



Bird Conservation in New York State Parks

The Division of Environmental Stewardship and Planning



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

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To prevent bird-window collisions, bird-friendly patterns were incorporated into the clerestory glass at the Grafton Lakes State Park Welcome Center, opened in May 2018.

CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS

STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
New York State Department of Transportation
New York Power Authority
New York State Department of State
Palisades Interstate Park Commission
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
United States Department of Agriculture
National Park Service

AUDUBON AND CHAPTERS

Audubon New York
Audubon Society of the Capital Region
Buffalo Audubon Society
Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary
Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
Four Harbors Audubon Society
Genesee Valley Audubon Society
Great South Bay Audubon Society
Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society
Jamestown Audubon Community Nature Center
Montezuma Audubon Center
North Fork Audubon Society
Northern New York Audubon
New York City Audubon
Onondaga Audubon
Presque Isle Audubon Society
Putnam Highlands Audubon
Rockland Audubon Society
Saw Mill River Audubon Society
Southern Adirondack Audubon Society

AMERICORPS

Excelsior Conservation Corps
The Student Conservation Association

COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES & PARTNERSHIPS

Champlain Valley Technical Education
Cornell University — Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Friends of Recreation, Conservation, and Environmental Stewardship (FORCES) and Partnering Schools
New York Natural Heritage Program
New York State Invasive Species Research Institute
SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry

PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT (PRISM)

St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario PRISM (SLELO)
Western New York PRISM

PRIVATE AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Berkshire Bird Paradise
Braddock Bay Raptor Research
Bronx Children's Museum
Caumsett Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
Friends of Point Au Roche State Park
Greenbelt Native Plant Center
Long Island Community Foundation
Long Island Sound Study
Mearns Bird Club
Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District
Palisades Interstate Parks League of Naturalists
Pheasants Forever
Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club
Rochester Birding Association
Rochester Young Birders Club
Solitude Lake Management
Trillium Invasive Species Management, Inc.
Western New York Bird Dog Federation
Volunteers

A special thanks to all of the federal and state agencies, private and non-profit organizations, volunteers, colleges and universities, and many more who contribute to bird conservation in State Parks across New York. This list includes some of the most notable partnerships identified by NY State Park staff.

BIRD CONSERVATION

IN NEW YORK STATE PARKS

The mission of the **Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation** (OPRHP) is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources.

The **OPRHP Division of Environmental Stewardship and Planning** (DESP) is dedicated to the protection, conservation, and resiliency of the State Parks and Historic Sites system. By working collaboratively with stakeholders and partners, the Division provides education, training, and the tools necessary to make informed decisions that balance responsible recreation with the needs of the natural environment. These efforts will ensure a robust and sustainable parks system now and for generations to come.

In order to promote avian biodiversity statewide, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation works with key partners to protect significant habitats and to provide education and outreach relating to bird conservation. While many of these efforts are targeted at birds and their habitats, the conservation of these areas will also have positive impacts on recreation, revenue, and overall ecosystem health in New York State.

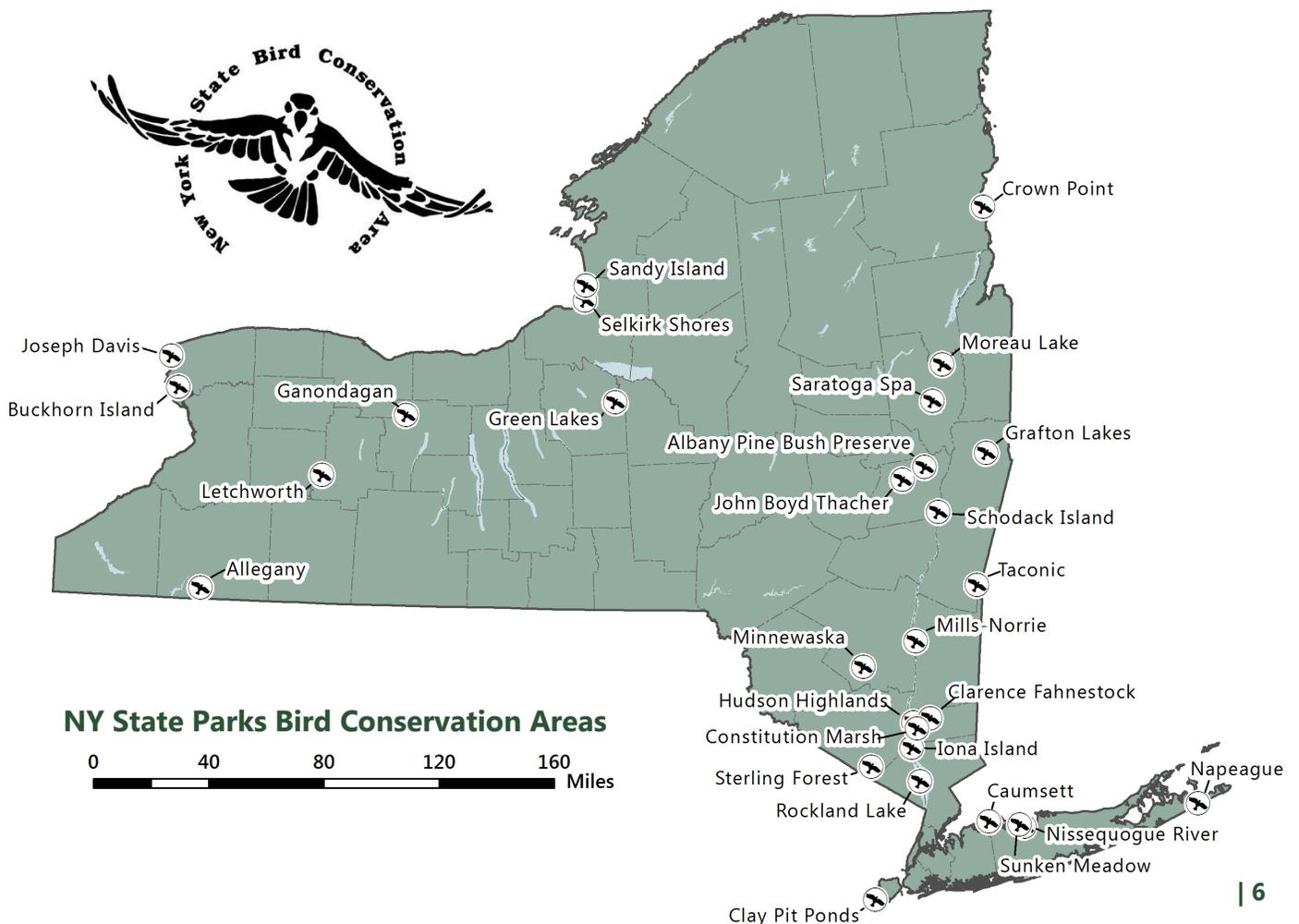
Did You Know?

