

THE URBAN AUDUBON

**BIRD-FRIENDLY RETROFIT AT THE
WORLD TRADE CENTER**

**THE YOUNG CONSERVATIONISTS
COUNCIL SAYS: GET OUTSIDE!**

**THE BIG PICTURE: A TALK WITH
KEVIN R. BURGIO, PHD**

EASTERN BLUEBIRD

BIRDABILITY



MISSION

NYC Audubon is a grassroots community that works for the protection of wild birds and habitat in the five boroughs, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

VISION

NYC Audubon envisions a day when birds and people in the five boroughs enjoy a healthy, livable habitat.

THE URBAN AUDUBON

Editors Marcia T. Fowle; Lauren Klingsberg

Managing Editor Tod Winston

Publications Committee Seth Ausubel, Ned Boyajian; Suzanne Charlé; Diane Darrow; Ivy Jo Gilbert; Catherine Schragis Heller; Mary Jane Kaplan; Andrew Maas; Abby McBride; Rebecca Minardi; Hillarie O'Toole; Don Riepe; Carol Peace Robins

Proofreading Diane Darrow; Andrew Maas

Art Direction and Layout Tod Winston

Design Concept reitdesign

Printing and Mailing Kase Printing, Inc.

Publisher NYC Audubon

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Karen Benfield

Executive Vice President Michael Yuan

Vice President Sarah Jeffords

Treasurer Dianne Benner

Secretary Deborah Laurel

Immediate Past President Jeffrey Kimball

Directors Seth Ausubel; Marsilia A. Boyle; Shawn Cargil; César A. Castillo; Angela Co; Christian Cooper; Steven A. Dean; Alexander Ewing; Tatiana Kaletsch; Kyu Lee; Jenny Maritz; Patrick Markee; Elizabeth Norman; Alan Steel; Michael Tannen; Richard Veit, PhD

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Co-Chairs Marcia T. Fowle*; James R. Sheffield

Council Members Richard T. Andrias; Sarah Grimké Aucoin; Claude Bloch, MD; David Burg*; Albert K. Butzel; Cliff Case; Rebekah Creshkoff; Andrew Darrell; Joseph H. Ellis; Andrew Farnsworth, PhD; Catherine Schragis Heller; Lynne Hertzog; Mary Jane Kaplan; Robert J. Kimtis; Lauren Klingsberg; Kimberly Kriger; Janice Laneve; Lawrence Levine; Harrison D. Maas*; Pamela Manice; Peter Rhoades Mott*; Dorothy M. Peteet, PhD; Don Riepe; Lewis Rosenberg; John Shemilt; David Speiser; Tom Stephenson
*Past President / *In Memoriam

STAFF

Executive Director Kathryn Heintz

Director of Conservation and Science Kevin R. Burgio, PhD

Associate Director of Conservation and Science Kaitlyn Parkins

Conservation Field Biologist Emilio Tobón

Community Science Program Manager Aurora Crooks

Conservation Scientist Emerita Susan Elbin, PhD
Advocacy and Outreach Manager Molly Adams

Associate Director of Education and Public Programs Danielle Sherman

Associate Director of Communications Andrew Maas

Associate Director of Content Tod Winston
Conservation Communications and Advocacy Associate Sohel Shah

Institutional Giving Manager Anne Schwartz
Senior Development

Associate Leo Wexler-Mann

Controller Monika Dorsey

NYC Audubon

71 West 23rd Street
Suite 1523 | New York, NY 10010
Tel: 212-691-7483 | Fax: 646-606-3301

nycaudubon.org

PRESIDENT'S PERCH

Karen Benfield



The text from a friend included a photo of a fluffy fledgling sitting on pavement: "A friend just found this kestrel alone on West 112th." Some parents from Bank Street School across the street had placed a thoughtful sign near him (see photo at right).

I walked uptown to check on it. Lacking the flying ability to return to the safety of a rooftop, the fledgling explored a small alleyway under a building entrance, hopped up the stairs, and tried to scale some scaffolding.

I called NYC Audubon bird transporter MaryJane Boland, who suggested keeping an eye on it for a bit. She connected me to Wild Bird Fund's compassionate leader, Rita McMahon. "If you can get the bird to a rooftop," Rita advised, "it will reunite with the parents who are certainly close by."

But the adventurous kestrel attempted to fly, landing in the middle of Broadway as lanes of cabs hurtled toward it. Human intervention was required.

Once the kestrel was safely scooped up and in a paper bag, NYC Audubon Young Conservationists Tim Healy and Ryan Zucker (read about the "YCs" on page 12) joined the effort to locate an accessible rooftop.

Sarah Piel and her husband Douglas McAlinden strolled by and joined the project. They called their building superintendent, Daniel Cortes, who readily invited the American Kestrel and its entourage to a rooftop at the end of the block.

Ryan and Tim handled the release, playing baby kestrel begging calls from their phones. This soon attracted the interest of the parents. The fledgling hopped out of the bag (see cover photo). There was one close call when he flew across to an adjacent building and missed the ledge, landing on the brick exterior wall. The kestrel clung there and then, using beak, wings, and talons, slowly climbed to safety. Within moments his mother flew in and fed him; the bystanders cheered and hugged.

Helping birds navigate our built environment depends on all of this: collaboration, good will, connection. At NYC Audubon it is how we change laws, how we protect habitat, how we educate. Read about another wonderful collaboration on page 4 of this issue: the bird-friendly retrofit at the World Trade Center's Liberty Park.

The architect of so many of our partnerships, Executive Director Kathryn Heintz, has announced that she will be retiring at year-end. We owe our financial stability through the pandemic, as well as much growth and extended reach, to Kathryn's ability to look at our work as a kestrel might—from above. We will miss her vision and tireless drive and the ways in which she has championed our work in New York City. There will be much more about Kathryn in our next issue. We are truly grateful for her magnificent leadership.

Karen Benfield

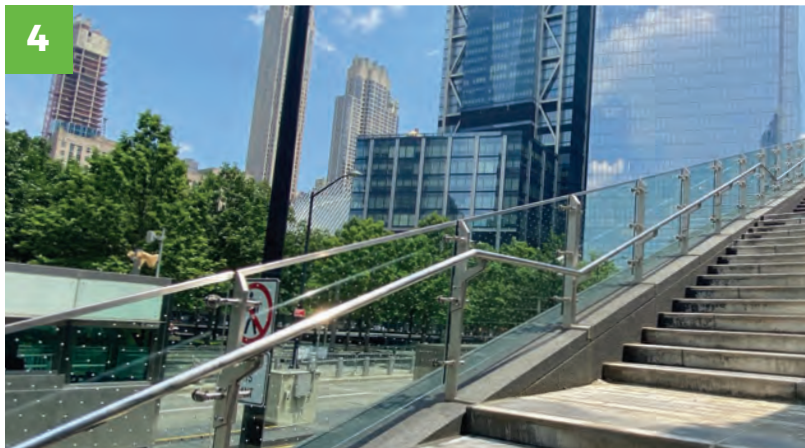
One joyful way to support NYC Audubon's collaborative conservation work is to celebrate with us at this year's Fall Roost. Recently retired Director of Development Kellye Rosenheim (see a tribute to her in the summer Urban Audubon) has put together a truly special outdoor cocktail benefit at the Central Park Zoo, and we're looking forward to seeing many of you there in person. (See the back cover.) There are many ways to support NYC Audubon's mission to help birds, however; see page 23 to learn more.



A fledgling American Kestrel under careful surveillance

IN THIS ISSUE

FALL 2021



The bird-friendly retrofit at Liberty Park © Melissa Breyer



Field technician Myles Davis with a fledgling Herring Gull © Andrew Maas



A male Eastern Bluebird © David Speiser



The Birdability campaign promotes accessible birding. © Adam Wasilewski

FEATURES

- 4 In a New York City Minute:
Bird-Friendly Retrofit at the World Trade Center**
by Suzanne Charlé
- 9 The Big Picture: A Talk with Kevin R. Burgio, PhD**
by Ned Boyajian
- 11 Meet Our New Board Members**
by Carol Peace Robins
- 12 The Young Conservationists Council Says: Get Outside!**
by Rebecca Minardi
- 14 Giving a Hand to the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialis Sialis*):
The State Bird of New York**
by Sandy Fiebelkorn

- 16 Birdability**
by Elizabeth Norman
- 17 Cooper & Cooper in Conversation:
Advocacy, Activism, and Moving Beyond
"the Incident" in Central Park**
by Hillarie O'Toole
- 24 NYC Audubon's Fall Roost**

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover Photograph:

American Kestrel © Tim Healy

Small Banner Photographs:

Susan Elbin, Steve Nanz, Don Riepe, NYC Audubon,
Camilla Cerea/National Audubon,
Tom Murray/CC BY-NC 2.0, Glenn Woodell, David
Speiser, Wendy Miller/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

DEPARTMENTS

6	Conservation Notes	20	News & Notes
10	Avian Advocate Updates	20	Remember the Birds
18	Events & Adventures	21	Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
18	Fall Lecture Series	21	Book Reviews
18	Volunteer!	22	Donor Acknowledgments
19	Fall Festivals	23	Support NYC Audubon
19	NYC Audubon Member Events		

IN A NEW YORK CITY MINUTE

BIRD-FRIENDLY RETROFIT AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

By Suzanne Charlé

If you visit Liberty Park, overlooking the 9/11 Memorial at the southern tip of Manhattan, look closely: The raised park's glass railing—now sporting thousands of small gray dots—is the most recent step in making New York City safer for birds. The change is the result of a cooperative effort on the part of volunteers, bird conservation organizations, architects, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which oversees the park.

