

# State And Federal Open Space Projects A Priority for 2003

By Carole Nemore

PUBLIC DOLLARS FOR OPEN SPACE are often a mix of both federal and state funding sources. That is why the national and state Audubon offices team up every year to identify and work together on saving lands of significance to the state, the region, and the country. This year is more important than ever because of several factors in New York State. The state's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has provided annual funds for public land acquisitions since 1992, rising to an average of about \$36 million per year in recent years. This amount falls short of meeting the real demand. But previously, New York was fortunate because it had the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act of 1996 and at least two other prior bond acts to pay for open space. Together they have provided hundreds of millions of dollars for land acquisitions for three decades.

Currently there are no bond acts left to supplement the EPF for open space acquisitions. Even more challenging is that the EPF is subject to annual budget appropriations and in fiscally difficult times, like this year and last, it is vulnerable. So to meet the demand to save important open spaces, the State is left with three options: increase the EPF authorization and appropriation for open space; secure new state revenue sources; and better access federal funds. The latter course is why we team up with National Audubon Society's Washington DC office, led by Bob Perciasepe, national director of public policy. Now that bond act funds are fully expended, access to funding from the state side of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (which funds locally significant open spaces) and the Farm Bill (for habitat protection) is more important than ever. Both sources of

federal funds are done through a competitive process, and that is where Perciasepe's team can play a major role for New York.

It is a known fact that despite population losses in parts of New York, open spaces are being developed at a rapid rate and astonishing losses of prime wildlife habitats and watersheds are occurring. Audubon New York also works with many other partners to advocate for saving lands throughout the state, including regional alliances such as the Northern Forest Alliance, the Hudson Highlands Coalition, the Catskill Coalition, the Long Island Stewardship System, and the land trust community. Currently, our major regional land initiatives are Long Island Sound, Hudson Highlands and Hudson River Valley, the Greater Catskills region, the Adirondack Park/Tug Hill region, and Central and Western New York.

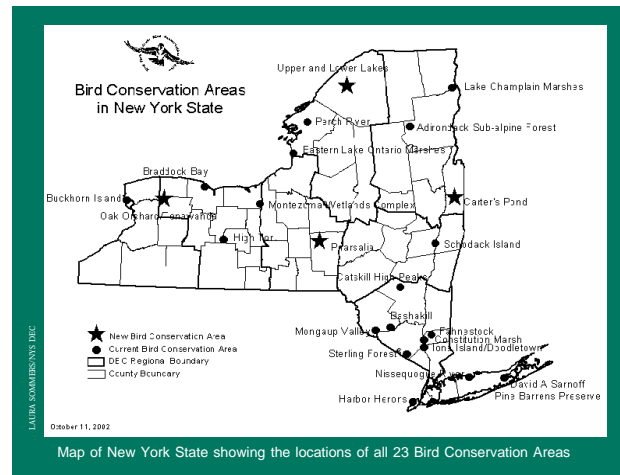
New York is fortunate to have an Open Space Plan that guides the state's funding decisions. Every few years, citizen committees meet in different regions of the state to recommend new priorities and to update the Plan. Audubon New York plays a key role in this process by recommending priority projects that tie into important regional ecosystems. As a result of our science and advocacy efforts, 73 out of 127 Important Bird Areas are now included in the Open Space Plan. This is very significant because all state or local purchases of land using EPF dollars are restricted to sites listed in the Open Space Plan. You can help us save IBAs with state and/or federal funds by getting involved in the second round of IBA nominations. (See story on page 5)

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## BIRD CONSERVATION AREAS IN NEW YORK STATE

Existing BCAs (name; size; location - date of designation):

1. David A. Sarnoff Pine Barrens Preserve BCA; 2,324 acres; Suffolk County - 8/31/98.
2. Eastern Lake Ontario Marshes BCA; 4,940 acres; Oswego and Jefferson Counties - 8/31/98.
3. Buckhorn Island BCA; 640 acres; Erie County - 8/31/98.
4. Iona Island/Doodletown BCA; 1,500 acres; Rockland County - 8/31/98.
5. Catskill High Peaks BCA; 3,700 acres; Greene and Ulster Counties - 6/10/99.
6. Nissequogue River BCA; 153 acres; Suffolk County - 4/28/00.
7. Montezuma Wetlands Complex BCA; 6,449 acres; Seneca, Wayne, and Cayuga Counties - 5/5/00.
8. Braddock Bay BCA; 2,576 acres; Monroe County - 5/5/00.
9. Mongaup Valley BCA; 11,967 acres; Sullivan County - 6/16/00.
10. Bashakill BCA; 2,213 acres; Sullivan County - 6/16/00.
11. Fahnestock State Park - Hubbard Perkins Conservation Area BCA; 10,050 acres; Putnam County - 9/29/00.
12. Constitution Marsh; 270 acres; Putnam County - 5/18/01.
13. Sterling Forest®; 16,833 acres; Orange County - 10/26/01.
14. Harbor Herons; 111 acres; Richmond County - 11/17/01.
15. Perch River; 7,862 acres; Jefferson County - 11/17/01.
16. Adirondack Sub-alpine Forest; 69,000 acres; Essex, Franklin, Hamilton Counties - 11/17/01.
17. Champlain Marshes BCA; 2,800 acres; Clinton, Essex, and Washington Counties - 3/9/02.
18. High-Tor BCA; 6,100 acres; Ontario and Yates Counties - 3/12/02.
19. Schodack Island BCA; 864 acres; Rensselaer, Columbia, and Greene Counties - 6/19/02.
20. Carter's Pond BCA; 447 acres; Washington County - 10/22/02.
21. Oak Orchard/Tonawanda BCA; 8,116 acres; Niagara, Orleans, and Genesee Counties - 10/22/02.
22. Pharsalia BCA; 10,000 acres; Chenango County - 10/22/02.
23. Upper and Lower Lakes BCA; 8,781 acres; St. Lawrence County - 10/22/02.



Several species of "winter finches" such as this Common Redpoll are attracted to the conifer stands within the Pharsalia BCA.



Pharsalia BCA is especially important breeding habitat for several species of forest birds, such as this Black-throated Blue Warbler.



Grasshopper Sparrows are one of the grassland species supported at the Oak Orchard/Tonawanda BCA.