



# WINGBEATS

Audubon Society of the Capital Region

## Conserving Open Space in Clifton Park: An Example Well Worth Studying

*by David J. Miller*

Over the past five years, the Town of Clifton Park has embarked on a comprehensive program to conserve open space. The town adopted a comprehensive open space plan in 2003 after two years of study and public involvement. Thereafter, the town instituted an 18-month building moratorium in the western section of town while a generic environmental impact statement was developed. The result of this effort was the formalization of new innovative planning and conservation tools which not only reduce available building lots by two-thirds, but also created new funding streams for open space purchases when developments were clustered within allowable lots.

Though the two realities – the spread of suburban development and the desire to conserve farms, wetlands, water bodies and green trails – clash in many of our Capital Region communities, Clifton Park has been successful in coming to grips with this conflict through these efforts. Its process and combination of citizen involvement and Town Board leadership can serve as a good example for others to study across the region and the state. The town's assessment of open space has shown that a substantial amount of the town remains in open space, as active farms, as

protected wetlands, river corridors and aquifer recharge areas, as town parks, and as scenic and historic resources. The town's 2003 open space plan and the generic environmental impact statement that followed has mapped, inventoried and prioritized these areas and set goals for farmland protection, open space acquisition and trail development.

Since the town board adopted the plan in 2003, the town has invested heavily in making the recommendations come alive by taking the following actions:

- Investing almost \$500,000 in completing the plan details and preparing a generic environmental impact statement covering the western part of town, that is, the area still largely in active farming or as open space;
- Consolidated several town committees into one open space, trails and riverfront committee to implement the town's open space program;
- Hired a full-time staff person, Jennifer Viggiani, as the town open space coordinator, the first position of its kind in upstate New York;
- Permanently protected close to 700 acres by acquisition and easements, including two major farms, the 260-acre Dwaaskill preserve on the State's open space plan, and wetland habitats around the Vischer Ferry Preserve, identified by Audubon New York as an Important Bird Area, as well as other critical natural resource areas;
- Committed over \$750,000 of county and state open space grants and more than matched them with town funds to complete the projects to date;
- Created a dedicated open space capital reserve fund to handle grants and purchases;
- Invested in new green trail projects – now adding some 12 miles of trails -- and a riverfront park along the Mohawk River.

### In This Issue ...

<b>2006 ASCR Programs</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Environmental Announcements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Open Space Continued</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ASCR Muckrace</b>	<b>4</b>

*Continued on page 3...*

## Audubon Society of the Capital Region



**Cordially Invites You To Attend Our  
Year 2006 Programs & Field Trips**



### Audubon Programs

**All Programs To Be Held At:**

*William K. Sanford  
Colonie Town Library*

**Thursday, October 12, 2006, 7:00-9:00 pm**

**Alaska: From Mountains to the Sea**

**Speaker: Fred & Barbara Nuffer**

Avid hikers Fred and Barbara Nuffer will present an eye-popping pictorial of their 3-week camping adventure exploring a small slice of our largest state. From Denali National Park and Preserve south to the Kenai Peninsula, they experienced habitats ranging from alpine tundra and boreal forest to tidewater glaciers, rugged coastline and the Pacific Ocean. Join us for a celebration of Alaska's vast wilderness, featuring fascinating flora and fauna, and simply delicious scenery.

Fred and Barbara Nuffer have both worked at NYS DEC's Central Office since the mid-1970's. They especially enjoy exploring the U.S. National Park System. Barbara, a Rensselaer County Master Gardener and accomplished photographer, currently has a series of articles on native wildflowers in DEC's The Conservationist magazine.

**Thursday, November 9, 2006, 7:00-9:00 pm**

**The Adirondack Biodiversity Inventory**

**Speaker: Dr. Graham Cox**

Though we know much about a few charismatic critters in the Adirondack Park, there is much we do not know about all the other taxa that comprise Adirondack

*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.*

ecosystems, from the bogs and river banks to the highest Alpine summits. Researchers from Paul Smith's College and the Adirondack Ecological Center are now embarking on a long term project to identify every species, from bacteria to moose, within the Park. Come learn about what this inventory is, and how you can get involved.

A long-time activist and researcher on Adirondack Park issues, Graham Cox is Audubon New York's coordinator of open space and forestry programs and serves on DEC's Forest Preserve Advisory Committee, the DEC Region 5 Open Space Advisory Committee, and the state's GIS coordinating advisory committee. He worked on the staff of the Gov. Cuomo's 21st Century Adirondack Commission in 1989-90.

**Thursday, December 14, 2006, 7:00-9:00 pm**

**GRASSLAND BIRD CONSERVATION**

**Speaker: Mike Morgan**

Of the 20 bird species showing the steepest decline in New York State, almost 50% are grassland species. Come learn about Audubon New York's grassland bird conservation initiative and find out what research is showing about where grassland birds are concentrated in New York, what are their habitat requirements, how their habitat fits in to New York's landscapes, and what landowners can do to manage habitat for grassland birds.

Mike Morgan is Audubon New York's Wildlife Ecologist and the coordinator of Audubon's grassland bird conservation program. Prior to coming to Audubon in 2004, Mike worked for the NYS DEC and USFWS at Iroquois and Montezuma National Wildlife Refuges, and at Finger Lakes Community College. His outside interests include canoeing, camping, woodworking and training his Labrador Retriever.

## Announcements

### **Birding Vischer Ferry**

Saturday, October 7 at 9:00 a.m.

Join chapter president Craig Thompson on a field survey of fall migrants at Vischer's Ferry Preserve, one of the Capital District's premier birding destinations. Suitable for the birding novice, this "citizen science" outing will continue our chapter's "Adopt An IBA" initiative at this site. In the event of inclement weather, this program will be cancelled. Call Craig at 756-3610 for more info.