It all started in the fall of 2020, when Project Safe Flight volunteer Melissa Breyer was monitoring the World Trade Center campus for bird strikes against building facades. Entering Liberty Park, she was stunned. “Four birds were dead. ‘What?!?’,” she remembers thinking. “It’s unusual to see four in one spot, even near a bad building.” Then she saw two birds crash into the park’s glass railing and bounce off.

Breyer lives in Brooklyn and couldn’t get to the site often, so she told her friend and fellow Project Safe Flight volunteer Calista McRae, who lived closer to the World Trade Center.

“It was nasty,” McRae recalls. Birds were colliding with the park’s clear glass railing, about 20 feet above the 9/11 Memorial. “The birds in Liberty Park could see the oak trees around the memorial and flew right into the glass.” The volunteers kept close watch, saving birds when they could. In all, more than 1,200 stunned or dead birds were found in the World Trade Center area that fall.

In early May during spring migration, McRae was back in Liberty Park and found three dead White-throated Sparrows. She looked over the glass railing: a Common Yellowthroat was stunned but still alive in the parking area below. “It was high security and closed to the public,” she recalls. Before she could ask the guards to try to rescue it, a truck ran it over.

McRae and Breyer felt drastic action was necessary to let people know about this ongoing danger to birds. “I tweeted several photos: @_WTCOfficial, @PANYNJ,” says McRae. Breyer tweeted as well. The

tweets were noticed by others, and Beverly Mastropolo, a wildlife rehabilitator, contacted local journalists.

Media hopped on the story: On May 12, the *New York Post* ran an article. The next day CBS2 interviewed the Project Safe Flight

volunteers and documented how glass railings and windows could be “deathtraps.” After the first news story, Breyer says, two guards walked up to her and pointed up at the railing, shaking their heads. “Clearly things were going to change.”



Calista McRae @stuffedowl · May 6

Replying to @stuffedowl

it would be so easy to fix this one small strip of glass by breaking up the illusion of transparency -- untreated, it kills birds all morning



2

10

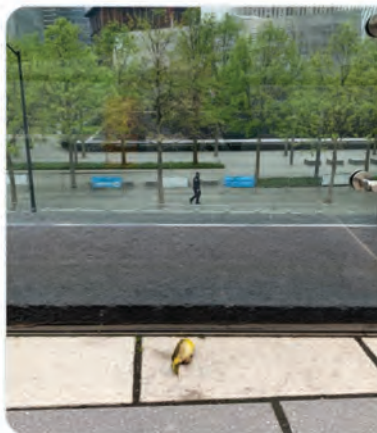
26



Melissa Breyer @MelissaBreyer · May 6

Replying to @stuffedowl @_WTCOfficial and @PANYNJ

Can anyone see the glass here? Neither could this migrating common yellowthroat who crashed into it yesterday and died on the spot in Liberty Park.



1

8

12



Tweets from Calista McRae (showing three White-throated Sparrows) and Melissa Breyer last spring brought needed attention to the preventable deaths of songbirds at Liberty Park.

The Port Authority said it was “looking into the matter.” And it was, reaching out to NYC Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) for input. Christine Sheppard, ABC’s bird collisions campaign director, was ready with advice about possible retrofits the Port Authority might make. For over 10 years, ABC has explored what works and what doesn’t, and like NYC Audubon and the American Institute of Architects, it played a major part in the development and passage of New York City’s Local Law 15 of 2020, which requires all new construction and significantly altered buildings to use bird-friendly materials.

The Port Authority architect called Canada’s Feather Friendly Technologies, a world leader in applications on glass that allow birds to “see” windows and avoid deadly collisions—estimated to cause about one billion bird deaths each year in the U.S. Paul Groleau, the company’s vice president, recalls that the Liberty Park architect described the problem

and asked “‘Can you help us out? Can you send pictures?’ They wanted to get it done ASAP.” Feather Friendly overnighted several samples for approval of two patterns, in gray and black, enough to cover four panes of the park’s glass railing.

“The response was immediate,” says Groleau. As soon as the Port Authority got the samples, Feather Friendly’s partners installed them. Sheppard got a call from the Port Authority “asking if I might come down the next day—they were going to do it and were on the move. It was so encouraging. And it looked fine!” (The current, eighth generation of Feather Friendly is a pattern made up of two-by-two-inch squares, “the recommended spacing pattern to mitigate collisions for all bird species, including hummingbirds,” says Groleau. The product, tested and approved by ABC, was recently installed at Brooklyn’s Marine Park’s Salt Marsh Nature Center and at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in Queens.)

By June 2, the Port Authority was installing the bird-friendly dot pattern on the park’s entire railing. “We’re thrilled,” says Kathryn Heintz, NYC Audubon’s executive director. “The Port Authority responded with such speed.” The action impressed others, too: Groleau says that there’s been a recent increase in inquiries about retrofit materials from managers of commercial and residential buildings in New York City, as well as from individuals.

Sheppard of ABC says New York City’s new law requiring bird-friendly materials for all new construction and major alterations is “the biggest deal ever.” Now, says Kaitlyn Parkins, associate director of conservation and science for NYC Audubon, “we need to convince owners of all existing buildings to put mitigation in place.” NYC Audubon hopes to marshal enthusiasm from the many who have discovered birdwatching during the pandemic and may not know of this major opportunity to make New York City safer for migrating birds. ■



Birds flying across Liberty Park collided with its glass railing as they attempted to reach the greenery beyond. Feather-friendly’s dot pattern makes the glass visible as an obstacle to even the smallest of birds, allowing them to avoid it.

Large photo © Melissa Breyer/Inset photo © Scheel Shah

CONSERVATION NOTES

With the spring and early summer field season winding down, I have been visiting many of the areas where we at NYC Audubon do research and outreach. I have been out doing horseshoe crab surveys in Plumb Beach, banding Semipalmated Sandpipers in Jamaica Bay, hanging out on the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center green roof with nesting gulls, and birding on Governors Island. Not being a native New Yorker, I was unaware of the beauty of the hidden areas that harbor such bird diversity.

Below, our conservation staff members share highlights of the projects they have been working on in the past quarter. As New York City opens up and we return to the office after the field season, we'll begin entering and sharing the data we've collected and start planning for the next year of research projects.

Looking forward, I plan on working with our team to further develop our research and advocacy focused on light pollution. Light pollution not only affects birds by drawing more of them into cities, where they may subsequently collide with glass, but also affects human health. With continued support from you and our volunteers, we can address this urgent and serious issue in New York City and beyond.

—Kevin R. Burgio, PhD

WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR **American Oystercatchers**

This year American Oystercatchers began nesting in Breezy Point in the second half of April, slightly later than in previous seasons. We observed 41 breeding pairs, 4 more than last year. As I write in early July, we still have 16 pairs incubating, and 10 active broods. Unfortunately, we have lost 22 nests and 2 broods. But our birds are very persistent; 9 have renested so far. ("Renesting" refers to an additional nesting attempt after a pair's first nest is lost.) At press time in late July, no chicks have fledged, but we hope we will start to see fledglings in a few weeks. The breeding season continues at least until the end of August.

We suspect the main cause of oystercatcher nest and brood loss is predation and human disturbance, but we do not have solid research evidence. Unfortunately, constraints related to the pandemic prevented us from installing camera traps at our nests this year as planned; we intend to try again next year.

—Emilio Tobón

Harbor Herons

After a year's hiatus, we conducted our annual Harbor Herons Nesting Survey in the second half of May. We visited 20 islands across the New York-New Jersey Harbor and found 8 wading bird

species breeding on 7 islands. A total of 1,194 wader pairs was found, indicating a stable nesting population over the past three years. Black-crowned Night-Heron was the most abundant species, followed by Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Glossy Ibis, Little Blue Heron, Green Heron, Great Blue Heron, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. This last species also continues to nest at several mainland colonies, principally in Queens and New Jersey.

Hoffman Island in the lower harbor remains the City's largest wader colony, and also its most diverse, hosting six species. Our Hoffman survey team



Oystercatcher banding team members Kaitlyn Parkins, Leo Wexler-Mann, and Matthew Combs, PhD, prepare to release three fledglings.



Courtesy of Mianus River Gorge/Gotham Coyote Project

On South Brother Island, a Great Blue Heron and a Great Egret stroll in front of a motion-activated camera, installed in partnership with Mianus River Gorge and Gotham Coyote Project.

observed the first Great Blue Heron pair to be found nesting on the islands in many years—though recently recovered footage from a camera trap installed on South Brother Island in 2019 indicates that a Great Blue Heron pair may have nested there that year, after our survey. Hoffman Island also continues to be visited by our radio-tagged Great Egret, Edward, who has been tracked visiting the island since 2015, when he was tagged in a collaborative effort among 1000 Herons, NYC Audubon, New Jersey Audubon, and the U.S. Forest Service.

—Tod Winston

Semipalmated Sandpipers and Common Terns

This spring we deployed eight tiny radio-tags, called nanotags, on Semipalmated Sandpipers during their northward migration stopover in Jamaica Bay. The tags, obtained through a grant from the Disney Conservation Fund, are used to track birds locally in the City and are also picked up by an array of receivers across the country called the Motus network. Of the eight nanotagged birds, only two were detected in Jamaica Bay in the days immediately following release. However, four were detected at Motus stations to our north, as they continued their migration to the Arctic to breed: two in Vermont, one in Massachusetts, and one traveling through upstate New York to the Canadian shore of Lake Ontario. We will continue to receive data from these birds from the Motus website. Learn more and track these individuals yourself at motus.org.

