

April - June 2005



WINGBEATS

Audubon Society of the Capital Region



Open Space Plan Undergoing Revision



In January, NYS DEC and OPRHP, with the help of nine Regional Advisory Committees, began the process of updating New York's Open Space Conservation Plan. The current Plan was published in 2002. The Committees, which are appointed jointly by the State and County governments, will be meeting throughout the spring to analyze available natural resource and recreation information relative to their region. Where deemed appropriate, Committees will recommend revisions to the current regional open space program and policy, and will identify and rank regional open space priority projects. DEC's Regional Supervisors of Natural Resources will be working with their respective Committees, helping to identify available data bases and other relevant information which the Committees will use to help inform this important review.

Regional Advisory Committees are expected to report their recommendations by the end of June. NYS DEC and OPRHP staff will then consolidate these reports over the summer into a statewide Draft Revised Plan that will be the subject of a public comment period and public hearings, expected to be held throughout the State in late 2005 or early 2006. Thereafter, NYS DEC and OPRHP staff will assess the public comment and produce a Final Revised Plan for the Governor's approval, expected some time in 2006.

The Region 4 Advisory Committee, which represents the Capital District (i.e. Albany, Columbia, Delaware, Greene, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Schenectady, and Schoharie counties), will be meeting several times between now and the end of May. Audubon members are encouraged to

nominate deserving parcels for the Committee's consideration. During the last revision, most of NY Audubon's Important Bird Areas were added to the regional and state project lists. However, now that the revised IBA list has been promulgated, there may be some new parcels to add. To nominate parcels, or for more information about the review process or the Open Space Conservation Plan in general, contact the Region 4 Advisory Committee Co-Chairs:

Mr. Mark Fitzsimmons, the Albany County representative, at 447-5665 or by email at mfitzsimmons@albanycounty.com

Mr. Mark King representing The Nature Conservancy at 272-0195 ext. 28 or by email at mark_king@tnc.org

Mr. Peter Innes at NYS DEC, 1150 N. Wescott Rd, Schenectady, NY 12306 or phone 357-2234.

New York's Open Space Conservation Plan serves as the blueprint for the State's land conservation efforts, which during the past several years, has conserved more than 394,000 acres of land across the State with an investment of \$378 million in Environmental Protection Fund and Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act funds. The first Plan was completed in 1992. State legislation passed in 1990 that led to the preparation of that Plan also required an update of the Plan every 3 years, which resulted in revised Plans in 1995, 1998, and 2002.

The goals of the Plan are: to protect water quality; to provide high quality outdoor recreation; to protect scenic, historic and cultural resources; to protect habitat diversity; to sustain the traditional pastimes of hunting, trapping, fishing, and viewing wildlife; to maintain natural resource-based industries of farming, wood products, commercial fishing and tourism; to provide places for education and research on ecological, environmental and appropriate cultural resources; and to preserve open space, particularly forest lands, for the protection and enhancement of air quality.

The Plan consists of a comprehensive description of programs and policies that affect the conservation of the State's open space resources; a compilation of major conservation successes accomplished under the Plan; a list of priority projects; conservation strategies for major resource areas; evaluation and criteria used to determine Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act spending priorities; and recommendations by the Regional Advisory Committees and the Governor's Quality Communities Task Force to improve New York's open space conservation program.

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Audubon Society of the Capital Region



**Cordially Invites You To Attend Our
Year 2005 Programs & Field Trips**



Audubon Programs

All Programs To Be Held At:

*William K. Sanford
Colonie Town Library*

Thursday, April 14, 2005, 7:00-9:00 pm

Bird Conservation In NYS Parks

Speaker: Ray Perry

New York has one of the most diverse state park systems in the country and many of the parks offer critical bird habitat.

Join us as Ray Perry discusses what the state's Bird Conservation Area program is, and why it is important to the state's birds. Ray coordinates the BCA program for the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, and has 20 years service with two state agencies as park naturalist, environmental educator, and program planner. Ray is an avid birder who leads walks, conducts bird counts, and keeps the Schenectady County bird list (217 to date).

