

# All Birds, All Habitats, Three Countries

By Michael Burger

THE MOST INCLUSIVE bird conservation planning effort in the world is taking shape right here in New York state. The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) is a coalition of United States, Canadian, and Mexican government agencies and private organizations that identifies and conserves priority bird species and the habitats on which they depend. The goal of NABCI is to achieve all-bird conservation by coordinating, without duplicating, the efforts of the four major existing bird conservation plans: North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners In Flight, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, North American Waterbird Plan.

To facilitate this task, a mapping team has divided the North American continent into nearly 70 ecologically based Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs), four of which comprise all of New York state (see map below).

Planning efforts are well underway in one of New York's BCRs, the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain (BCR 13), making it one of the most advanced on the continent and potentially a model for planning efforts in other BCRs. The initial BCR 13 planning meeting was held in Alexandria Bay, New York, in April of 2001 to bring

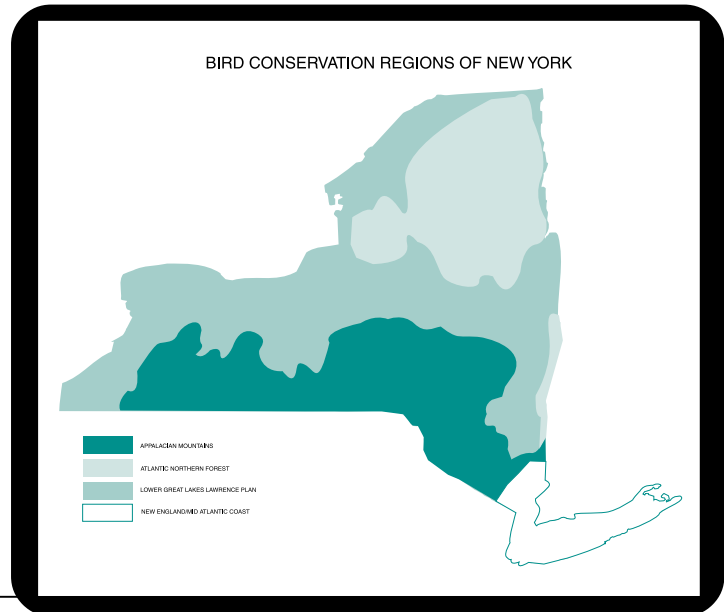
together ornithologists and conservation biologists from the four states and two provinces that fall into BCR 13. New York's contingent included staff from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Environmental Conservation, Audubon New York, Ducks Unlimited, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and The Nature Conservancy.

A follow-up meeting was held last November in Montreal, Quebec, to finalize the lists of priority species and habitats and to identify focus areas for top priority conservation projects within the BCR. Efforts are now underway to outline the process and draft proposals for these projects in order to seek funding needed to successfully complete them. One of the consensus top priority projects identified at the Montreal meeting is the wetland-associated grasslands and shrub lands found in the St. Lawrence Valley on both the U.S. and Canadian sides. These habitats support such priority species as Henslow's Sparrow and Golden-winged Warbler, among others. Several of Audubon's Important Bird Areas were identified as

focus areas in BCR 13, including the Perch River Wildlife Management Area and grasslands, Indian River Lakes/Black Lake, and the Lisbon Grasslands.

The NABCI framework promises to be an efficient and effective planning effort that can help protect valuable

bird habitats across New York and North America. To learn more about NABCI, visit their website at [http://www.nabci.org/cec/about\\_frame.htm](http://www.nabci.org/cec/about_frame.htm).



## Swift Hired As New Nongame Unit Leader

Staff Report

BRYAN SWIFT was promoted this past fall from within New York's Department of Environmental Conservation to head the Nongame and Habitat Unit. After serving as a Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Waterfowl Specialist for the past 14 years, Swift is now the leader of a unit that is responsible for coordinating statewide programs for most avian species, other nongame and "watchable wildlife", and the habitats on which they depend.

Swift holds a Bachelor's degree in Forest Biology from State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) and a Master's degree in Wildlife Ecology/Management from the University of Massachusetts. In addition to dozens of scientific publications to his credit, Swift was the salutatorian and recipient of the SUNY's Outstanding Senior award at SUNY-ESF and received the 1999 Outstanding Professional award from the New York State Chapter of the Wildlife Society.

The Nongame and Habitat Unit Leader position became available this summer upon the retirement of long-time leader Bob Miller. Like his predecessor, Swift oversees the State's Bird Conservation Area program and participates on behalf of the New York State DEC in the North American Bird Conservation Initiative and Partners In Flight conservation efforts.

"Bryan and I have worked together for nearly 20 years, and I have great confidence that his enthusiasm, dedication, professional qualifications and broad experience will allow him to make the most of our Nongame and Habitat Unit," said John Major, Ph.D., Chief of DEC's Bureau of Wildlife.



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