- ☑ *New York State supports over 450 different bird species.*
- ☑ *There are 27 NY State Parks with designated Bird Conservation Areas, covering over 160,000 acres.*
- ☑ *Over 35 NY State Parks have completed one or more bird-related conservation projects and over 25 projects are in progress.*
- ☑ *Over 50 partners have assisted bird-related education or conservation programs in NY State Parks.*
- ☑ *NY State Parks have provided sites for bird research for over 100 years.*
- ☑ *Since 2011, the Audubon in the Parks Initiative has been instrumental in promoting bird conservation in NY State Parks.*
- ☑ *Birding is a recreational opportunity that attracts many people to NY State Parks each year. The US Fish and Wildlife Service reports that 20% of New York residents identify themselves as birders.*

BIRD CONSERVATION AREAS

The New York State Bird Conservation Area (BCA) Program was established in 1997 to safeguard and enhance bird populations and their habitats on state lands and waters. The goal of the BCA Program is to integrate bird conservation interests into planning, management, and research projects within the context of agency missions.

- **Nearly half of all BCA sites are managed by NY State Parks.** Of the 62 BCAs in New York, 27 are managed by NY State Parks, 32 are managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), 1 is managed by the NYS Canal Corporation, and 2 sites have shared management between NY State Parks and NYS DEC.
- **BCAs are still being designated in NY State Parks.** Ganondagan State Historic Site was designated in 2017, becoming the first BCA in the Finger Lakes Region. Taconic State Park's BCA was designated in 2018.
- **There are still parks that may meet BCA criteria.** With over 350,000 acres of NY State Park land, many opportunities exist to expand the number of BCAs. BCAs can be designated at any park that meets one or more of the following criteria, as defined by NYS Environmental Conservation Law §11, Title 20:
 - Waterfowl concentration
 - Pelagic seabird concentration
 - Shorebird concentration
 - Wading bird concentration
 - Migration concentration
 - Diverse species concentration
 - Individual species concentration
 - Species at risk area
 - Bird research area



AUDUBON NEW YORK

Audubon New York, a state program of the National Audubon Society, protects birds and the places they need, now and in the future, throughout the Americas



Audubon | NEW YORK

using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation. With 85,000 members and 27 affiliated chapters state-wide, Audubon New York oversees seven sanctuaries and centers, from Long Island to western New York. New York's chapters are part of a national network that is nearly 450 chapters strong. Audubon's state programs, nature centers, chapters and partners have an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire and unite diverse communities in conservation action. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Audubon is a nonprofit conservation organization. OPRHP partners with Audubon New York and chapters statewide.

AUDUBON NEW YORK'S WILLIAM HOYT ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

In recognition for their outstanding commitment to revitalizing New York's remarkable State Parks system, Audubon New York and the Audubon Council of New York State selected **Rose Harvey**, former Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and **Lucy Waletzky**, Chair of the New York State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, as the 2013 recipients of the William Hoyt Environmental Excellence Award.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY'S RACHEL CARSON AWARD

In May 2019, the National Audubon Society celebrated the legacy of female leadership in environmental conservation at its annual Women in Conservation luncheon. The prestigious Rachel Carson Award was presented to **Rose Harvey**, former Commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and The Garden Club of America. The event highlighted the value of public parks and native plants for birds and people, as well as the community organizing and advocacy efforts that help ensure a cleaner, healthier environment for all.