In addition to nanotagging Semipalmated Sandpipers, we also band them with traditional U.S. Geological Service metal bands and plastic field-readable leg flags, which also return valuable data. In 2019 we banded bird “4XP,” which did not receive a nanotag because it was under the minimum weight (25 grams) required to carry one. 4XP was spotted this June on Ruffle Bar Marsh Island in Jamaica Bay, just one mile from where it was originally banded at Big Egg Marsh. 4XP was on its way to breed in the Canadian Arctic when we first captured it in spring 2019, flew to its wintering grounds in South America in fall 2019, probably made the same round-trip journey in 2020, and was on its way back north again in 2021. While



© NYC Audubon

A banded Semipalmated Sandpiper is ready for release.

we don't know 4XP's exact wintering and breeding locations, the estimated distance it flew between the two times it was seen in Jamaica Bay was very likely at least 15,000 miles. Through both traditional banding and nanotagging data, we can continue to learn about the incredible migratory journeys these birds make.

The Governors Island Common Tern colony has suffered a setback: After reaching approximately 100 nesting pairs in June, the colony was abandoned in early July, prior to hatching. An inspection revealed no clues explaining the abandonment (though heavy rains may have washed away evidence). Terns abandon their colonies for many reasons; the most likely cause in this case is a nocturnal predator. Should the colony

return in 2022, we will work closely with Governors Island to monitor and protect it.

—Kaitlyn Parkins

Horseshoe Crab Monitoring

Our horseshoe crab monitoring program was back this year! Taking extra precautions due to COVID-19, we limited our monitoring crews to three volunteers per beach visit, in addition to a paid site coordinator who oversaw regulations and data recording protocols. This year, we monitored four beaches in Brooklyn and Queens: Dead Horse Bay, Plumb Beach East and West, and Big Egg Marsh. (NYC Parks monitors other sites throughout the City.) In May and June, 54 volunteers bravely ventured out into the dark on 12 separate nights, in all weather conditions, to witness the rare spectacle of spawning Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs.

Our final numbers are still being tallied, but early reports show that despite a range-wide decline in Atlantic Horseshoe Crab populations, our horseshoe crab spawning activity appeared very healthy: some nights, our volunteers counted well over 100 mating horseshoe crabs at a single beach. While monitoring we found several previously tagged horseshoe crabs, indicating that some horseshoe crabs are returning to the beach year after year. If you find a tagged horseshoe crab on the beach, please report this information to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at fws.gov/crabtag. You will learn how far that particular crab has traveled, and will receive a horseshoe crab pin as a thank you.

—Aurora Crooks



© Akiko Togami

A volunteer measures a tagged horseshoe crab.

CONSERVATION NOTES



PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT Collision Monitoring

This spring, 39 Project Safe Flight volunteers dedicated their time, commitment, and energy for two months (from April 1 to June 1), monitoring and collecting data from seven collision routes—a record number of routes in the program’s history. Five of these sites were located in Manhattan, one in Brooklyn, and one in Queens.

While data for the spring season of Project Safe Flight is still being compiled, it appears that there was a drop in collisions this season, which is excellent news. Several of our monitored buildings have worked with us over the past year to employ mitigation options, ranging from decals to bird-friendly glass, resulting in a sharp decline in collisions. If these preliminary findings hold true, we will focus our efforts on additional problematic buildings in the City, as we continue to research the relationship between migration patterns and bird mortality from building collisions. —Aurora Crooks

GREEN ROOFS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

This summer we continued to conduct weekly surveys of arthropods, birds, and bats on the Javits green roof. And we deployed our first piece of equipment on the newest section of the green roof: a motion-sensor camera trap directed at newly planted apple trees. The apple trees offer cover, perches, and possibly fruit. We are excited to see what bird species use this new roof habitat.

During the breeding season, we worked to balance the Herring Gull colony on the green roof with conservation goals. To allow roof maintenance and maintain the Herring Gull colony, we established two specific gull “conservation zones” away from sensitive equipment and drains. Thus far, gull nest densities are almost four times greater in these zones than on the rest of the roof, a welcome change from previous years. Our gull management technicians, Myles Davis and Francine Phillips, worked through the middle of July.

The Green Roof Researchers Alliance (GRRRA) received a competitive pool

of proposals for the 2021 GRRRA Grant Program and recently awarded three grants of \$1,500 each to projects we expect to have a large impact on green roof science. The projects funded will research native plant establishment patterns, create a short film explaining green roofs and live-streamed environmental monitoring equipment, and examine the three-dimensional impact of green roofs on heat mitigation.

In September, the GRRRA is teaming up with Toronto-based organization Green Roofs for Healthy Cities to host a first-of-its-kind event partnering scientists with architects and practitioners: “Green Roofs in New York: Research & Practice,” to be held virtually on Friday, September 17. GRRRA scientists and green roof install/build practitioners will discuss case studies that highlight the intersection between science and practice, and explore how to use findings from academic pursuits to improve green roof design. To register and see event details, visit greenroofsny.com.

—Dustin Partridge, PhD ■



Left-hand photos: Andrew Maas; right-hand photos: courtesy of Manus River Gorge and Gotham Coyote Project

Left: Team members Myles Davis, Emilio Tobón, Kaitlyn Parkins, and Francine Phillips band Herring Gull chicks (see released chicks in inset photo) on the Javits Center green roof. Right: photos taken by a motion-activated camera on South Brother Island over the last two seasons included (top to bottom) a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and Double-crested Cormorant gathering nest material and a raccoon. (Raccoons are one of our nesting waterbirds’ main predators, and when one manages to reach an island, sometimes the birds desert their nests. Happily, this colony appeared healthy in 2021, though this raccoon was roaming about in 2020.) Other predators caught by the camera included Red-tailed Hawk and Eastern Screech-Owl.

THE BIG PICTURE

A TALK WITH KEVIN R. BURGIO, PHD

By Ned Boyajian

Now that NYC Audubon Director of Conservation and Science Kevin R. Burgio, PhD, has had a few months to get his feet wet with the organization's conservation work, longtime volunteer and past NYC Audubon Board Member Ned Boyajian sat down with him to get his perspective on this challenging time for our environment.

Ecosystems are in crisis. Is there reason for hope?

The truth is, we're likely to lose many species over the next 100 years. Yet many dire predictions of extinction don't take into account evolution or adaptation. For instance, the timing of some bird species' life cycles is changing with the climate. While preliminary evidence suggests birds might not be able to adapt their bodies quickly enough to rapidly changing climates, some birds have done so: Darwin's finches' beak shapes and sizes changed in just a few generations when drought conditions affected their food sources.

There's a lot we don't know right now, but as the science improves, our ability to identify at-risk birds will improve and with that, our ability to protect them and the places they need, as well.

With so many unknowns, how do we make good decisions not just for today, but for tomorrow?

Climate change is affecting organisms' distribution in ways that are hard to predict now. A species may move in order to stay within its climate tolerances, but, for instance, what happens if its food moves somewhere else? What happens when novel virulent pathogens suddenly come into contact with species unequipped to deal with them?

Conservation has long focused on restoring ecosystems to "pristine" circumstances. I think we are past that point now. There are very few places left on Earth that human activity hasn't affected. We could protect a patch of Brazilian rain forest with high biodiversity today, but will it be high in 100 years? Maybe, but maybe not.

Providing species with the habitat they need is crucial. Will maintaining one particular urban park preserve a species? Probably not. Yet it may offer important stopover habitat for migrating birds, and also an invaluable opportunity for educating and engaging people. As a kid in Boston, all I saw were House Sparrows and pigeons. When I taught ornithology at the University of Connecticut, I'd bring students out who were from inner cities. When we'd hear, say, a Northern Parula's song, they'd be struck by its beauty. We'd talk about it: it weighs as much as a big pencil eraser, yet it flew thousands of miles to get here. Then it will breed and fly back and do it again and again.

While preserving one particular park may not save a species, it will help inspire people to think about their place in nature, to grow the next generations of people who are passionate about conservation, which is a huge win in my



© Class and Nature/Shutterstock

The Northern Parula (here, a singing male), one of our smallest warblers, is a long-distance migrant that breeds as far north as Hudson Bay and winters throughout Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.

book. Nature has value unto itself. We should be protecting it because it's the right thing to do. Yet exposing people to the awe of nature also is beneficial.

Does increased equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility help conservation?

First, I would like to say that working to be more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible is the moral thing to do, regardless of the ways it may help aid conservation. That said, having more diverse groups represented in conservation brings a variety of background experiences. Due to systemic racism, poor environmental conditions such as air, water, and light pollution disproportionately affect BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color). Yet, BIPOC are not yet adequately represented in the decision-making processes that affect them directly. Being inclusive goes beyond just higher levels of diversity in conservation; we also need to listen and to integrate diverse voices in these decisions. ■



We hope that you all are continuing to be safe and well. Below are some ways to advocate right now for New York City's birds. Make sure to sign up to be an Avian Advocate and receive timely action alert emails at nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates.

BIRD-FRIENDLY RETROFIT AT LIBERTY PARK

Project Safe Flight volunteers Calista McRae and Melissa Breyer sounded the alarm about an area of concern for our city's birds this spring: Liberty Park on the World Trade Center campus. The clear, reflective glass of the park's overhead walkway was leading birds to collide with it, as they mistook reflections for the park's vegetation.

Thanks to these determined volunteers posting about the collisions on social media and subsequent news stories on CBS2 and in the *New York Post*, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey heard our concerns and quickly acted to retrofit the walkway's glass with Feather Friendly's dotted pattern treatment. We thank the Port Authority for its swift action and look forward to monitoring Liberty Park again this fall in order to measure the treatment's effectiveness in preventing collisions. Read more about this story on page 4.