Thursday, May 12, 2005, 7:00-9:00 pm

Chincoteague:

Natural History of a Barrier Island

Speaker: Bob Budliger

Bob Budliger will present an illustrated talk on the nature of the Virginia barrier island at Chincoteague. He will explore the origins of the island, its history, its plants and animals, and its fabled wild ponies. Bob is the retired Director of Education for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and has taught five coastal ecology workshops for Cornell University at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

Thursday, June 9, 2005, 7:00-9:00 pm

The Natural History of Bats

Speaker: Al Hicks

First of all, they do not fly into your hair. They are not flying mice. And they are not all dangerous rabid blood-suckers. Join us for an evening with Al Hicks to learn some of the amazing things that are true about bats. For

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.

example, they are important parts of a balanced ecosystem; they navigate with "sonar"; and they are a lot more common than you'd expect.

Al is the mammals specialist with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's endangered species unit and has spent a large part of his career studying bats and developing plans to protect them. Al's work takes him into the realms of darkness-- out in the forests at night and into the deepest of caves and old mines-- perennial backdrops for all good stories.

Audubon Field Trips

Ferns of Joralemon Park

Sunday, June 5: 2:00 p.m.

Nestled in the Town of Coeymans, Joralemon Park is a veritable botanical treasury, featuring 25 species of fern and many wildflower specialties. Join ASCR President Craig Thompson for a field study of what is without question one of New York's premier fern grottos. Long pants and sturdy shoes recommended. Call Craig Thompson at 756-3610 for more information or to confirm in the event of inclement weather. The Park is located on County Rt. 102 approx. 1½ miles north of Rt. 143. Meet at parking pull-off on 102 just north of (past) Ravena Fish and Game Club.

Fourth of July Butterfly Count

Saturday, June 25

ASCR will sponsor the third annual Heldeberg Butterfly Count on Saturday, June 25 (rain or heavy overcast date of Sunday, June 26). The Fourth of July Butterfly Counts was started by the North American Butterfly Association. The counts take place within an 15 mile diameter circle. Ours takes place in Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Thompson Lake and Thatcher State Parks and part of Partridge Run WMA. We will be out all day identifying and counting every butterfly we find. Last year we found 27 species and 601 individual butterflies. Our cumulative species count is now 33. If you are interested in helping, please call Sue Adair at 355-8008 before 8:30 PM.

Albany Pine Bush Butterfly Walk

Saturday, July 9 - Afternoon

Join Sue Adair for a 2 hour butterfly field trip on Saturday afternoon, July 9. Mid-July is a great time to find several species of hairstreaks in the pine barrens including the stunning Coral Hairstreak. A number of other species should also be present. To participate call Sue Adair at 355-8008 before 8:30 PM.

Coming Soon to a Hilltop Near You....

By Graham Cox



Coming soon to a hilltop or ridgeline near you: A dozen, maybe a hundred, 225-foot tall wind turbines with blades more than 100 feet long, generating enough electric power to serve a whole town or even half a rural county. It is clean, green energy, hailed as an antidote to global climate change. But if this energy farm is built in the middle of the Adirondack Park, is it acceptable? Or if it is built off the south shore of Long Island is this acceptable?

These are questions that are now confronting communities across New York State and the Northeast states, which have 20 wind farms proposed in addition to the three existing, from Northeastern Maine to Long Island and west out to near Jamestown. The eight or so turbines now being proposed in a project for the ridge next to Gore Mountain Ski Center near North Creek is now a project before the Adirondack Park Agency for review. The project is being proposed by the owners of Barton Mines, in business on this prominent ridge site for a century, mining garnet there for industrial uses for many decades.

Reaction ranges from quietly fomenting opposition -- not in the Park, but acceptable elsewhere -- to a bold op ed in the New York Times Feb. 19, 2005, from Adirondack writer Bill McKibben. He argues that it is time for the environmental community to accept some wind power sites in the Park -- on privately owned lands where road access is already in place, where there is an existing power line to carry the current, and on industrially zoned land -- the exact conditions at the Barton Mines property.

An excellent article providing an overview of the issue and a listing of existing and proposed wind power sites appeared in the Autumn 2004 issue of Northern Woodlands, authored by Madeline Bodin. Audubon New York has started to wrestle with this issue and prepared a brief policy statement, the gist of it being that we need to insist on detailed site by site studies for each proposal to try to determine the likely impact on birds and bats.

