

BIRDING BAEDEKER IN PROGRESS

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While the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs was under the stewardship of Gordon Meade, plans were made to facilitate the first steps toward publication of a "where-to-bird-in-New York State" guidebook. With Richard Sloss at the helm, several of those initial activities have been carried further, so that a formal announcement of the details of this project is now in order.

New York State is blessed with a full range of topographical, vegetative, and climatic features. The terrain ranges from sea level to above 5000 feet in the Adirondacks. The vegetation at the highest altitudes, above the timber line, consists mainly of hardy mosses and lichens. At lower altitudes, there are still large areas covered with evergreens—spruce, fir, hemlock, and white pine. There are areas in the more protected sections of the Allegheny Plateau where one can still find hardwood stands—hickory, ash, oak, elm, and nut-bearing trees. In the most southern parts of the state, oak, birch, tulip, maple, beech, sweet gum and laurel abound. Various bushes and vines—catbriars, wild blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, grapes, poison ivy, and honeysuckle—provide exactly the type of forest understory that is essential to the breeding success of many of the species that nest in New York State. Cherries, peaches, apples, and plums are a few of the native fruits. The climate is as variable as the topography. In winter much of upstate may be enjoying sub-zero temperatures while at the same time temperatures may be as much as 25 or more degrees higher at the seashore, due to the warming effect of the Gulf Stream. Annual precipitation is generally abundant throughout the state and this, to a great extent, determines the health of the state's vegetation.

More than 410 species have occurred in New York State, counting all breeding, wintering and migrant birds. State residents are fortunate to have a new state book to refer to when attempting to determine the status of a given bird in New York—John Bull's *Birds of New York State*, 1974. Is it not logical then that they should also have an exhaustive Baedeker to assist them in locating the state's best bird-finding spots? Is it not also reasonable to expect this publication to be a result of the collective efforts of the finest birders the state can produce—that is to say, a production of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs?

The Executive Committee of the Federation has decided at this time that the preparation and publication of a comprehensive best

birding areas directory is in fact an entirely feasible project. It would incorporate such elements as: well-executed maps, precise and easy to follow directions, a separate section on Hawk Watches throughout the state, a section listing all of the current Rare Bird Alerts and local hotlines in the state (with room to add more as they are established), a seasonal rating of each area described—much like a four star system, information on available accommodations near each area (motels, campsites, etc.), a section listing birders who would be willing to act as local guides in their areas, an annotated checklist of New York State birds, substantial use of Breeding Bird Survey information, as well as a section listing bird libraries and collections open for study throughout the state. The Executive Committee feels that such a publication would not only be of general use to the many birders in New York but would also benefit the Federation financially and enhance the value of the Federation to individual members and clubs. The book would follow the arrangement of the ten reporting regions embodied in the *Kingbird*, and one of the main features contained in it would be not only descriptions of generally good birding areas, but also descriptions of and directions on how to find *specific* birds (hard to find, or “most wanted” birds).

Presently a thoroughgoing search for already published local and regional New York State guides is under way, with the hope of using many of them, with as little updating as necessary, in the Baedeker. Within a few weeks questionnaires will be sent out to each member club requesting all of the relevant information about specific birding areas frequented and favored by that club. Individuals are of course invited and even urged to request questionnaires from the author in order to make this publication complete in every respect. Member clubs are asked to submit as many forms as necessary to ensure that no pertinent information is absent from the final publication.

For more information and forms please write to: Susan Roney Drennan, 110 Bleecker Street, New York, New York 10012.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Roney Drennan is the Associate Editor of *American Birds*. Her very long list of affiliations includes the Linnaean Society of New York and the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs. A measure of her field activity is her Christmas Count participation of this past winter, which included seven counts in three different states. Along with her husband and two children, she spends a great deal of time on Block Island, where in addition to compiling that Christmas Count, she actively bands, and writes a column for the *Block Island Times*. In addition to her bird pursuits, she is engaged in a research project with Dr. Roger Payne of the New York Zoological Society, determining whale populations and migrations, funded by the World Wildlife Fund.