

# AUDUBON ADVOCATE

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## Audubon priorities highlighted in State of the State

By *Graham Cox*

Two of Audubon's top work priorities – land conservation and promoting smart growth in communities across the state – were given a major boost by Governor George E. Pataki in his state of the state address Jan. 3, 2001.

One of the state's great environmental accomplishments, the governor said, "has been the strong support we have provided for land conservation. Since 1995, we have led the nation in this effort, protecting more than 300,000 acres of land." He announced the latest major land deal involving International Paper Corporation, The Nature Conservancy and the State Environmental Conservation Department in the Adirondack Park as part of his address. (See story, page 6.)

Gov. Pataki also highlighted major initiatives expected from the Quality Communities task force, chaired by Lt. Gov. Mary Donohue. He put special emphasis on urban revitalization based on cleaning up contaminated abandoned brownfield sites. "Every acre of contaminated land in our cities and towns represents lost jobs, unrealized tax dollars and unfulfilled possibilities," Gov. Pataki said. (See story, page 11)

Gov. Pataki took credit for moving ahead with 1,400 projects using the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act funds approved by voters in 1996. So far, he said, nearly \$1 billion of Bond Act funds – out of an approved \$1.75 billion – has been invested in environmental protection. He also said that many projects are underway because of record funding from the Environmental Protection Fund. He cited examples along Long Island Sound, which "is undergoing a revitalization because of our investments in wastewater facilities, and through our efforts to create new public recreational access to the Sound in places like Oyster Bay and the new Nissequogue River State Park."

"The success of these projects clearly demonstrates the value of making wise investments today in environmental protection projects that pay off in an improved quality of life for years to come. We need to continue to make these critical investments in coming years, and enhance the dedicated environmental programs that fund this essential work. To that end I will propose a record level of funding for

*STATE OF THE STATE continued on page 3*

## International Paper signs 26,500-acre Adirondack land deal



Bill Brown

*A deal between IP and The Nature Conservancy will sell land next to the Whitney Estate in the central Adirondack Park. The three parcels include ponds, lakes and rivers which will be sold to become part of the state Forest Preserve, but TNC will keep much of this forest land habitat, home to this Northern Saw Whet Owl, as commercial working forest, keeping jobs and paying property taxes in the local Long Lake community. See story on page 6.*

## Assembly majority leader on conservation

*Staff Report*

Assemblyman Paul Tokasz, newly elected majority leader of the New York State Assembly, expressed strong support for the state's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) during a recent meeting with Audubon New York's executive director, David J. Miller. During the 20-minute conversation, he also said Assembly members have an understanding of issues related to sprawl and support state programs to



better use existing urban infrastructure including brownfield sites.

The Democratic majority leader from Buffalo said that the Assembly has always been supportive of environmental issues.

"The Assembly has always taken a very proactive position on issues dealing with environmental preservation, in the context of the issues that you raise – smart growth and sprawl, quality communities, open space

and brownfields," he said. "The Assembly will continue to pursue that. There have been several leaders in our house on the issue of smart growth."

On the EPF, the executive budget proposes to add \$25 million to the permanent fund base, bringing it up to \$150 million. Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, chairman of the Environmental Conservation Committee, has proposed adding \$50 million. "We will try to go higher... We always like to add money to the EPF, because it always gives us a bit more flexibility, whether it's helping municipalities with their real basic things like landfills, recycling or open space protection. I give the governor his credit on land acquisition. He has been very far sighted on these efforts. So, in terms of open space, I see no reason why the Assembly would not want to add to it."

Discussing smart growth or quality communities, Assemblyman Tokasz said that Assembly members have an understanding that "we cannot continue to just take communities and continue to move out the boundaries of those communities without understand-

*TOKASZ continued on page 3*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



### Volunteers at work

Vermont Institute of Natural Science and Audubon pair for a monitoring program, watching out for birds such as Bicknell's Thrush, pictured left. See page 5 for story.

### Sound Guardian 2000

Audubon New York and the Construction Industry Council of Westchester honor Congressman Christopher Shays and Congresswoman Nita Lowey. See page 8 for story.

### Smart growth report

The Quality Communities Task Force report was released, identifying 41 recommendations of how to improve communities throughout the state. See page 11 for story.