

# Wildlife, forests, and forestry: a Q&A on logging

By Mitschka Hartley  
Forest Ecologist, Audubon New York

FOR THREE YEARS Audubon New York research scientists and field technicians have been gathering data about the impact of different harvesting regimes on birds and other wildlife in the Adirondacks, the Catskills and several Southern Tier counties. Our aim is to prepare a useful guide to forest land owners, professional foresters and loggers showing how they can achieve sustainable forestry goals on their properties, or properties they manage, that balance wildlife conservation and silvicultural goals. Audubon New York's forest ecologist, Dr. Mitschka Hartley, has prepared these questions and responses, which we hope will contribute to the start of a useful dialog in coming months about the results of our field research.

## Q. Does logging harm wildlife?

A. It depends on what kind of logging and what kind of wildlife you are talking about. Any kind of disturbance changes the structure of a forest. However, different species of birds and other wildlife species are found across a wide range of forest conditions. If an old forest is clear-cut and all its trees are removed, many of the species that were present there will have to move elsewhere; at the same time, a new and different group of species will occupy the harvested area and thrive in that "early successional" habitat.

## Q. What kind of birds prefer harvested forests?

A. There are many species of birds and other animals that prefer clearcuts or young, regenerating harvests over mature forests. Many species of sparrows and warblers are found only in heavily-disturbed sites, or reach their highest abundance in recently-harvested forests. In fact, several WatchList bird species (of conservation concern) are reliant on "early successional" habitats such as regenerating forests. These include Prairie Warbler and Golden-winged Warbler. Other WatchList birds like the Wood Thrush and Cerulean Warbler prefer mature forests that are unlogged or only partially harvested. Most birds breeding in New York forests are found in a wide range of forest conditions, including mature forests and partially or somewhat heavily-logged forests.

## Q. Is Audubon opposed to logging?

A. Audubon New York opposes logging on wilderness areas and state preserve lands, but is not against logging in general. In fact, we encourage logging in areas where it is a valuable economic alternative to land-use practices that destroy or degrade forest habitats, such as housing developments.

In large, contiguous areas of mature forest, logging increases habitat diversity and can help maintain the full complement of native wildlife species found in that landscape. However, timber harvesting must be done sustainably to ensure that a mix of different-aged forests coexist in a landscape, and that the landscape always consists mostly of mature forest. Large blocks of mature forest are especially important for some relatively uncommon wildlife species, such as the Northern Goshawk and the American Marten. Therefore, our society can best conserve its wildlife by maintaining large areas with unharvested, mature forests as well as areas with a mix of forest ages, which results from sustainable timber harvesting over time.

Look for more information on Audubon New York's Forest Biodiversity Stewardship Program in future issues of the *Audubon Advocate*. And remember, you can do your part to conserve forests by looking for paper products with the highest post-consumer recycled content, and by selecting wood products that are from Certified Sustainably-Managed forests.



AUDUBON NEW YORK

## Global warming impact detailed in New England Regional Assessment report now available

By Graham Cox

THE LATEST CONFIRMATION that global warming is an undisputed fact, not a fanciful theory, comes in a new easy-to-read report by the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space at the University of New Hampshire (UNH). The report is called "Preparing for a Changing Climate: The Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change." The report examines the specific impacts on the ecology, the economy and society of New England and New York.

A principle author, Dr. Barrett Rock, a professor in the department that studies complex systems at UNH, presented an overview of the report and the evidence in September at a joint meeting of The Adirondack Council and the Wildlife Conservation Society at the Sagamore Great Camp at Raquette Lake. Expert panels examined

## Many Audubon New York priorities included in the final version of the state open space plan

By Graham Cox

THE FINAL VERSION of the third update of the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan was issued in September by the State Department Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

Included in the new habitat protection plan are key areas identified by Audubon New York — more than 75 Important Bird Areas identified by Audubon New York in its 1998 report; the KeySpan-Jamesport property on Long Island Sound; the Beaverkill/Willowemoc watershed in the southern Catskills (where Audubon New York is instrumental now in identifying key parcels for protection); Westmere Woods, adjacent to the Audubon New York office and a potential education and conservation site for the Capital District; the Bog River/Beaver River headwater complex straddling the DEC regional lines in the northern Adirondack Park; continued expansion of the Montezuma Wetlands between Syracuse and Rochester; and improved access to the Great Lakes and Niagara River shorelines, a significant international Bird Conservation Area.

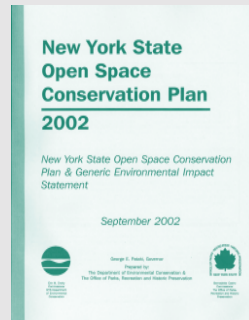
Three multi-region conservation targets are also included — the New York State Canal system as an important recreation corridor and primary trail system; the protection of tens of thousands of acres of working forests, primarily in the Adirondacks, the Catskills and Tug Hill; and expanded protection for state parks and state historic sites.

Statewide, the plan also reinforces its commitment to protect critical farmland as part of the open space

and Smart Growth goals for the state. There is also a renewed commitment to the many small projects that could enhance fishing access, waterway access, protect rare habitats, complete trail and greenway connections and improve access to existing public lands.

In a letter accompanying the 2002 Open Space Conservation Plan, DEC and OPRHP point out that "the state has invested more than \$378 million" to "add 394,000 acres identified" in the last two versions of the plan in the last eight years. They remind readers that Governor George E. Pataki, in his January 2002 state of the state message, "outlined a vision of protecting an additional million acres of land during the next decade, using the Open Space Plan and the Quality Communities Task Force as the guiding templates for this ambitious conservation initiative."

Copies of the final version of the 444-page plan (plus appendices) are now available from the two state agencies. Contact Francis Sheehan at DEC, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4250, or Robert Reinhardt, NYS OPRHP, Agency Building 1, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12238. Or visit the DEC website, [www.dec.state.ny.us/website/opensp/index.html](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/opensp/index.html).



the evidence in discussions of the impacts of global warming on the region's ecosystems, on regional biodiversity, on the economy of New York and the New England states, and on the quality of life for regional residents.

The report examines more than 100 years of climatology records for the region and describes the conclusions of two working computer models, one showing a general rise in average annual temperature of six degrees Fahrenheit, the other of ten degrees Fahrenheit. By the end of this century, according to Professor Rock, we can expect the climate of Boston to be like that of present-day Richmond, Virginia, based on the lower number, or of Atlanta, Georgia, based on the higher number. We can expect the beech-maple hardwood forests of New York to be replaced by oak-hickory forests similar to those of the southern Appalachian forests today. Gone will be a regional tourism and recreation industry based on leaf peeping and winter sports.

Expect major infestations of many pests and diseases from southern states and sub-tropical biomes, including more mosquitoes and ticks, Lyme disease and West Nile disease, according to Audubon High Peaks chapter member and veterinary expert Dr. Nina Schoch, one of the panel experts.

The report is available by contacting [faith.sheridan@unh.edu](mailto:faith.sheridan@unh.edu) (or call 603-862-1792) or download by going online to [www.necsi.sr.unh.edu](http://www.necsi.sr.unh.edu).

