History of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc.

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The publication of this work will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs as the state's ornithological organization. A short recap of the Federation's distinguished history is therefore appropriate.

After the end of World War II, it became evident that the burgeoning interest in birdwatching and ornithology required some mechanism for the birders of the state to get to know each other, to share their ideas and experiences, to jointly promote research and education in the field of ornithology, and to secure a stronger voice in bird-related conservation matters. In December 1946, the Buffalo Ornithological Society and the Genesee Ornithological Society hosted a meeting in Rochester, to which they invited all known bird clubs in the state, to discuss the feasibility of forming a statewide organization. Representatives of 10 other bird clubs and Audubon chapters joined the two ornithological societies for this historic meeting. With great enthusiasm, a planning team started the work that culminated in an organizational meeting in Amsterdam in October 1947. Temporary officers were elected, and a draft constitution and bylaws were approved for formal ratification by the charter member clubs.

On 12–14 December 1948, with all legal matters taken care of, the first formal annual meeting of member clubs was hosted by the Genesee Ornithological Society at the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences. The first regular officers and directors were elected, bylaws were formally adopted, and the Federation was officially under way. From the Federation's inception, two key objectives of the founding members were to start a state journal dedicated to documentation of the state's key ornithological information and to prepare and publish a new treatise on the birds of New York State to update Elon Howard Eaton's monumental two-volume work published in 1910 and 1914.

Just two years later, in December 1950, the first issue of *The Kingbird* was published, and since then it has appeared quarterly without interruption. In 1950 the organization could count 18 member clubs and had begun seeking individual members and subscriptions to help fund the cost of the journal. By the fourth annual meeting in April 1951, there were 149

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individual members, still far short of the number needed to ensure the journal's future. But succeed it did. Today the Federation has more than 40 member clubs, 90 life members, and some 700 annual members; its next 50 years look bright indeed.

The update of the state bird book, however, which from the start had been a key objective, was not realized for 26 years. Finally, with crucial assistance from the American Museum of Natural History and constant support from the Federation's leadership as well as help from many members, John Bull was able to complete his *Birds of New York State*, which was published in 1974.

The 1980s saw the Federation's most demanding project, *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*, conclude with its publication by Cornell University Press in 1988. This followed six years of fieldwork by more than 4000 volunteers working in 5335 separate 5 km "Atlas blocks" covering the entire state. The project was a superb example of cooperative effort by the Federation and its members, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology.

As the Federation enters its second 50 years, it is committed to periodically updating both the state bird book and the breeding bird atlas on approximately a 25-year cycle. Preliminary plans are already in place for an update of *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* early in the twenty-first century.

The Federation is fully aware that its established record of focusing on research and conservation to ensure the preservation and protection of our birds and their essential habitats must continue unabated. It is committed to the principle of seeking and establishing new partnership relations to cope with the challenges that the next century will surely present.