AUDUBON IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS (IBAs)

Audubon spearheads an ambitious effort to identify, monitor, and protect the most important places for birds. Audubon has identified 2,758 IBAs covering 417 million acres of public and private lands in the United States. The IBA Program of Audubon New York, in cooperation with a host of partners, has identified 136 critical bird breeding, migratory stop-over, feeding, and over-wintering areas in the state. IBAs have been identified throughout New York in all types of habitats, including forests, grasslands, wetlands, and bodies of water.



AUDUBON IN THE PARKS INITIATIVE

Audubon in the Parks is an initiative with Audubon New York and the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation to advance bird conservation in NY State Parks, specifically targeting Bird Conservation Areas (BCAs) and Important Bird Areas (IBAs). By joining forces to reach common goals, Audubon in the Parks utilizes the collective strength of both NY State Parks and Audubon to have a greater impact on bird conservation across the state through outreach, interpretation, and habitat enhancement efforts.

From Piping Plover monitoring on the shores of Long Island to invasive species control on the Niagara River, both Audubon New York and local Audubon chapters play an important role in bird-related conservation throughout NY State Parks. These groups host field trips to parks, provide education and outreach, conduct avian surveys, install nest boxes, remove invasive species, participate in festivals, assist with habitat management, receive grants, and more.

“Audubon New York has supplied Piping Plover monitoring and protection staff at Orient Beach State Park for several years now. It’s an incredible help.”

— Regional Environmental Manager
Annie McIntyre

- **Over 40 NY State Parks have partnered with Audubon New York or a local Audubon chapter.**
- **All eleven OPRHP regions would like to increase their partnership with Audubon.**
- **There are over 70 NY State Parks located within an Audubon Important Bird Area.**

Partnerships can be divided into three main categories:

1. Education, Outreach, and Events
2. Conservation and Restoration
3. Monitoring and Research

Types of Audubon Partnerships

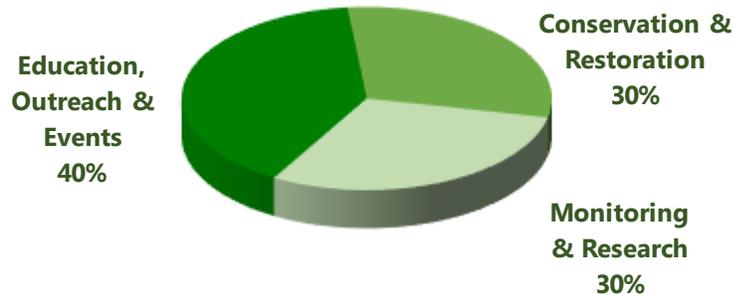


Photo: Audubon New York



AUDUBON IN THE PARKS HIGHLIGHTS

ALLEGANY REGION

Outreach Conservation Monitoring



Multiple Audubon chapters partner every year for the Allegany Nature Pilgrimage at **Allegany State Park**, which features numerous bird-focused educational programs. Organizations include the Jamestown Audubon Community Nature Center, the Buffalo Audubon Society, the Presque Isle Audubon Society, and the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club. More than 800 people attended the event in 2019. Also, the Jamestown center has met with about 300 students at other Allegany events.

CENTRAL REGION

Outreach Conservation Monitoring

Audubon New York played an integral role in establishing the Piping Plover Monitoring Project on the Eastern shores of Lake Ontario, including **Sandy Island Beach State Park**. They helped establish a network of volunteers and were critical in creating and implementing the Piping Plover Monitoring and Stewardship Manual for Lake Ontario. The Onondaga Audubon Society helps coordinate volunteer efforts and keeps records of banding information. Audubon New York also helped develop a grassland management plan for **Green Lakes State Park**, which is now being implemented at the park. The Onondaga Audubon Society has assisted with bird and invasive species monitoring at Green Lakes. They also lead field trips at **Clark Reservation, Verona Beach, and Fair Haven Beach State Parks**.

“We certainly would not be where we are as a project if it wasn’t for the help and support of Audubon New York and the Onondaga Audubon Society from the very beginning.”

— Great Lakes Piping Plover Project Coordinator
Alivia Sheffield



FINGER LAKES REGION

Outreach Conservation Monitoring

In 2017, Ganondagan State Historic Site became the first Bird Conservation Area designated in the Finger Lakes Region. Representatives from Audubon New York joined NY State Park staff at the community celebration.



The Genesee Valley Audubon Society leads birding trips to **Ganondagan State Historic Site**. They have also assisted with bird surveys for many years at Ganondagan and have provided ideas and guidance for habitat management for many parks, including Ganondagan’s grassland management and prescribed burning regimen.

