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Designation Helps Protect Declining Bird Population

By Mark Gerlach
Black Rock Forest Consortium is now an important bird area, according to a designation recently approved by Audubon New York, an organization that focuses on the conservation and protection of natural resources for birds.

It's important that planning boards and builders take natural habitats into consideration when starting a project, William Schuster, Black Rock Forest Consortium executive director, said. When habitats are fragmented (e.g., freeways) animals are separated.
"Many species can't take that."

Schuster said. "What kind of world do we want to pass onto the next generation?"

The consortium maintains a 3,838-acre forest and scientific field station in the Hudson Highlands, its website says. Black Rock applied for the designation in Nov. 2014. The area includes the Black Rock and Schunemunk forests.

"This designation can be a significant tool for community and land use planners in both the preparation of area plans, as well as the review of development proposals," David Church, Orange County planning commissioner

said in a statement.

Five species on the Audubon's "watch list" live in Black Rock Forest: wood thrushes and blue-winged, worn-eating, prairie and cerulean warblers. The birds' populations are in decline, Schuster said. Approximately 160 bird species live in the Black Rock area.

Black Rock has a list of 42 different species that it's "concerned about," he said.

Prior to the designation the Hudson Highlands West IBA included portions of Stork King State Park and land west of Schunemunk.