

NEW YORK STATE WILDLIFE PRESERVES

6. BASHERKILL MARSH

MARTIN BORKO

South of the Village of Wurtsboro, and lying between the westerly Catskills and the easterly Shawangunks, is the Basherkill. Its meandering waters and adjacent broad low banks form an extensive freshwater marsh — the largest of its type between Montezuma and the salty Jamaica Bay.

Rivulets from the Shwangunks (a hard, coarse conglomerate rock) enter the bowels of the valley where they come in contact with its limestone folds. Here, with the passage of time, water has carved out extensive underground caverns. Stalagmites reach up from the floor and stalactites are suspended from the ceiling, growing with each drop of lime-carrying moisture. Each drop of water passing through the rock dissolves and delivers the lime to the glaciated valley of the Basherkill.

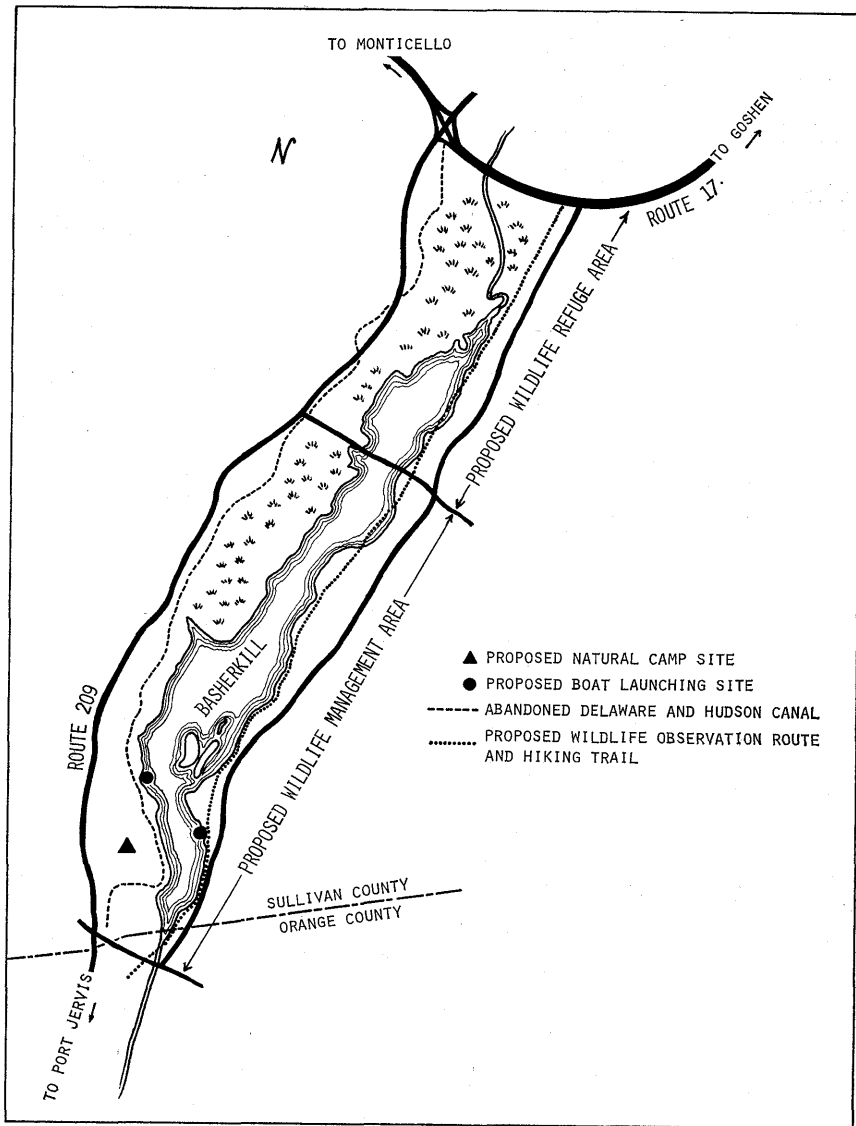
The lime or calcium neutralizes the shallow water of the marsh and fills it with a myriad of microscopic plants and animals. In amongst the aquatic vegetation, insects find sustenance and, with the sound of the peeper, there comes transformation after transformation as adults emerge from their watery nursery. Poised in the bushes and trees, as if they had the ability to predict the upcoming feast, are the warblers, vireos, and gnatcatchers. It is not unusual for a May count to turn up twenty warblers by noon. It is a good spot to see the Golden-winged, the Blue-winged and *both* their hybrids.

On the east side of the Basherkill lies the rail bed of the defunct Ontario and Western Railroad. A quiet walk along the rail bed takes the birder to the marsh edge, where he has a chance to see Great Blue and Green Herons, American and Least bitterns, Short-and Long-billed Marsh Wrens, the secretive Sora and Virginia Rails, the Osprey and the Bald Eagle.

Eagle watchers should visit here from mid-March to mid-April, when this magnificent bird comes to hunt the Basherkill's numerous fish species as the ice retreats.

Mergansers, divers, and dabblers join the eagles as they migrate to their northern nesting grounds. The sound of the Canada Goose fills the air as one hopes for a glimpse of the Whistling Swan.

Is the Basherkill unique? — no; uncommon? — yes. Wetlands — nature's rainbarrels — are few and are becoming fewer due to gradual development and an ignorance of their spiritual and materialistic value. The Basherkill is all this plus surrounding uplands, open meadows, and a spelunker's paradise. Yet, even this is threatened by gradual "progress."



Basherkill — an excellent multiple use wildlife management area.

Assemblyman Ben Gilman has introduced Assembly Bill #5605. This bill would allocate \$100,000 toward the purchase of the Basherkill marsh. This bill was introduced last year and reintroduced again this year. It lacks a companion bill in the Senate and lacks sustained public pressure needed for its passage.

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Mr. Borko, a member of the Sullivan County Environmental Management Council and of the Federation, urges each Federation member to write his assemblyman, senator, Governor Rockefeller and Speaker Dureya asking that action be taken on the Basherkill. *Ed.*

CORRECTIONS OF THE MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC., June 5, 1971.

Paragraph 6, on Page 136 of the July issue of the *Kingbird*, Vol. XXI, No. 3.

Dr. Dittrich requested permission to exchange copies of the *Kingbird* with the *EBBA News*, the publication of the Eastern Bird Banding Association, the *Ptarmigan*, Fort Collins Bird Club, Fort Collins, Col., and the *Bulletin of the New Jersey State Museum*. (Secretary's note: see page 115 of May, 1971 issue of the *Kingbird* for the complete list of exchanges.) He also requested approval for sending complimentary copies of the *Kingbird* to the Rogers Environmental Education Center at Sherburne, N.Y. and to Onondaga Nature Center at Beaver Lake near Baldwinsville, N.Y. Mr. Taylor felt we should do this. In reply to a question as to where the exchange bulletins are kept, it was stated that they have been kept at Mr. Taylor's home for a certain period of time, after which they are discarded. Some, however, have been passed on to the Laboratory of Ornithology. The council approved the request for the exchanges and complimentary copies.

Add to list of delegates: (on page 141, line 2) Gerald A. Smith, 4173 Makyes Rd., Syracuse 13215, Onondaga Audubon Society.