

The Battle for our Finned Friends

By Shana Beemer

RECENT DECISIONS regarding the management of groundfish species on both our coasts have created an unprecedented flurry of media attention on fisheries and fishermen. In New England, a federal judge ruled to cut the fishing effort nearly in half. In the Pacific, new rules will severely limit bottom fishing on much of the continental shelf, for commercial AND recreational fishermen. These decisions have not been made to punish or single out fishermen; they have been made to comply with the primary federal fisheries legislation, the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA.) Amended in 1996 to allow for the long-term sustainability of U.S. fisheries, many critical provisions of the MSA have yet to be implemented due to outspoken industry opposition. These groundfish rulings were long overdue in light of the science: seven of the nineteen New England groundfish stocks need mortality reductions to stop declines, and bottom-dwelling rockfish species off the West Coast have declined to as little as 3% of historic levels.

Unfortunately, the flurry of media attention has not focused on the tremendous step forward for the conservation of our marine natural resources. Instead, it has

killed the messenger, those who have sought to improve conservation, so much so that the judge involved in the New England case rescinded her order to stop overfishing. Worst of all, the MSA is up for reauthorization this year, and the socio-economic effects of stricter fishing regulations have led to industry lobbying to weaken, rather than improve, the legislation. Proposed amendments, shifting the blame for the current state of the sea away from overfishing and onto natural factors such as climate change, would put the law in such vague terms that there would be effectively nothing to abide by.

By definition, fishermen need fish to make a living. Now is the time to strengthen the conservation provisions of MSA; protecting critical habitat, reducing overfishing, and curtailing the wasteful practice of throwing dead fish back to sea are not new or crazy ideas. The precedent of moving a strong conservation ethic below the high tide line has finally been established, and we must not abandon it. For more information, contact Audubon's Living Oceans Program at (631) 859-1588.

Future of Audubon

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Wildlife Service and refuge manager of Shawangunk Grasslands (formerly the Galeville Airport) spoke about grassland management issues. Saturday's workshop topics included: leadership, chapter dialogues and the second round nominations of Important Bird Areas. Many enjoyed the field trip to Bashakill, a Bird Conservation Area in Sullivan County.

Dan Beard, National Audubon Society's chief operating officer, who was the keynote speaker for the Saturday evening program, spoke highly of Audubon New York's accomplishments.

"Audubon New York has made great strides in implementing our 2020 Vision. You have a rapidly growing network of centers, and you continue to be a leader in citizen science and advocacy on behalf of birds and their habitat," said Beard who recently announced his retirement and will be sorely missed. "The future for Audubon New York is bright and filled with promise," he added. The weekend culminated with various program and committee reports.

The next council meeting will occur at the Gideon Putnam in Saratoga Springs, New York from March 21-23. For further details contact Audubon New York at (518) 869-9731.



Dan Beard (left) accepts *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior* from Geoffrey Cobb Ryan, Council Chair.

Audubon New York Council representative Gladys Goldmann (speaking), offers advice to new chapter leaders during an orientation.

Chapter Spotlight

By William McKeever, Buffalo Audubon Society

BUFFALO AUDUBON has received \$10,000 in funding from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. The grant provides for fully-sponsored nature education programming over a one-year period to twenty-five City of Buffalo fifth and sixth grade classrooms.

Buffalo-area elementary students and their schools typically cannot afford the fee for school-based programs offered at the Beaver Meadow Audubon Center. On the heels of last year's massive teacher layoffs in the cash-strapped school district, this program is Buffalo Audubon's response to the challenges city schools face in Buffalo—meeting tough new learning standards at the very time hundreds of educators and support personnel were let go.

Each of the twenty-five classrooms will develop a yearlong relationship with an Audubon naturalist. The program incorporates four direct contacts over a year: one nature center program of several hours length and three "naturalist-in-the-classroom" programs, including a "pre-visit" prior to the Nature Center field trip program.

The program will have a year-long *Audubon Adventures* curriculum kit for use throughout the year by the teacher to supplement science lessons. The Audubon naturalist will work with the teacher to select tools and activities from the curriculum kit to provide the most benefit to students throughout the year.

At an average of 30 students per classroom, there will be 750 participants, for a total of 3,000 contacts throughout the 2002-2003 academic year. Buffalo Audubon Society is celebrating the 50th anniversary of nature education programs at its Beaver Meadow Audubon Center in Wyoming County, New York.

The nationally published Audubon Adventures newspaper is part of the kit to be used by participating Buffalo teachers to supplement their science lesson plans.



(L to Right) Audubon New York's Carole Nemore, director of conservation and Graham Cox, forest and wetland program coordinator, George Schuler, Nature Conservancy, John Myers, executive director of the Shawangunk Ridge Open Space project, and Alan Sorenson, planning director for Sullivan County participate in the Saturday morning panel discussion about Smart Growth.



Bryan Swift of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation compliments the Council for its efforts during his Friday night speech.



Jim Previdi, president of Rockland Audubon Center, shares his highlights with the Council during the roundtable.

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