Foreword

Governor George E. Pataki

As Governor of New York State, I am a strong supporter of conservation and environmental protection efforts. As a citizen, I believe one of our most important callings is to pass on to our children an environment that is at least as rich, as diverse, and as nurturing of life as the one passed to us by our forebears. It is with these thoughts in mind that I welcome the opportunity to introduce *Bull's Birds of New York State*, devoted to the documentation and full understanding of the diversity of bird life in our great state.

Birds are, as the late Roger Tory Peterson said, "the litmus paper of the environment." Changes in bird populations often open our eyes to problems, alerting us to a need for action. The subtle warnings of changes that need our attention are often first noted by birders. Thus the birder is at the forefront of our environmental protection efforts. The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs (FNYSBC) is a prime example of our citizens' contributions to protecting the environment.

In partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), and augmented by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the FNYSBC completed a six-year study (1980–1985) of breeding bird distribution in the state, documented in the 1988 publication of *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*. These organizations are now gearing up for a new effort starting in the year 2000, which will result in a revised Atlas.

This partnership between the NYSDEC and FNYSBC again came into play when it was decided to completely revise Bull's 1974 work, *The Birds of New York State*, the result being the current volume. Part of the funding was provided by the NYSDEC, through the Return a Gift to Wildlife tax checkoff program; the rest was contributed by conservation-minded individuals and organizations.

Protecting habitats is a major key to the flourishing of bird populations. In New York, we are funding the purchase of important habitat areas through the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act and through the Environmental Protection Fund. I also commend the NYSDEC's outstanding work in the reestablishment of viable populations of Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons, and Bald Eagles. These are dramatic success stories!

My son, Teddy, and I are active birders. We have joined the members of the Putnam-Highlands Audubon Society on their annual Christmas Bird

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Counts. Those long days of birding and the great camaraderie will provide wonderful memories for both of us.

So, whether you watch birds on the shores of Long Island, at the Bashakill Marsh, at Niagara Falls, or just at your backyard feeder, this volume will help you appreciate what our Empire State has to offer. It will give you a historical perspective, and it will tell you what we can hope to look forward to in the future if we are vigilant stewards of our natural world.