AUDUBON IN THE PARKS HIGHLIGHTS

LONG ISLAND REGION

Outreach Conservation Monitoring

The “Be A Good Egg” initiative is a collaborative effort between Audubon New York and local Audubon chapters, including North Fork Audubon Society, and other partners. They lead programs at **Sunken Meadow, Jones Beach, Orient Beach, and Hallock State Parks**. In 2019, Audubon New York launched the “Beach Steward Volunteer Program” at Sunken Meadow and Jones Beach, where volunteers assist in coastal bird outreach and monitoring. The Great South Bay Audubon Society helps host a “Bird and Breakfast” program four times a year at **Connetquot River State Park**. Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society has volunteered for a grassland restoration project at **Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve**. Four Harbors Audubon Society has created native plant demonstration gardens at Sunken Meadow and leads educational kayaking trips at **Nissequoque River State Park**. At Orient Beach, Audubon New York has monitored and stewarded Piping Plovers and Least Terns since 2009 and North Fork Audubon Society assisted with monitoring in 2019.



In 2017, Bill Brown, manager of Hempstead Lake State Park, and Annie McIntyre, Long Island Regional Environmental Manager, received awards from the South Shore Audubon Society in recognition of their efforts to preserve wildlife habitat.

NIAGARA REGION

Outreach Conservation Monitoring



The Buffalo Audubon Society has led programs in numerous parks. In 2009 and 2011, Buffalo Audubon assisted with shrubland bird habitat at **Joseph Davis State Park**. They also assisted with black alder control at **Beaver Island State Park** and **Buckhorn Island State Park** in 2016. Buffalo Audubon is still engaged in an ongoing invasive species control project at Buckhorn Island. At **Knox Farm State Park**, Buffalo Audubon regularly conducts bird surveys with volunteers.

“We already work closely with Buffalo Audubon, but can build on this partnership... Buffalo Audubon has been a great partner!”

— Regional Biologist
Meg Janis

NEW YORK CITY REGION

Outreach Conservation Monitoring



Audubon New York’s “For the Birds!” provides educational programming at **Clay Pit Ponds State Park**. In 2017, they partnered for a field trip program at **Gantry Plaza State Park**. Also in 2017, New York City Audubon partnered with the Bronx Children’s Museum to provide bird walks and presentations in their afterschool program. Both Audubon New York and New York City Audubon worked with several parks, including **Clay Pit Ponds, Gantry Plaza, Bayswater, Roberto Clemente, East River, and Denny Farrell Riverbank State Parks**, to install Chimney Swift towers. | 10

AUDUBON IN THE PARKS HIGHLIGHTS

PALISADES REGION

☑ Outreach ☑ Conservation ☑ Monitoring

At **Bear Mountain State Park**, the Rockland Audubon Society holds field trips twice annually and assists with raptor surveys and roost counts. Rockland Audubon Society also holds monthly walks under their “First Sunday Walks” program at **Rockland Lake State Park**, as well as annual field trips to **Tallman Mountain, Harriman**, and **Sterling Forest State Parks** and **Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site**. At Harriman and Stony Point Battlefield, they monitor and maintain Eastern Bluebird boxes. Harriman and Sterling Forest are also the sites of Golden-winged Warbler habitat restoration (2013-pres.), avian surveys, and geolocator deployment, which occurs in partnership with Rockland Audubon Society and Constitution Marsh Audubon Center Staff. At **Schunnemunk Mountain State Park**, NYC Audubon provided three American Kestrel boxes in 2014 to provide nesting opportunities for the declining raptor species. The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society serves as the regional coordinator for Golden Eagle camera trap data, with participants from many aforementioned parks as well as **Storm King State Park, Minnewaska State Park Preserve** and **Highland Lakes State Park**.



SARATOGA-CAPITAL REGION

☑ Outreach ☑ Conservation ☑ Monitoring



At **Moreau Lake State Park**, the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society partnered to construct a bird blind, fishing line disposal stations, and an Osprey platform installation. The Southern Adirondack chapter also assisted with nest box installation, as well as ongoing monitoring and maintenance of boxes, at **Saratoga Spa State Park**. At **Peebles Island State Park**, the Audubon Society of the Capital Region coordinated multiple bird walks and a high-level Bald Eagle presentation in collaboration with the DEC. The Audubon Society of the Capital Region has also partnered for the Hawk Watch and ongoing invasive

buckthorn control at **John Boyd Thacher State Park**, as well as Raptor Fest, Cerulean Warbler monitoring, construction of a bird blind, and ongoing oriental bittersweet control at **Schodack Island State Park**.

AUDUBON IN THE PARKS HIGHLIGHTS

TACONIC REGION

Outreach Conservation Monitoring

At **Ogden & Ruth Livingston Mills State Park**, New York City Audubon provided two American Kestrel boxes to be installed at the Dinsmore Golf Course. This was part of an effort to replace nesting habitat at Mills Mansion that was sealed during mansion repairs. A “Birding with Audubon” hike, led by the Director of Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary, was held at **Olana State Historic Site** in 2018. The Center has also assisted with bird programs at **Clarence Fahnestock State Park** and **Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve**. At Fahnestock, they have led breeding bird surveys and bird banding programs, including surveys for Golden-winged Warblers. At Hudson Highlands, NY State Parks has worked with the Center to manage Phragmites for the past several years and are working to improve a boardwalk and interpretive panels on site. Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands are also the sites of bird walks led by the Putnam Highlands Audubon Society. In addition to supporting over 1,000 students annually through field trips with the Connect Kids to Parks Grant Program, the Saw Mill River Audubon Society leads multiple bird walks and weekend field trips at **Rockefeller State Park Preserve**. The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is involved in Golden Eagle camera trap coordination at several of the above parks, as well as **Lake Taghkanic** and **Taconic State Parks**.

