



For the Birds! Spreads its Wings

By Kim Keirnan, Program Coordinator,
For the Birds!

DURING THE 2004-2005 SCHOOL YEAR, the *For the Birds!* program saw an unprecedented increase in the number of new schools and cities served throughout the state. The

mission of *For the Birds!* is to provide elementary students in underserved urban communities with a multi-session, interdisciplinary, hands-on, educational program that complements the school curriculum, encourages a desire to learn, and promotes an appreciation of nature and a stewardship ethic, through the study of birds. In addition to continuing with all of the New York

2nd grade student
from *For the Birds!*
program at PS 36 in
Harlem showing his
journal entry



KIM KEIRNAN

City and Utica classrooms that participated last year, the program has expanded into two new cities this year: Garrison and North Bellmore.

In Garrison, Pete Salmansohn from Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary, is teaching *For the Birds!* at the Haldane Elementary School, year-round, with three 4th grade classes. Pete brings his teaching expertise and unique style to the classrooms to offer these students a very special version of the *For the Birds!* curriculum. In North Bellmore, Karl Brummert and Theresa Perez from the Theodore Roosevelt Audubon Center and Sanctuary, are teaching the program this fall at the Sawmill Road Elementary School, with four 5th grade classes. A recent article in *Newsday* detailing the students' and teachers' experiences with the program is a testament to its success. Karl and Theresa have been doing an incredible job of adapting the program to meet the needs of the students and teachers at this school on Long Island.

In the spring of 2004, *For the Birds!* was piloted in two 2nd grade classrooms at Columbus Elementary in Utica, through a partnership with the Utica Zoo and the Utica Marsh Council.

This fall, the program continued at Columbus, thanks to the dedication and talent of educators and volunteers from the Zoo and Marsh Council. In addition, a \$12,000 grant received from the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties will enable the further expansion of *For the Birds!* in Utica. The grant provides funding to hire and train a college intern to teach the program in additional Utica City Schools. The partnership in Utica has been extremely successful and serves as a model for expanding *For the Birds!* into other new cities.

Future plans for the program include continuing to grow in New York City by offering *For the Birds!* to schools in Queens and Brooklyn, as well as piloting the program in two new cities: Syracuse and Albany. In both of these cities, partnerships are being forged with local colleges—the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse and Russell Sage College in Albany. With continued success, we can realize the goal of the *For the Birds!* program—to foster an excitement about learning by opening the eyes of young students to the natural habitat in their own neighborhood.

Volunteers in Focus: Law student takes break from the books to help bird conservation

By Jillian Liner

AUDUBON NEW YORK has been very fortunate over the past year to have the assistance of Jim Roble, a former database manager now law student, volunteering with the Important Bird Area (IBA) program. As a volunteer, Jim has developed and continues to refine an Access database that houses all of our information relating to IBAs. Jim looks at his involvement as an investment in the environment, "The time I spend developing the database is recouped in much more time saved by others, so in that sense it is an investment, and I am rewarded anytime I hear a positive story of a habitat being protected or a declining species recovering."

Jim has spent most of his life in Michigan. He was born and raised in the Detroit area and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where he is currently a second year law student. About a year ago he couldn't refrain from helping us when he heard that we were struggling to find a way to incorporate our IBA information into an easy-to-use database. His professional work as a software designer had involved designing and creating databases for large, often high profile companies and he was happy to apply those skills to an environmental cause.

It is a little known fact that Jim's first words as a child were "Birdy outside" in response to a robin that caught his eye. Jim considers himself a moderate birder often missing exits on the thruway because he is more interested in viewing the Red-tailed Hawks that line it. But Jim cites three close encounters as having peaked his curiosity in birds. "I had a bald eagle swoop down on me while riding my bike in the U.P., a magnificent condor in the Grand Canyon kindly posed for a photo op, and I was attacked by a goshawk on South Manitou Island on Lake Michigan." I assured Jim not to take the goshawk's gesture personally; goshawks can be extremely aggressive during the nesting season.

Audubon New York is very grateful to have Jim onboard as one of our volunteers and we hope that his work with us has only fueled his curiosity. For further information on volunteering with Audubon New York, contact Jillian Liner at jliner@audubon.org or 607-254-2437.



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