

THE URBAN AUDUBON

**TURN OFF THE LIGHTS THIS SPRING AND FALL;
SAVE MILLIONS OF LIVES**

**EXPANDING NYC AUDUBON'S REACH:
MEET ROSLYN RIVAS**

**VOLUNTEER PROFILE:
JUNKO SUZUKI,
DETERMINED BIRDER**

MARCIA FOWLE TAKES FLIGHT



MISSION & VISION

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.

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

STATEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

NYC 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.

THE URBAN AUDUBON

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PRESIDENT'S PERCH

By Karen Benfield,
Board President



Springtime bursts with forward momentum. Our clocks spring forward, green plants shoot up through the earth and bloom, and colorful birds wing across our city—staying a day, a week, a season. At NYC Audubon, those birds provide us with renewed motivation for the conservation work we undertake and remind us why collaboration is our best opportunity to make a difference for birds in the five boroughs.

We have exciting partners to celebrate, including several whose bird-safe-building contributions will make this spring's migration a safer one. Brookfield Place in downtown Manhattan, like the nearby World Trade Center, has been a major site of bird collisions. But throughout 2022, Brookfield Place management consulted with NYC Audubon on voluntary, proactive changes, retrofitting their glass in a particularly deadly area and turning off lights in one section during migration. While further study is needed, early data from our Project Safe Flight collision monitoring shows positive results: many fewer collisions. (Learn more on page 6.)

Across the East River, it's a similar story at 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge, where the installation of bird-safe film on a large portion of the hotel's façade last summer was an important step in mitigating collisions with reflective glass windows facing Brooklyn Bridge Park. Collision monitoring this past fall indicated that collisions had fallen by nearly two-thirds after that enlightened fix.

And at Central Park's Metropolitan Museum of Art, a masterpiece is now viewable outside the museum—a masterpiece of bird-friendly design, of course. As part of a major renovation of its Rockefeller Wing, the museum is installing bird-friendly glass on its southern park-facing façade. This carefully considered renovation will make a critical difference for the countless birds that stop over in Central Park during migration.

These retrofits are significant successes, and they are just a beginning. We will continue to encourage our partners to turn off lights and retrofit other façades, and monitor the sites to gauge the effectiveness of their efforts. We are thankful to partners like 1 Hotel, Brookfield, and the Met. They follow in the footsteps of our longtime partner the Javits Center, which continues to set an example of sustainability and bird-friendly design. Such collaboration is essential to reducing bird collisions in the City.

Collaboration is fueling other areas of our work, as well. As we research migratory birds' use of urban habitat, expand our public programs, and engage more New Yorkers in birds and nature, we are delighted to team up with green-space partners including the Madison Square Park Conservancy, the Bronx River Alliance, and the Marine Park Alliance. Read more about our work reaching new audiences on page 10.

YOUR partnership is key to our success. Your commitment to birds, and your support for our conservation work, are what allow us to be a critical ally for urban biodiversity. Thank you for your ongoing dedication to the work of bird protection and habitat expansion across New York City. We can't do this work without you.

Karen Benfield



The Palm Warbler, here perched among Eastern Redbud blooms, is one of the first warblers to arrive in the City each spring.

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Learn more about NYC Audubon's recent successes for the City's birds in our just-published Annual Report, viewable at nycaudubon.org/annual-report.

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SPRING 2023



The bright lights of New York City's skyline, though beautiful, draw migrating birds into danger © Daniel Mennerich/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



NYC Audubon Christmas Bird Count surveyors in Central Park © NYC Audubon



Public Programs Manager Roslyn Rivas holds a Merlin at Raptorama! © Tod Winston



Spring visitors to the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge are likely to see nesting Tree Swallows (here, a male) © Ryan F. Mandelbaum

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Cover Photograph: female Golden-crowned Kinglet on Northern Spicebush © Matthew Pimm/Audubon Photography Awards

Small Banner Photographs: Camilla Cerea/National Audubon, Susan Elbin, Steve Nanz, NYC Audubon, Don Riepe

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TURN OFF THE LIGHTS THIS SPRING AND FALL; SAVE MILLIONS OF LIVES

By Carol Peace Robins

Seventy percent of North American bird species are migratory—and among those, more than three-quarters migrate at night. In short, this means that roughly *half of all North American birds are nocturnal migrants*. We know that artificial light at night does great harm to these nighttime travelers. But exactly how and why this happens takes some explaining.

The Problem

To start, artificial lighting, both external and internal, attracts migrating birds. But this phenomenon must be considered at several different scales: locally, lights cause collisions; at a larger scale, lights attract birds toward cities; and at a regional scale, birds are pulled off of their historic migratory routes. As many as one billion birds die in window collisions each year in the U.S., and many of these collisions can be attributed to light pollution.

Lured away from their ancient routes, migratory birds end up in a web of glare. Their innate abilities to use the Earth's magnetic field and celestial clues to determine location and direction, which have evolved to function in the natural light of the night sky, are thrown off course. Disoriented by the light, they may flutter around aimlessly, becoming exhausted. They may strike buildings at night, often repeatedly. And they may be stranded in inhospitable areas after sunrise—and then collide with windows that offer illusions of safety in reflected sky and trees, causing injury that leaves them susceptible to predators, and often death.

How often birds collide at night and how often in daylight is not entirely clear (and that question is a subject of future NYC Audubon research). But altogether, NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight data indicate that up to a quarter million birds

die each year in window collisions in New York City alone.

Solutions

Turning off the lights is one obvious remedy to this problem—but making that happen isn't easy. Lately New York has made great progress at both City and State levels. In December 2021, supported by the advocacy of NYC Audubon and other environmental, academic, and animal welfare organizations, the New York City Council passed two laws that are good steps forward:

- Int. 274 requires all City-owned or occupied buildings to turn off outdoor lights from 11pm to 6am during peak periods of spring and fall migration.
- Int. 271 requires City buildings to install occupancy sensors, ensuring that indoor lighting shuts off automatically when no one is present.



