

Appendix G – Bird Conservation Area Management Guidance Summaries

**New York State
Bird Conservation Area Program
Management Guidance Summary**

Site Name: Fahnestock Bird Conservation Area

State Ownership and Managing Agency: Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)

Location: Putnam County, Towns of Carmel, Kent, Philipstown, and Putnam Valley.

Size of Area: 13,892 acres

DEC Region: 3

OPRHP Region: Taconic

General Site Information:

The Fahnestock BCA is located within Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park. The park is located in north central Putnam County roughly between the Taconic State Parkway and US Route 9. The park is largely forested, and offers numerous outdoor recreation opportunities, including hiking, swimming, camping, and groomed trails for cross-country skiing. The Fahnestock BCA is within Audubon New York's Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands Important Bird Area (Burger and Liner 2005). It was originally designated as a BCA in 2000. This update to the BCA Management Guidance Summary was completed in order to consider recent land acquisitions which have expanded the size of Clarence Fahnestock State Park. Review of these sites indicated that the majority of these parcels met the criteria for inclusion within the existing BCA.

Vision Statement: The Fahnestock BCA will provide for the continued conservation of forest-interior bird species. Recreational/interpretive opportunities and access will continue in a manner consistent with the conservation of the diverse bird species using the area. In cooperation with OPRHP's Taconic Outdoor Education Center and local bird clubs, the BCA will serve as a focal point for interpretation of bird communities of the lower Hudson Valley.

Key BCA Criteria: Migratory concentration site; diverse species concentration site; species at risk site (ECL §11-2001, 3. e., f. and h). Fahnestock BCA represents one of the largest areas of contiguous forest in the lower Hudson Valley, and thus provides significant stopover and breeding habitat for a diverse group of forest-dependent bird species. Characteristic bird species found during migratory and breeding periods include Broad-winged Hawk, Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Veery, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-throated Vireo, Worm-eating Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager. Species-at-risk at Fahnestock include the State Threatened Least Bittern and Special Concern Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Red-shouldered. Hawks and Eastern Whip-poor-will.

Critical Habitat Types: The BCA is composed primarily of extensive areas of contiguous mature forest, primarily Chestnut Oak and Appalachian Oak-Hickory forests. These hardwood forests provide habitat for species dependent upon unfragmented forest. Additionally, wetland habitats, such as highbush blueberry bogs and red-maple hardwood swamps, are dispersed throughout the BCA, and provide important habitat for wetland-dependent birds.

Operation and Management Considerations:

Identify habitat management activities needed to maintain site as a BCA.

Bird habitat in several areas of the BCA is being impacted or potentially impacted by the spread of non-native invasive species. For example, a non-native insect, the hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA), has resulted in widespread hemlock mortality in NYS and probable loss of habitat for hemlock-associated birds (Tingley et al. 2002). HWA is a very real threat to the conservation of these species. A variety of invasive plant species, such as Phragmites, black swallow-wort, and Japanese barberry, are present within the BCA and are displacing native vegetation. Given the potential for these species to reduce habitat quality (Schmidt and Whelan 1999, Borgmann and Rodewald 2004), invasive species management, including public education, is an important priority at this park.

Deer populations within the BCA also appear to be negatively impacting bird habitat quality. Deer browsing pressure in some areas is limiting regeneration of native vegetation and has reduced the density of shrub and understory vegetation, thus impacting habitat quality for birds that depend on dense understory vegetation (McShea and Rappole 2000). In addition, due to preferential browsing on native species, deer can favor the spread of non-native invasive vegetation (Rooney et al. 2004). OPRHP staff will examine options to limit the impacts of deer on the diversity and density of native vegetation.

Identify seasonal sensitivities; adjust routine operations accordingly.

There are currently no seasonal sensitivities within the BCA.

Identify state activities or operations which may pose a threat to the critical habitat types identified above; recommend alternatives to existing and future operations which may pose threats to those habitats.

There are no current OPRHP activities which pose a threat to critical habitats.

Identify any existing or potential use impacts; recommend new management strategies to address those impacts.

Illegal uses within the BCA, in particular illegal All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use, have disturbed habitat and in turn nesting of birds. Park staff will consider options to limit the potential for ATV access and improve enforcement activities regarding ATV use.

Education, Outreach, and Research Considerations:

Assess current access; recommend enhanced access, if feasible.

Current access is will be improved under the master plan. Parking will be increased somewhat, existing lots improved and additional trails are planned. Park grounds are open year-round.

Determine education and outreach needs; recommend strategies and materials.

Partner with Audubon and local bird clubs to develop interpretive displays, slide shows, programs and materials about needs of forest-dependent bird species.

The Taconic Outdoor Education Center, located within the BCA, hosts numerous interpretive programs for schools groups and the general public and will continue to develop curriculum and programs designed to further appreciation of the birds and bird habitats found within the BCA.

Update and distribute the OPRHP checklist "Birds of Fahnestock State Park."

Identify research needs; prioritize and recommend specific projects or studies.

Monitoring of bird populations is essential to understand management needs and interpret the impact of management actions. OPRHP will work with partners on long-term point counts and other surveys within important habitat types within the BCA.