SHARE THE SHORE OUTREACH

This summer we redesigned and printed three different hand-out cards for the Share the Shore initiative and distributed them at outreach events. Originally created by Audubon New York, the cards raise awareness about the harm that off-leash dogs can do to beach-nesting birds, and help beachgoers identify beach-nesting bird species and their nests. The cards, printed in both English and Spanish, were made possible thanks to the Disney Conservation Fund. We shared some of them with partner organizations NYC Plover Project and Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy (JBRPC) for distribution at their events.

We also partnered this summer with JBRPC, the NYC Parks Wildlife Unit, and the Surfrider Foundation to create hand-painted signage on the Rockaway Beach boardwalk in Queens. Fourth and fifth graders from three local schools produced the artwork after learning about beach-nesting birds, their Rockaway Beach habitat, and the daily threats they face on our local shoreline.

Sohel Shah, who penned this issue's Avian Advocate Updates, joined NYC Audubon this summer as our new conservation communications and advocacy associate. See News & Notes on page 20. ■

BECOME AN AVIAN ADVOCATE

Enroll in our Avian Advocates email list and join our core group of volunteer conservation policy advocates. You'll receive periodic updates on what's happening and what you can do to help. Visit nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates to learn more and get involved.



A Piping Plover and Common Tern grace one of 16 signs installed between Beach 30th Street and Beach 70th Street in Rockaway Beach.



Black Skimmers are easily disturbed as they attempt to nest on New York City's crowded Rockaway Beach.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

By Carol Peace Robins

© Kyu Lee



KYU LEE

This is the story of a boy from the Bronx who wound up becoming a passionate advocate for the sustainability of planet Earth, its people, and its wildlife.

A graduate of the University of Chicago, Kyu Lee is director of communications at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University. From 2008 to 2021

he served as associate director of communications and marketing of its Earth Institute. In both roles, he has reached out to opinion leaders, donors, students, and policy makers to build awareness of climate change, poverty, and sustainable development.

Kyu has been involved with sustainability issues since he attended the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as a student journalist and photographer. He then traveled extensively as a journalist for *The Earth Times*, visiting such far-flung places as China, East Africa, and Italy to report on poverty, development, environment, and children's and women's rights and health issues.

Kyu lives on the Upper West Side with his wife, Christine, a teacher and reading specialist, and their six-year-old daughter, Tessa (pictured above, at a somewhat younger age), who enjoys bird walks and bird bike rides in Central Park with her dad.

Kyu is particularly interested in conservation areas such as green infrastructure, waterways, climate adaptation, and renewable energy, and is looking forward to putting his global experience to work making our city a better, more livable place.

© Lizzy Ratner



PATRICK MARKEE

Once again, we introduce a new board member whose passion for birds came through his son. Patrick Markee accompanied Elias (pictured with him at left, now 11) on kindergarten birding trips. They soon joined NYC Audubon bird walks and volunteered together for Project Safe Flight. Like Board Member Stephen Dean's son John, Elias testified before the City Council

in support of Local Law 15 of 2020, the City's new bird-friendly building design regulation.

Though Patrick's bird advocacy may be recent, he's no stranger to advocacy in general. As deputy executive director for New York's Coalition for the Homeless, where he worked for 20 years, he oversaw the organization's advocacy and policy work, media strategy, and community organizing. From 2007 to 2016, he served as a board member of the National Coalition for the Homeless.

Patrick holds a BA in social anthropology from Harvard University and dual master's degrees in community and regional planning and Latin American studies from the University of Texas at Austin. He has researched peasant communities in Cuzco, Peru, and housing conditions in Cleveland, Ohio, and Laredo, Texas. His articles and book reviews have been published in *The Nation* and *The New York Times Book Review*.

Patrick and Elias live in the East Village with wife and mom Lizzy Ratner, a senior editor at *The Nation*. Patrick looks forward to using his experience as an advocate and parent of a young birder to help NYC Audubon foster its essential mission.

© Tina Alleva



ANGELA CO

Angela Co is an architect, designer, and teacher—and in just five years from the day a pair of binoculars and an old Peterson field guide fell into her hands, she has become as “birdy” as many lifelong birders. She joined the Brooklyn Bird Club and became a volunteer designer for its newsletter. With partner Tina Alleva she founded Bird Collective, an eco-friendly apparel company that raises awareness about threats to wild birds and donates to their cause. In their first year, they gave \$33,000 to bird advocacy groups, including NYC Audubon.

Angie is an assistant teaching professor of architecture at Syracuse University and director of the New York City Architecture Program at the Syracuse Manhattan campus. Her Syracuse student design studios have partnered with community organizations like South Bronx Unite to address environmental justice, affordable housing, and social equity.

She holds a master's degree in architecture from Columbia University and dual bachelor's degrees in architecture and computer science from the University of Pennsylvania. Her many awards include the Rome Prize in architecture and support from MacDowell. She is a certified passive house consultant and LEED-accredited professional.

Angie and Ryan Goldberg, her freelance journalist husband, live near Prospect Park, where he enjoys birding as much as she does. She's looking forward to putting her talents to work at NYC Audubon to build a more diverse and livable city and to educate people about birds, their habitat, and bird-safe building design. ■

THE YOUNG CONSERVATIONISTS COUNCIL SAYS: GET OUTSIDE!

By Rebecca Minardi

The Young Conservationists Council was off to a great start, just when the pandemic hit. The group of seven students and young professionals pivoted quickly, however, hosting a virtual presentation about New York City's owls, their first "Flappy Hour." Now that the City is opening back up, the council has big plans. Conceived by NYC Audubon Board President Karen Benfield and chaired by Simon Keyes, the council aims to get more young adults (ages 18–35) involved in conservation. Tim Healy describes the group as a think tank—a place to brainstorm, plan ways to gather, and build community. During the pandemic, many New Yorkers discovered the City's parks and wildlife; to educate and empower this newly bird-loving public, the council is planning "bioblitzes" (day-long volunteer surveys of the City's wildlife), along with more Flappy Hours, trivia nights, and interpretive walks. Ryan Mandelbaum hopes to encourage young people to convert from attendees to stewards; from participants to advocates.

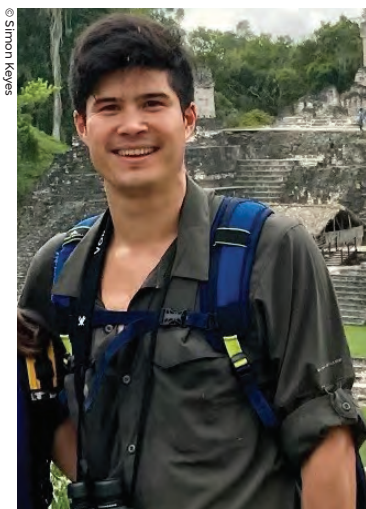
Meet Simon, Tim, Ryan M., and their fellow council members, Akilah, Efua, José, and Ryan Z., below—and learn how to get involved.



Tim is visited by a Crimson Rosella while exploring Queensland, Australia.

Tim Healy of Queens has been birding his entire life (believe him, his first word was bird!). A high school biology teacher in Elmhurst, Queens, Tim is passionate about helping his students draw connections between the birds they see from their windows and caring about our planet. Tim says he has gotten so much from the City's birding community that when asked to join the

council, he jumped at the chance to give back. During the lockdown, he racked up 150 species in his heavily trafficked and manicured local patch, Astoria Park—proof that wherever you are, there are birds. For Tim, the City's most pressing conservation issues are protection of microhabitats, prevention of bird window strikes (he once rescued a Yellow-billed Cuckoo after a nasty collision at his school), and reclamation of man-made spaces for wildlife. Ultimately, Tim wants to make the City friendlier to birds.



Simon birds among the ancient Mayan ruins of Tikal, Guatemala.

For Brooklyn's **Simon Keyes**, also a lifelong birder, the pandemic increased his aptitude for and enjoyment of birds. Simon works for Silicon Valley Bank in Manhattan and joined the council to help the City's conservation efforts. He often gets texts from friends reporting warblers stunned or killed by window collisions, and wants to make the City migration-safe. Central Park and Prospect Park are his favorite birding places, and Simon was happy to see how busy

Prospect Park was during the pandemic. He hopes other young people realize how important it is to have access to clean outdoor spaces. Simon fondly remembers his grandfather raising money for conservation, and he wants to empower others to support environmental efforts, even if not monetarily. "Natural spaces are for everyone and conservation can be as simple as cleaning up trash at your local park."



Akilah birds in Prospect Park (right after finding a Chuck-will's-widow).

Akilah Lewis of Queens has been birding for just four years, but she's quickly made up for lost time. As an environmental educator for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, a co-organizer of 2021's inaugural Black Birders Week, and secretary for the Feminist Bird Club, Akilah has been busy. She loves engaging with all kinds of birders and hopes the council can increase young adults' participation in conservation issues. A former Student Conservation Association intern for the Hudson Valley AmeriCorps Program, Akilah continues to be passionate about environmental education. For her, maintaining healthy spaces for birds, including native plantings and grass-land habitat, is the most important conservation issue in the City. Akilah wants to remind any young people interested in conservation

issues that "birds are everywhere; cultivate curiosity for what's around you."

© Ryan F. Mandelbaum



Ryan rescues a batch of motherless domestic ducklings in Prospect Park.

Ryan Mandelbaum of Brooklyn has been birding for five years, ever since they learned about NYC Audubon's Harbor Herons Project. They quickly fell in love with shorebirds. Ryan is the editorial lead at IBM Quantum and a freelance science writer, but still finds time to bird in Prospect Park and Green-Wood Cemetery. They hope the council can make young people more aware of local wildlife and the importance of the City's habitats for birds year-round. They point out that it can be distressing to talk to older birders because it forces us to realize how many birds and bird species have already been lost: "The situation is dire." Ryan stresses how important it is that deep local ecological knowledge be passed on and marshaled for climate change research, in order to create a more just and sustainable future.