© Helena CH

The artificial light of New York City (here, Manhattan) draws night-migrating birds off of their ancient migration routes. Once drawn into the urban landscape, birds may become disoriented and are more likely to strike windows, both at night and in the morning.

A third proposed City Council law, Int. 265, would hold all commercial and mercantile buildings in the City to the same requirements as City-owned and -occupied buildings. This bill unfortunately did not advance to a vote in 2021, but NYC Audubon is working with a coalition of partner organizations to ensure the bill comes up for a vote again this year, and to build grassroots support to aid its passage.

As for New York State, in January 2022, State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal (representing lower and midtown Manhattan) and Assembly Member Patricia Fahy (representing Albany and surrounding areas) introduced the Dark Skies Act, which would require that most nonessential outdoor lighting be extinguished after 11pm. This bill, which has strong support from our partners at Audubon New York, will likely come to a vote soon.

Effectiveness

And do such measures work? The two previously passed New York City Council Lights Out laws mentioned above are still being phased in, so it's too early to assess results. But elsewhere, there are plenty of indications that Lights Out saves birds.

- NYC Audubon Advisory Council Member Andrew Farnsworth of Cornell Lab of Ornithology, a co-author of a Chicago-based study, reports that when half the illuminated windows of Chicago's McCormick Place, a large conference hall on a lake front, were turned off during spring migration, collisions were reduced by 60 percent.
- In Germany, a study of a 41-story building during six autumn migrations concluded that "the numbers of casualties found . . . illustrate the significant negative effect on birds that such buildings have" due to artificial light at night.

Evidence of the importance of reducing artificial lighting is also beginning to mount closer to home. In 2022, building managers at downtown Manhattan's Brookfield Place turned out lights along one façade during spring and fall migration, in consultation with NYC Audubon. To test this Lights Out measure, Project Safe Flight volunteers monitored collisions before and after the policy was in place. The volunteers found



The collision victims pictured here (roughly from right to left, one Yellow-rumped Warbler, three Golden-crowned Kinglets, one Swamp Sparrow, three Brown Creepers, one White-throated Sparrow, and one Ovenbird) were found by Project Safe Flight volunteer Melissa Breyer on her collision monitoring route in the World Trade Center area this past October 15. These preventable deaths are the result of a combination of artificial light at night and reflective glass.

zero collision victims in spring, and in the fall saw collisions reduced by 77 percent compared to the previous year.

Two important caveats to these exciting results are that the Lights Out efforts at Brookfield Place took place at just one façade among many at the building complex—birds may have still collided elsewhere—and that there is high variation in the number of collisions between years. We need more than one year of data to confirm if this Lights Out effort was effective. There is still a significant amount of work to do to make Brookfield Place bird-safe, but these early efforts are evidence that Lights Out may be a viable solution.

Lights Out legislation—and implementation—is essential. As is bird-friendly design. Current Lights Out advocacy efforts follow on the heels of the 2019 passage of New York City's landmark Local Law 15, which requires all new construction and significantly altered buildings to use bird-safe materials. Imagine how many millions of birds will be saved if both bird-friendly design and reductions in lighting become part of our everyday lives—here and all over the world.

Learn more about upcoming Lights Out legislation, and how you can help, in Advocacy Updates on page 12. ■

CONSERVATION NOTES

This past winter, NYC Audubon's conservation team has been analyzing Project Safe Flight, Harbor Herons, and American Oystercatcher data from last year's field season, collaborating with partners on Lights Out legislation in New York City and statewide, and planning our spring 2023 field research. Read highlights of our work below.

PROTECTING MIGRATING BIRDS

Collision Monitoring, Lights Out, and Bird-Friendly Buildings

Project Safe Flight was greatly expanded this past fall to include routes in all five boroughs for the first time. For 11 weeks, nearly 120 volunteers dedicated their mornings to monitor select buildings for victims of window collisions. Through their dedication and effort, volunteers found 648 birds of 67 identified species, and transported at least 60 injured birds to the Wild Bird Fund for rehabilitation. Using this year's data, we were able to identify several high-collision façades and potential partners for future bird-friendly building retrofits. A recap of the season can be found at nycaudubon.org/blog/psf-fall-2022.

Over the next year we will be doing an in-depth analysis of the full 25-year Project Safe Flight data set to examine annual variation and trends in collisions. This analysis will allow us to further understand the extent of collisions in New York City and provide improved guidance for making the City bird-safe.

In addition, NYC Audubon collected data from the public through reports to [dBird.org](https://dbird.org), our online crowd-sourced data collection tool, which increases our understanding of bird collisions. In 2022, 3,010 reports were submitted to dBird in New York City, a 35 percent increase compared to the previous year. This increase most likely indicates a rise in public awareness of the issue of bird collisions and of dBird as a resource to contribute data, rather than an increase in collision rates.

We're also working with several partners to voluntarily retrofit their buildings, monitor collisions before and after bird-friendly

mitigation, and celebrate the successes of such measures. This fall, we monitored two sites where such mitigation was put in place; 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge and Lower Manhattan's Brookfield Place. 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge installed Feather Friendly window treatment on a subset of dangerous windows. Remarkably, their efforts reduced collisions by nearly two-thirds! At Brookfield Place, an installation of Bird Divert, an alternative window film, at a pedestrian overpass reduced collisions by over one half, and Lights Out efforts in a nearby façade reduced collisions by over three-quarters. We continue to monitor collisions at Brookfield Place and work with management to get additional bird-safe building measures in place to further reduce window strikes.

