

## Appendix C

### New York State Bird Conservation Area Program Management Guidance Summary

**Site Name:** Saratoga Spa BCA

**State Ownership and Managing Agency:** Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

**Location:** Saratoga County, City of Saratoga Springs and Town of Malta

**Size of Area:** ~1,070 acres

**DEC Region:** 5

**OPRHP Region:** Saratoga/Capital District

**General Site Information:** The Saratoga Spa BCA is located within Saratoga Spa State Park. The park is located ~2 miles west of Saratoga Lake and is bordered on the north by urban development within the city of Saratoga Springs. The Saratoga Performing Arts Center, which offers outdoor concerts and festivals, is located within the Park. One 18-hole and one 9-hole golf course are available for public use, and are currently managed in accordance with Audubon Sanctuary Program guidelines for the benefit of bird populations. The park offers numerous other recreational activities, including canoeing, biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing.

**Vision Statement:** Recreational/interpretive opportunities and access will continue in a manner consistent with conservation of the diverse assemblage of bird species using the area for breeding or during migration. The BCA will remain in a relatively natural condition.

**Key BCA Criteria:** Migratory concentration site; diverse species concentration site (ECL §11-2001, 3. e. and f.). During spring and fall migration, birds concentrate in the wetlands associated with Geyser and Kayaderosseras Creeks. Of 75 Neotropical migratory songbird species that breed in New York, 54 have been observed within the park. One-hundred seventy bird species in total have been identified within the park, and 97 of these species have been noted as breeders within the park. The BCA lies within Bird Conservation Region 13, and 14 of 15 regional Responsibility Species have been recorded breeding here.

**Critical Habitat Types:** Saratoga Spa BCA contains relatively large and intact tracts of both upland forest and wetland habitat. Forested habitats, including Appalachian oak-pine and hemlock-northern hardwood forests, provide important stopover and breeding sites for forest-interior species such as Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Both forested and emergent wetlands occur along Geyser and Kayaderosseras Creeks. These wetlands provide breeding habitat for migratory songbirds such as Yellow Warbler and Common Yellowthroat, as well as waterfowl and wading birds such as Wood Duck, Common Merganser, Virginia Rail, and Great Blue Heron. The heron rookery is located in the forested wetlands associated with Geyser Creek.

**Operation and Management Considerations:**

- *Identify habitat management activities needed to maintain site as a BCA.*

Invasive species, such as Japanese Knotweed, have successfully established themselves along Kayaderosseras Creek. Furthermore, early-successional habitat within the BCA, such as old field habitat along the Kayaderosseras, is susceptible to invasion by non-native species. These non-native species generally inhibit growth of native vegetation and reduce habitat quality for birds. Management should focus on efforts to inhibit the establishment and spread of non-native vegetation, and encourage growth of native species in the BCA.

Along the upper reaches of the Kayaderosseras, old field and grassland habitat often extends to the banks of the creek. When located adjacent to a fast-moving stream, these habitats are subject to greater erosion and retain less rainfall than do riparian forests. In addition, a forested riparian buffer will provide habitat for bird species such as Yellow Warbler and Common Yellowthroat. Forested buffers should be allowed to revegetate to the extent practicable.

- *Identify seasonal sensitivities; adjust routine operations, accordingly.*

Open fields are interspersed throughout the BCA. To the extent possible, any cutting or other management of fields within the BCA will be timed to minimize disturbance to nesting birds, preferably prior to May 1 or after September 1.

- *Identify state activities or operations that may pose a threat to the critical habitat types identified above; recommend alternatives to existing and future operations, which may pose threats to those habitats.*

There are currently no state activities that pose a threat to critical habitat types.

- *Identify any existing or potential use impacts; recommend new management strategies to address those impacts.*

Current levels of use by park visitors are consistent with the conservation of birds and their habitats at the BCA. Sensitive areas, such as the Great Blue Heron rookery, are currently difficult to access and are unlikely to be disturbed by visitors. Management activities which would enhance access to sensitive sites should be avoided.

There are several areas within the park that are not included in the BCA. Many of these areas, while not meeting BCA criteria, do have bird conservation value. Future activities potentially affecting birds in these areas will be assessed through normal environmental review processes.

- *Assess current access; recommend enhanced access, if feasible.*

Current access is adequate. Park grounds are open year-round. Trails are available for hiking and skiing. Put-ins are available for kayaking and canoeing.

### **Education, Outreach, and Research Considerations:**

- *Determine education and outreach needs; recommend strategies and materials.*

A BCA kiosk will be designed and installed in an appropriate location within the park.

The OPRHP checklist, *Birds of Saratoga Spa State Park*, will be updated and re-printed.

Develop/enhance partnerships with environmental organizations and bird conservation groups such as Friends of the Kayaderosseras and Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club.

- *Identify research needs; prioritize and recommend specific projects or studies.*

The Great Blue Heron rookery, located along Geysers Creek, has been present since at least 1987. This rookery is of local significance, and should be monitored regularly (annually if possible) to determine persistence of this rookery and to document changes in breeding population size.

Within the southern section of the BCA, there are relatively large tracts of grassland habitat. This habitat type is declining regionally, and many grassland-dependent species are of conservation concern within the state. To help guide future management of these grasslands, bird surveys should be conducted to determine if any state-listed species are using these areas of the BCA.

**Contacts:**

Michael Greenslade, OPRHP, Saratoga Spa State Park, 518-584-2000

Tom Lyons, OPRHP, Albany, phone: 518-474-0409

Ray Perry, OPRHP, Albany, phone: 518-474-0409

Tray Biasioli, OPRHP, Albany, phone: 518-474-0409

**Sources:**

Cobb, T. L. 1994. *A Checklist of Birds Identified in Saratoga Spa State Park, 1985 – 1993.*

OPRHP. 1996. *Birds of Saratoga Spa State Park.*

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