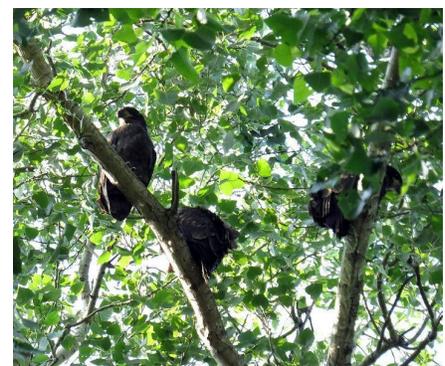


Photo: Gerry Katzban

THOUSAND ISLANDS REGION

Outreach Conservation Monitoring

At **Galop Island State Park**, Audubon New York assisted with site assessment and proposal of an ongoing grassland management project. Audubon New York also assists with Piping Plover monitoring at **Southwick Beach State Park**.



BIRDS IN NY STATE PARKS

BIRDS AND RECREATION

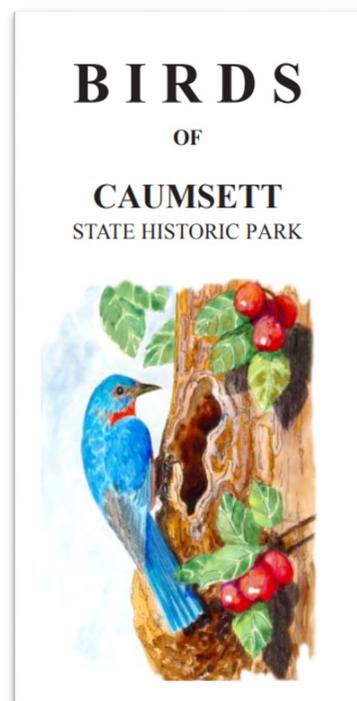
With over 450 species of birds, New York State is one of the top bird-watching destinations in the Northeast. In fact, the US Fish and Wildlife Service reports that 20 percent of New York residents identify themselves as birders, making them a key demographic for NY State Parks. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service's latest national survey on outdoor recreation, wildlife-watchers spent nearly \$75.9 billion in 2016 and 17 million people traveled to participate in bird-watching. Birding is a recreational opportunity that attracts many people to NY State Parks each year.



TAKING ACTION

Responsible stewardship balances public use and protection of the natural environment. With over 74 million visitors to NY State Parks, efforts are ongoing to provide education and outreach opportunities to park patrons, to conserve and enhance habitat for birds and the many other plants and animals that call State Parks home, and to monitor to ensure these efforts are meeting their goals.

- **Outreach and Education:** NY State Parks offer a myriad of bird-related educational opportunities for individuals, families, and school groups alike. Opportunities include interpretive signage at Bird Conservation Areas, park-specific bird checklists, bird-watching blinds and platforms, and programming with expert naturalists in the parks or at one of the **30 State Park Nature Centers**.
- **Habitat Enhancement:** With over 350,000 acres of parkland in the NY State Park and Historic Sites system, habitat conservation is a critical component to protecting avian diversity statewide. In recent years, there have been **over 45 projects** that have directly advanced bird conservation in NY State Parks.
- **Monitoring:** Bird surveys and monitoring by NY State Park staff and others—including volunteers, park patrons, partners, and school groups—is key to identifying bird species in our parks, as well as the long-term trends of their status and condition.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

BIRD-THEMED PROGRAMMING

Programming to highlight birds and the importance of bird conservation is offered in many NY State Parks at all experience levels. Many parks offer regular bird walks to showcase the variety of bird species that can be found. Programs are also offered within State Park Nature Centers for all ages and experience levels. Here are just a few examples of the unique programs available to park patrons:

- “Nature in Your Neighborhood” is offered at parks in the NYC Region, like **Gantry Plaza State Park**.
- Christmas Bird Counts occur at many parks, including **Knox Farm State Park**, **Evangola State Park**, and **Letchworth State Park**.
- **Grafton Lakes State Park** offers a monthly “Birds and Bagels” meetup.
- **Allegany State Park** offers programs including “Awesome Owls” and “Birds of Allegany”.
- **Rockefeller State Park Preserve** hosts Bird Photography Workshops.
- **Minnewaska State Park Preserve: Sam’s Point Area** offers “Live Birds of Prey” programs.
- “International Migratory Bird Day” is celebrated at **Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve**.
- A Bird Festival is held at the Trailside Zoo at **Bear Mountain State Park**.