—Katherine Chen, Community Science and Outreach Manager;
Dustin Partridge, PhD, Director of Conservation and Science

SAFEGUARDING THE CITY'S WATERBIRDS

American Oystercatchers

Our efforts to analyze 12 years of data on beach-nesting American Oystercatchers in the Rockaways, Queens, is uncovering alarming trends: In just 12 years, American Oystercatchers have significantly extended their breeding season, likely due to climate change, and few chicks are surviving in the remotest parts of Breezy Point, despite a large number of nesting adults. We are currently working on fully synthesizing these results for publication.

To address these alarming trends on the ground, this spring we'll continue our long-term surveys of breeding oystercatcher pairs. We're also eager to launch an expanded "camera trap" study, which captures images of the nesting areas. This project will include breeding sites at Jacob Riis Park, Fort Tilden, West Beach, and Breezy Point. The camera-trap study will allow us to determine if predation is a major contributor to observed low hatching rates, and how predation may change as a result of a lengthened breeding season due to climate change.

—Emilio Tobón, Conservation Field Biologist

Wading Bird Foraging in the Bronx River

In 2010, as part of a larger study, NYC Audubon worked with partners to conduct wading bird surveys along the Bronx River (known previously as the Harbor Herons Foraging Study). Since then a substantial amount of restoration has occurred along the river. This spring, partnering with the Bronx River Alliance, we will be reviving the Bronx River survey. Using the same methods and survey locations employed in the original research, we will replicate the study to see how restoration efforts along the river have influenced wading bird activity. Have foraging birds increased in the river thanks to restoration? Are restored sites used more frequently than unrestored sites? How useful is habitat restoration for bird conservation? These are just a few of the questions we aim to answer. Stay tuned.

—Emilio Tobón, Conservation Field Biologist;
Dustin Partridge, PhD, Director of Conservation and Science



© Ryan F. Mandelbaum

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (here a brightly colored, healthy adult male) was a frequent victim of window collisions this past fall.



© Andrew Maas



Our Harbor Herons Nesting Survey team visits the islands of Jamaica Bay. We will be collaborating with the National Park Service this year to reduce predators on the Bay's Islands. The largest colony, Subway Island, was abandoned last year, most likely because raccoons accessed the island.

Harbor Herons

NYC Audubon concluded its 38th season of Harbor Herons surveying with the completion of our annual nesting survey report, and with a working group meeting to share data and trends on waterbird populations and conservation with regional and coastal partners. NYC Audubon's 2022 *Nesting Survey Report* of the Harbor Herons Project is now available online at nycaudubon.org/harbor-herons.

This January's annual meeting of the Harbor Herons & Other Waterbirds of the Greater NY/NJ Harbor Working Group included talks by 25 presenters (including three NYC Audubon staff). Topics ranged from the status of endangered shorebirds such as Piping Plover to the need for habitat restoration. Several trends have emerged from both the conference and our own data analysis:

- Waterbird populations are in decline in many areas.
- Predation is a major threat to beach-nesting birds in the region.
- A coastal/regional trends analysis is needed to determine if wading birds are declining over all or simply moving to different areas.
- Climate change is likely to have a huge impact on the wetlands and beaches where waterbirds breed and forage in the New York/New Jersey Harbor and Bight.
- Collaboration is key to successful conservation of waterbirds.

—Dustin Partridge, PhD, Director of Conservation and Science

CONSERVING AND MONITORING HABITAT

Green Roofs

We completed data collection at the Javits Center's green roof network this past fall, after a fascinating first year of biodiversity monitoring. In 2022 we regularly surveyed both the Center's original green roof, covered with low-growing *Sedum* species and the site of a Herring Gull nesting colony, and the Center's newer "expansion roof." This new expansion roof complex includes a farm, food forest, and pollinator garden.

Though we are still analyzing data and processing several thousand arthropod samples, preliminary results indicate that the vegetatively complex habitats of the expansion roof have attracted new species at a faster rate than the original green roof. Interestingly, the newer sections of the roof are also developing a unique subset of arthropod species, with several charismatic arthropods, like the Two-Striped Grasshopper and Green June Beetle, being fairly abundant.

We have also officially recorded 51 bird species using the Javits Center green roof network! Research Associate Tod Winston conducted bird surveys through the fall and recorded many exciting migratory birds using the roof, including Blue Grosbeak, American Woodcock, and Tennessee Warbler.

While somewhat anecdotal, an interesting finding from this year's observations is that birds are spending an extended period of time foraging on the Javits green roof, a pattern that differs from results on many other roofs surveyed in the City. Birds are lingering on the roof despite human presence, likely due to the habitat's quality and large size, which is not typical of local

CONSERVATION NOTES



green roofs. They also seem to be spending several days foraging, as they would in a larger park. On the original Sedum roof, our monitors have observed flycatchers staying for an extended foraging period, but no other migrant species. The varied habitats of the expansion roof seem to provide adequate food and shelter for many different types of birds for a longer period.

We are gearing up for another season of the Herring Gull Conservation and Management Program on the Sedum green roof. Our seasonal field technicians will begin working on the roof in early spring to ensure nesting occurs in areas safe for both birds and sensitive equipment.

—Dustin Partridge, PhD, Director of Conservation and Science

Parks, Gardens, and Restoration Sites

As part of our expanding program of biodiversity monitoring in urban habitats, this winter NYC Audubon kicked off a new monitoring partnership just a block from our office in Manhattan. Madison Square Park is known to local birders for the occasional views it provides of uncommon birds—sightings in recent years have included Mourning Warbler and Sora—but this busy urban park is also a good example of a small green space that provides important stopover habitat for many common migratory species. Periodic bird surveys, most frequent during migration, will help us to better understand the value such small parks hold for birdlife. Run in partnership with Madison Square Park Conservancy, upcoming monitoring and outreach events in the park will also

connect our conservation initiatives with a broad audience.

