

## Prospect Park Audubon Center at the Boathouse launched

By Linda Vanderveer

The National Audubon Society of New York State and the Prospect Park Alliance sealed their commitment to create New York City's first Audubon Center with a groundbreaking ceremony on April 26 at Prospect Park's historic boathouse. Members of both organizations signed a memorandum of understanding for the creation of the Prospect Park Audubon Center at the boathouse, which is scheduled to open in April 2001, and will provide valuable hands-on environmental education experience to schoolchildren, teens, families and the local community. The signing came on the birthdays of both John James Audubon and Frederick Law Olmsted, the renowned designer of Prospect Park and Manhattan's Central Park.

Extensive renovations estimated at \$4.5 million will return the boathouse, a city landmark built in 1905, to its previous grandeur, and bring the building up to current building code regulations. Funds for the restoration are being provided by a number of city, state and private donors. In 1998, Prospect Park was selected by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area: a critical habitat for migratory song birds from the West Indies, Central and South America. More than 240 species, including at least 25 species of warbler, have been recorded in the park.

"We have 2.5 million people in

Brooklyn; one lake, one forest and all these fantastic birds," said Tupper Thomas, president of the Prospect Park Alliance. "Just as Brooklyn is a borough of immigrants, so are many of our birds. They come from places such as the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Barbados, stopping here on their way north. This project will be a great way to allow urban folks to understand the roles of forests, lakes and streams for wildlife and people. And they'll be able to do it right here in Prospect Park."

"This is a significant day for all of us," said David J. Miller, executive director of the National Audubon Society of New York State. "Not only is Audubon forging an historic partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance and the New York City Parks Department, but we are building an alliance with the people of New York City. The Prospect Park Audubon Center is our first urban nature center in New York City, and is among the first of Audubon's urban nature centers in the country. It is part of Audubon's commitment to provide communities with the opportunity for memorable and educational experiences in nature. This center's environmental education programs will serve Brooklyn residents representing more than 90 ethnic groups in a park that supports an astounding variety of birds and other wildlife. Together, we will discover, protect and celebrate the diversity that makes the natural world so wonderful."



Prospect Park Alliance Archive photos

Above, Kenneth Fisher, Brooklyn City Council member, speaks at the signing ceremony with New York City Parks Commissioner Henry (Star Quest) Stern looking on (far right). Below are memorandum of understanding signatories Henry Christensen, chairman of the board of Prospect Park Alliance; Audubon's Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff, John Flicker and David J. Miller; and Tupper Thomas, executive director of Prospect Park Alliance.



## Audubon Centers network in New York gets started

By Chuck Remington

On March 23, staff and volunteers from Audubon Centers across New York met for the first time to kickoff the beginning of a centers network for the state. The all-day session was attended by 16 people, many of whom were meeting others in the group for the first time. Topics included:

**SHARING BEST PRACTICES.** Each center led a full activity used in one of their programs to showcase what they do best. Activities included singing the "Mockingbird Mimic Mambo," classifying macroinvertebrates living in a local stream, donning costumes to learn about animal tails, making camouflaged animals out of potatoes and examining the similarities between bird and

human survival in the wild.

**NEEDS AND CHALLENGES.** We discussed issues such as: what new teaching techniques or new topics could center education programs cover; what new audiences would each center like to reach; and what is preventing us from meeting our goals, limiting us from expanding in new directions or making our programs even better.

**AUDUBON CENTERS NETWORK.** We traded ideas about how to create the most effective network for resource sharing throughout our centers. What do we want to find out about or use from other Audubon Centers? Can we share programs, activities, marketing techniques? Should we cross train our staff at other centers? What are the similarities between each center's short and long-term goals?

Represented at this meeting were the Jamestown Audubon Nature Center, the Beaver Meadow Nature Center, Kaler's Pond Nature Center, Theodore Roosevelt Nature Center, Constitution Marsh Audubon Center, and Rheinstrom Hill and Buttercup Sanctuaries.

This marks the beginning of a new era of sharing between Audubon Centers.

A few weeks later, a similar meeting at the National Audubon Convention in California brought together Audubon educators from centers across America. The end result of these fledgling networks will be education programs that are even more innovative and effective in connecting people to nature...programs that will advance our goal to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats.

## TRS hires new staff members

Staff Report

The following people have recently joined the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary staff.

**PATRICIA PELKOWSKI, RESEARCH COORDINATOR:** Trish received her bachelor's degree in environmental biology from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse. As a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, she specializes in

passerines and raptors. Trish also coauthored *A Seasonal Guide to Bird Finding on Long Island*. She is president of Four Harbors Audubon Society and is on the board of directors of the Open Space Council. Trish begins a graduate program in environmental studies this fall.

**SUZZANNE NAPODANO, PROGRAM COORDINATOR:**

Sue Napodano came on board in February of this year. She earned her bachelor's degree in biology from Binghamton University. Sue has taught in formal and nontraditional settings. She looks forward to the challenge of

integrating TRS's education programs with new classroom standards. She is currently enrolled in a master's program in education at Long Island University/C.W. Post Center.

**THERESA PEREZ, NATURALIST EDUCATOR/VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR:** Theresa joined the staff this past March. After receiving her bachelor's degree in natural resources from Cornell University, Theresa taught wildlife education programs for two years at the Volunteers for Wildlife Hospital and Education Center. She is also a board member of Four Harbors Audubon Society and plans to pursue a master's

degree in wildlife conservation.

**LISA EIGNER, NATURALIST EDUCATOR:** Lisa, who was working part-time at the sanctuary, recently came on board as a full-time naturalist educator. Lisa received her bachelor's degree in environmental science from Binghamton University, where she specialized in ecosystems. Lisa has gained experience in the environmental field working as an intern for the Belize Audubon Society and for the National Park Service in Mt. Rainier, Wash.