

This letter was sent to several senators and assembly members.



NEW YORK STATE ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

for the birds and birders of New York State since 1948

June 4, 2021

Dear Senator :

I am writing on behalf of our organization to urge your support for S. 5816, the Birds and Bees Protection Act. The NY State Ornithological Assoc. is the umbrella group for over 30 bird clubs and Audubon Chapters in the state, plus over 400 individual members.

This legislation would address the continuing threat that neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) pose to birds and to important pollinating insects. These chemicals, commonly used on turf, ornamental plants and agricultural products, can kill pollinators, birds, and fish. Neonics have been linked to colony collapse disorder, a disturbing trend of massive bee die-offs. Beekeepers in New York have lost over 40% of their bee colonies every year for the past decade. The collapse of bees threatens the agricultural production of apples, pumpkins, squash and tomatoes in New York. These crops contribute nearly half a billion in economic output in our state each year and support thousands of jobs and much-needed tax revenue.

These insecticides also work their way into ponds and nearby waterways through runoff. Neonics have appeared in roughly 30% of Long Island groundwater samples and frequently in state surface waters at levels expected to cause "ecosystem-wide damage." Once in a body of water, these toxic insecticides are ingested by insects, ultimately having detrimental impacts on fish and birds up the food chain.

This bill would largely ban use of neonics in New York until summer 2028. In addition, it commissions a study to be conducted on the feasible alternatives to toxic pesticide use. A major report by Cornell University concluded that the most common uses of neonics in New York, provide little to no benefits to users and are easily replaced by safer alternatives.

New York should follow the lead of other states and the European Union by taking the common sense step to halt these dangerous insecticides. Please use your influence and votes to pass the Birds and Bees Protection Act this session.

Sincerely,

Andrew Mason, Conservation Chair

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