We'll also continue our monitoring work this spring at the Big Rock Wetland Restoration Project, in partnership with the Douglaston Manor Environmental Association and funded in part by Save the Sound. Recent sightings at this site in Udalls Cove, Queens, have included Bald Eagle, Red-breasted Merganser, and Lesser Scaup. Continued surveys of this ecologically rich site's shoreline and salt marsh will allow us to compare habitat use before and after upcoming restoration work, and serve as a way to educate the local community about the great variety of birds in their neighborhood.

—Tod Winston, Research Associate

Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Folks from all five boroughs of New York City participated in the 123rd annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. NYC Audubon coordinated the counts within the New Jersey-Lower Hudson count circle on Sunday, December 18, marshaling a record of nearly 250 volunteers to count birds at 35 locations across Manhattan and northern New Jersey, including a new count location at Madison Square Park. Eighty of these volunteers joined us in Central Park, one of our most popular count locations, where we counted 6,755 birds of 55 species. See highlights and photos from the count at nycaudubon.org/blog/cbc-2022 and results for the entire New Jersey-Lower Hudson circle at nycaudubon.org/cbc. Meet one of our count volunteers on page 9.

—Katherine Chen, Community Science and Outreach Manager ■



NYC Audubon volunteers survey the birds of Central Park during the 123rd annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE: JUNKO SUZUKI, DETERMINED BIRDER

By Phil Roosevelt

Junko Suzuki will never forget her first Christmas Bird Count. It was 2003, and snow was falling hard in New York. Junko and her fellow volunteers trudged through the northeastern reaches of Central Park, notebooks in hand, until the snow piled too high and the visibility dropped too low. A ranger with the group called for help, and a truck ferried them to safety. But that's not all she remembers from the day. Peering into the whiteness, the group had spotted a tiny bird with a long tail and a rust-colored cap—an American Tree Sparrow, the first Junko had ever seen. She thus got a “lifer.”

Junko almost always finds the bird. She has been tracking the birds of New York City, formally and informally, for more than 20 years. She has made it to no fewer than seven Christmas counts, including the one this past December. She is remarkably persistent: She looked for one species, the Henslow's Sparrow, for more than 10 years. In the 11th year, she finally spotted it, in the Shawangunk Mountains north of the City.

Junko, a native of Japan who has worked variously as a media consultant, a theater critic, and a graphics designer, first took to birds in the late 1990s after watching some Mourning Doves sleep on a fire escape in

Brooklyn. She was struck by the beauty and the peace. It was “almost a kind of healing experience,” she recalls. She read up on birds, took some classes, and began heading into Central Park as often as possible.

Early on, someone told her of watching a thousand Broad-winged Hawks wheeling and circling in the sky during a migration. The image stuck in her mind; year after year she looked for great masses of broad-wings. Finally, one morning last September, it happened. Starting at 10:50am, she watched one swirling flock after another fly over Central Park's Belvedere Castle. The flocks, or kettles, kept coming, bigger and bigger. A fellow birder joined her, then several more. By 5pm, the group had counted 3,256 Broad-winged Hawks. “It was just a dream come true,” she says.

For the 2022 Audubon Christmas Bird Count, held on a cold but blessedly blue-skied Sunday morning, Junko helped lead about 15 volunteers through her assigned area in the northwestern corner of Central Park, not far from her apartment. She clearly knew the turf. When the group reached a particular clearing, near 105th Street, she urged them to return at first light on spring mornings to take in the flocks of migrating songbirds.



Junko surveys her Christmas Bird Count territory in the northwest corner of Central Park.

Just as the count was finishing up, after six hours of hiking and tallying, Junko got a text message: a Redhead duck, a rarity in New York City, had been spotted from Battery Park City. She jumped on a downtown subway and, of course, found the bird. ■

VOLUNTEER!

Help make the City safer and more welcoming to wild birds. Spring community science opportunities include **Project Safe Flight** (see below), **Horseshoe Crab Monitoring**, and **outreach help at our festivals** and at our **Governors Island Nature Center**. Learn more and register at nycaudubon.org/volunteer.

PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

Light and glass pose major threats to migratory birds as they travel through New York City. You can help NYC Audubon collect data during migration by monitoring

designated buildings for collisions. This opportunity requires a time commitment of up to one hour, one morning a week, from April through early June. Virtual information sessions (required for new volunteers) will be held over Zoom:

- Tuesday, March 14, 6-7pm
- Thursday, March 16, 7-8pm
- Monday, March 20, 9-10am

Learn more and register to volunteer at nycaudubon.org/volunteer. Stay updated on all our programs via The eGret eNewsletter (sign up at nycaudubon.org/egret). ■



Make New York City safer for migratory birds like the Indigo Bunting.

EXPANDING NYC AUDUBON'S REACH: MEET ROSLYN RIVAS

By Mary Jane Kaplan

New York City Audubon's members, volunteers, and friends are a passionate group. Whether we're birders, environmental activists, all-around nature lovers, or some combination thereof, we're brought together by a love of birds.

In the face of the great challenges our birds face however—up to a quarter of a million deaths from collisions each year in New York City; dwindling habitat due to rising sea levels; and nationwide declines in the majority of bird species—one thing is clear. *Our passionate cadre of bird lovers is not enough.* In a city of 8.5 million, we must raise our sights. **We must enlist many, many more of our fellow New Yorkers in this fight.**

Hi, Roslyn—and a belated welcome to NYC Audubon. When did you first become interested in working with an environmental organization?

Hello and thank you! I was born and raised in the Bronx and grew up not far from the Bronx Zoo. I visited the Zoo almost every other weekend as a young child, and I definitely credit that as being my “origin story.” The Zoo really fostered my love for nature and animals. I knew from a young age that I wanted to do something with wildlife and biology when I got older. I used to carry an animal encyclopedia with me everywhere! Back then, my dream was to be a “real” biologist, out there in the rainforests and savannahs.