© Efua Peterson



Efua birds in Park City, Utah (having just spotted her first Sandhill Crane).

When Efua Peterson, a software engineer at EnergyWatch Inc., was referred to the council by NYC Audubon Board Member Chris Cooper, she jumped at the opportunity to join like-minded people interested in conservation and community. Efua lives in Manhattan and enjoys birding in nearby Central Park and Riverside Park, but she also gets out on extended birding trips when she can. She worries about the challenges birds face during migration, especially in urban areas like New York City. Efua recognizes that the council's strength in fostering young people's interest in conservation is by getting them outside to observe what's around them. After those first experiences, she says, "It's a natural next step to fall in love with what you're seeing and experiencing and want to protect it."

Interested in getting involved in the Young Conservationists Council? Join NYC Audubon at our new Young Conservationist membership level for \$25 per year, and you'll get updates and invites to council activities. Learn more and see our membership form on page 23. ■

© Shannon Curley



José works in Staten Island's Freshkills Park, where he bands Grasshopper Sparrows and other grassland species.

José Ramírez-Garofalo of Staten Island began birding as a child with his mother Kathy, a ranger for the National Park Service, and still birds with her today. José watches birds a lot—in the past 10 years he's birded almost every day in local spots such as Oakwood Beach, Fort Wadsworth, and Freshkills Park. He notes that Staten Island has rapidly lost natural areas—and as a research associate for the Freshkills Park Alliance, he's happy this entire capped landfill is

being transformed into green space. In addition to development, he regards sea level rise and alteration of coastline habitats as key conservation issues. José joined the council to expand Staten Island's representation in the conservation community. He would like to see more young people outside, to foster concern for the environment. This fall José starts a PhD program in ecology at Rutgers University, but, of course, will still make time to bird.

© John Zucker



Ryan visits the Purple Martin colony in Lemon Creek Park, Staten Island.

Ryan Zucker of Manhattan is headed to Cornell University this fall to major in biology with concentrations in ecology and evolutionary biology. Though he'll be far from his favorite birding haunts, Central and Riverside Parks, his studies will continue to focus on birds. Ryan joined the council to help young people learn more about the natural world and its conservation. He likes that the group is "by young people, for young people" and hopes others recognize the incredible abundance of nature that exists in our human-built world. For Ryan, the top conservation issue in New York City is habitat loss; the City's fragmented green spaces must be protected and bolstered with more native vegetation to support both year-round and migrating feathered friends. Yet, Ryan notes, "the City still supports so much life, and there's so much to see in just the five boroughs. Go outside to somewhere green and look!"

GIVING A HAND TO THE EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*SIALIS SIALIS*): THE STATE BIRD OF NEW YORK

By Sandy Fiebelkorn

It's 7am in early May. Approaching a pair of bluebird boxes situated 30 feet apart on a pasture fence in Connecticut, I hear the swishing branches of a willow on the bank of a nearby gurgling brook. Then I hear what I came to see, chirping and frolicking overhead. I look up and there it is, the Eastern Bluebird, as Thoreau described it in 1852, "carrying the sky on its back and the earth on its breast." I feel solitary, but not lonely. Nature surrounds me.

Since 2009, I have been monitoring Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes on 12 rural properties in Cornwall, Connecticut, about 100 miles from New York City, in order to improve the birds' breeding success. Bluebirds prefer a habitat of open countryside, pastures, scattered trees, and open pine forests. They share that habitat with other secondary cavity-nesting species: Tree Swallows, House Wrens, European Starlings, and House Sparrows.

Once as common as the American Robin, the Eastern Bluebird suffered a severe decline in the first half of the 20th century, primarily due to an influx of House Sparrows and European Starlings. These two species, native to Eurasia, take over bluebird nests, breaking or removing eggs and even killing nestlings. In the late 1970s, bluebird societies around the U.S. encouraged property owners to mount man-made boxes on their properties to provide safer havens and reverse the decline.

From early April through mid-August, I check the boxes on my assigned properties every 7 to 10 days. I track the progress of each active nest box, tabulating bluebird pairs, eggs, nestlings and fledglings, and the number of days between each stage of their early lives. Monitoring requires more than just data recording, however; diagnostics and preemptive actions are often necessary:

- Blowfly infestation can occur quickly; removing the larvae before they consume the nestlings can be life-saving.



© Mark Boyd/Audubon Photography Awards

An Eastern Bluebird female (right) enthusiastically attends to nest-building while the more brightly colored male holds what may be a courtship "gift" to his mate.

- Prompt removal of vacated nests returns boxes to a habitable state.
- Intrusive nest-building by House Sparrows and European Starlings, often atop bluebird nests "under construction," prevents the bluebird pair from producing a brood. As these invasive species are non-native, there is no Federal regulation prohibiting removal of their nests at any stage.
- House Wrens have the maddening habit of constructing as many as four nests, only to leave three unoccupied, some atop bluebird nests. Although wrens are native, I am permitted to remove their nests if they are not yet cup-shaped or if they contain no eggs, in order to let the bluebirds continue their brood creation.



© Sandy Fiebelkorn

Historically, Eastern Bluebirds nested in tree cavities in natural forest clearings and open woods. However they readily nest in anthropogenic habitats such as old farm fields and orchards, parks, and golf courses, if nest sites are available.

Over the 12 years from 2009 through 2020, bluebird productivity in the boxes on my properties has vacillated, with an encouraging uptick in the 2014–2018 time frame, mainly due to an increase in pairs. The figures below are annual averages for each time frame. (Note that while the first two rows represent five years each, the most recent row includes only two years of data.)

	Pairs	Eggs	Fledges
2009–2013	7	25	17
2014–2018	11	48	30
2019–2020	8	26	8

Fortunately, 2021 is off to an auspicious start. Through May 22, there have been 6 pairs on the territories, with 15 eggs laid.

Concerted and continuing efforts across the country on behalf of bluebirds have made a real difference in recent decades: according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, Eastern Bluebird numbers rose between 1966 and 2015, and the species is now considered of “low conservation concern.” Bluebirds are a long-term symbol of hope, good health, and happiness in North America. May that be true for all of us in this year of recovery. (Learn more on the New York State Bluebird Society website at nysbs.org.)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD NESTING BASICS

- Courtship and nest-building takes 7-10 days. Males initiate nest-building by bringing material to a box or a natural tree cavity.
- The female completes nest construction, weaving strands of dry grass and pine needles, creating a very neat, deep, cupped nest often 3-4 inches high. Nest building takes 2-6 days and can require as many as 3,000 strands of grass and/or pine needles.
- Egg-laying begins 1-2 days after nest completion, with the female laying one powder blue egg per day in the morning. Average clutch size is 3-5.
- Females incubate the eggs for 12-14 days. Chicks fledge 16-22 days after hatching.
- Bluebird pairs in the Northeast can raise two broods each season.

While Eastern Bluebirds have not nested in New York City for many years, a recent collaboration in Van Cortlandt Park may change that: this spring NYC Audubon put up a dozen bluebird nesting boxes in partnership with NYC Parks, the Nature Group of Van Cortlandt Park, and Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. The boxes are being monitored by the Nature Group. So far, no bluebirds have nested—but several pairs of Tree Swallows and House Wrens have taken up residence. Keep your fingers crossed. ■



© Top photos of eggs and nestlings: Sandy Flebelle.com. Bottom photo of bluebird family: Russel Niemi/Audubon Photography Awards

The growth of an Eastern Bluebird brood, clockwise from left: eggs; altricial hatchlings, their eyes still closed; nestlings showing “pin feathers,” encapsulated by thin sheaths; a close-up of further developed flight feathers; and hungry fledglings, in a moment of potentially fierce sibling rivalry.

BIRDABILITY

By Elizabeth Norman

Birdability is an exciting and relatively new movement that seeks to ensure that birding is more accessible to people of different abilities. Founded by Texas birding guide Virginia Rose, the campaign was inspired by her experiences birding as a wheelchair user with her home chapter of Travis Audubon. Birdability employs outreach, education, and advocacy to pursue its mission and, in partnership with National Audubon, has created and published a map of accessible birding sites.

In New York City, we are fortunate that many parks are accessible to people with limited mobility, including many listed in NYC Audubon's Birding by Subway brochure, viewable at nycaudubon.org/bbs. (The next edition will indicate which parks have wheelchair-accessible subway stations nearby.) NYC Audubon offers some programs that are accessible to people with limited mobility and is working to better coordinate and expand these offerings. Other plans to grow accessible programming include closed-captioning functionality for upcoming online presentations and a spring birdsong event for those with low vision. NYC Audubon is committed to further progress as part of its dedication to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

As a NYC Audubon board member, I appreciate that active birders of limited mobility are part of the communities we

serve. During the pandemic I met birder Ros Steinberg, who recalled the joys of birding with her late partner of 40 years, Bonnie Berman. Ros recently found bird lists in which Bonnie had recorded close to 100 bird species she'd seen in New York State. Ros is in her early 80s and is fairly mobile with a rolling walker. She birds from her balcony and sometimes watches gulls and other birds at the South Street Seaport. She and I talked of joining NYC Audubon Guide Gabriel Willow on a walk in The Battery in the coming months.

In response to my suggestion of a walk with Ros, Gabriel shared "I'd love that! The Battery is totally accessible—as is Bryant Park, where a birder in a motorized wheelchair has joined my walks. That's one benefit of birding in NYC: probably the most ADA- (Americans with Disabilities Act) compatible birding anywhere, except for the general lack of curb-cuts or subway elevators that folks with wheelchairs or walkers have to deal with in general."

