

AVIAN INVESTIGATIONS FOR THE YEAR 2004



SPRING 2004

HUDSON RIVER NATURAL RESOURCE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Past and continuing discharges of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have contaminated Hudson River natural resources. While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is continuing with cleanup plans, federal and state trustee agencies are conducting a natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) to assess and restore natural resources injured by PCBs.

This fact sheet provides information about an investigation of PCB impacts to various bird species being conducted under the NRDA.

WHY STUDY HUDSON RIVER BIRDS?

Many laboratory and field studies done in other parts of the country have shown the potentially harmful effects of PCBs on fish, mammals, and other wildlife. In birds, PCBs have been shown to cause a range of adverse impacts, including disease, behavioral abnormalities, genetic mutations, physical deformities, changes in brain chemistry, reduced hatching rates, embryo mortality, and death.

The Trustees have found Hudson River PCB contamination in birds and their eggs. These investigations have revealed reproductive impairments and PCB contamination in tree swallows. In 2002, analysis of PCB levels in bird eggs from eleven species nesting along the Hudson River revealed that eggs from spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) and belted kingfishers (*Ceryle alcyon*) had the highest levels of PCB contamination.

WHAT WILL THE TRUSTEES LEARN?

Beginning in Spring 2004, scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), on behalf of the Trustees, will assess reproductive success of belted kingfishers, spotted sandpipers and tree swallows on the Hudson River. Concentrations of PCBs and other contaminants in eggs and nestlings (in some instances) will be determined. Any gross deformities in embryos and hatchlings will be revealed, and accumulation rates of various contaminants in belted kingfisher chicks will be analyzed.

The purpose of this work is to inform the Trustees regarding injury to avian resources and guide their future efforts to identify pathway and specific injuries to birds from PCBs, as defined in regulations written by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) contained in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 11, NRDA. This work will be used to help determine whether future studies will be performed in 2005 and potentially beyond, and if so, to help in their design. This work will also guide the Trustees in the determination of potential restoration requirements for avian resources that are injured due to PCB exposure. The final study plan for the year 2004 avian investigations is posted on the Trustee Hudson River NRDA web sites.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

This study will be conducted along the Hudson River from Bakers Falls to Lower Schodack Island, and in a region upstream of Glens Falls, New York; work may also be conducted on other tributaries in the Hudson River area. If you own property in any of these areas, scientists from the USGS may ask you for permission to enter your property for this study. If you grant permission, the scientists will survey your property for the presence of birds, particularly belted kingfishers, spotted sandpipers or tree swallows, and their nests. This may involve listening for birds, searching for birds and their nests, and potentially collecting eggs and/or nestlings, and monitoring the nests. This work will be conducted in Spring-Summer 2004. The Trustees will not enter or collect samples from your property without your permission.



Tree Swallow



The Hudson River Trustees—assessing and restoring your natural resources

Further information on the Hudson River NRDA can be found on the following websites:

www.darp.noaa.gov/northeast/hudson/index.html

www.dec.state.ny.us/website/hudson/index.html

<http://contaminants.fws.gov/restorationplans/HudsonRiver/HudsonRiver.cfm>

To add yourself to the **Hudson-NRDA listserv**:

1. Send a message to: requests@willamette.nos.noaa.gov
2. Write in the subject: Subscribe hudsonnrda

Hudson River Natural Resource Trustees
NYSDEC
625 Broadway, 5th Floor
Albany, NY 12233

If you have questions about natural resource damages, or want to submit a restoration project or be placed on the Hudson River NRDA mailing list, please contact one of the individuals listed below:

Lisa Pelstring
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1305 East West Highway SSMC4, Room 10219
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-713-3038 x195
Lisa.Pelstring@noaa.gov

Fred Caslick
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
3817 Luker Road
Cortland, NY 13045
607-753-9334
fred_caslick@fws.gov

Steven Sanford
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 5th Floor
Albany, NY 12233
518-402-8996
sxsanfor@gw.dec.state.ny.us