SPOTLIGHT: BE A GOOD EGG

The “Be A Good Egg” outreach initiative, which began in 2013, is a collaborative effort between Audubon New York, local Audubon chapters, and other partners including Group for the East End. The program seeks to reduce human disturbance to nesting and migrating coastal birds through outreach days on



Long Island. Audubon partners with NY State Parks to provide this critical outreach at **Jones Beach**, **Orient Beach**, **Hallock**, and **Sunken Meadow State Parks**. In these programs, beach patrons pledge to respect fenced-off areas where birds are nesting, properly dispose of trash, and keep dogs off of nesting beaches. These three actions can significantly reduce disturbance to nesting shorebirds that are already impacted by coastal development, climate change, and predation.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

CITIZEN SCIENCE

There are several bird-focused citizen science programs coordinated by different organizations, including the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society. Popular programs include eBird, iNaturalist, and the Great Backyard Bird Count. Many parks including **Gantry Plaza State Park** and **Knox Farm State Park** incorporate these citizen science tools into bird programming within the park.

SPOTLIGHT: PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Project FeederWatch is a citizen science program operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada. It runs from November through April and is conducted at multiple NY State Parks, including **Letchworth State Park**. People of all skill levels are able to submit observations from their feeders to this project, and the results will help scientists to track the long-term trends of distribution and abundance of winter birds, such as Northern Cardinals and Black-capped Chickadees.



I BIRD NY

To promote birding in New York State, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation launched the 'I Bird NY' initiative to encourage residents of all ages to get outdoors and try bird-watching. Young birders are encouraged to find 10 common bird species as part of an annual challenge and those who submit the 'I Bird NY' Challenge Form (available online) receive a certificate and bracelet. There is also an annual challenge for experienced birders, where participating birders are entered into a random drawing to win birding equipment. This initiative is supported by many NY State Park Nature Centers, including **Evangola State Park**.



HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION PROJECTS

Properly managing the various habitats found in NY State Parks creates healthy ecosystems that support biodiversity. Successional old field habitat is maintained at **Crown Point State Historic Site** and **Point Au Roche State Park**. **Beaver Island State Park** is restoring a wet meadow to provide nesting and foraging habitat for birds. A 25-acre native grassland is being restored at **Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve**. At **Jones Beach State Park**, shorebird foraging habitat is being restored. At **Iona Marsh in Bear Mountain State Park**, efforts are ongoing to restore native communities and promote biodiversity in the 153-acre marshland. **Harriman** and **Sterling Forest State Parks** are managing wetlands as important breeding areas for the Golden-winged Warbler, a NYS species of special concern. These birds rely on shrubby, open areas to breed, and this specialized habitat is becoming increasingly rare in the northeast.

Native pollinator gardens, which provide nesting and foraging opportunities for birds, have become a common feature within NY State Parks. Parks that have added pollinator gardens include **Rockefeller**, **Glimmerglass**, **Grafton Lakes**, **Belmont Lake**, and **Clark Reservation State Parks**, among many others.

SPOTLIGHT: REDUCED MOWING

A significant threat many bird species face is habitat loss. One of the most threatened and least common habitats is grasslands. One method to provide additional habitat for grassland birds is to adopt a reduced mowing regimen within the park. **Evangola State Park** has created a meadow habitat with native plantings. By taking this meadow completely out of the park's mowing regimen, grassland birds are able to safely nest and raise young. Similarly, **John Boyd Thacher State Park** and **Saratoga Spa State Park** have each set aside about 100 acres within the parks to be utilized as grassland habitat. These areas are only mowed after August 15th, following the completion of the grassland bird breeding season.

SPOTLIGHT: "LIVING SHORELINE" COASTAL RESTORATION

In response to the flooding and damage to the bulkhead from Superstorm Sandy, **Roberto Clemente State Park** incorporated a "Living Shoreline" to improve storm resiliency. This project involved creating a variety of habitats including salt marsh, tidal pools, coastal scrub, and native planting areas. The variety of new habitat in the park will benefit birds and other wildlife, creating a natural oasis in a highly urbanized area.



HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Removal of invasive species, especially when coupled with the planting of native species, can significantly improve habitats that birds depend on. At **Buckhorn Island State Park**, invasive black alder was removed from a significant forested wetland community, and Phragmites and knotweed were removed from a wet



meadow. This provides native nesting and foraging habitats for birds, including the Sedge Wren. Removing invasive species also helps provide access to important perching and nesting areas for forest birds. For



example, Oriental bittersweet was removed from **Schodack Island State Park** and **Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve** to prevent the climbing vines from impacting the mid and upper canopy, which is used for perching by Bald Eagles and for nesting by Cerulean Warblers.

ENHANCING NESTING OPPORTUNITIES



The loss or degradation of natural habitats decreases available nesting sites for birds. Man-made structures are frequently installed within NY State Parks to create nesting opportunities for a variety of birds. Chimney Swift towers were installed in five New York City parks, including **Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park**. Eastern Bluebird boxes are monitored at **Mine Kill** and other parks. Osprey nesting platforms can be seen in many parks, including **Beaver Island State Park** and **Crown Point State Historic Site**.

SPOTLIGHT: NEST BOXES

Installing nest boxes is a simple way to benefit cavity-nesting birds within parks. Cavity-nesting birds depend on standing damaged and dead trees (called snags) for natural nesting holes to raise young. Due to development and safety concerns, however, these natural cavities are increasingly being removed from forest and field habitats. Species that will utilize this type of nesting habitat include the Eastern Bluebird, American Kestrel, and Tree Swallow. Each year at the New York State Fair, NY State Park staff along with FORCES and the Excelsior Conservation Corps assist fair-goers to build their own wooden nest boxes. In 2019, over 1,800 nest boxes were distributed to fair-goers!