Sri Nandula is a NYC Audubon member who has enjoyed birding all over the world. I met Sri a few years ago on a trip to Nickerson Beach with NYC Audubon Guide Tod Winston, and I was impressed that Sri did not let birding as a deaf person slow him down. Sri notes that online classes can be difficult to follow when transcription or captioning services are not available,

but reported, "My experience birding has been incredible both in general and on NYC Audubon walks. I enjoyed observing the birds through my binoculars and checking the Sibley field guide with Tod." Sri has been taking a comprehensive bird biology course with Cornell Lab of Ornithology to develop his advanced skills.

Around the nation, parks and organizations are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of accessibility. Some trails and birding locations are installing paved paths or level boardwalks. In June, on a birding day trip to Mount Greylock State Reservation in the Berkshires, I was impressed to see a woman with a rollator walker on a dirt and gravel trail. She was on an outing with the Brookline Bird Club, which advertises some limited-mobility trips. Denver Audubon also recently established a Birding Without Barriers program, which has mapped Denver parks that allow those in wheelchairs to enjoy nature.

We have a long way to travel to make birding truly accessible, but it's heartening to see momentum building to make the enjoyment of birding open to all. Birdability is paving the way. Visit www.birdability.org for resources such as the Birdability Map of accessible birding sites, as well as content for people with mobility challenges and those who are neurodiverse, hard of hearing, or with low vision. ■



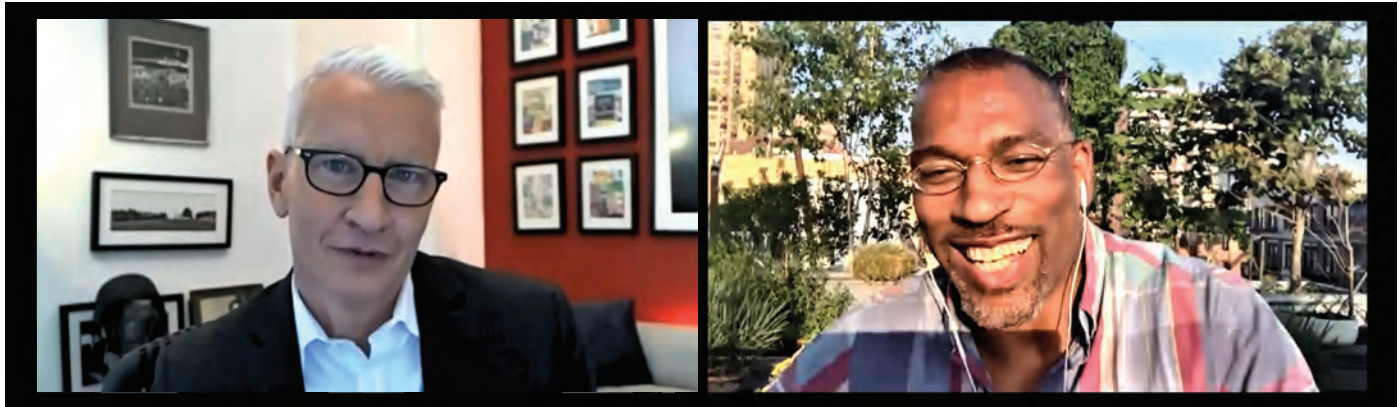
© Johann Schumacher/Alamy Stock Photo

The new viewing boardwalk by Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Center's Visitor Center is a good example of accessible park planning.

COOPER & COOPER IN CONVERSATION

ADVOCACY, ACTIVISM, AND MOVING BEYOND “THE INCIDENT” IN CENTRAL PARK

By Hillarie O’Toole



Anderson Cooper (left) and Chris Cooper meet via Zoom.

While many special events were moved online this past year out of necessity, few were so perfectly suited to Zoom as the conversation held this spring between CNN anchor and journalist Anderson Cooper and writer, birder, activist, and NYC Audubon Board Member Chris Cooper. Broadcast on May 19 for an audience of ticketed viewers, the event raised funds to support NYC Audubon’s efforts to diversify our community and to protect wild birds and their habitats in the five boroughs.

The exchange between the two Coopers oscillated between light-hearted, witty banter and deeply personal accounts of their experiences with discrimination. Chris, who serves as a guest cohost of *GAY USA* news, cheerfully introduced Anderson as the “other gay Cooper in TV news.”

The two quickly got down to business, addressing what Chris now refers to as “the incident.” Chris indicated that he has moved on from the now-infamous racist encounter in Central Park with Amy Cooper in 2020: “I know that people think I should have been traumatized . . . but she just does not have that kind of power over me.” Though Amy had taken their confrontation to a “dark place” in that moment, Chris noted—using her knowledge of systemic racism to her advantage—he would not allow “60 seconds of nonsense” to undo his love for Central Park and for birding.

Holding fast to his 35-plus years of

joyful birding memories in the park, Chris remains a staunch advocate for preserving delicate bird habitat. He maintains that keeping dogs on-leash is one of the best ways city residents can do their part: many do not realize the damage an off-leash dog can do, not only by frightening ground-feeding birds, but also by “tearing up the turf and plant life” in areas carefully cultivated for wildlife.

Taking turns as narrator, Anderson and Chris then shared their formative memories as gay men, their experiences of coming out, and the challenges they’ve faced. Asked about his experience with nature at his Connecticut home, Anderson recounted a tale of a “home invasion” by vultures that was part humor and part horror. (No vultures were harmed). While conceding he is “no bird expert,” Anderson expressed his appreciation for the power of nature and acknowledged the increased interest in birding that became evident during the pandemic. In agreement, Chris’s advice for all, and especially for city kids, was to continue to “get outside as much as possible” to experience nature’s healing.

Turning to the subject of social media, which gave “the incident” immediate and worldwide exposure, the duo examined its pros and cons, and discussed how it has changed the worlds of birding and journalism, alike: on the one hand, giving voice to many who have been long

silenced by traditional channels; on the other, potentially spreading dangerous falsehoods. (As Chris noted, “everyone has their own facts.”)

Anderson acknowledged that though he tries to avoid the “toxic” aspects of social media, without cameras we often wouldn’t know the truth. Chris, focusing on the birding world, fondly recalled the days when birders recorded their sightings in a logbook at the Central Park boathouse; now birders have sightings from around the park, and around the globe, at their fingertips.

The two Coopers concluded their conversation when Anderson had to “run off” to do the evening news broadcast—but not before he’d confirmed with Chris that the lovely bird calls he enjoys from his garden are indeed the cooings of Mourning Doves.

To cap off the evening, NYC Audubon Board Member César Castillo facilitated a lively Q&A session. A thoroughly engaged audience seemed eager to be involved in NYC Audubon’s ongoing work to create a more inclusive, welcoming, and safe space for all New Yorkers. Chris, who along with César is a member of NYC Audubon’s equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility committee, acknowledged that it is hard work and “we are going to make mistakes.”

Chris and César ended with some tips for new birders: get out there, bird both with groups and alone, and discover! ■

EVENTS & ADVENTURES

FALL WALKS ARE BACK!

We are pleased to be able to offer a variety of bird walks all around New York City this fall. Visit nycaudubon.org/local-trips-classes for information and to sign up for your favorite fall migration walks as well as free bird walks. Registration for members begins Monday, August 16 at 9am. Registration for nonmembers begins Monday, August 30 at 9am.

Please note: Due to certain precautions and restrictions, we unfortunately will not be offering van trips this fall. We know many of you love these trips and apologize that circumstances have delayed their return.

For updates right in your inbox, make sure to sign up for The eGret eNewsletter at nycaudubon.org/egret. And follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (@nycaudubon).

FALL LECTURE SERIES

We're planning an exciting hybrid lineup of both in-person and virtual lectures this season. We'll kick off in October with an engaging virtual panel exploring the Natural Areas Conservancy's new vision for the restoration and long-term care of New York City's wetlands. In November, researchers Dr. Shannon Curley and José Ramírez-Garofalo will discuss their bird-banding and survey work in Freshkills Park's grassland habitat. Finally, don't miss our December talk: Christopher Leahy of Massachusetts Audubon will discuss his new book, *Birdpedia*, a selection of bird terms, taxonomies, folklore, and more. To learn more details and see registration information, visit nycaudubon.org/lectures.



If you get out and bird this autumn, you may encounter the Chestnut-sided Warbler as it travels south in its dapper fall suit.

VOLUNTEER!



Make a difference for the City's wildlife. There are many ways to help. Visit nycaudubon.org/take-action/volunteer to see an overview of NYC Audubon's community science programs, such as Project Safe Flight, as well as habitat improvement events, such as beach clean-ups and plantings. To see any currently

scheduled orientation sessions or events, visit nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events. Make sure to sign up for the The eGret eNewsletter at nycaudubon.org/egret to get bimonthly updates on our programs.



FALL FESTIVALS



© François Portmann

Monarchs feed on asters (and Black-eyed Susans).

4TH ANNUAL JAMAICA BAY MONARCH AND POLLINATOR FESTIVAL

Sunday, September 19, 10am-3pm

With American Littoral Society, Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, and Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. Come celebrate pollinators like Monarch butterflies, moths, bees, and birds. Learn from experts and naturalists including Don Riepe and enjoy activities for the whole family. RSVP preferred but not required. For more information, visit nycaudubon.org/festivals. No limit. Free (donation suggested)



© Shawn Weber/Audubon Photography Awards

Cooper's Hawks migrate through the City in good numbers in the fall.