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Sources:

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**New York State
Bird Conservation Area Program
Management Guidance Summary**

Site Name: Hudson Highlands BCA

State Ownership and Managing Agency: Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)

Location: Dutchess County, Town of Fishkill and the City of Beacon; Putnam County, Town of Philipstown and the Villages of Nelsonville and Cold Spring; Westchester County, Town of Cortlandt

Size of Area: 6,868 acres

DEC Region: 3

OPRHP Region: Taconic

General Site Information: The Hudson Highlands BCA is located within Hudson Highlands State Park which consists of a series of separate parcels along a 16 mile stretch of the east shore of the Hudson River extending from southern Dutchess County to northern Westchester County. The park extends eastward from the river up to 4 miles. In 2007, approximately 270 acres within Hudson Highlands State Park were designated as the Constitution Marsh BCA. The park is largely undeveloped, and offers numerous recreational activities, including fishing, hiking, and kayaking along the Hudson River. The Hudson Highlands BCA is within Audubon New York's Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands Important Bird Area (Burger and Liner 2005).

Vision Statement: The Hudson Highlands BCA will provide for the continued conservation of a diverse assemblage of bird species. Recreational/interpretive opportunities and access will continue in a manner consistent with the bird species using the area for breeding or during migration. The BCA will remain in a relatively natural condition.

Key BCA Criteria: Migratory concentration site; diverse species concentration site; species at risk site (ECL §11-2001, 3. e., f. and h.). During spring and fall migration, songbirds can be found in abundance along the forested banks of the Hudson River. Of 75 Neo-tropical migratory songbird species that breed in New York, 55 have been observed within the BCA. Cerulean Warblers (Special Concern) and Peregrine Falcons (Endangered) breed within the park, and substantial numbers of Bald Eagles (Threatened) congregate along the Hudson during the winter (Evans et al. 2001).

Critical Habitat Types: Hudson Highlands BCA contains relatively large tracts of interior forest habitat. These forested habitats, such as Chestnut Oak and Oak-Tulip Tree forests, provide important stopover and breeding sites for forest-breeding species such as American Redstart, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Acadian Flycatcher. Forests adjacent to the Hudson River are important for two species of conservation concern. Cerulean Warblers breed in the canopy of

mature forests near the Hudson, and Bald Eagles use forests along the Hudson during the wintering period. Cliff communities provide breeding sites for Peregrine Falcons. Rocky summit communities along Breakneck Ridge and Bull Hill provide unique habitat for many species generally associated with early-successional habitats, such as Prairie Warblers.

Operation and Management Considerations:

Identify habitat management activities needed to maintain site as a BCA.

Several invasive plant species, in particular swallow-wort, have successfully established themselves within the BCA. Many of these invasive species impede growth and regeneration of forested habitats, and threaten to dominate the rare rocky summit communities. These non-native species inhibit growth of native vegetation and reduce habitat quality for birds. Management should focus on efforts to inhibit the establishment and spread of non-native, invasive vegetation, and encourage growth of native species in the BCA.

Abundant deer populations within the BCA also threaten bird populations at the site. Overbrowsing by deer can greatly reduce the diversity and density of shrub and understory vegetation. Bird species that rely upon these layers of the forest likely have greater difficulty finding nesting and foraging locations (McShea and Rappole 2000). Furthermore, heavy deer browsing favors establishment of non-native species, which generally provide lower-quality bird habitat (Schmidt and Whelan 1999, Borgmann and Rodewald 2004). OPRHP staff will explore options to limit deer impacts to forest health and regeneration.

Identify seasonal sensitivities; adjust routine operations accordingly.

Bald Eagles regularly use Denning's Point and nearby Hudson River shoreline sites as foraging and perching locations during the winter. In recent years, OPRHP has taken steps at Denning's Point during the winter to protect eagles. The agency will continue to work closely with NY DEC to manage this area in a manner that minimizes disturbance to eagles and provides for their continued use of these sites.

Identify state activities or operations that may pose a threat to the critical habitat types identified above; recommend alternatives to existing and future operations, which may pose threats to those habitats.

There are currently no state activities that pose a threat to critical habitat types.

Identify any existing or potential use impacts; recommend new management strategies to address those impacts.

Some trails within the park, such as those along Breakneck Ridge and Bull Hill, receive high visitor use, and also contain sensitive rocky summit communities. These areas will be monitored to ensure that the communities and the flora and fauna they support are not being negatively

impacted. Efforts will be made to educate visitors about the uniqueness of the plant and animal communities at these sites and to provide trail access commensurate with continued recreation and protection of the diverse species inhabiting this area..

Illegal uses within the BCA, in particular illegal All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use, have disturbed habitat and, in turn, nesting of birds. Park staff will consider options to limit the potential for ATV access and improve enforcement activities regarding ATV use.

Education, Outreach, and Research Considerations:

Assess current access; recommend enhanced access, if feasible.

Current access is will be improved under the master plan. Parking will be increased somewhat, existing lots improved and additional trails are planned. Park grounds are open year-round.

Determine education and outreach needs; recommend strategies and materials.

A BCA kiosk will be designed and installed in an appropriate location within the BCA, and will illustrate the birds and bird habitats found within Hudson Highlands.

A bird checklist for the BCA will be developed and be made publicly accessible.

OPRHP will use the Taconic Outdoor Education Center at Fahnestock State Park and partnerships with local bird conservation groups and environmental education centers to enhance appreciation and conservation of the unique bird community at the BCA.

Identify research needs; prioritize and recommend specific projects or studies.

Long-term monitoring of the bird community at this park is desirable as it will highlight management needs, and help evaluate the success of habitat improvement actions. OPRHP will continue to work with its partners in this effort.

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Sources:

Borgmann, K.L., and A.D. Rodewald. 2004. Nest predation in an urbanizing landscape: the role of exotic shrubs. *Ecological Applications* 14: 1757-1765.

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