MONITORING

NEST MONITORING

Monitoring nesting birds is a useful tool for understanding survival and reproductive success of populations. At NY State Parks, staff and volunteers participate in nest monitoring of birds in a variety of locations. At **Rockefeller State Park Preserve**, nesting Bobolinks are monitored within their imperiled grassland habitat; two breeding raptors—the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon—are monitored at **Storm King State Park**; and NYS endangered Piping Plovers are monitored on the shores of **Jones Beach State Park** and **Sandy Island Beach State Park**. Several State Parks also monitor nesting within nest boxes, which can be utilized by Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and House Wrens.



SURVEYS

“From the top of Bear Mountain, hawk watch volunteers counted 3,786 migrating hawks today. We witnessed a ‘river of raptors’ streaming overhead toward the setting sun.”

— Hawk Watch Volunteer
Gerhard Patsch, Sept. 2019

Surveys are conducted throughout New York for various bird species. At **Ganondagan State Historic Site**, bird surveys led to the site’s designation as a Bird Conservation Area. At **Schodack Island State Park**, Audubon New York assists with surveys for the presence of the Cerulean Warbler, a forest species of special concern in NY. Staff at **Bear Mountain State Park** work with the park’s naturalist group and the Rockland Audubon Society to complete raptor surveys for the Bear Mountain Hawk Watch. Information from bird surveys are useful for researchers to understand migrations and population dynamics.

SPOTLIGHT: RAPTOR MONITORING

Raptors, also known as birds-of-prey, include eagles, hawks, vultures, owls, and falcons. Many parks in New York State include programming centered around this group of birds. One focus is the monitoring of nesting and winter roosting sites of Bald Eagles and migrations of Golden Eagles. In the Palisades and Taconic Regions, several parks use camera traps with carrion to capture images of Golden Eagles. The images are shared with the US Geological Survey for a multi-state project to map the population distribution of these raptors, which is coordinated by the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society in the Taconic region.

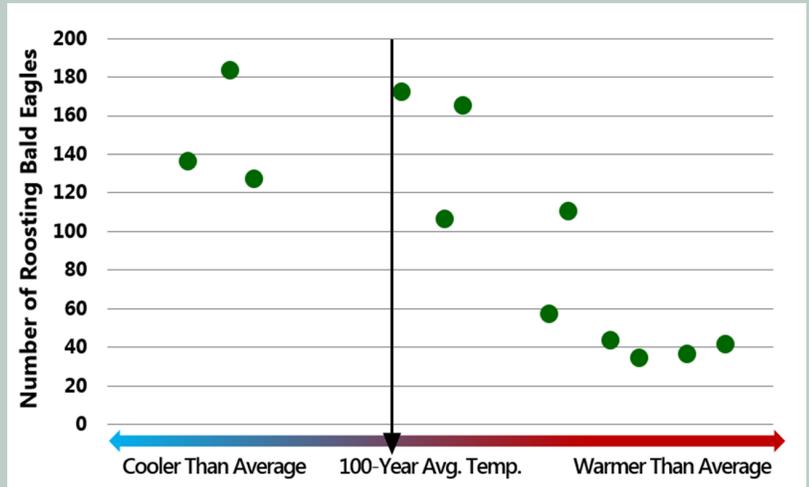


MONITORING

SPOTLIGHT: WINTERING BALD EAGLES

During the winter, Bald Eagles gather at dusk to roost in trees, often near open water at large lakes and rivers. Since 2007, volunteers in the Palisades Interstate Park League of Naturalists have monitored eagles at multiple roost sites in the lower Hudson River Valley, a winter concentration area for these majestic birds. To ensure individuals are only being counted once, roost counts occur on a designated day and time. This effort has revealed that when January

temperatures are mild (warmer than average), a lower number of Bald Eagles are observed roosting near the Hudson River, likely due to the availability of open water habitat in other locations. When January temperatures are colder, more Bald Eagles are observed roosting near the open waters of the lower river. NY State Parks have been known to support groups of over 100 Bald Eagles roosting together.



THE NEW YORK NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

The New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) is a program of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry operating in partnership with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and NY State Parks. Their mission is to facilitate conservation of New York's biodiversity by providing comprehensive information and scientific expertise on rare species and natural ecosystems to resource managers and other conservation partners. NYNHP has advised and contributed to numerous bird-related projects in NY State Parks. Here are just a few examples of NYNHP's efforts within parks:



New York
Natural Heritage
Program



- Collect and update data on rare bird occurrences in parks for the database
- Track significant bird assemblages including gull colonies, waterfowl winter concentration areas, colonial waterbird nesting areas, and raptor winter concentration areas
- Work with NY State Parks and other partners, including Audubon and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, to conduct and coordinate bird surveys
- Provide input on conservation plans and stewardship actions involving birds
- Contribute information and recommendations for the Bird Conservation Area Program
- Provide lists of documented bird species with the state and federal status rankings
- Offer information on many rare bird species through the NYNHP Conservation Guides

To learn more about New York's rare species, visit <https://guides.nynhp.org/> to view the NYNHP Conservation Guides!

