



# GREAT LAKES / ATLANTIC REGION

# New York & Vermont

## 2024 STATE CONSERVATION REPORT



### ★ TWO SENECA RIVER WETLANDS RESTORED

In late June 2023, Ducks Unlimited (DU) in partnership with New York Department

of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), restored two wetlands within the Montezuma Wetland Complex located along the Seneca River, a 61-mile flowage that empties into Lake Ontario. The 65-acre site is designed to provide open water habitat for migrating birds by digging channels and potholes and making shallow scrapes with an excavator. The scrapes capture water during high water events and bolster habitat conditions. Excess material from the digging was used to backfill five man-made ditches that encouraged off-site drainage. Channels and potholes were connected through a dense cattail stand to improve water flow and encourage native plant species such as rushes, sedges, and grasses. Seneca River and Montezuma water quality will also benefit from the work. Wetlands filter nutrients, like phosphorous and nitrogen before they reach larger watersheds, resulting in better habitat for fish and wildlife, plus cleaner drinking water for nearby communities.

### ★ \$6 MILLION NAWCA GRANT CREATES CRITICAL HABITAT

A \$5.8 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant is permanently protecting 16 properties in the St. Lawrence River



Valley (SLRV), a critical nesting area for Atlantic Flyway waterfowl, particularly mallards. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Waterfowl Management Areas—Lakeview and Wilson Hill (200 acres total)—will also be restored as a part of the funding. Indian River Lakes Conservancy, St. Lawrence Land Trust, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, and Thousand Island Land Trust are all partnering on the third phase of NAWCA funding within the region which will protect 12,000 acres once complete. The shallow wetlands in this region house many nutrient-rich aquatic plants that ducks and other water-dependent birds rely on for food and refuge. During the spring and fall migrations, it's estimated the SLRV and eastern Lake Ontario see upwards of 9 million waterfowl use days per year. Spawning northern pike and other fish species will benefit from the wetland enhancements as will black terns and other migratory birds.

### ★ LAKEVIEW WMA PROJECT HAS MULTI-SPECIES IMPACT

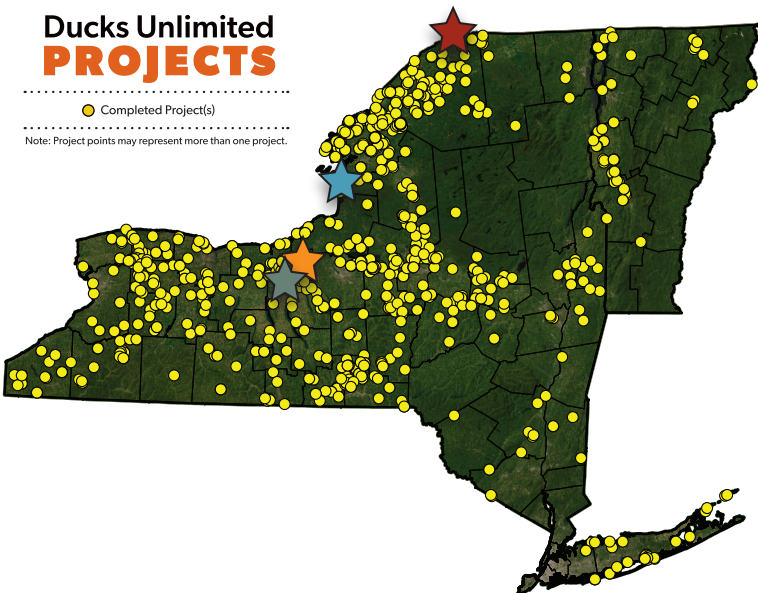
Lakeview WMA, a 3,461-acre public tract that borders the eastern shoreline of Lake Ontario, is part of the largest natural freshwater barrier beach system in New York. The habitat includes open fields, shrublands, woodlands and wetlands. Due to artificial manipulation of water levels, the habitat at Lakeview has been altered, becoming less diverse with increasing stands of cattails and the encroachment of other invasive species. DU partnered with NYSDEC, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Great Lakes Commission (GLC) and National Audubon Society Great Lakes on a wetland enhancement project that will improve spawning and nursery habitat for fish such as northern pike. New breeding habitats for waterfowl (black ducks) and declining marsh bird species like the state-endangered black tern will also be established. Additionally, the work will enhance recreational opportunities at the WMA, including duck hunting, bird watching, sport fishing and kayaking.



### Ducks Unlimited PROJECTS

● Completed Project(s)

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.





**MITIGATION PROTECTS 120 ACRES IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN N.Y.**

**DU**'s wetland restoration and preservation program protects habitat that serves as offsets for land development projects that have unavoidable impacts on wetlands. The program is structured such that more acres are restored than impacted. Developers pay for all the restoration and protection of habitats. This program is important to ensure that the number of wetlands on the landscape remains stable or increases. DU has protected approximately 2,305 acres through its first 16 projects in New York State and Vermont.

In 2023, DU constructed three projects in New York, resulting in approximately 120 acres of wetlands and adjacent uplands being restored at projects in Stockton (32 acres, Chautauqua County), Middlebury (30, acres, Wyoming County), and Brewerton (57 acres, Onondaga County). These projects put essential habitat on the ground and ensure that as wetlands are impacted, replacement sites support waterfowl health.

"What's really important about DU operating a mitigation program is that without it, the replacement wetlands might be completely devoid of habitat features that result in waterfowl usage," Program Director Patrick Raney said. "Over time if we converted all of the impacted wetlands over to wetland types that do not support waterfowl, we could see a decline in the quality or amount of habitat. We generally see that these offset wetlands are better for waterfowl than the small urban ditches and roadside wetlands being impacted, so this is a case where common sense seems to prevail. We help clients meet permit obligations. We have funding to put good waterfowl habitat back on the landscape."



**★ 500 ACRES ACQUIRED AT BLACK CREEK HEADWATERS**

**W**orking in partnership with NYSDEC and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, DU has helped secure nearly 500 acres of wetland and upland habitat at the headwaters of Black Creek, which flows downstream into Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. This effort resulted from the Montezuma Wetlands Complex Land Protection Partnership, dedicated to conserving critical habitat at Montezuma. DU launched a Geographic Information System (GIS) prioritization tool to identify the most high-ranking properties in need of protection and restoration. The partnership represents a landscape level conservation effort to effectively and efficiently identify high-priority areas for conservation. Currently, NYSDEC and USFWS own and manage over 19,000 acres of critical migration habitat, supporting more than 260 bird species and 1 million migratory waterfowl.



**DUCKS UNLIMITED** conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

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**NEW YORK NUMBERS**

**2023**

- 1,423 acres conserved
- \$2,278,169 invested

**HISTORICAL**

- 67,617 acres conserved
- \$37.5 million invested

**VERMONT NUMBERS**

**2023**

- 150 acres conserved
- \$502,555 invested

**HISTORICAL**

- 6,132 acres conserved
- \$3.28 million invested



**GREAT LAKES / ATLANTIC REGION**

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