EDUCATING NEW YORK'S FINGERLAKES VISITORS TO TACHOPTERYX

John and Sue Gregoire
Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory

The Watkins Glen, NY gorge and other such attractions are visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists each year. Eleven venues in the Finger Lakes Parks system are home to adult Tachopteryx thoreyii, the Gray Petaltail.

During our many visits to the Glen gorge, we've seen and heard tales of big dragonflies in a plethora of languages. Most, if not all, were in the form of dire warnings of what those "darning" or "sewing" needles would do to ones lips, nose, ears and other assorted body parts, not to mention all the "stinger" anecdotes.

Unfortunately, Tachopteryx is a gregarious soul and truly enjoys perching in easy reach on safety walls, gorge shale and people! Who knows how many have been swatted and dispatched over the years - certainly more than are collected as collecting in NY's state parks require specific permit.

A few years ago we proposed and then helped design educational placards with the area staff of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). This spring, and just in time for the petaltail flight season, these colorful signs (see photo) have been installed at several locations within each of the parks known to host Tachopteryx.

We may thus save a few and keep our gorge species going long enough to discover its breeding habitat preferences while also educating thousands of people internationally. All our science has to date is a single anecdotal report of a female laying eggs in a seep feeding a gorge. This despite seasonal searches by a number of paid and volunteer researchers.

#30

Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory
John and Sue Gregoire
5373 Fitzgerald Road
Burdett, NY 14818-9626
khmo@att.net