### **Fall Audubon Council Meeting**

ASCR members are cordially invited to participate in the Fall Audubon Council of New York State meeting, which will take place October 27-29, 2006 at the Hotel Saranac in Saranac Lake, New York. Highlights of the weekend include: keynote speaker Peter Berle, former President of the National Audubon Society and NYS DEC Commissioner; presentations on Bicknell's thrush, spruce grouse, and loons; a field trip to Bloomingdale Bog for boreal species; and much more. For more info, contact Audubon NY at 869-9731 or [www.ny.audubon.org](http://www.ny.audubon.org)

### **Conference On John James Audubon**

On Saturday, October 21, 2006, the E.N. Huyck Preserve will hold a conference on John James Audubon from 1-9PM at the Rensselaerville Institute Conference Center in Rensselaerville, NY. The conference will feature the world premiere of a new PBS documentary, "John James Audubon: Drawn From Nature", as well as talks by experts on the artist and preserving his work, including the Octavos, a rare collection of his prints and natural history writings. Registration is limited. For more information and to obtain a registration form, visit [www.huyckpreserve.org](http://www.huyckpreserve.org) or e-mail [audubonconference@huyckpreserve.org](mailto:audubonconference@huyckpreserve.org) or call 518-797-3105.

### **Audubon Society of the Capital Region Annual Report available On-Line**

What has the chapter been up to lately? You can check out ASCR's Annual Report on line, [www.capitalregionaudubon.org](http://www.capitalregionaudubon.org), for a recap of our 2005-06 achievements and our Annual Plan for 2006-07.



## Open Space in Clifton Park

*...Continued From Page 1*

While every planning effort can always do more and improve in time, the leadership and dedication that Supervisor Phil Barrett and the Town Board have given to this program has made a huge difference. In addition, citizens have been involved every step of the way and the current Open Space, Riverfront and Trails committee is working every month to further the program's goals. The town efforts are also being used to help Saratoga County in its efforts to adopt a county-wide Green Infrastructure Plan.

There remain issues from time to time over individual developments and their scope of impact on the town, but today's tools put the town in a far better position to address them than a mere five years ago. In celebration of successes to date, the town has recently issued a brochure, the Open Space Report Card, which gives the details of the plan and the projects. Together, we can continue to keep the momentum going for open space in Clifton Park by taking stock in our accomplishments to date and building upon them.

For a detailed look at the open space plan and to get involved with projects, visit the town's web site at [www.cliftonpark.org](http://www.cliftonpark.org), or contact town open space coordinator Jennifer Viggiani at: [jviggiani@cliftonpark.org](mailto:jviggiani@cliftonpark.org), or call her at 371-6054.

*This article was prepared by Audubon New York Executive Director David J. Miller, a resident of Clifton Park, who co-chairs the open space, trails and riverfront committee with Jim Romano.*





## OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

**President:** Craig Thompson  
508B Stanton Road  
Coeymans Hollow, NY 12046  
(518) 756-3610 (home)  
President@CapitalRegionAudubon.org

**Vice:** Graham Cox  
**President:** 200 Trillium Lane  
Albany, NY 12203  
(518) 869-9731 (work)  
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) ryf@nycap.rr.com
Allison Van Keuren P.O. Box 494 Slingerlands, NY 12159 (518) 435-0817	Frank Murphy 7 Finch Court Rensselaer, NY 12144 (518) 577-8005 thrush@nycap.rr.com
Jane Graves 411 Warren Road Ithaca, NY 14850 jgraves@skidmore.edu	Erin Bradt 182 Stage Road Box 290B East Berne, NY 12059

## COMMITTEES

<b>Conservation:</b>	David Gibson (518) 877-8678 (home)
<b>Education:</b>	Erin Bradt
<b>Programs:</b>	Scott Stoner—Co Chair (518) 785-6760 (home) scottjstoner@aol.com
<b>Field Trips:</b>	Craig Thompson (518) 756-3610 (home)
<b>Membership:</b>	Louise Desormeau (518) 786-0805 (home)
<b>Publicity:</b>	Open
<b>Editor of Wingbeats / Webmaster:</b>	René Facchetti (518) 768-4630 (home) ryf@nycap.rr.com



## **ASCR BIRDING TEAM COMPETES IN MONTEZUMA MUCKRACE**

The first-ever ASCR-sponsored birding team, the Merlins, competed in the tenth annual Montezuma Muckace, held at the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. Participants in the 24-hour competition, which ran from 9 PM September 8 until 9 PM September 9, attempt to identify as many species as possible within the borders of the Complex, which includes the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge and Howland Island Wildlife Management Area.

The team was organized and managed by ASCR Board member Jane Graves. Team members were ASCR Board member Alison Van Keuren and Albany-area residents John Roosenberg II and Doug Kibbe. A total of 111 species were identified and over \$550 was raised.

The Montezuma Muckrace is a fundraiser to support projects at the MWC. This year money raised is to be used to help fund a project to study the habitat characteristics of the Cerulean Warbler. The goal set was \$10,000. As of September 12, around \$6000 has been raised, but pledges and donations will be coming in until the October 6 deadline.

A record 23 teams and 83 individuals participated. Overall, 188 species were identified, with the winning team, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's "No Strings Attached" tallying an impressive 146 species.

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



**Audubon Society  
of the Capital Region, Inc.  
P.O. Box 11654  
Albany, NY 12211**

☒ **Return Service Requested**

*Printed on Recycled Paper* 

Pre-Sort Std.  
US Postage  
Paid  
Albany, NY  
Permit # 881

**DATED PROGRAM  
PLEASE EXPEDITE**