

## Beaverkill/Willowemoc Open Space Program Well Underway

By Graham Cox

AUDUBON NEW YORK, working with the Open Space Institute, has now identified 116 key parcels of land along the four main stems of the Beaverkill and Willowemoc rivers in the southern Catskills as potential conservation properties. They range in size from five to 500 acres and many of them are presently classified as vacant parcels.

Using Audubon New York's geographic information system, parcels in or close to flood plains areas and wetlands have been identified in what is a first round of potential sites for conservation in some form. OSI staff is now field checking these parcels and preparing to rate them against a list of 19 criteria to determine whether discussions with the landowners may be worth pursuing.

The joint Audubon/OSI analysis is based on a major report prepared by Trout Unlimited for NYS DEC, which examined the water quality and threats to the significant trout populations in these world-class fishing streams. The Beaverkill/Willowemoc watershed, which covers 300 square miles on the southern edge of the Catskill State Park and includes part of the Forest Preserve,

has been identified as a priority area in the state open space conservation plan. However, no specific parcels were identified in this state plan.

The Audubon/OSI list will be presented to DEC in coming weeks as they consider suitable properties to provide improved public fishing access, clean-up water pollution sources or better manage flood hazards along the streams. The state and OSI can consider a broad array of land conservation tools for these streams, including flood control funding sources, fishing and parking access easements, broader conservation easements for recreation purposes, and in some limited cases land purchase from willing sellers.

As part of the GIS analysis, Audubon New York has also identified extensive private forestlands in the watershed that may benefit from state purchase of conservation easements to encourage the property owners to retain their working forest character. Continued forestry following industry best management practices and other sustainable forestry measures will contribute over the long-term to maintaining the high quality water in these rivers and their tributaries.

## Eagle Monitoring In The Catskills

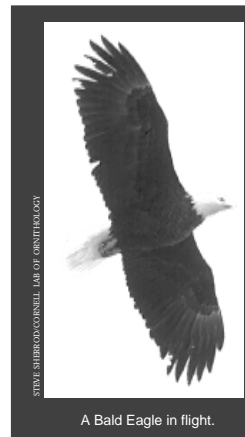
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ONE OF THE MOST MAGNIFICENT sights of winter is watching bald eagles gliding, perching and diving for food along New York's Upper Delaware River boarder with Pennsylvania. It is well worth a day trip to one or several IBA sites in Orange, Sullivan, and Delaware counties to see how successful the state and federal endangered species programs have been in restoring bald eagles to the Northeast.

More than 150 bald eagles migrate now to this region in search of open water and fresh fish. This area also offers large stands of undisturbed trees for the eagles to perch and roost. The Upper Delaware River and the Mongaup Falls Wildlife Management Area in Sullivan County offer an abundant food source and a safe haven for the eagles to survive the winter months. The Eagle Institute, a non-profit conservation group concerned with protection of the eagle and habitat conservation, has trained volunteers who are stationed at popular viewing locations with spotting scopes and binoculars to help visitors find the eagles, answer questions and direct them to other popular viewing locations. Each winter, the Institute volunteers aids 3,000-4,000 visitors at the viewing locations.

The Eagle Institute volunteers are stationed along the Upper Delaware River at the Lackawaxen, PA, and Narrowsburg, NY riverside viewing locations, and at the Mongaup Falls and Rio Reservoirs in Sullivan County, every weekend from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. until mid-March. Also on the Delaware River, interpretive exhibits and literature are available at Barryville, NY and Minisink Ford, NY viewing sites. The Eagle Institute winter field office, located in Lackawaxen Pa. (at the end of the historic Roebling Bridge) is open Wed-Fri from 1-4 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am-4 pm, until mid-March. Maps, literature and brochures are available and visitors are encouraged to view a brief educational video.

The Institute also offers an introductory slide presentation that explains how the eagle made a comeback from the brink of extinction and why the Upper Delaware River region is critical to the eagles' survival. The Institute is a private, non-profit organization based in Sullivan County with its winter field office in Lackawaxen, PA. For information call (845) 557-6162 or (570) 685-5960 or contact the institute at [eagleinstitute@yahoo.com](mailto:eagleinstitute@yahoo.com).



Audubon staff members Pete Salmansohn and Steve Kress have written a new children's book entitled *Saving Birds: Heroes Around the World* (Tilbury House.) The forty-page hardcover volume is Audubon licensed, and features six engaging stories about people in places as different as Chiapas, Mexico and Jerusalem, Israel who are using creative, and often ingenious ways of helping threatened birds to survive. The book is illustrated with color photographs and is designed to inspire young people to believe in their own abilities to make a difference for wildlife. It can be ordered online through Amazon, or purchased at your local bookstore. Pete Salmansohn works as an educator at Audubon New York's Constitution Marsh and Steve Kress is Audubon's Vice President for Bird Conservation.

