

# Smart Growth Continues to Move Forward

By Al Caccese

AT BOTH THE STATE and local levels, the principles of Smart Growth continue to achieve varying degrees of successes. The goal, of course, is to reduce the sprawl that continues to seriously degrade our environment. Unchecked and unwise growth has resulted in habitat fragmentation and loss, which results in decreased biodiversity and wildlife populations, in addition to air and water pollution. Suburban sprawl is also expensive to all levels of government and terribly inefficient.

In New York, sprawl has consumed millions of acres of farms, forests and public water supply watersheds. It has undercut the character of suburbs, while sapping the vitality of older town and city centers. And, it has placed urban residents at a significant economic disadvantage.

However, things are starting to improve. A major statewide opportunity has been created with the signing of the new Brownfields law, for which we are all indebted to the legislature, specifically Senator Carl Marcellino and Assemblyman Tom DiNapoli, and to Governor George E. Pataki. This act will encourage redevelopment of previously disturbed properties which are often found in urban areas and other areas where infrastructure already exists. This is not only good

for those places, but it also reduces the demand for other properties, typically those located in the suburbs.

Also on a statewide basis, there are several pieces of legislation drafted and in some instances, introduced, which would codify the smart growth principles and provide incentives to sustainable behavior including sound planning, redevelopment of urban areas, farming, forestry and open space protection. It is hoped that a serious bill will be enacted during the 2004 Legislative session.

On a local level, successes in Clifton Park and in other forward thinking communities have caught the imagination of municipal leaders, as well as interested organizations and individuals. Many new efforts are developing around the state, whether through the impressive efforts of the State's Quality Communities initiatives, or independently by interested citizenry. All these efforts are important and should be encouraged. To this end, Audubon New York is partnering with the NYS Department of State to co-sponsor a Smart Growth/Quality Community Conference to be held in Albany on May 25 and 26, 2004. Smart growth pilot project successes will be shared, and notions as to where to go from here will be explored. Save the Dates!

## Pesticides and Healthy Backyard Habitats

By Sean Mahar

CAN YOU BELIEVE that three times more pesticides are applied per acre on household lawns and gardens than are applied to agricultural crops? With this current trend, it is not surprising that these toxic chemicals have killed an estimated 7 million birds annually across the country. Not only is it affecting birds, but it is also having an impact on water quality and possibly human health.

As part of Audubon New York's Pesticide education campaign, which was initiated in response to this type of data, two hundred thousand households across New York State were provided with science-based flyers and brochures discussing the negative environmental and human health effects of using toxic lawn care chemicals this past year. The goal of this campaign is to bring homeowners peer-reviewed scientific information on the negative impacts lawn care pesticide will have on lawns, and provide information on alternative products and techniques that can be used to maintain a healthy lawn without relying on pesticides and other chemical methods.

It is our hope that with this information homeowners will begin to see that their lawns are actually habitats that can, and should support a wide variety of birds, plants and animals. A healthy backyard habitat consists of a diverse range of native plant and grass species,

which naturally require less maintenance and care. These native plants also attract more birds, and beneficial insects that can also lead to a healthier lawn, and can help balance any pest problems that may occur. However, pesticides, herbicides, and other lawn chemicals, don't create a healthy backyard habitat for birds, wildlife, plants and people. They can drive away many of the same bird and insect species that help to keep your lawn healthy, as well as increase the time and money necessary to take care of your lawn. But current misleading advertising encourages the use of these toxic chemicals.

This spring, we are again encouraging homeowners to make informed decisions about the products they purchase for their lawns, and to reduce their use of pesticides. We will again be distributing more of the same science based flyers and brochures to homeowners, and strongly encourage Audubon members and other citizens to help us with this outreach. Please contact our offices at 518-869-9731 or email [smahar@audubon.org](mailto:smahar@audubon.org) if you are interested in obtaining copies of this information, or if you are looking for any speakers for local or chapter events on pesticides.

Remember to spread the word about pesticides, instead of spreading pesticides.



Record any bird you see, from anywhere and anytime, then explore where the birds are!

### What is eBird?

eBird, a project developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, provides a simple way for you to keep track of the birds you see anywhere in North America. You can retrieve information on your bird observations, from your backyard to your neighborhood to your favorite bird-watching locations, at any time for your personal use. You can also access the entire historical database to find out what other eBirders are reporting from across North America.



### Who uses eBird?

The eBird database that you are helping to create can be used by you, other birders and amateur naturalists, scientists, conservationists, educators or anyone to discover where species can be found throughout the year; which birds are regularly found at specific locations across North America; where certain species arrive or depart from their breeding and wintering grounds; and many other possibilities.



### Why should I eBird?

You make a contribution to our understanding of nature when yours, and others', observations are collected and organized into a central database—where they can help complete a picture of the life of birds. If you use the eBird web site to enter all your birding information—and get your friends, family members, students, and colleagues to use it as well—before long, the answers to the never-ending questions about birds will be found in the eBird database, for use now and for generations that will follow.

<http://www.ebird.org>