

Centers Update

By Andrew Mackie

KNOX FARM AUDUBON CENTER

Knox Farm State Park, located in East Aurora, officially opened to the public Memorial Day weekend. Audubon New York was there to help introduce the new park to the public. Since the signing of the agreement with State Parks for an Audubon Center at Knox Farm Audubon New York has made significant progress.

During the spring/summer-nesting season, Audubon staff and volunteers conducted the first grassland bird surveys at the park. The objective was to determine the presence or absence of eight grassland bird species. These included: Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow and Upland Sandpiper. Five of the eight species were documented during the surveys. We are now working on recommendations for grassland management at the park.

This summer marked the initiation of Audubon programs at Knox Farm. Two programs were developed for this site. One program titled "Wildlife Detectives" uses the character of Sherlock Holmes and a detective mystery to introduce families to the scientific process. The other program "Is Mrs. Bluebird at Home?" focuses on birds that use nest boxes. Naturalists from the Buffalo Audubon Society were trained to conduct these programs once a month for the next year.

An architectural assessment is underway to determine the renovation needs and costs of turning the Heifer Barn at Knox Farm into an Audubon Center. Audubon New York has also submitted requests for federal appropriations to cover the cost of planning and initial construction.

CRUSOE AUDUBON CENTER

Nestled within the 36,000 acre Montezuma Wetlands Complex is the future home of the Crusoe Audubon Center. This Audubon Center is a partnership between Audubon New York and the New York State Department of Environ-

mental Conservation (DEC). Negotiations are continuing to finalize an agreement with an anticipated construction date as early as next spring.

The staff at Audubon New York has been busy working with the DEC to design the Center. An important component was finished this summer with the release of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Audubon Center. Audubon staff contributed materials and comments on the SEIS and presented at the public hearing held in the Town of Savannah where the Center will be located.

Green will be the color of this Audubon Center! Audubon and DEC are working together to create an environmentally friendly building that utilizes green building design and materials. A building design charrette was held following the process created by the United States Green Building Council. Fifty-eight design and material characteristics that could be incorporated into the Center were rated. The initial analysis was very positive suggesting the Crusoe Audubon Center can be a certified green building.

AUDUBON CENTER IN UTICA

The Utica Marsh is located on the city's edge, just minutes from downtown. Over time this wetland system has been degraded by illegal dumping, vandalism and proximity of nearby junkyards. Through the leadership of Congressman Sherwood Boehlert supporters of Utica Marsh came together in June. Audubon New York helped organize the meeting which included: The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, National Grid, Utica Marsh Council, The Mohawk Valley Chamber of Commerce, The City of Utica, The New York State Department of Transportation, Hamilton College and Utica Public Schools.

A vision for the Utica Marsh including an Audubon Center will be created. Audubon New York is in the early process of conducting a feasibility study for this Center. This will include several pilot education programs conducted at the Marsh in the spring of 2003. These programs will be a partnership with the Utica Marsh Council and the Utica Zoo.



Audubon New York participated in The North American Game Fair at The Mashomack Club in Pine Plains. At their booth, Dave Wheeler, Buttercup Farm Audubon Center and Sanctuary's warden, and Larry Federman, assistant warden/educator, showed the importance of the Mashomack land as it relates to the Wappinger Creek watershed. The Wappinger Creek flows through Mashomack, through Buttercup, on its way to the Hudson River as part of the Hudson River Estuary. Pictured to the left is Theresa Perez with a Red-tailed Hawk, one of several raptors on display during the day from the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center.

Over the summer, a new trail was blazed at RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary, almost doubling the length of the trail system. This bridge was built, using natural materials, to traverse a ravine.



RamsHorn Update

Larry Federman, RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary's assistant warden/educator, participated in the Great River Hudson Paddle on the Athens to Saugerties leg. A future dock at RamsHorn Creek will allow paddlers access from the Hudson River to the Audubon Sanctuary.



PHOTOS BY LARRY FEDERMAN