



Nissequogue River, Montezuma, Braddock Bay Wildlife Management sites designated as Bird Conservation Areas

By Michael Burger, Ph.D.

Governor George E. Pataki has recently designated three new Bird Conservation Areas (BCAs). (See full story of dedication on page 1.) Profiles of the sites follow.

NISSEQUOGUE RIVER STATE PARK

The park was designated April 21 and is the state's sixth BCA. It's located in Smithtown, Suffolk County, on the north shore of Long Island, and includes habitats such as riverine, cobble and sandy shoreline, tidal wetlands, and deciduous trees and shrubs along the shore. Nissequogue River qualifies as a BCA because of the many herons, egrets and migratory songbirds that use the park. More than 100 herons regularly roost in the large trees surrounding the inlets of the river shoreline. The Nissequogue River State Park BCA is part of the larger Nissequogue River Watershed/Smithtown Bay Important Bird Area identified by the National Audubon



The Black-crowned Night Heron is the most abundant heron species using Nissequogue River State Park BCA.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology/Johan Schumacher

Cornell Lab of Ornithology/Lang Elliott



The American Black Duck is a WatchList species in the northeastern U.S. They are often found in large numbers at the Montezuma Wetlands Complex.

Society of New York State in 1998.

MONTEZUMA WETLANDS COMPLEX

State-owned portions of the Northern Montezuma Wetlands (Montezuma Wetlands Complex) Important Bird Area were designated as New York's seventh BCA May 5. The Montezuma Wetlands Complex is located in the towns of Savannah, Montezuma, Conquest and Seneca Falls in Seneca, Wayne and Cayuga counties. Currently 16,779 acres of land in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex are owned or managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, including the 6,449 acres of the Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area owned by NYSDEC and receiving the BCA designation. The

National Audubon Society of New York State is one of several partners working to protect and manage the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. Other key partners include the USFWS, NYSDEC, Ducks Unlimited, and The Nature Conservancy.

The complex meets nearly all of the criteria for being designated as a BCA. It is a waterfowl, shorebird, diverse species and individual species concentration site and also a bird research site. In addition, several state-listed species are found at the complex, including Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Black Tern, Short-eared Owl, Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Northern Harrier, American Bittern, Osprey and Cerulean Warbler. More than half a million Canada Geese and 25,000 Snow Geese pass through the area during migration. The complex often hosts more than 100,000 Mallards, 25,000 American Black Ducks and a thousand or more individuals of 25 species of shorebirds during migration. Additionally, it hosts one of the largest fall swallow concentrations in the state.

BRADDOCK BAY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

The 2,100 acre Braddock Bay Wildlife Management Area on the shore of Lake Ontario in the Town of Greece, Monroe County, was designated as New York's eighth BCA May

5. The area contains high quality wetlands, including deep emergent marsh, backed by shrub/scrub and forested lands along the lake shore. Braddock Bay qualifies as a BCA due to concentrations of waterfowl, raptors and diverse songbirds during migration. In addition, several state-listed species breed in the area, including Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Northern Harrier, Black Tern and Sedge Wren. The large number of raptors using the area during the spring migration has led to the site's designation as a globally significant Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society of New York State and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology/L. Page Brown



The Broad-winged Hawk migrates through Braddock Bay each spring by the thousands.

BCA designations bring ecosystem approach to plans

continued from page 1

Lake Ontario, west of Rochester. Environmental Conservation Commissioner John Cahill said, "With Braddock Bay and Montezuma designations, these habitats will continue to support more than one million migratory waterfowl that depend on these areas for critical resting, nesting and feeding during their spring and fall migrations along the North American flyway."

The Northern Montezuma Wetlands Complex is one of the most magnificent and diverse migratory bird areas in the northeast, identified by National Audubon Society as a globally significant Important Bird Area. National Audubon is working with the state, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited and other partners to provide for future environmental education projects on the site.

Governor George E. Pataki said, "With the designation of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex,

the Nissequogue River State Park and Braddock Bay as state Bird Conservation Areas, we will integrate bird conservation interests in planning management and research projects and take a comprehensive ecosystem approach to conserving birds and their habitats."

The state Bird Conservation Area program is based on the National Audubon Society of New York State's Important Bird Areas program. A total of eight Bird Conservation Area designations have been made and the state has approved \$300,000 in the coming year's budget to further implement this program.

NEW YORK STATE BIRD CONSERVATION AREA PROGRAM

- Existing BCA
- New BCA



Executive Office

Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro and, from left, Nassau County Executive Tom Gulotta, Gov. George E. Pataki, state Sen. James Lack and William Cooke of National Audubon Society of New York State are shown at the Nissequogue River BCA dedication April 21.