THE FUTURE OF BIRD CONSERVATION

STEWARDSHIP THREATS AND BIRD CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

The **OPRHP Priorities for Environmental and Natural Resource Stewardship** identifies the following statewide threats to achieving stewardship goals:

1. Invasive Species
2. Deer Overabundance
3. Habitat Fragmentation
4. Lack of Knowledge and Protection Strategies
5. Climate Change



Each of these threats affect bird populations, but by addressing these concerns directly, NY State Parks and its partners will be able to work towards achieving bird conservation priorities. The list below includes some of the future bird conservation priorities identified by NY State Parks staff:

- Habitat Management
- Improving Nesting Sites
- BCA Designation
- Bird Surveys & Monitoring
- Outreach Assistance
- Disturbance Research

SPOTLIGHT: RESEARCH ON DISTURBANCE

A common goal reported by NY State Parks staff is to collaborate with partners to study the effects of disturbance, particularly from fires and deer browsing, and the resulting impacts to bird populations. Both of these disturbances can have dramatic effects on the landscape by removing understory vegetation that certain forest bird species rely on. Since deer browsing and fires are natural impacts that are occurring with greater frequency in recent years, the long-term impact on birds is not well understood. The **Sam's Point Area at**

Minnewaska State Park Preserve uses photo reference points and spring breeding bird surveys to monitor the area's natural restoration following fire and to better understand differences in bird communities in burned areas versus unburned areas of the globally rare dwarf pitch pine barren ecosystem. Such research and monitoring by partners and citizen scientists will provide information to guide future habitat conservation within parks in order to achieve environmental stewardship goals.



CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORIES

FISHING LINE COLLECTION

According to Audubon North Carolina, every year over 300,000 shorebird deaths are attributed to discarded fishing lines and hooks. Fishing line and hooks can physically injure wildlife, making them vulnerable and weak, and can also entangle birds and trap them in branches or on power lines. Fishing line collection sites aid wildlife, including birds, by removing this dangerous threat. After a volunteer at **Moreau Lake State Park** discovered a Common Loon entangled in fishing line in 2012, the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society partnered with NY State Parks to construct and install five fishing line receptacles at boat launches around Moreau Lake and **Schodack Island State Park**. Other key parks where receptacles have been installed include **Hempstead Lake, Orient Beach, and Caleb Smith State Parks**. Due to the collaborative work between NY State Parks, Audubon chapters, and volunteers, these simple receptacles made of PVC pipes, have been installed in many parks throughout the state, and contribute to the critical reduction of this harmful debris.



Photo: Audubon New York



The fishing line collector at Moreau State Park, left, became one of the first installed in a State Park in 2012. The receptacle from Caleb Smith State Park, above, has a short poem accompanying it to demonstrate its benefits to various wildlife species, especially birds.

CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORIES

PIPING PLOVER RECOVERY IN THE GREAT LAKES

There are three distinct populations of Piping Plover in the US: the Northern Great Plains, the Atlantic Coast, and the Great Lakes. This small shorebird was federally listed in 1986 and at that time there were no Great Lakes plovers nesting in New York. But after nearly 30 years and many conservation efforts to improve nesting habitat, a pair of birds returned to nest in New York in 2015! In years since, Piping Plovers have nested within **Sandy Island Beach State Park**. Along with nesting site protections, researchers band the young of these federally endangered birds. Bird banding is a common practice for research. For endangered populations, it can provide essential information about site use that can help to guide future conservation goals and practices in both the breeding and wintering grounds. In the case of the plovers at Sandy Island Beach, bird banding recently helped researchers track the successful migration of a Great Lakes fledgling! The young bird was resighted on a Florida beach, making it the first banded Great Lakes fledgling to be resighted on non-breeding grounds in 2019. Based on sightings from its breeding ground, this Piping Plover made the nearly 1,300 mile journey in only 3 to 4 days. Such insights from monitoring will continue to inform scientists on this shorebird's road to recovery.



NIAGARA RIVER HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

NY State Parks received EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding to restore, improve, and expand fish and wildlife habitat within the Niagara River Area of Concern. The project is taking place at four sites: Grass Island, Burnt Ship Creek, and a shoreline within **Buckhorn Island State Park** and East River Marsh Extension located in **Beaver Island State Park**. Restoration of these sites will improve habitat functions and values for fish and other aquatic organisms, migrating waterfowl, waterbirds, and song birds (including the state listed Northern Harrier, Least Bittern, and Sedge Wren). It will also provide the regionally appropriate in-water, wetland, and riparian native vegetation communities to support long-term ecological integrity and



resilience. At Buckhorn Island State Park, Audubon New York, Ducks Unlimited, and Buffalo Audubon Society are sponsoring complementary habitat restoration projects and are partners in this larger effort.



New York State Parks is dedicated to the conservation of birds, the habitats they depend on, and to the experiences and educational opportunities birds provide to the Empire State's residents and visitors.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**