

Biodiversity in New York's
State Park System
Summary of Findings



New York
Natural Heritage
Program

NYS Office of
Parks, Recreation &
Historic Preservation



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A report prepared by the
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Cover:
Short-eared owls (*Asio flammeus*) nest in the salt marshes of Gilgo State Park, Suffolk County.
Photo by AJ Hand.



New York Natural Heritage Program

The NY Natural Heritage Program is a partnership between the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) and The Nature Conservancy. Its mission is to enable and enhance conservation of rare animals, rare plants, and significant natural communities (which are basically different types of forests, wetlands, grasslands, etc.). The Program accomplishes this mission by combining thorough field inventories, scientific analyses, expert interpretation, and the most comprehensive database on New York's distinctive biodiversity to deliver the highest quality information for natural resource planning, protection, and management. NY Natural Heritage was established in 1985 and is housed within NYS DEC's Division of Fish, Wildlife, & Marine Resources. The program is staffed by more than 20 scientists and specialists with expertise in ecology, zoology, botany, information management, and geographic information systems.

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The mission of OPRHP is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York residents and visitors, and to be responsible stewards of the valuable natural, historic, and cultural resources entrusted to the agency. New York's 176 State Parks and 35 Historic Sites are recognized as unique and irreplaceable public assets that serve nearly 60 million visitors annually. The New York State Park System encompasses over 313,000 acres of land and water. State Parks include a diverse array of forested, mountain, riverine, wetland, water, marine, meadow, and coastal environments, as well as developed picnic areas, campgrounds, trails, ball fields, playgrounds, and swimming pools. This mix of developed and natural areas supports swimming, hiking, camping, fishing, boating, picnicking, nature study, organized sports, golfing, and a broad spectrum of other active and passive recreational and educational opportunities. OPRHP also serves as the administrator for a diverse array of grant programs for municipalities and other recreation and resource protection providers.



NYS Biodiversity Research Institute

The New York State Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) was created during a time of increasing awareness of the urgent need to preserve global and local biodiversity. In 1993, State Education Law (Section 235-a (2,3)) was amended to create the BRI within the New York State Museum to meet these demands. The BRI is funded through the Environmental Protection Fund and includes a number of collaborators, including the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Natural Heritage Program and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Current projects focus on biodiversity stewardship, biodiversity education and biodiversity research to assess environmental quality and change. Activities of the BRI are guided by an executive committee, which is appointed by the legislature and the governor of New York.