4TH ANNUAL RAPTORAMA! FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 16, 10am-3pm

With American Littoral Society, Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, and Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center to learn all about the hawks and owls of Jamaica Bay. We'll see some of these amazing raptors during a live demonstration, and go on walks with experts to get a look at hawk species flying south for the winter. RSVP preferred but not required. Visit nycaudubon.org/festivals for more information. No limit. Free (donation suggested)

NYC AUDUBON MEMBER EVENTS

Let's get back together in person! Join us for a NYC Audubon member event this fall. Member events are free for contributing NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up. Except for the KIDS walk, all member walks are limited to 15 people. These events are popular and fill up quickly; please limit your registration to one free member event in Central Park. Unless otherwise noted, register at nycaudubon.org/members-only or contact us at membership@nycaudubon.org or 212-691-7483 x301.

FALL MIGRATION IN THE CENTRAL PARK RAMBLE

Wednesday, September 8, 7:30-9am

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street to enjoy a fall ramble with Jeff Kimball, filmmaker of *Birders: The Central Park Effect* and immediate past president of NYC Audubon.

FALL MIGRATORY SONGBIRDS IN CENTRAL PARK

Monday, September 13, 8-10am

Meet at Central Park West and 103rd Street to join Kellye Rosenheim for a trek through Central Park's North Woods.

KIDS MEMBER WALK IN CENTRAL PARK

Saturday, September 18, 3-4:30pm

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street to explore the park's best birding hotspots with other young birders. Open to registered KIDS members ages 8-12, accompanied by a parent or guardian. To register, parents should email KIDS@nycaudubon.org. For more information about the KIDS membership program, visit nycaudubon.org/kids.

SEPTEMBER WALK IN THE CENTRAL PARK NORTH WOODS

Saturday, September 18, 8-10am

Meet at Central Park West and 103rd Street and explore the forest, meadows, and waterways of the North Woods with new NYC Audubon Board Member Kyu Lee.

A FALL STROLL THROUGH GREEN-WOOD

Sunday, September 19, 8-10am

Meet at the Main entrance to Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery at Fifth Avenue and 25th Street. Join new NYC Audubon Board Member Angie Co for a look around this historic and bird-filled Brooklyn green space.

FALL WALK IN PROSPECT PARK

Saturday, September 25, 8-10am

Meet at the entrance to Prospect Park across from Grand Army Plaza and join NYC Audubon Advisory Council Member Tom Stephenson, author of *The Warbler Guide* and creator of the *BirdGenie* smartphone app, for a fall meander.

EXPLORING GOVERNORS ISLAND

Friday, October 8 and Saturday, October 16, 10am-12:30pm

Take a mini vacation from the bustle of New York City. Meet at the Governors Island Ferry (Battery Marine Terminal near the Staten Island Ferry) for a short ride to the island and a morning of birding under the guidance of expert Annie Barry.

DECEMBER WALK IN CENTRAL PARK

Wednesday, December 8, 8-11am

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street for a walk with NYC Audubon Birding Guide Tod Winston. Brave the chilly weather as we search for some of Central Park's best wintering birds in the Ramble and Reservoir.

NEWS & NOTES



BIRD ILLNESS STRIKES THE MID-ATLANTIC STATES

A previously unknown disease causing sickness and death in songbirds is being reported in the Mid-Atlantic states as far north as New Jersey and Pennsylvania. (At press time in late July, there have been no confirmed reports in New York State.) The illness, which causes eye swelling and neurological signs, was first noted in May. It is recommended that all bird-feeding be discontinued for the time being. Find updates on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website at dec.ny.gov/animals/6955.html.

NYC PARKS FUNDING BACK IN 2022

We are happy to report that \$80 million has been restored to the NYC Parks budget for fiscal year 2022, including \$8 million for nature and resiliency. Learn more at ny4p.org/what-we-do/play-fair.

SUMMER BIRDING EVENTS CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND HISTORY

Following the second annual Black Birders Week, organized by BlackAFinSTEM, a group of Black birders, scientists, and conservationists, NYC Audubon celebrated Juneteenth, African American Emancipation Day, in Central Park. NYC Audubon Board Member Christian Cooper, Young Conservationists Council Member Efua Peterson, and New York City Biology Teacher Ronnie Almonte led a birding outing in the Ramble, followed by a potluck picnic.

This summer NYC Audubon co-organized “Let’s Go Birding Together” walks in partnership with National Audubon in Central Park and on Governors Island, in celebration of LGBTQ+ Pride Month. (See photo on page 21.)



© Timothy Caraballo

Efua Peterson (far left), Chris Cooper (center), and Ronnie Almonte (not pictured) led a celebratory Juneteenth bird walk in Central Park, followed by a potluck picnic.

STAFF

In the summer *Urban Audubon*, Executive Director Kathryn Heintz announced that she would step down from her position by December 30 of this year. The board of directors has formed a search committee. If you are interested in learning more about the executive director position, contact Kathryn at kheintz@nycaudubon.org.

Sohel Shah, a recent graduate of Tufts University and a summer intern with NYC Audubon in 2019, has joined the staff as our new conservation communications and advocacy associate. Welcome Sohel!

We thank two seasonal field technicians, Myles Davis and Francine Phillips, for their work this summer on the green roof of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center.

BOARD AND ADVISORY COUNCIL

NYC Audubon welcomes new board members Angela Co, Kyu Lee, and Patrick Markee, who were elected at our June annual meeting. (Get to know them on page 11.) Also at the meeting, Michael Yuan was elected executive vice president. NYC Audubon thanks Robert Bate; Richard H. Fried, VMD; Larry Levine; and Rachel “Kellie” Quiñones for their years of service on the board of directors. Mr. Levine, an environmental attorney with Natural Resources Defense Council, has joined the advisory council.

Joseph H. Ellis, a longtime member of the advisory council, is the recipient of the 2021 Environmental Leadership Award from Audubon Connecticut of Greenwich. Congratulations, Joe! ■

REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Make sure that New York City remains a haven for the birds and wildlife you love. A bequest to NYC Audubon is a generous and straightforward way to safeguard birds and their habitat in New York City’s five boroughs for the future.

A bequest can be expressed in a Will as simply as, “I bequeath [a sum of money, a percentage of my estate, or an IRA, life

insurance policy, or investment/bank account] to New York City Audubon Society, 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523, New York, NY 10010.” Consult with your attorney to determine what is best for your particular situation.

Visit nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy or contact us at development@nycaudubon.org to learn more about planning a gift for NYC Audubon.

STATEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY



New York City Audubon believes all people have the right to a close connection to the natural world and the right to a healthy environment. Preserving our environment is only possible if we all feel that connection.

We recognize that inequities in our society are widespread and hinder access to nature. Only by embracing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility as values and striving for them in practice will we begin to foster a love of nature in all people and inspire them to be active stewards of the environment.

We further believe that to thrive as an organization and

effectively advance our mission and vision, the diversity of New York City's people must be represented in, and welcomed into, our leadership, staff, and membership. The expertise, values, and perspectives of a diverse and inclusive organization are fundamental to expanding the reach and impact of our conservation, advocacy, and educational efforts.

We commit to building an equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible New York City Audubon, dedicated to protecting nature for all of New York City's people and its wild birds. ■



© Luke Frank/National Audubon

NYC Audubon and National Audubon hosted a "Let's Go Birding Together" walk this summer in Central Park, one of several Pride Month birding events.

BOOK REVIEWS

By Ivy Jo Gilbert



VESPER FLIGHTS
By Helen Macdonald
Grove Press, August 2020

As uncertainty related to the pandemic continues, and with attention sapped by marathon Zoom calls, nothing beats curling up with a book (an actual paper one) of reflective essays. Helen Macdonald, the acclaimed author of the memoir *H Is for Hawk*, won't disappoint readers looking

for a nature-inspired moment. Her latest, *Vesper Flights*, is a collection of over 40 compelling essays. I took this book with me while birding. While in transit, I found that they offered the right mixture of reflection and call to action that kept me coming back.

Macdonald has a sharp eye and a clear desire to share, taking readers from the meadows of her childhood in England, where she learned to love nature, to the high rises of New York City. Her varied subjects include ants, birds' nests, hares, NASA scientists, mushrooms, and songbirds. But what makes Macdonald's voice compelling is not just her ability to write about many different aspects of the natural world, but also her attention to detail and ability to make what she is experiencing relatable.

Published at the height of the pandemic's first wave, Macdonald's storytelling offered hope and comfort. I noticed myself recalling passages and entire essays, weeks after finishing them. I especially kept coming back to her essay

"Tekes Park," in which she looks back at her childhood adventures:

"So many of our stories about nature are about testing ourselves against it . . . defining our humanity against it . . . when I learned the names of the creatures from field guides it was because I needed to know them the same way I had known the names of my classmates. They made the natural world seem like a place of complex and beautiful safety."

In addition to sharing reflections on the intricately connected natural world, Macdonald questions the role that humans play in nature. She speaks urgently of not just the desire to write, but the need: "During this sixth extinction we who may not have time to do anything else must write what we now can, to take stock." After reading Macdonald's *Vesper Flights*, readers may find themselves itching to document their own natural history observations. I would recommend the book to anyone who wants to slow down and learn more about the natural world and its relationships. ■

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



NYC Audubon's conservation work and public programs are made possible by the philanthropic contributions of members, friends, corporations, foundations, and government agencies. We are grateful to all those who have sustained our work over the past six months, especially during these difficult times. Thank you also to the members and donors whose 1,356 gifts in amounts up to \$2,499.99 collectively provided \$88,179 in support of our mission from January 1 to June 30, 2021.

*Denotes new members of the American Kestrel Circle since our previous report in the Spring 2021 *Urban Audubon*.

