

**PROGRESS REPORT**

**Avian Surveys at Sagamore Hill National Historic Site**

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## **Introduction**

In July 2002, Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center (TRS) was contracted by the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct avian surveys at Sagamore Hill National Historic Site (SAHI). In accordance with the timetable contained in the Cooperative Agreement, several preliminary tasks were performed by TRS staff during August through December of 2002. Avian surveys commenced in January 2003 and will continue through December 2003. Following completion of the avian surveys, a Final Report in full compliance with the specifications of the Cooperative Agreement will be submitted to the NPS Northeast Region Natural Resource Inventory and Monitoring Program.

This progress report describes the work which has been conducted to date by TRS staff, and identifies the remaining tasks to be completed as part of this project.

## **Preliminary Tasks**

The project timetable included in the Cooperative Agreement between TRS and NPS identifies five tasks to be undertaken between August and December, 2002. The current status of each task is addressed below:

1. “Obtain a master species list compiled by the NPS I & M Program staff from local Breeding Bird Atlas data, Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge bird species lists, and local Christmas Bird Count data.”

A master species list has not as yet been provided to TRS staff by NPS, and is probably unnecessary at this time. As discussed in the next item, this has not created any problems or delays in the project.

2. “Add to this list data from TRS year-round surveys and TRS MAPS data to complete an expected species list for SAHI.”

TRS staff have developed a working list of expected and possible avian species at SAHI. This list was developed from TRS year-round surveys and TRS MAPS data, historical (1980-1985) and current Breeding Bird Atlas data, and various local bird checklists. Such checklists include the Long Island-wide list contained in *A Seasonal Guide to Bird Finding on Long Island* (Barton and Pelkowski, 1999) and site-specific lists from Caumsett, Sunken Meadow, and Nissequogue River State Parks, modified as necessary to reflect conditions at SAHI.

At such time as data from Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge and/or local Christmas Bird Counts may become available, TRS staff will review such data to identify any revisions which need to be made to our working list.

3. “Ground-truth strata and establish sampling sites.”

Topographic maps and NPS SAHI habitat maps were consulted by TRS staff to identify major habitat types on site. Habitats were ground-truthed by TRS staff with the assistance of SAHI personnel. In consultation with SAHI staff, a total of twelve sampling points/transects were selected so as to obtain avian population data from each of the twenty-one habitat management zones identified in the NPS SAHI maps. SAHI personnel are in the process of obtaining a portable GPS unit to log the coordinates of the ends of each transect and of each sample point.

4. “Establish sampling protocol.”

Sampling protocol follows the methodology described in the Cooperative Agreement. In addition to the data collection identified in the agreement, TRS staff are recording the specific NPS SAHI habitat management zone in which each bird is detected. This additional data is expected to be helpful in developing a General Management Plan for this site. All sampling locations, dates, and times are coordinated with SAHI staff.

5. “Complete habitat sampling.”

As noted above, major habitat types (e.g. forest, marsh, fields, lawn areas, etc.) were identified and ground-truthed for the purpose of selecting sampling locations. The Cooperative Agreement specifies that TRS staff use the Institute of Bird Population’s habitat assessment protocol developed for their Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program. As that protocol was developed for use during the breeding season and is most effectively applied at that time of year, TRS staff will complete habitat sampling during June and early July of 2003.

### **Avian Surveys**

A total of eleven avian surveys have been conducted by TRS staff from January through April of 2003. These have consisted of nine general site surveys, one owl survey, and one woodcock survey. Shoreline waterfowl surveys are routinely performed as part of the general site surveys, since one of the twelve sampling points/transects is located on the beach between the estuarine marsh and Cold Spring Harbor.

Fifty-seven avian species have been detected during these surveys. An additional three species (Turkey Vulture, Great Horned Owl, and Cedar Waxwing) have been reliably reported by SAHI personnel. Appended to this report is a cumulative species list current through April 27, 2003; the date of the most recent general site survey. Similar lists are provided to SAHI personnel every few weeks, to assist them in educating the general public about the natural resources present at this historic site.

## **Remaining Tasks**

As noted above, TRS staff will complete habitat sampling in early summer, utilizing the Institute of Bird Population's habitat assessment protocol based on their Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program.

Walking transect and/or breeding bird point count surveys will continue to be conducted twice a month through December 2003 (weekly in May and September). Goatsucker and marsh breeding bird surveys will be conducted in June and/or July, in accordance with the project timetable. An additional owl survey is planned for December 2003 to attempt to document the presence of Great Horned Owl on site.

Data entry is targeted to commence in early summer of 2003. Pursuant to the Cooperative Agreement between TRS and NPS, an MS Access database template will be developed for the entry of all species and habitat data collected at SAHI. The template is to be developed by the NPS Coastal and Barrier Network I&M data manager and provided to TRS staff. We are currently awaiting receipt of said template.

## **Conclusion**

The staff at Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary are pleased to submit this Progress Report to the NPS Northeast Region Natural Resource Inventory and Monitoring Program staff. Three of the five Preliminary Tasks have been successfully completed, a fourth (the master list to be prepared by NPS) has been rendered virtually unnecessary, and the fifth will be completed shortly in optimal compliance with the specified protocol. Avian surveys have been productive in both species diversity and total numbers of birds. SAHI personnel have been extremely courteous and helpful, and have been closely involved in all aspects of this project. We are confident that the MS Access database template will be developed by the NPS Coastal and Barrier Network I&M data manager and provided to us shortly. We look forward to our continued cooperative efforts and a mutually-satisfactory conclusion to this project.

**Birds of Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, through April 27, 2003**

Double-crested Cormorant  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Turkey Vulture  
Mute Swan  
Canada Goose  
American Black Duck  
Mallard  
Greater Scaup  
Long-tailed Duck  
Bufflehead  
Common Goldeneye  
Red-breasted Merganser  
Osprey  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Ring-necked Pheasant  
Wild Turkey  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Ring-billed Gull  
Great Black-backed Gull  
Herring Gull  
Mourning Dove  
Eastern Screech-Owl  
Great Horned Owl  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Fish Crow  
Barn Swallow  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Carolina Wren  
House Wren  
Winter Wren  
Golden-crowned Kinglet  
Hermit Thrush  
American Robin

Northern Mockingbird  
European Starling  
Cedar Waxwing  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Pine Warbler  
Eastern Towhee  
Chipping Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
Dark-eyed Junco  
Northern Cardinal  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Common Grackle  
House Finch  
American Goldfinch  
House Sparrow