How did you go about preparing for that career?

I studied ecology and evolutionary biology at Yale and got my bachelor of science in 2017. After graduating, I worked at the New York Botanical Garden up in the Bronx and then at National Audubon, updating its Plants for Birds native plants database—I wrote over 300 descriptions of native plants!—and helping with Climate Watch as part of Audubon's community science team. Since that time, I also earned a graduate certificate in wildlife management from Oregon State University.

Did your experience at National Audubon influence your long-term career plans?

Working at National really made me conscious of how much wildlife—particularly birds—there is under our noses. There's so much here! People say things like, “Wildlife in New York City? You mean pigeons?” I tell them to look more closely and they'll find lots of flora and fauna, even in densely urban spaces. (And besides—I love pigeons; I would never insult them!) I've learned that green roofs are just as important as forests for studying wildlife.

Do you have particular goals in mind for the coming year?

Yes! For example, we now hold monthly lectures November through March. I'd like to expand them throughout the year, with speakers from as diverse backgrounds as possible, especially scientists, activists, and educators of color.

As for bird outings, I want to make sure we hold events in parks and neighborhoods we don't usually visit. Central and Prospect Parks are incredible birding spots, but there's more to NYC than just those popular areas, such as Crotona and Soundview Parks in the Bronx, and Conference House and Brookfield Parks in Staten Island. These “new” locations sometimes require new guides, and luckily the City is full of experienced and blossoming local birders. I'm using my own birder network to find them, as well as relying on our website to attract prospective guides (nycaudubon.org/join-our-team).

It is no small task. But Roslyn Rivas, NYC Audubon's public programs manager, has signed up for the job. You may already have met Roslyn on a bird outing, at our Shorebird, Pollinator, or Raptorama! festivals, or virtually, introducing our lecture series. Since joining us last August, she has been hard at work **expanding bird outings across the City, hiring new guides, forming new community partnerships, and making our programs more accessible to a wider audience.**

Longtime *Urban Audubon* contributor and Advisory Council Member Mary Jane Kaplan recently chatted with Roslyn to get to know her and learn what she has planned.



Roslyn shares NYC Audubon's work with a young family at the Raptorama! festival in Jamaica Bay. (See another photo of Roslyn on page 3.)

Increasing accessibility is also one of my priorities. We are making all our platforms accessible for people with disabilities and adding accessibility information to all our event descriptions.

How are you connecting with New Yorkers who aren't part of NYC Audubon's usual audience?

In addition to expanding the areas where we hold events, forming new partnerships is a great way to reach more City residents. I'm collaborating with local groups across the City, such as the Bronx River Alliance, various park conservancies, and community gardens. I'm also very happy to be continuing relationships with organizations like the Feminist Bird Club, Latino Outdoors, and Outdoor Afro. Our festivals in Jamaica Bay, Marine Park, and on Governors Island also draw many NYC residents who aren't familiar with our work.

Overall, my goal is to expand the wildlife conservation network in New York City, especially in marginalized communities. Not everyone has equal access to green space, especially in urban areas, so I want to make sure we reach people who don't often have a chance to connect with nature. Everyone should have a positive experience with the environment, and birding is one of the many activities that can provide just that. I really want to emphasize that birding is for everyone. It isn't an exclusive club, and you don't need fancy equipment to participate. Over the years, I've realized that I can work at wildlife conservation just as well in the City as in a tropical rainforest. I might even think about pursuing a degree in urban ecology in the future.

What is your biggest challenge in the new job?

Trying to balance all my ideas! ■

EVENTS & ADVENTURES



Spring is nearly here and we have lots in store! Join us on bird outings, classes, and festivals all across the five boroughs. We're teaming up with a great array of new partners, including New York Restoration Project, Rocking the Boat, Alice Austen House, and so many more. Row with us down the Bronx River, engage in photography workshops on Staten Island, and join bilingual bird outings in your local parks.

Complete listings of our spring outings and classes will be posted at nycaudubon.org/local-trips-classes by Wednesday, March 1, at 5pm

SPRING OUTINGS AND CLASSES

Outings and Classes: View our complete listings of spring outings and classes and register at nycaudubon.org/local-trips-and-classes.

Members-Only Outings: Members-only outings are free for contributing NYC Audubon members, who also receive a 30-percent discount and early registration for most fee-based outings and classes. See our spring schedule and register at nycaudubon.org/members-only.

REGISTRATION DATES

NYC Audubon Members: For NYC Audubon members, registration for all events (both members-only outings and fee-based outings and classes) begins on **Monday, March 6, at 9am**. See our website (links above) for details and contact membership@nycaudubon.org if you need to confirm that your membership is active.

Nonmembers: Outings and classes registration for nonmembers begins on **Friday, March 10, at 9am**. See our website (links above) for details, or visit nycaudubon.org/membership to become a member and get early access to registration.

DON'T MISS OUT: JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST

Sign up for The eCret eNewsletter at nycaudubon.org/egret and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (@nycaudubon).



At our annual Horseshoe Crab Festival, we may see Red Knots and other shorebirds feeding on horseshoe crab eggs in Jamaica Bay.

JOIN US AT A FESTIVAL THIS SPRING!

Come out and have fun with the birds, and with your fellow New Yorkers, this spring. Learn from local bird and ecology experts, go on a bird outing, and participate in family-friendly activities:

- **Earth Day in Carl Schurz Park – Saturday, April 22**
- **Climate Arts Festival at Queens Botanical Garden – Saturday, April 22.**
- **Jamaica Bay Horseshoe Crab Festival – Saturday, May 20**

No limits. Free. Learn more about each event and register at nycaudubon.org/festivals.



"The Hills" of Governors Island offer striking views of the City—and nesting territory for Yellow Warblers and Tree Swallows.

