



At left Dr. Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director of Audubon Pennsylvania, with Dave Froehlich, Executive Director of Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, holding one of the IBA signs at the Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve.

Ambler's Maple Avenue Reservoir Designated as Important Bird Area

The Pennsylvania Ornithological Technical Committee (OTC), Audubon Pennsylvania, and the National Audubon Society have named a site just outside the Borough of Ambler as an Important Bird Area. The designation applies to the old reservoir on Maple Avenue and the preserved open space near it, and means that several Pennsylvania species of special concern (PA state endangered, threatened, at risk, or rare) and many species of waterfowl and other birds use that particular site for breeding and resting during migration, according to David Froehlich, the President of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.

An Important Bird Area is a site that is part of a global, continental, or state network of places recognized for their outstanding value to birds and bird conservation. The IBA program is designed to focus attention on vulnerable bird habitats, and helps to promote proactive habitat conservation. The IBA program was established by BirdLife International in Europe in the 1980's. The National Audubon Society administers the program in the United States.

The Maple Avenue site is considered part of a larger Important Bird Area that includes Fairmount Park and Benjamin Rush State Park. Another IBA in the region, the H. J. Heinz National Wildlife Refuge is located near the Philadelphia International Airport. Audubon Pennsylvania developed the first statewide IBA program in the country, and has identified 82 IBA sites encompassing over two million acres of Pennsylvania's public and private lands.

The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association plans to name the site The Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve. The local conservation group plans to clean up the Maple Avenue site and to create a waterfowl preserve, including a viewing platform that will allow the public to view the birds at a safe distance.

The site is part of a Green Ribbon Trail of open space along the Wissahickon Creek that has been assembled over fifty years by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. The ribbon of protected land and the public walking trail along the creek now stretches from Montgomeryville to Philadelphia, almost without a break. A Walk For The Wissahickon fund-raiser will be held on Sunday, October 2.

For more information about the Waterfowl Preserve or about the Walk for the Wissahickon, call the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association at 215-646-8866 or visit their web site at www.wvwa.org.