

A NATURAL

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Above, Gov. George E. Pataki writes out a check to pay for his family membership to the Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown. Pataki became a member Monday while touring the facility. Below, Pataki shares a laugh with James Berry, RTPI president, and state Sen. Patricia K. McGee.

P-J photos by Joe R. Liuzzo

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Institute In Position To Start Expansion Project

By KYLE KUBERA

Gov. George Pataki became the newest member of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute on Monday. The cost of the membership — \$3 million.

That was the joke as Pataki signed up to be a member of the organization while touring the Institute. About 15 minutes earlier, the governor announced he was forgiving a \$3 million loan the state had given to RTPI in 1989.

"It's a bargain at that price," the governor said, carrying on the joke. Actually, the governor signed up for a family membership at a cost of \$40 and was given one of Peterson's *Field Guides to Birds*.

The governor's announcement ended a hectic three days for Institute officials. Jim Berry, RTPI president, said he got a call Friday notifying him of the governor's decision.

"It just all came together so fast," he said. "We have been working on this for seven years. The timing of this is just perfect. We're still pinching ourselves to make sure that it is real."



Pataki said he became interested in the outdoors as a child living on a farm in the state's Hudson Valley region. As a teen-ager, one of the first gifts he received was Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to Birds in North America*.

"I am deeply, deeply grateful for the opportunity to be here," the governor told the nearly 50 people who

attended the announcement at the Institute. "I didn't know what a wonderful place you have here."

The state approved forgiveness of the loan in 1994, but official action was not taken by the governor at that time. The Institute's first payment on the 30-year, \$100,000 per year loan, was due later this year.

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