GOVERNORS ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, May 5-October 29, 11am-5pm
Location: Nolan Park House 17

Take the ferry to Governors Island and visit NYC Audubon's nature center at Nolan Park House 17. Governors Island boasts an eBird list of 238 species (and counting). Borrow binoculars and learn from an experienced guide on one of our free weekly bird outings, or strike out on your own. Find more information about birding and special events at nycaudubon.org/gov-island. To inquire about volunteering opportunities or our Artist in Residence program, contact Advocacy and Engagement Associate Jesse McLaughlin at jmclaughlin@nycaudubon.org.



NYC Audubon Vice President Chris Cooper and Young Conservationist Efu Peterson lead an outing during Black Birders Week 2022.

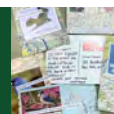
SAVE THE DATE THIS SPRING AND SUMMER

Make sure to put these special birding events on your calendar!

- **World Migratory Bird Day – Saturday, May 13**
Come birding with us: NYC Audubon will host free bird outings across the City in celebration of migratory birds.
- **#BlackBirdersWeek 2023 – Sunday, May 28-Saturday, June 3**
Take part in this year's Black Birders Week, organized by The BlackAFInSTEM Collective—a collective that "seeks to support, uplift, and amplify Black Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics professionals in natural resources and the environment through professional development, career connection, and community engagement."
- **LGBTQ+ Pride Events – the month of June**
Come out to bird and celebrate Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ Pride Month. Allies welcome!

Visit nycaudubon.org/events-birding/calendar to check for scheduled events as these dates approach. ■

ADVOCACY UPDATES



SUPPORT CITY- AND STATEWIDE LIGHTS OUT LEGISLATION

Artificial light at night attracts night-migrating birds, disorienting them and drawing them into New York City where they are likely to strike glass windows. (Learn more on page 4.) Two bills that will protect migrating birds by limiting lighting need your support, at City and State levels. :

- In December 2021, two important Lights Out bills, Int. 271 and Int. 274, were passed by the New York City Council. These two laws, which require that all City-owned and -occupied buildings turn out nonessential outdoor lights and use occupancy sensors during peak migration periods, will reduce collisions and save tens of thousands of birds' lives every year. **Lights Out Bill Int. 265**, which was also introduced in 2021 but did not advance to a vote, would enforce these same limits in all commercial and mercantile buildings. NYC Audubon is working with the Lights Out Coalition to advance this more inclusive landmark legislation in 2023.
- The **Dark Skies Protection Act (S7663)**, introduced by Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal (D/WFP-Manhattan) and Assemblymember Patricia Fahy (D-Albany), would require that most nonessential outdoor lighting across New York State be extinguished after 11pm, be motion-activated, or be covered by an external shield.

Visit nycaudubon.org/advocacy to learn how to support passage of these two bird-friendly bills.

HELP SPREAD GREEN ROOFS ACROSS THE CITY

Green roofs provide many environmental benefits, including insulation, reduction of the urban "heat island effect," absorption of rainwater, and habitat for birds and other wildlife. NYC Audubon is working with several partners to improve New York City's Green Roof Tax Abatement program to help offset the high costs of green roof installation. Proposed changes will make the abatement more accessible to City residents by reducing the current four-inch soil depth requirement to two inches and by extending the number of years funds are available through the abatement.

Currently, a \$15 tax abatement per square foot of green roof space is available in certain



© Catherine Paul

NYC Audubon's radio-tagging of shorebirds, such as this Semipalmated Sandpiper, will allow us to research the threats posed by local wind farms.

priority community districts of the City. We're working on several other recommendations for the program: increasing the baseline abatement amount from \$5.23 to \$10 per square foot in non-priority areas, and raising the total programmatic cap from \$1 million to \$10 million. Visit greenroofsny.com/financingoptions to learn more about this program.

MINIMIZING THE IMPACT OF OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY

Offshore wind is an effective and clean energy source. The siting of wind turbines must be carefully considered, however, as they may negatively impact bird populations. Empire Wind, a utility-scale wind farm slated for the offshore area south and east of the City called the New York Bight, is likely to begin construction soon. In January, NYC Audubon, in partnership with many conservation and biodiversity organizations, submitted comments in response to the Bureau of Ocean Energy management's Draft Environmental Impact Statement, calling for increased monitoring and reduced impact on

migrating and offshore/pelagic bird species.

We will continue to follow the progress of Empire Wind and will submit additional comments as needed. We are also expanding our waterbird conservation research to focus on southbound migratory shorebirds that are likely to encounter turbines built in New York Bight, in order to better understand the risks these birds may face.

Read more about wind power and its possible impacts on birds at nycaudubon.org/wind-power-horizon.

ON THE HORIZON: STORM SURGE BARRIERS IN NEW YORK HARBOR

Extreme storms and flooding have hit New York City in recent years, and such incidents will become increasingly common as global warming progresses. In response to this current and long-term threat, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is investigating flood control measures for the New York-New Jersey Harbor, including storm surge barriers at the mouth of various waterways, via its

NY & NJ Harbor & Tributaries Focus Area Feasibility Study (HATS).

This project is currently in the planning phase and has not been permitted or funded; construction wouldn't begin till 2030, with completion by 2044 at the earliest. The mass installation of flood control measures would impact the City's shorebirds and waterbirds, though the extent of the impacts would depend on the location and size of the measures put in place. We have submitted comments requesting increased focus on the cumulative impacts of the project on waterbirds in the Harbor and will continue to monitor project developments. Learn more about HATS at bit.ly/3KOjqlZ.



© Don Riepe

Pollinators such as this Question Mark Butterfly are threatened by neonicotinoid use.

