

The results are in! New York's list of IBAs increases to 136 sites

By Jillian Liner

The Important Bird Area (IBA) Technical Committee held their last meeting on the second round of IBA site identifications this past fall at Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca. The results are in and the committee has approved 136 sites as IBAs. The results will be incorporated into a second edition of the book *Important Bird Areas of New York* to be published in 2005 in conjunction with Audubon's 100th anniversary.

Audubon New York embarked on a second round of IBA site identifications about two years ago, making New York the first state to undergo a second round. The goals of the second round were to identify new sites that were missed in the first round and re-evaluate all existing IBAs to make sure that they continue to meet the IBA criteria. The assessment process also provided an opportunity to build on the considerable developments in bird conservation that have occurred since the program first began in New York in 1996.

Noteworthy actions taken by the IBA technical committee during the second round include modifications to the IBA criteria to better align our state program with the national and global IBA programs (see map below), the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to assist in site identification, and the establishment of a de-listing process to evaluate IBAs that no longer appear to meet IBA criteria.

Numerous individuals from around the state contributed to the second round by nominating new sites and providing bird data or other information

on existing IBAs. Through a series of meetings and conference calls the committee determined whether or not proposed and existing sites had sufficient data to indicate that they met one or more of the three IBA criteria. Twenty-one of the forty-nine newly nominated sites and 117 of the 123 existing IBAs were accepted, bringing the total number of IBAs in New York to 136 sites (note: 2 newly nominated sites and 2 existing sites were combined).

Newly recognized IBAs include sites for at-risk species such as the Meco Sagaponack Coastal Dunes on Long Island, an important breeding site for Least Tern and Piping Plover; sites for large concentrations of birds such as the Hoffman and Swinburne Island Complex, a nesting site for hundreds of wading birds; and sites for assemblages of responsibility species such as the Tug Hill Plateau, a large, intact forest site with numerous forest breeders and the Bergen Swamp, a unique swamp forest in western NY.

Over the upcoming year we will be working on disseminating information on the revised list IBAs. The publishing of the second edition *Important Bird Areas of New York* is the first step. The second edition will include information about bird conservation priorities at the national and state scale, site descriptions specifying why a site has been identified, maps showing site locations, and recommendations on ways to get involved in bird conservation.

New York's IBA Criteria

Sites for Species at Risk

This category identifies sites that support significant breeding, wintering, or migrating populations of species considered to be at risk, which include species listed in New York as endangered, threatened, or of special concern, federally listed, or on the Audubon WatchList 2002. Numerical thresholds have been developed.

Sites for Concentrations of Birds

This category identifies sites of importance for dense populations of breeding birds (such as a heronry), high concentrations of waterfowl or shorebirds in any season, and migratory "bottlenecks" where geographical features (such as ridges) concentrate large numbers of migratory birds. Numerical thresholds have been developed.

Sites for Responsibility Species Assemblages

This category identifies large, intact habitats that support assemblages of bird species for which New York has a high responsibility for their long-term conservation, even if they are not considered to be at risk. Responsibility species are determined through the Partners in Flight species assessment process and include species of high regional responsibility in the Bird Conservation Regions that make up New York State.

IBA Technical Committee Members

Elliott Adams, Oakes Ames, Tim Baird, Bob Budliger, Mike Burger, Valerie Freer, John Fritz, Jane Graves, Jay Greenberg, Lee Harper, Sheila Hess, Eric Lind, Jillian Liner, Marty McGuire, Kevin McGowan, Bill Ostrander, Ray Perry, Mike Richmond, Ken Rosenberg, Sy Schiff, Bryan Swift, and David VanLuvan

Did you know?:

- IBAs are being identified in 156 countries around the world
- Forty states have initiated IBA programs and more than 1,200 US IBAs have been identified
- So far, New York has 5 globally significant IBAs: Great Gull Island, Jamaica Bay, Montezuma Wetlands Complex, Braddock Bay, and the Niagara River



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Audubon NY Board Member Margot Ernst and Mike Sheridan monitor birds near Elk Lake IBA

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Revised List of Important Bird Areas

