

## Reunited: A Bird Conservation Success Story

By Michael Burger, Ph.D.

ON JANUARY 30TH of this year, two old friends were reunited after nearly 25 years. Peter Nye, Endangered Species Specialist with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, was part of a group capturing wintering Bald Eagles along the St. Lawrence River on that day when they caught Agnes.

The band on her leg confirmed that she was one of the first two eagles reared and released in 1976 under a new program, the first of its kind, to help restore breeding eagles to New York state. On June 27th of 1976, Peter Nye had placed Agnes and a young male eagle into a hacking tower overlooking Tschache Pool at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in central New York. In 1978 Bald Eagles were listed as endangered

species in all of the lower 48 states except for Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan where they were listed as threatened.

Four years after her release, Agnes moved up to the Perch River Area of New York and began breeding. This milestone helped demonstrate the success of New York's eagle hacking program, making it a model for other states to follow. Not only could released eagles survive, but they could successfully breed in suitable habitats in New York state. Twenty years later, eagles have made a remarkable comeback in New York and elsewhere across the United States. More than fifty territories were established in New York in 2000, with thirty-four nests producing seventy young eagles.

This bird conservation success story was made possible through the protection of habitat, the banning of

# Habitat

Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) which had decreased the reproductive success of eagles and other birds of prey, and the hard work and ingenuity of those who began the first hacking program back in 1976, including USFWS personnel, Dr. Tom Cade and his staff at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Peter Nye and other DEC staff. And don't forget Agnes. Since establishing her first nest in 1980, she is believed to have nested for 21 straight years in the same location in the Perch River Area and to have successfully raised 32 young—and counting.



Bald Eagles have made a dramatic comeback in New York state and elsewhere in the United States.

## Erin Crotty named State Environmental Conservation Commissioner

By Graham Cox

ERIN M. CROTTY has been named commissioner of the State Department of Environmental Conservation, the first woman named to this important state position since the department was established in 1970. She succeeds John. P. Cahill, who has now become the senior policy advisor to Governor George E. Pataki.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Audubon New York welcomes **Erin Crotty**, the new Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, and looks forward to a long prosperous relationship.

Since October 1999, Ms. Crotty had worked as director of state and local government relations for Plug Power of Latham, NY. Plug Power is a designer and developer of on-site electricity generation systems using fuel cell technology for homes.

Before that job, Ms. Crotty had worked with the department and with the governor's office for several years. She was deputy commissioner for water quality and environmental remediation for two years, responsible for overseeing the state programs to clean up contaminated properties, implement the \$1.75 billion Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act and

other activities impacting New York water quality. As deputy commissioner she is credited with crafting legislation proposed by Gov. Pataki to reform and refinance the State Superfund program.

Prior to 1997, Ms. Crotty served in Gov. Pataki's office as director of special environmental projects, where she was involved in negotiating the historic New York City Watershed Agreement and in implementing the Bond Act. She had worked before this as a policy analyst for the State Senate Commission on Toxic Substances and Hazardous Wastes. She earned her

bachelor's degree from Russell Sage College in 1988 and a master's degree in urban and environmental studies from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1992.

David J. Miller, Audubon New York executive director, welcomed her appointment, saying: "Audubon has had the pleasure of working with her on issues ranging from the Bond Act to the restoration of Long Island Sound. She is a proven conservation leader and we look forward to continuing to work with her on our conservation issues."

## Did You Know?

- ▶▶▶▶▶ The body temperature of **BUTTERFLIES** must be at least 81 degrees Fahrenheit before they can fly?
- ▶▶▶▶▶ That the **HORSESHOE CRAB** is one of the oldest organisms and has remained unchanged for more than 300 million years?
- ▶▶▶▶▶ That there are **WALKING CATFISH** in Florida that can stay out of the water for 80 days?
- ▶▶▶▶▶ That most **SONGBIRDS** replace all their feathers at least twice a year? This process is called "molting."
- ▶▶▶▶▶ The typical **PLANT OR TREE** receives approximately 10 percent of its nutrition from the soil. The rest comes from the atmosphere?
- ▶▶▶▶▶ The **TALLEST TREE** in the world is a California redwood, which measures 360 feet tall?
- ▶▶▶▶▶ **PENGUINS** swim with their wings, not with their webbed feet? They can swim at 20 mph.
- ▶▶▶▶▶ **HERONS** and **EGRETS** pull their necks in when airborne, whereas **SPOONBILLS** and **IBIS** always fly with their neck extended or stretched out?

BY JANE SOKOLOV

## Birding Authority Leads Walk and Book Signing

By Sandra Doring and Jana Goldman



ARTIST ILLUSTRATED

Author David Allen Sibley

DAVID ALLEN SIBLEY, world renown illustrator and author guided a bird walk at the Five Rivers Environmental Center on Friday May 18th. The free event was sponsored by The Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza Albany, New York. The Audubon Society of the Capital Region and Audubon New York, partnered with The Book House to bring Mr. Sibley to the Capital Region. The walk was followed by a signing of his latest book *The Sibley Guide to Birds* recently published by National Audubon Society.

David Allen Sibley, son of the well-known ornithologist Fred Sibley, began watching and drawing birds in 1969, at age seven. He has written and illustrated articles on bird identification for *Birding* and *American Birds* (now *Field Notes*) as well as regional publications and books. Since 1980 Mr. Sibley has traveled the continent watching birds on his own and as a tour leader for WINGS, Inc. You can learn more about Mr. Sibley and see his artwork at his website at [www.sibleyart.com](http://www.sibleyart.com).