THE BIRDS AND BEES PROTECTION ACT

This past January, NYC Audubon co-signed a coalition letter to Governor Hochul and state legislative leaders urging reintroduction of the Birds and Bees Protection Act, a bill that would ban harmful and unnecessary use of neonicotinoid pesticides ("neonics") statewide. We have been partnering with Audubon New York and the Natural Resources Defense Council in support of this bill, which would greatly reduce usage of neonics, a widely used class of neurotoxic insecticides that is believed to be a principal contributing factor in the 30 percent decline in North American birds in the past 50 years. Learn more about what you can do to support the bill at inktr.ee/BirdsandBeesProtectionAct.

Find out what steps you can take to contribute to the bird-friendly advocacy efforts above, and sign up to be an Avian Advocate, at nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates. ■

NYC AUDUBON LOSES TWO LONGTIME FRIENDS

We are saddened to share the passing of two good friends of NYC Audubon. Each, in their own way, contributed generously to the organization's mission through their significant and varied talents, dedication, and hard work.

PETER P. BLANCHARD III (1951-2022)

Peter Blanchard, an early and supportive friend of NYC Audubon, passed away this past August. Peter was at home in nature everywhere; in his New Jersey estate known as Greenwood Gardens, which he restored and opened to the public in 2013; on the coast of Maine; in Brooklyn and Queens' Jamaica Bay complex; and on Staten Island. He was a meticulous observer of ecosystems and wildlife and authored three landmark reports for New York City Audubon: *Buffer the Bay Revisited: An Updated Report on Jamaica Bay's Open Shoreline and Uplands*; *Jamaica Bay Coastal Habitat Restoration Project at Bayswater State Park and Dubos Point Wetlands Sanctuary, Queens, NY, 1994-1996*; and *An Islanded Nature: Natural Area Conservation and Restoration in Western Staten Island, including the Harbor Herons Region*. These eloquently written accounts remain the basis for the recovery of flora and fauna in Jamaica Bay and Staten Island, and we continue to learn from them.

NYC Audubon extends its sympathies to Peter's wife and son, Sofia and Theo. Read more about Peter's life, and about Greenwood Gardens, at bit.ly/3lcD0cr.

ALAN MESSER (1955-2022)

Alan Messer, an accomplished artist and well-known figure in the New York City birding community, passed away this past December. Alan generously shared his beautiful artwork of birds with NYC Audubon: many of his illustrations were featured in early issues of *The Urban Audubon*, and in 2015, NYC Audubon collaborated with him on an exhibition of his work at the Central Park Arsenal, "Conserving Our City of Nature." Alan gave his time and expertise freely to several partners of NYC Audubon, as well. He led bird outings for the New-York Historical Society and the Wild Bird Fund, and was a past president of the Linnaean Society of New York.

NYC Audubon extends its sympathies to Alan's wife, Janet Shapiro. Read more about Alan's life at legcy.co/3JZMpX9.



Alan Messer's painting, *Crowded House, South Brother Island*, depicts one of the Harbor Heron islands that Peter Blanchard celebrated and defended so eloquently in his written works.

MARCIA FOWLE TAKES FLIGHT

By Lauren Klingsberg, Publications Committee Co-Chair

When Marcia Fowle announced that she was stepping away from NYC Audubon and moving out of New York City, my first reaction was that I could not imagine NYC Audubon without her. When I walked into NYC Audubon's office in 1998 to offer to work on its newsletter, I met a cheerful, personable woman who made the prospect of volunteering with NYC Audubon sound both substantive and fun (both of which have proved to be true). Marcia was at that point the first and only employee of a fledgling organization.

In 1992, when she interviewed to be NYC Audubon's first executive director, she was looking to put her recently earned degree in city planning to use. She described herself then as "not a birder"; but over her 30-plus-year career working and volunteering for NYC Audubon, she has made a remarkable and indelible difference for the City and its birds. Marcia served as executive director for six years: a time that saw the emergence of Project Safe Flight, now one of NYC Audubon's signature projects; the Jamaica Bay Restoration Project; and a comprehensive nesting survey of Central Park.

As she segued from the role of executive director to that of volunteer, she maintained the ethos of NYC Audubon, which she describes as "not casual volunteerism." As a volunteer, she has served continuously on the NYC Audubon board



Marcia at her weekend retreat in the Berkshires

of directors or advisory council, serving for many years as the council's co-chair. And for nearly 25 years, she and I have co-edited *The Urban Audubon* and served as co-chairs of the publications committee. Marcia has steered the newsletter through multiple major redesigns (see below) and many years of growth. It's been quite a run.

Marcia has accomplished much more, however. She authored, along with past Harbor Herons Nesting Survey Coordinator Paul Kerlinger, *The New York City Audubon Society Guide to Finding Birds in the Metropolitan Area*, making

accessible important and then extremely hard-to-find information on how to go about engaging in a burgeoning pastime. She edited *Bird-Safe Building Design*, NYC Audubon's signature and first-of-its-kind document that provides architects and builders with invaluable guidance on the construction of buildings less lethal to the City's bird population. And she has served on countless Fall Roost committees, growing NYC Audubon's annual fundraising event to the gala benefit it is today.

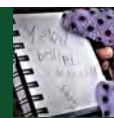
These are just a few of Marcia's many accomplishments, which are too long to list here in total. But it is her warmth and wit that I will miss the most—along with her pragmatic, can-do attitude and the stories she tells of the organization's history and of her passionate and colorful fellow volunteers and staff. In no small part due to her tenacity and drive, NYC Audubon has grown to better represent the City and to better protect its birds. We will miss her dearly.

Though Marcia is moving this summer to Vermont with her husband, bird-friendly architect and longtime NYC Audubon supporter Bruce Fowle, we are happy to report that she will remain on NYC Audubon's advisory council. We look forward to a continuing relationship and wish both Marcia and Bruce well in their new habitat. ■



Marcia Fowle's tenure as NYC Audubon executive director, president of the board, co-chair of the advisory council, and co-editor of *The Urban Audubon* has seen the organization through great change and growth.