The issue of should there be wind turbines in the Adirondack Park, or the Catskill Park, is a whole different problem for us all to consider. But while we have been thinking about this, quietly, the Tug Hill Commission and the local towns along the Black River Valley and the western escarpment of Tug Hill have approved a collection of turbines, some 180 in all on a footprint 18 miles by five miles, south of Lowville. The fiscal benefits to the farmer/landowners are considerable. Progress toward the stated goal of Governor Pataki, to generate 25 percent of New York's electric power from clean, green sources in the next few years, is also closer when this project is complete.



It is a debate that can only heat up across the Northeast, as community leaders are asked to weigh the local environmental impacts with the long term global impacts, to weigh possible local destruction of wildlife against curbing greenhouse gas emissions, and weigh local aesthetics against a sign of real hope for the future, argues McKibben.

ASCR will continue to update you on this topic as information becomes available.

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President: Craig Thompson
508B Stanton Road
Coeymans Hollow, NY 12046
(518) 756-3610 (home)
cdthomps@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Vice: Graham Cox
President: 18A Michael Terrace
Albany, NY 12203
(518) 456-1489 (home)
gcox@audubon.org

Secretary: David Gibson
107 Longkill Road
Ballston Lake, NY 12019
(518) 877-8678 (home)
(518) 377-1452 (work)

Treasurer: Louise Desormeau
P.O. Box 11654
Albany, NY 12211
(518) 786-0805 (home)
auntlouisd@aol.com

DIRECTORS

Sue Adair
107 Fox Run Drive
Schenectady, NY 12303
(518) 355-8008 (home)
adair@nycap.rr.com

René Facchetti
1392 Delaware Turnpike
Delmar, NY 12054
(518) 768-4630 (home)
rfacchet@albany.net

Robert Budliger
36 Groesbeck Place
Delmar, NY 12054
(518) 439-0006 (home)
rbudliger@aol.com

Frank Murphy
7 Finch Court
Rensselaer, NY 12144
(518) 577-8005
thrush@nycap.rr.com

Jane Graves
PO Box 494
Slingerlands, NY 12159
jgraves@skidmore.edu

Erin Willsey
182 Stage Road
Box 290B
East Berne, NY 12059

COMMITTEES

Conservation: David Gibson
(518) 877-8678 (home)

Education: Erin Willsey

Programs: Scott Stoner—Co Chair
(518) 785-6760 (home)
Robert Budliger—Co-Chair
(518) 439-0006 (home)

Field Trips: Robert Budliger
(518) 439-0006 (home)

Membership: Louise Desormeau
(518) 786-0805 (home)

Publicity: Sam Katz
(518) 372-8412 (home)

Editor of Wingbeats / René Facchetti
Webmaster: (518) 768-4630 (home)
rfacchet@albany.net



Environmental Announcements

Birds of North America Online. This highly acclaimed paper series was completed in 2000 with detailed accounts of more than 700 species of North American birds. It is now available in a continually expanded and interactive online format for individual subscribers at \$40.00 per year. For more information go to the BNA website at <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu>

Important Bird Areas of New York. The second round of IBA site identification was completed in late Fall, 2004. The second edition of the Important Bird Areas of New York will be published in mid 2005. A discounted rate of \$14.99 per item including shipping is available for orders placed before April 15, 2005. Make checks payable to: Audubon New York, 200 Trillium Lane, Albany, NY 12203. For more information go to the IBA website at <http://ny.audubon.org/IBA>

New York State Breeding Bird Atlas. The NYSBBA is entering its final "clean-up" 2005 field season. Data analysis has begun with the hiring of co-editor Kevin McGowan. The expected publication date for the book is sometime in 2007. Consult the Atlas website to look at the exciting comparative maps for the 1980 and 2000 atlases at <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/bba>

New York State Ornithological Association 2005 Meeting. The 2005 meeting of NYSOA is scheduled for September 23-25 at the Albany Marriott on Wolf Road. The featured speaker will be David Bird from McGill University who will be addressing avian reproductive strategies ("How Birds Do It"). For more information go to the NYSOA website at <http://www.birds.org>

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



**Audubon Society
of the Capital Region, Inc.
P.O. Box 487
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