

## Bird gardens and point counts at Dyken Pond

By Chuck Remington

Last summer I had the pleasure of birding, working, digging and planting with 30 teens in three, two-week sessions at the Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center. The program, aptly named “Rough Riders”, has, for many years, involved young adults in environmental projects that give them vocational skills and two weeks in the woods of the Rensselaer Plateau (an Important Bird Area).

With support from a grant from the Howard and Bush Foundation, Audubon added to the menu of activities for the program. One day a week, I taught the Rough Riders how field biologists use the point-

count technique to survey bird populations. They accompanied me with area-specific checklists and new binoculars to twelve pre-posted stops and assisted in the visual and aural identification of species. These data were then submitted to the New York Important Bird Area web page at [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org) (see story on page 5).

The Rough Riders were also given the background information, tools and purchasing power—thanks to the grant and to Lisa and Pierce Hoyt of Dyken Pond—to design and create gardens that attract birds. Armed with information from Stephen Kress’ *Bird Gardens* book, they decided which native plants to choose based on soil compatibility, the food and shelter they offered and an inventory of existing flora. Over the course of two weeks, the teens laid out, dug and planted their gardens — taking away the vegetation, adding topsoil, anchoring weed-prevention matting and placing trees, shrubs and perennials.

The bird gardens gave the Rough Riders (and me!) blisters, sore muscles, mud-caked shoes and lessons in botany and landscape design. But, more importantly, these young adults were given a chance to exercise their decision-making and analytical skills. As the plots of lawn were transformed into a natural resource for wildlife, the teens’ sense of accomplishment grew. And at the end of their two weeks, we all shared a bit of pride for the legacy we left behind.



NASNY  
Rough Riders work to create a garden to attract birds.



NASNY  
Rough Riders spent two weeks at Rensselaer Plateau, an Important Bird Area.

## Eibs Pond Earth Day Committee awards grant to Audubon

Staff Report

The Staten Island Science Teachers Association (SISTA) has generously awarded \$3,000 to the National Audubon Society of New York State (NASNY) to support the For the Birds program at public school 57 in Staten Island. The grant will help to launch the innovative urban environmental education program into its third year at the school.

Educator Regan Clover and volunteer Gini Stowe, along with the Fox Hills Tenant Association and the Parks Council, will continue their involvement with the program. “We are thrilled to receive this grant,” said Kristen Stram, education coordinator for NASNY, “and to have the means to include two new classes of 5<sup>th</sup> graders in science-based activities that benefit birds.”

“The Eibs Pond Earth Day Committee of SISTA is delighted to be able to fund this worthwhile program. Students of PS 57 and the surrounding community will benefit from this endeavor as this wonderful resource continues to improve, providing habitat and passive recreation for its families,” said Lenore Miller of the S.I. Earth Day Committee.

## Funding for ZBGA on the rise

By Bill Cooke

The National Audubon Society of New York State (NASNY) continues to work for funding increases for zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums (ZBGAs).

State funding is critical to scores of facilities, including some of Audubon’s. This program has allocated \$4.95 million statewide for a number of years. While the funding remained flat, the cost of maintaining these facilities has continued to grow. This has put even more pressure on these facilities and made it harder to keep the doors open.

After intense lobbying by a coalition of groups including Audubon, the New York State Senate leadership added \$1 million to this program. We are truly thankful for the support of senate majority leader Joseph L. Bruno, Senate Finance Chairman Ronald Stafford and Senate Environmental Conservation Chairman Carl Marcellino, who played critical roles in the successful passing of the additional funding legislation.

As we near a new legislative session, Audubon continues to work for funding increases for this program. Zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, wildlife sanctuaries and centers reach hundreds of thousands of New York’s children and adults each year. These facilities are critical foundations necessary for the education of our future generations about the natural world and conservation.

## Edith Read summer campers perform breeding bird surveys

By Kristen Stram

This summer, more than 50 junior highschoolers (grades 7-9) participated in Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary’s Summer Marine Biology Program. Counting and capturing crabs, habitat studies and monitoring the water quality of Long Island Sound were a few of the highlights of this coastal ecology program. Another added feature was a set of activities designed by NASNY education staff.

Every Thursday, Regan Clover, an Americorps volunteer assigned to Audubon, and I worked with youth on a science project to benefit the sanctuary. (Since then, Regan has been hired by NASNY to teach For the Birds in New York City.) Using new skills with binoculars and checklists and the recognition of field marks and behavior, these young naturalists searched for evidence of nesting birds, recorded their findings, and submitted their data to sanctuary staff. These data will

become part of the New York State Bird Breeding Atlas Survey. Furthermore, the data will contribute to the protection of birds and other wildlife at Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary — an Important Bird Area.

In addition to counting birds (and participating in other Audubon activities that had them acting like birds), each camper designed and created a poster to educate the public about sanctuary-specific environmental issues. A poster contest and reunion took place in October. The top three posters, judged by staff of Westchester County Parks and members of the Friends of Edith G. Read Sanctuary, Scarsdale Audubon Society and Central Westchester Audubon Society, will be converted to permanent signs for display at the sanctuary.

Special thanks go to Jeff Main and Mary Davis of Westchester County Department of Parks for making this program possible!



NASNY  
Edith Read campers collect data for the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas Survey.