

Research Runs Strong at Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center

By Trish Pelkowski

MANY PEOPLE KNOW the Theodore Roosevelt Audubon Sanctuary and Audubon Center (TR) in Oyster Bay for its education programs. But TR also has a history of more than 70 years of bird research. That tradition of investigation still runs strong both on and off the Sanctuary.

Some of the research provides information for making management decisions. For example, we conduct avian surveys at nearby Sagamore Hill National Historic Site. Since January 2003, we have identified 115 bird species on the property and in adjacent Cold Spring Harbor, including an immature Bald Eagle. Our findings and recommendations will be used by the National Park Service to develop habitat management plans for this former home of our namesake and inspiration, Theodore Roosevelt.

At the nearby Hoffman Center in Muttontown, we are monitoring the success the native grassland that we created there three years ago. Surveys at this site show the beneficial effects that this project has had upon species diversity and abundance. Several species that have been declining locally, including Savannah Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, and Yellow-breasted Chat, have successfully bred at this site in the past two years.

Some research projects are a part of larger efforts. This past summer marked the third year of our operation of a MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) bird-banding station at Hoffman Center. MAPS stations are in

operation throughout the country, providing regional and nationwide information on the bird populations in this country. This year our station documented a poor breeding season, likely due to the extremely wet weather throughout the northeast during late spring and early summer.

We also band hawks in the autumn on Fire Island. Every year, thousands of hawks travel along Long Island's barrier beaches on their southbound migration, and this year was no exception. We caught and banded a record number of hawks for our present location. As usual, most of the birds we banded were falcons (Merlins and Kestrels) and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

The research that we conduct on Sanctuary property has also become part of a larger effort. 2003 marked the 20th continuous year of breeding bird surveys at the Sanctuary. Over the past five years, these data (along with our MAPS data) have been forwarded to the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas 2000 project. This study has the ambitious goal of accurately identifying the breeding range of each bird species throughout the state.

The history of research at TR was the primary reason for its designation as an Important Bird Area. The staff and volunteers are pleased to continue that tradition. The studies we conduct inform our education programs, management, and our continuing work to understand our interactions with the other species that share our world.

Citizen Science at Prospect Park Audubon Center

By Glenn Phillips

IMAGINE THE EXCITEMENT of being the first person to see a butterfly that had never been recorded in Prospect Park. Participants in last summer's Butterfly Count observed two new species, a Hoary Edge and a Queen butterfly. Citizen science is based on the concept that ordinary people can contribute meaningful scientific data. For some people who have participated in Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys, that's not a new idea, but for many of Prospect Park's visitors, it's unheard of.

Typically, urban residents think of science as something done by men in white lab coats, and nature as something far away or on television. To counteract these misconceptions, the Center offers a variety of ways for people to get involved. Individuals can collect data on their own after learning about the study from Teacher/Natural-

ists at the Center, or they can join a group collecting data as part of our Discover Tours. After-school programs for kids and school groups also participate in citizen science projects.

In addition to the butterfly count, Prospect Park has partnered with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Urban Bird Studies Initiative, a National Science Foundation supported project, to test out some new citizen science projects specially designed for urban areas: Dove Detectives and Crows Count. So far, over 300 adults and children have participated in collecting data that will help the lab's scientists monitor changing dove and crow populations. Mourning Dove populations, which have dramatically declined in some regions, are a particular focus of the project. Students and public visitors help scientists track the kinds of habitats that these birds use.

Ongoing and upcoming citizen science projects include: the Christmas Bird Count on December 20, Duck Detectives in January, the Great Backyard Bird Count in February and Gulls Galore in March. Teachers report

that their students have a new appreciation for the birds that they see everyday after participating in citizen science projects. Adults and children alike are thrilled to realize that a walk in the Park can become a scientific expedition.



Green Team Member Kimarley Hayes searches for crows in Prospect Park.



Representatives from Toyota Motor North America visit the Prospect Park Audubon Center. The Toyota Foundation gave \$1 million to the Prospect Park Audubon Center Endowment Fund. (L to R) Veronica Pollard, Group Vice President of Corporate Communications, Toyota Motor North America, David J. Miller, Executive Director of Audubon New York, John Flicker, President of the National Audubon Society, Glenn Phillips, Director of the Prospect Park Audubon Center, and Toshiaki (Tag) Taguchi, President and CEO of Toyota Motor North America.

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Audubon Staff Members Win Book Award

Audubon Staff

SAVING BIRDS: Heroes Around the World has been selected as one of the Best Science Books of the Year for Children. The award, given by the National Science Teacher's Association and the Children's Book Council, highlights outstanding science books published each year. *Saving Birds* Audubon employees.

Saving Birds tells six different stories of people in various parts of the world who are undertaking creative and often adventurous projects to help endan-

gered and threatened birds. The book is illustrated with color photos and is written for young readers, grade 4 and up. Published by Tilbury House of Gardiner, Maine (www.tilburyhouse.com), it is also available at bookstores or online.

Pete Salmansohn is an educator at the Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary and is also the Education Coordinator for Project Puffin. Steve Kress is Audubon's Vice-President for Bird Conservation and Director of Project Puffin. www.projectpuffin.org