AMERICAN KESTREL CIRCLE

Amy and David Abrams
Gina Argento
Tony Argento
Robert Bate and
Tracy Meade
Karen Benfield and
John Zucker
Claude and Lucienne
Bloch
MaryJane Boland and
Daniel Picard
Ronald Bourque
Marsilia A. Boyle
Virginia Carter
Gail Clark
Christian Cooper
Steven Dean*
Art Sills and Sarah DeBlois
Althea Duersten
Helena Durst
Joe and Barbara Ellis
Aline Euler*
Henry Euler*

Alexander Ewing and
Wynn Senning
Marcia and Bruce Fowle
Philip Fried and
Bruce Patterson
Richard H. Fried and
Stella Kim
Jeff Gramm*
Ronnie and Richard
Grosbard
Nancy Hager
Scott and Ellen Hand
Laura and David Harris
Kathryn and Vincent G.
Heintz
Cathy and Lloyd Heller
Sally Jeffords
Jamie Johnson*
Peter Joost and
Janice Laneve
Tatiana Kaletsch
Mary Jane Kaplan
Jeffrey Kimball and
Pamela Hogan

Pam King
Lauren and Ethan
Klingsberg
Andrea Krantz and
Harvey Sawikin
Nancy Langsan
Jade Lau
Deborah Laurel
Renee Lucier
Adrienne Lynch
Laure and Stephen
Manheimer
Pamela Manice
Jenny and Flip Maritz
Patrick Markee and
Elizabeth Ratner
Edith McBean
Andre Meade
Katherine Mele
Joyce Menschel
Clark Mitchell
Malcolm and Mary Morris
Maura Murphy
Mindy Papp

Will Papp
Bill C. and Terry Pelster*
Cheryl Reich and
David Dewhurst
Lew and Sheila Rosenberg
Christine Sheppard
Jennifer Shotwell
Winnie Spar
Alan Steel
John Steinberg and
Jill Pliskin*
Antonia Stolper and
Bob Fertik
Virginia Stowe
Lenore Swenson
Mary and Michael Tannen
Emma Tyrer
Sigourney Weaver*
Elizabeth Weinshel and
Joel Goldfarb
Sam Wertheimer and
Pamela Rosenthal
Chris Whalen and
Rocio Salas-Whalen
Shelby White
Elizabeth Woods and
Charles Denholm

Kings County Brewers
Collective
Lark Fine Foods
Leaves of Grass Fund
Leon Levy Foundation
Lily Auchincloss
Foundation
Manomet Center for
Conservation Science
The Marta Heflin
Foundation
Mill Rock Capital
Moore Charitable
Foundation
National Audubon Society
National Fish and Wildlife
Foundation
National Park Service
New York City Department
of Environmental
Protection
The New York Community
Trust
New York State
Department of
Environmental
Conservation
Orchard Jewelry
Patagonia
Peak View Foundation
Pine Tree Conservation
Society
Port Authority of New York
and New Jersey
Robert and Joyce Menschel
Family Foundation
Robert F. Schumann
Foundation
Robert W. Wilson
Charitable Trust
The Walt Disney Company
Foundation
William C. Bullitt
Foundation
Wood Thrush Fund

CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Achelis and Bodman
Foundation
Amazon Smile Foundation
American Littoral Society
The Apple Hill Fund
Arnold Glas
Bird Collective
Broadway Stages
The Bronx Is Blooming
The Capital Group
Companies Charitable
Foundation
Con Edison
Disney Conservation Fund
The Dobson Foundation
The Durst Organization
Euler-Revaz Family
Foundation
The Ferriday Fund
FXCollaborative
Goelet, LLC
Harry & Rose Zaifert
Foundation
Hudson River Foundation
Innisfree M&A
Incorporated
Jacob K. Javits Convention
Center
Kimball Foundation

TRIBUTE GIFTS

Chris Cooper
Marcia Fowle
Bernard Grossman
Cathy Heller
Lucy Keating
Karen Sandt

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Penny Brome
Rio Composto
Corinna Grant
Peter T. Loizeaux
Bruce Regal



Migrating Cedar Waxwings are often sustained by the berries of native Eastern Red Cedar.

© David Sloas, MD/Audubon Photography Awards

LET'S MAKE SURE MIGRATION IS A SOARING SUCCESS

What an exciting time to be in New York City: The doldrums of summer are quickly fading, and we look forward to reveling in fall's beautiful colors. Meanwhile, overhead, millions of birds are making their way south, many of them young birds for the first time. It is up to each locality along the vast Atlantic Flyway to make sure that the birds have what they need to complete their long journeys: food, water, and shelter. It is up to larger Audubon chapters like NYC Audubon to develop tools to ensure these long-distance travelers are safe from building collisions and disorienting artificial light at night. Below, you'll find several ways to support NYC Audubon's efforts this fall to make sure our city is truly bird-friendly.

NEW: BECOME A YOUNG CONSERVATIONIST

Calling all young nature-lovers, ages 18-35! For \$25 per year, a Young Conservationist membership will contribute to NYC Audubon's conservation work, and get you (or a young person you know) connected to the Young Conservationists Council and all they have planned: Flappy Hours, lectures, bioblitzes, trivia nights, and more. See the membership form below at the right or donate online at nycaudubon.org/donate.

The Young Conservationists Council, formed in early 2020, is a group of young New Yorkers who are committed to sharing the wonders of the City's diverse ecosystem with the next generation of New Yorkers, and who are dedicated to protecting and conserving its natural habitats.

GIVE MONTHLY

Provide ongoing monthly support to ensure our birds are protected throughout the year. You can make a huge difference for as little as \$15 per month. See the membership form at right or visit nycaudubon.org/donate.

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN KESTREL CIRCLE

Soar above the rest by making a donation of \$2,500 or more. American Kestrel Circle Patrons enjoy special access and exclusive tours (as possible given physical distancing restrictions). See the membership form at right or donate online at nycaudubon.org/donate. Contact us to learn more.

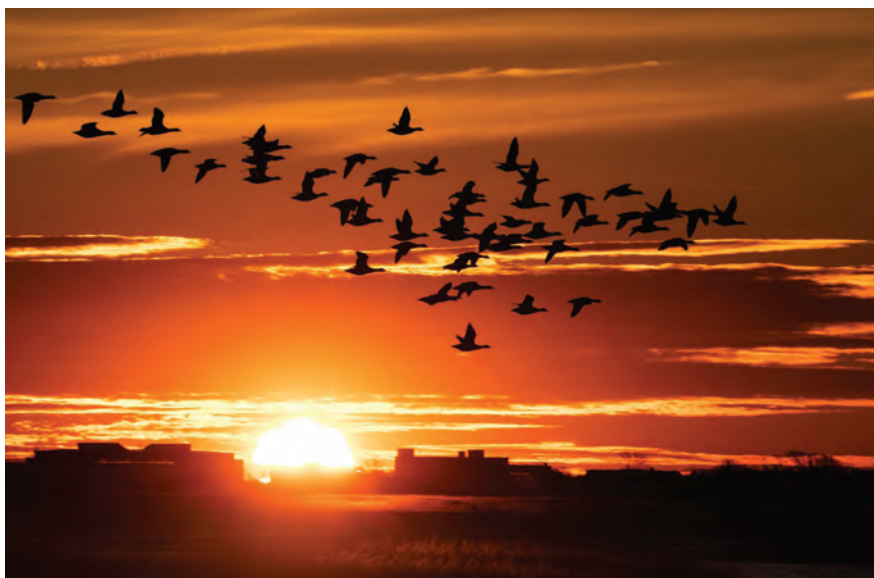
GIVE A MATCHING GIFT

Supporters can double or triple the value of donations through their employers' matching gift programs. Contact your company's personnel office to learn how. Be sure to specify New York City Audubon as the designee.

REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Please consider remembering the birds in your estate plan: see the bottom of page 20.

To learn more, contact us at (646) 502-9611 or development@nycaudubon.org.



© François Portmann

Atlantic Brant wing their way through the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Contributing members are essential to our conservation and outreach work.

Members receive *The Urban Audubon* newsletter and The eGret eNewsletter, enjoy discounts on field trips and classes, and make a difference for the City's wildlife.

☐ I would like to become a member by making a **recurring** donation in the amount of \$_____ **each month**.

I would like to become a member by making a one-time donation:

☐ American Kestrel Circle \$2,500 ☐ Conservationist \$500 ☐ Advocate \$250
☐ Supporter \$100 ☐ Family \$75 ☐ Friend \$25 ☐ Dual Friend \$50
☐ Young Conservationist(18-35) \$25 ☐ Student/Senior(65+) \$15 ☐ Dual Senior \$30
☐ Additionally, I would like to add a donation of \$_____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

☐ Enclosed is my check payable to NYC Audubon

☐ Charge my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐ AMEX ☐ DISC

CARD #: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Security Code: _____

Mail this form with your payment to:
 NYC Audubon • 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523 • New York, NY 10010
 Membership in NYC Audubon does not include National Audubon membership or *Audubon* magazine.
 Donations to NYC Audubon are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. NYC Audubon is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON

71 West 23rd Street
Suite 1523
New York, NY 10010

DATED MATERIAL:
Fall 2021 Issue

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
HUDSON NH
Permit No. 82

NYC Audubon's Fall Roost

AT THE CENTRAL PARK ZOO

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

Celebrate with us in person at the 2021 Fall Roost!

Our walkabout cocktail party offers strolls to the tropics, Antarctica, and the Sea Lion pool—all outside and in the friendly company of fellow bird-lovers.

Learn more, see silent auction items, and purchase your tickets at nycaudubon.org/fall-roost.