



### Breeding Bird Atlas 2000 underway

On a June morning, a birder will spend a couple of hours in a favorite marsh watching birds with a special purpose, noting all birds seen and heard, and paying particular attention to their behavior. He's looking for evidence of breeding. He's not disturbing his quarries by searching out nests, simply observing behavioral cues that indicate breeding.

Certainly, some nests can be easily seen. A Great Blue Heron rookery, for example, in the wooded edge of the marsh has a dozen large nests and through binoculars our birder sees adults tending young. A Canada Goose pair is leading six fuzzy goslings around the open water. Our birder can add to the probables by coming back a week or two later and listening for continued singing by males in the same location. Virginia Rails and Bitterns heard calling in the marsh on subsequent visits are counted as probables; the same birds heard on only one visit in the breeding season are possibles.

Our birder is participating in Atlas 2000, a project of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Federation of NYS Bird Clubs. National Audubon Society of New York is a partner and member of the steering committee, along with the NY Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, the Cornell University Department of Natural Resources and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Atlas 2000 is a multi-year effort to locate bird species and document their breeding habitats in the Empire State. This is a replication of the first Breeding Bird Atlas that was conducted from 1980 to 1985 and resulted in the publication of *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* in 1988. Atlases of this kind, first developed in Britain, have been done in many states, including Vermont, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. New York will be the first to repeat it at the desired 20-year interval.

A Breeding Bird Atlas gives biologists, planners and managers information about the distribution of the state's 240 bird species. This repeat effort will document changes, and signal accomplishments and future challenges in managing this valuable resource.

To accomplish the survey, biologists divided the state into more than 5,000 atlas "blocks," each measuring 5 x 5 kilometers (about 3 x 3 miles). Regional coordinators assign survey blocks to volunteers and provide them with a handbook of instructions, field data cards and maps of their blocks. Once assigned to a block, volunteer birders visit each habitat and record each bird species they see or hear. Thousands of volunteers will be needed. They

need not be expert ornithologists, but should have some birding experience and be able to identify most of the common breeders in the state.

National Audubon Society of New York State has committed time and resources to this important project. Bob Budliger, longtime Audubon activist and one of the state's leading birders, has agreed to serve as Audubon's representative to the Atlas 2000 steering committee. A multi-year project will certainly evolve.

Atlas 2000 needs you! If you wish to volunteer or want more information, contact the project coordinator at Breeding Bird Atlas 2000, Wildlife Resources Center, 108 Game Farm Road, Delmar, NY 12054 or e-mail at [fwbba@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:fwbba@gw.dec.state.ny.us). You can also visit the DEC's Atlas website and see the handbook of instructions, addresses of regional coordinators, and even topographic maps of atlas blocks. Go to <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/bba/index.html>

### Crackshot birder teams to take AIM

During the month of June, teams of experienced birders will be spreading out across some of the best bird habitats in New York state — all in the name of science. In an effort to increase our knowledge of the distributions and abundances of target species, the teams, called Avian Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) Teams, will descend upon select Important Bird Areas (IBAs) during the breeding season. Team members will use standard avian sampling methods in their attempts to find out, for example, where and how many Cerulean Warblers actually do breed in the Northern Montezuma Wetlands IBA.

"Good data are a conservation biologist's best friends," according to Dr. Michael Burger, director of bird conservation for National Audubon Society of New York State. "Whether seeking funding for priority projects, developing conservation plans, or assessing the effects of actions already taken, the most important thing is to have quality, up-to-date data." In an effort to protect birds at IBAs across New York state, Audubon is developing a comprehensive program to acquire those data, and AIM Teams will play an important role.

Matt Victoria, of Syracuse, is assisting Dr. Burger in the organization of the AIM Teams and will be participating in each of the counts. If you would like to participate, please call Dr. Burger at (607) 254-2441.

### Fourth Montezuma Muckrace 2000 set

Now in its fourth year, the Muckrace is a "big day" birding competition to raise money for bird conservation efforts in the Montezuma



New York State Office

*The Beaverkill Birdathon team traveled from the Beaverkill to the Bashkill May 13 to see more than 90 species. From left are John and Patricia Adams, Ned Ames, Jane Sokolow, Shirley Hartman, Michael Burger, and Mia and John Wilkinson. May is Birdathon month for the National Audubon Society of New York State, with hundreds of supporters dusting off their binoculars to raise money for conservation and education programs.*

Wetlands Complex, a premier 47,000-acre site that was designated as an Important Bird Area of global significance in 1997 and a Bird Conservation Area in 2000. The complex, which stretches from the northern end of Cayuga Lake northward to within 10 miles of Lake Ontario, includes Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and Howland Island State Wildlife Management Area among many unique natural areas.

The objective of the race is for each team to identify as many species of birds as possible from midnight to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 16 within the boundaries of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. Although competitive birding events are springing up around the United States, the Montezuma Muckrace is the only fall event in the northeastern United States.

More than 60 of the state's top amateur and professional bird experts competed in last year's event. New to the competition in 1999 were three youth teams.

The competition tests the abilities of birders while operating under sleep deprivation and the stress of keeping to a tight schedule of stops along a carefully planned route. But to many the challenge is irresistible. "Once

you've tried competing in the Muckrace, it gets under your skin and you can't wait to get out there and see how many different kinds of birds it's possible to find," said Bill Grow of the 1999 Owasco Valley/Finger Lakes Audubon team.

Teams consist of three or more people who bird together throughout the day. A registration fee of \$100 for an affiliated team or \$50 for an unaffiliated team is required. Prizes will include gift certificates, memberships, bird prints and more. There is also a separate recreational (noncompetitive) category (\$50) to encourage those who want to contribute to conservation efforts without competing. Competitive affiliated teams registering before August 18th will receive event tee shirts.

**To register your team contact:** Vern and Lenore Durkee, 115 Woolf Lane, Ithaca, NY 14850, phone (607) 256-0879, e-mail [vdurkee1@twcny.rr.com](mailto:vdurkee1@twcny.rr.com). **For more information contact:** John Van Niel, Conservation Department, Finger Lakes Community College, 4355 Lake Shore Drive, Canandaigua, NY 14424, phone (w) (716) 394-3500 ext. 254, phone (h) (315) 568-4690, e-mail [vanniel@usadatanet.net](mailto:vanniel@usadatanet.net)

## Audubon State Council Resolutions 2000

### WILDLIFE

Resolutions adopted by the Audubon State Council relating to wildlife are:

- ✓ Support increased funding to the state Conservation Fund and broadened representation on the Fund's advisory board;
- ✓ Support federal Teaming with Wildlife funding proposal for fish and wildlife programs now in CARA;
- ✓ Support the Return a Gift to Wildlife tax checkoff program;
- ✓ Support a full scientific review to determine Cormorant management options in locations where these bird populations are not sustainable;
- ✓ Support legislation to regulate use of lead fishing sinkers and monofilament fishing line, which are a continuing source of mortality to wildlife, including Common Loons and other waterfowl;
- ✓ Continued support of New York River Otter Project;
- ✓ Support scientific studies to determine the feasibility of wolf reintroduction in the Adirondacks;
- ✓ Support state funds for public education on public health problems caused by feeding waterfowl;
- ✓ Support the reduction in use of pesticides and the implementation of integrated pest management programs;
- ✓ Oppose the use of Avitrol in New York City and support state legislation to ban its use in New York City.