Capital Cuckoos bird-a-thon team participated in the 13th annual Montezuma Muckrace on September 11 and 12, 2009. This annual 24-hour birding competition, sponsored by Audubon New York and Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, raises funds to support conservation projects within the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. This year the goal is to raise \$13,000 to fund a reforestation project for 57 acres of cropland on the National Wildlife Refuge. Money is raised through pledges sought by participants, registration fees, and sponsorships. Again this year, Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex will match money raised by the top three-fundraising teams.

For information on how to contribute to the cause, contact ASCR rep Jane Graves at [jgraves@skidmore.edu](mailto:jgraves@skidmore.edu), 607-342-6096. To access complete information about the Muckrace, including the newsletter, "Muckrace Musings," visit the Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex website ([http://friendsofmontezuma.org/muck\\_race.html](http://friendsofmontezuma.org/muck_race.html)) or the Audubon NY website ([http://ny.audubon.org/GetInvolved\\_MontezumaMuckrace.html](http://ny.audubon.org/GetInvolved_MontezumaMuckrace.html)). The 2008 competition raised over \$12,000, which funded a shorebird restoration project on Savannah-Spring Lake Road.

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# WINGBEATS

## Going Green

Beginning this winter, ASCR's seasonal newsletter *WingBeats* will not be available in hard-copy format. The full gamut of upcoming programs, field trips and other chapter news and information will be available on line at:

[www.capitalregionaudubon.org](http://www.capitalregionaudubon.org)

## ASCR Sponsors Audubon Adventures

Again this school year, ASCR is underwriting classroom subscriptions to National Audubon's award-winning *Audubon Adventures* teaching materials. Classroom teachers interested in taking advantage of this exceptional opportunity can contact : [president@capitalregionaudubon.org](mailto:president@capitalregionaudubon.org) for more information.

**\*\*\* For Programs, Field Trip, & Further General  
Environmental Information, Visit Us on the Internet at:  
[www.CapitalRegionAudubon.Org](http://www.CapitalRegionAudubon.Org)**



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PLEASE EXPEDITE**