

Important Bird Areas

NIAGARA RIVER CORRIDOR SITE PROFILE

State:

Name: [Niagara River Corridor](#) **Acres:** 98,004
State: [US-NY](#) **Status:** Recognized
Counties: Niagara, Erie **Priority:** Global
Confirmed Criteria: D4ii,D1,D4iii,D4i,D3,D4iv,A4i

Species	Criteria Proposed	Criteria Confirmed	Assessment Date
American Black Duck		D4ii	1/1/2008
American Coot		D4ii	1/1/2008
American Wigeon		D4ii	1/1/2008
American Woodcock		D3	1/1/2008
Bald Eagle		D1	1/1/2008

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Niagara River Corridor IBA

Click on a dot to view IBA Details; double-click anywhere on the map to zoom in; slide the thumb up or drag the mouse to zoom in and down to zoom out;

Global
 Continental
 State
 -N/A

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SITE DESCRIPTION

This site includes the portion of the Niagara River that flows north and northwest for approximately 32 miles from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, which varies from 110 to 2,200 yards wide. The Upper River flows around Grand Island in eastern and western branches before flowing over Niagara Falls (158-167 feet high) into the Niagara gorge. The gorge is up to 200 feet deep and extends downstream about six miles to the village of Lewiston. The river then flows for another seven miles, between banks ranging from 20-70 feet in height, until it reaches Lake Ontario. There are rapids before and after the falls and a large whirlpool in the lower river. Water depth varies from less than 30 feet in the Upper River, to shallow rapids in the Lower River, to 200 feet in the gorge. The shoreline in some areas of the upper river on the U.S. side is industrially developed and very little natural shoreline remains. In the lower river, the shoreline between the falls and Lewiston is largely undeveloped shrub lands and forests that are protected as state parks. Downstream of Lewiston the shoreline is largely developed, but shrub and forest habitats are still common. According to the NY GAP land cover data, approximately 16% of the site is shrub habitat, which includes old field/ pastures, shrub swamps, successional hardwoods, and successional shrub lands. Portions of the site are administered by NYS OPRHP and NYS DEC, and on Canadian side, by the Niagara Parks Commission, but the bulk of the land is municipal, corporate, or privately owned.

ORNITHOLOGICAL SUMMARY

The Niagara River annually supports one of the world's most spectacular concentrations of gulls, with 19 species recorded and one-day counts of over 100,000 individuals. The site is particularly noteworthy as a migratory stopover and wintering site for Bonaparte's Gulls, with one-day counts ranging from 10,000-50,000

individuals (2-10% of the world population). One-day Ring-billed Gull counts vary from 10,000-20,000, and one-day Herring Gull counts vary from 10,000-50,000. The river also hosts a remarkable diversity and abundance of waterfowl. Winter NYS DEC aerial surveys show a 22-year average of 2,808 Canvasbacks (31.5% of state wintering population), 2,369 scaup (6% of state wintering population), 2,015 Common Goldeneyes (29% of state wintering population), and 7,527 Common Mergansers (31% of state wintering population). Annual peak numbers range from 2,000- 15,000 Canvasbacks, 2,500-15,000 Greater Scaup, 2,300-3,000 Common Goldeneyes, and 2,500-12,000 Common Mergansers. The river also supports breeding colonies of Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons (95-142 pairs), Ring-billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, and Common Terns. The habitats along the river's edge support an exceptional diversity of migratory songbirds during spring and fall migrations. The few remaining marshes, including one at Buckhorn Island State Park, have supported breeding Least Bitterns, Northern Harriers, and Sedge Wrens. Other species at-risk supported at the site include the American Black Duck (breeds), Common Loon (winter), Pied-billed Grebe (confirmed breeder), Cooper's Hawk (confirmed breeder), American Woodcock (probable breeder), Common Nighthawk (probable breeder), Redheaded Woodpecker, Willow Flycatcher (confirmed breeder), Horned Lark (confirmed breeder), Wood Thrush (confirmed breeder), Bluewinged Warbler (probable breeder), and Cerulean Warbler. Ca

Conservation Issues	Land Use	Habitat	Ownership
<p>This site is listed in the 2002 State Open Space Conservation Plan as a priority site under the project name Great Lakes & Niagara River Access, Shore Lands, and Vistas. Portions of this site (Buckhorn Island) are designated as a state Bird Conservation Area. Industrial water pollution on the U.S. side has historically been a major problem along the Niagara River, but cleanup efforts have reduced the levels of most known toxic chemicals. The health of the aquatic ecosystems of the river must continue to be monitored because of the massive numbers of wetland species that rely on those ecosystems. Much of the land along the river has been developed for industrial purposes (especially on the U.S. side of the upper river near Buffalo and Niagara), power generation, and commercial and residential uses. Continued loss of forest and shrub habitats along the river will negatively impact migratory songbirds. The protection of remaining wetland, forest, and shrub habitats along the shoreline should be a priority. Boating activities are a known threat to nesting terns and herons in the upper portions of the river, and there is considerable interest in developing marinas and boat launch facilities along the remaining available shoreline. A comprehensive bird conservation plan for the Niagara River Corridor was developed with input from numerous partners and published in 2002 by the Canadian Nature Federation; efforts should be made to implement the plan's recommendations. Efforts to incorporate bird conservation projects into the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing process are encouraged. During the first round of IBA site identifications, this site was recognized under the research criterion because a long-term monitoring project is based there.</p>			

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