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# AVIAN ABUNDANCE STUDY FINDS MEADOWLANDS A CRITICAL HABITAT FOR BIRD POPULATIONS

**District is permanent and seasonal home to more than 150,000 birds  
and many threatened and endangered species**

**LYNDHURST, N.J.** – The Meadowlands District and its expansive wetlands form a critical and unique habitat for birds, serving as the year-round and seasonal home to more than 150,000 birds of 200 avian species, many of them threatened and endangered, according to the results of a two-year study conducted by the New Jersey Audubon Society. The study, “Avian Abundance and Distribution in the Hackensack Meadowlands,” was sponsored and assisted by the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission.

“The avian habitats in the Meadowlands and its strategic location as a stopping point for migratory shorebirds speak to the region’s singular importance in the state as an area where natural beauty co-exists with a bustling business center,” said Joseph V. Doria, Chairman of the NJMC and Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. “The fact that such a haven for birds can be found in one of the most dense parts of the country, let alone the state, is high testimony to the NJMC’s efforts to restore the environmental health of the Meadowlands.”

The study, conducted between Aug. 2004 and Sept. 2006, is the most comprehensive tracking of the avian population in the Meadowlands District in Northern New Jersey, just five miles from Manhattan. More than 150 species were observed using the Meadowlands as a refueling stop during the migration and winter seasons, taking advantage of its tidal, brackish and freshwater emergent wetlands, upland deciduous forest, and early successional habitats. The Meadowlands District is home to more than 8,000 acres of urban wetlands.

Research involved 124 viewing points at 31 sites spanning the 30.4 square-mile Meadowlands District, from the woods of Teterboro to the marshes of Kearny. Of the

150,000 individual birds recorded, nearly 2,000 were members of 35 threatened and endangered species. Many of these birds breed in the Meadowlands, highlighting its importance not only as a home for birds but as a habitat that helps perpetuate the survival of species whose population has been dwindling.

The most commonly seen endangered species was the Northern Harrier while often-seen threatened species included the Black-Crowned Night Heron, Savannah Sparrow, and Osprey. Surveys also unveiled 10 species that are new to the Meadowlands, including the Grasshopper Sparrow, Cerulean Warbler, and Eurasian Wigeon.

The most common species seen overall were the Red-winged Blackbird, Herring Gull, Barn Swallow, Mallard, and Song Sparrow.

Looking to the future, the data gathered and conclusions drawn from “Avian Abundance and Distribution in the Hackensack Meadowlands” can be used as a comparative basis to evaluate the future success of management of habitats and the effects of disturbance at these sites.

“This study illustrates the NJMC’s great responsibility moving forward in ensuring that the Meadowlands continues to be an ideal permanent and transient home for hundreds of thousands of birds,” said Robert Ceberio, Executive Director of the NJMC. “The study is a source of great pride for the NJMC given our commitment to restoring the Meadowlands as a thriving natural habitat, but our work is far from finished. We will continue to pursue our goals with the dedication and determination that has brought us this far.”