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PCBs found in birds living near Hudson
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The study showed the chemicals found in eggs belonged to birds as varied as the Eastern phoebe, which eats insects in open areas, the spotted sandpiper, which walks along sand bars and eats insects as they emerge from the sand, and the belted kingfisher, which eats small fish from the river.

"The PCBs are in a wide variety of birds," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Kathryn Jahn said. "It shows that PCBs are present in a wide variety of habitats."

The lowest concentrations were found in eggs of the American robin, Jahn said Friday. That is probably because robins might feed from areas other than the river, thus cutting their exposure.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released results of the study this week on its Web site. The project is part of the Hudson River Natural Resources Damage Assessment. That program entails federal agencies and the state Department of Environmental Protection trying to gauge the impact that PCBs have had on the Hudson River.

This study was performed largely by the U.S. Geological Survey.

General Electric dumped 1.3 million pounds of PCBs into the Hudson River from 1947-77. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has ordered GE to dredge 2.65 million cubic yards of PCB-laden sediment from the river's bottom between Hudson Falls and Troy. The project will be the largest Superfund environmental cleanup in history. It's expected to take six years, beginning in 2006. The project is expected to cost General Electric nearly $500 million.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service collected 168 eggs from nests along the river from Fort Edward to the Troy dam from April to June 2002. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife maps, biologists collected most of the samples from nests along the shorelines north of Stillwater in Saratoga and Washington counties.

Testing the eggs destroys them, so Jahn said biologists chose common species to test for this study.

"The only data we have on PCB concentrations in bald eagle eggs comes from non-viable eggs that didn't hatch," she said.

She said PCBs can cause reproductive problems in birds. This summer, biologists kept watch over bird nesting areas along the river. Jahn said they were trying to count populations and survey reproduction to see what impact the PCBs are having.

"The data from that is still being analyzed," she said. "That will be in early 2005."

There is also a possibility that biologists will repeat this summer's population study this coming summer, she said. The state Department of Natural Resources studied frogs along the river this summer, also as part of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment.

The study is available at

http://contaminants.fws.gov/restorationplans/HudsonRiver/AvianEggExposureDataReport9_04.pdf.

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