

# Pesticides, A Greater Understanding... Assuring the Future

By William Cooke

For the past 50 years or so, pesticides have been used in increasing amounts across New York and our nation. Pesticides, which include insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides, were used initially to increase agricultural productivity. In fact they are used on the vast majority of food products consumed in this country and throughout the world today. In addition, they are now widely used on top of recreational lands, school grounds, parks, and residential lawns and gardens. In fact because of their disturbing rate of use, every person on this planet is a carrier of pesticides.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reveals that the use of pesticides is a risk to groundwater, human health and non-target organisms such as birds.

While the use of pesticides in conjunction with growing food crops has been the subject of much attention with regard to public health protection, the casual but high rate of use by homeowners is not often addressed. Pesticides that "beautify" our surroundings by eliminating nuisance insects and common weeds on lawns are hazardous.

Commercially or privately applied pesticides effect not only the target organisms, such as grubs, but hosts of

other lawn inhabitants. For example, birds may die from the consumption of poisoned grubs. Family pets such as dogs and cats may track chemicals into the home from the outdoors. Children may also transport chemicals from treated lawns on their hands and feet. Anyone and anything that comes into contact with the pollutants risk chemical contamination.

New York State has monitored above normal incidences of cancer in areas documented as having high levels of pesticides. Is this cause and effect? We are not sure. Many sources maintain that continued exposure to pesticides and other chemicals contribute to incidences of cancer. Others indicate that there is not enough proof for validation.

### Are they really carcinogenic?

There is not enough long-term research and information to know assuredly. However, these chemicals have non-target impacts throughout the food chain. Informed people must take the responsibility to reduce exposure to pesticides.

The key to reducing pesticide use in this state and country is public education.

Everyday individuals make hundreds of choices with little to no information.



Jillian Butler

## Audubon hires new IBA Program Coordinator

Staff Report

Audubon New York welcomes Jillian Butler as the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program coordinator. Butler works with Dr. Mike Burger, director of bird conservation, at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, NY. "Jillian's experience makes her well suited to continue the IBA program's success in protecting New York's birds and the habitats on which they depend," maintains Mike Burger, director of bird conservation. Butler holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York and a master's degree in Ecological Planning from the University of Vermont. Over the past several years, she has worked for non-profit and state agencies performing landscape inventories and developing conservation and management plans for important natural areas in Vermont and New York.

Some of the decisions reflect marketing messages that have saturated our minds for years. Audubon believes that with information and clear understanding, individuals can make sound decisions. It is for that reason that Audubon New York continues to campaign about the truth of pesticides. Once informed, individuals will choose not to use pesticides around their homes, for the sake of their families and pets, friends, and neighbors.

For further information about pesticides contact the Director of Government Relations, William Cooke at (518) 869-9731 or see our website at <http://ny.audubon.org>.

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