

Centers and Education Update

By Richard Haley

AUDUBON CENTER AT KNOX FARM STATE PARK

The summer and autumn of 2003 saw more growth and progress in the development of the Audubon Center at Knox Farm State Park in East Aurora. In addition to the ongoing programs provided by staff from the Buffalo Audubon Society's Beaver Meadow Audubon Center staff, new programs were offered through a seasonal educator employed by Audubon New York. Educator Scott O' Connor provided programs from August through October to families visiting the park.

An Advisory Board for the Center has been formed, which held its third meeting in December. The group is currently setting goals and a vision for education exhibits and programs at the Center. The New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has contracted an engineering firm to conduct a study of the structural work needed on the Heifer Barn to turn it into a seasonal program building and Audubon Center.

UTICA MARSH

Audubon Centers and Education Staff have been working with several groups on aspects of projects that will ultimately help in creating a new Audubon Center at Utica Marsh. Audubon staff have met with planners from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry to examine the placement of an Audubon Center in a larger plan for the continuing rejuvenation of the Utica Marsh Area.

Audubon is also working in concert with the Utica Zoo and the Utica Marsh Council to pilot Audubon's *For The Birds!* program in one Utica school. This will be the first time Audubon New York has exported the program outside of the New York City area. Audubon hopes to build on the pilot project and reach multiple Utica schools in the future.

CENTERS AND EDUCATION NETWORK

Educators from all of Audubon New York's Centers, along with the Chapter-run Beaver Meadow Audubon Center and the Jamestown Audubon Nature Center, continue to meet regularly to exchange ideas, plan new initiatives and improve their ecological knowledge and teaching skills. This regular exchange of knowledge is one of the core reasons for making sure that Audubon Centers are connected in a network.

In the past several months, network educators have gotten together for training on bird physiology and evolution, Hudson River fish identification, training in the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Citizen Science programs and an introduction to leaf litter invertebrates. The group has also been working on setting standards and goals for public and school group programs. Audubon programs will continue to increase in quality as the network develops.

Governor Pataki Sends Strong Letter to U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

By Sean Mahar

SEVERAL STUDIES have recently been released detailing the threats to the ocean environment that current fishing practices pose. Some of these studies found that in the last 50 years, destructive overfishing of the oceans has wiped out 90 percent of large, important species like cod, halibut, tuna and swordfish. New York State Governor George Pataki served on the PEW Oceans Commission, which released such a report, entitled "America's Living Oceans," highlighting the vast degradation that has occurred in the oceans and the need for increased protection and conservation of aquatic ecosystems.

This past summer it was announced that the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy was set to release

its report this November detailing the health of the nation's oceans. Before this report becomes U.S. policy, the Governors from all states must review and submit comments. Audubon New York and its members have been working with Governor Pataki to submit comments in advance of the release of the U.S. Commissions report. We are proud to announce that Governor Pataki sent a strong and thoughtful letter emphasizing the need for conservation and protection of ocean resources and ecosystems! This letter is being used as an example around the country, and we thank the Governor for all his efforts to conserve and protect ocean ecosystems (you can view the letter at http://ny.audubon.org/pataki_ltr.pdf).

Nature Art Festival, Jamestown-Style

By Merle Szallo

THE NATURE ART FESTIVAL, held last August in Jamestown, NY, is the primary fund-raiser for its sponsor organizations – Jamestown Audubon Nature Center and Roger Tory Peterson Institute – and one of the premiere art shows in the country. Last year it surpassed revenue expectations and provided in excess of \$20,000 to each of its sponsors.

What makes this festival different from any other? Work in progress. Not the festival itself (which they have done quite nicely after five years), but works of art being created on site during the festival. You can watch a sculptor sculpt (and talk to him about the process), a painter paint, even watch a jewelry artisan put petal to metal. This year, it was a brisk experience as the Festival moved to a central location downtown at the Jamestown Savings Bank Ice Arena. Just as the dog days of August arrived, the Festival provided a

great respite from the heat. Artists were on display on the rink where the temperature was a lovely 68 degrees. In a stroke of serendipity, the Nature Art Festival coincided with several other events, including the Celebration of Culture (think food) and Lucy's Birthday Celebration (Jamestown is the birthplace of Lucille Ball). There was not a hotel room available in a sixty-mile radius.

Next year's event has been moved to July 17-18, 2004, in order that it may occupy both rinks at the Arena. In addition to creating more exhibit space, a ground-level entrance will facilitate handicapped access. The date change also moves the Festival out of conflict with a national bronze event, so there may be more bronze artists available. A waiting list of new artists, together with favorites from past years, await your discerning eye next July.

New Listserv Created for Chapter Educators

By Richard Haley

ONE RESULT of the Chapters Education discussion at the Audubon Council meeting in Kingston is the creation of an email listserv for educators from Audubon Chapters in New York State. Anyone involved in leading field trips, arranging for speakers, working with schools, or any other Audubon Chapter education work is welcomed to join. The listserv provides an easy method for questions, answers and announcements concerning education to get to all subscribers.

There is no charge to be a member of the listserv, and people can join or unsubscribe from the group at any time. As the number of subscribers grows, this will become an important new communication tool. It is not simply for the distribution of information from the Audubon State Office, but a forum for the exchange of questions and answers.

For details on how to join the listserv, you can contact Centers and Education Director Richard Haley at rhaley@adubon.org, or at 518-869-9731. You can also join the listserv by visiting the website www.edgateway.org, joining (at no fee), and subscribing to the New York Audubon Educators group.



Congressman Sherwood Boehlert with Challenger, the Bald Eagle. Congressman Boehlert has been a champion for New York's environment and a conservation leader in Congress since 1982.

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