NEWS & NOTES



LEARN HOW YOU'VE HELPED THE CITY'S BIRDS

NYC Audubon's *2022 Annual Report* is now available! We've introduced a concise visual format this year to share our victories for birds—from new bird-friendly design retrofits to high-tech shorebird banding. Read about our accomplishments, learn about exciting new projects, and join us in acknowledging the generosity of our donors. Learn more at nycaudubon.org/annual-report.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE AND ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 7, 6pm

A virtual gathering, free and open to the public

NYC Audubon conducts scientific research in New York City to understand how birds are using our urban environment and how this environment affects them, via signature conservation programs such as Project Safe Flight, Waterbirds of NY Harbor, and Green Infrastructure. Whether you're a NYC Audubon member or just curious to learn more about our work, please join us virtually to hear about our accomplishments over the past year and our goals for the year ahead.

Our board election and annual meeting of members will precede the presentation. Registration required. Free and open to the public. Register at nycaudubon.org/annual-meeting.

BOARD AND ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWS

NYC Audubon is grateful beyond words for the three decades of service, in many different roles, that Marcia T. Fowle has dedicated to our organization, and to the welfare of the City's birds. Though Marcia is stepping away from her most recent positions as co-chair of the publications committee and advisory council, we are grateful that she will remain a member of our advisory council. Read more about Marcia's contributions and accomplishments on page 14.

DRONE LIGHT SHOW DURING FALL MIGRATION

NYC Audubon voiced concerns on several local news outlets this November about a 500-drone light show that took place over the Hudson River, in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the game *Candy Crush*. NYC Audubon Executive Director Jessica Wilson and Director of Conservation and Science Dustin Partridge, PhD, explained that such light shows should not be permitted during migration because of the danger they pose to migrating birds, and advocated for a reduction in artificial lighting during spring and fall migration.

A BIRD-FRIENDLY PROSPECT PARK VALE RESTORATION

NYC Audubon has been working with partners at the Brooklyn Bird Club to provide expertise and advocacy for a bird-friendly design for the restoration of the northeast corner of Prospect Park, known as the Vale. Prospect Park Alliance has been responsive to our feedback and we are pleased that their recent Vale design plans include a reduced footprint for a proposed building (which will also have a green roof); protection of woodland areas; the closure of a children's play area that has disturbed sensitive habitat and an enclosure around a new play area; and ecological restoration including a new pollinator meadow and the connection of previously fragmented forest areas.

The plans will go through a formal public review in 2023, and we expect the resulting design will be a win for both birds and people.

OPT FOR THE DIGITAL URBAN AUDUBON

Save paper by opting for the online *Urban Audubon* (view this issue at nycaudubon.org/ua). You'll receive email notification right as the print copy hits mailboxes. Visit nycaudubon.org/go-digital or scan the QR code at right. ■



THERE'S MORE ONLINE! DIGITAL URBAN AUDUBON STORIES

Don't miss two more bird-filled **Digital Urban Audubon Stories**! Visit nycaudubon.org/digital-ua to find:

- **Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*)**, by Don Riepe: Learn all about this summer resident and its history in the City.
- **Birding while Busy** by Hillarie O'Toole: Get tips on how to fit birding into your busy daily life. ■

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

E editing and designing *The Urban Audubon*, on and off, over the past 10 years has been one of the great joys of my life. Working with longtime co-editors Marcia Fowle and Lauren Klingsberg, with my colleague Andrew Maas (who was himself an excellent *Urban Audubon* editor and designer for several years), and with all the talented members of the publications committee has been a great privilege and has taught me more than I can say.

I am not leaving NYC Audubon—God forbid! But the time has come for me to shift some of my focus to neglected artistic pursuits, and this means that going forward, I will spend most of my

NYC Audubon time working as a research associate in the field, and as a birding guide and teacher.

I am very grateful to know that I leave *The Urban Audubon* in more than capable hands, despite the departure of Marcia Fowle. Longtime Co-Editor and Advisory Council Member Lauren Klingsberg has graciously offered to step back into a more hands-on role to guide the publication. And Andrew Maas will once again oversee production in the office.

I look forward to what I'm sure will be a superb summer issue. And, I look forward to seeing many of you, more often, in the park!
—*Tod Winston* ■



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NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON

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

DATED MATERIAL:
Spring 2023 Issue

SUPPORT NYC AUDUBON

GIVE NOW TO HELP BIRDS THRIVE IN NEW YORK CITY

There are many ways to support NYC Audubon's work to protect the birds of New York City and their habitats. Help us continue our work to enact comprehensive bird-friendly building and Lights Out legislation, and to introduce all the communities of New York City to the wonder of birds. **Your contribution can make a real difference for the birds you love, now and in the future.**

DONATE TO PROTECT BIRDS

Make the City a safer place for the millions of birds that pass through during spring migration. Give at nycaudubon.org/donate.

BECOME A MEMBER

Join our flock by becoming a member of NYC Audubon! With membership levels geared toward young professionals, families, seniors, and more, your dues support NYC Audubon's conservation work and connect you to like-minded New Yorkers through special members-only bird outings and events, 30-percent discounts and early registration on fee-based outings and classes, and other perks. Join at nycaudubon.org/membership.

GIVE MONTHLY

Provide ongoing monthly support to protect birds throughout the year. Make a huge difference for as little as \$15 per month. Set up recurring monthly donations at nycaudubon.org/donate.

GIVE A MATCHING GIFT

You can double or triple the value of donations through a matching gift program. Contact your employer's personnel office to learn how. Be sure to specify *New York City Audubon* as the designee.



Golden-crowned Kinglets (a female, featured on our cover, and a male, above, stunned from a window strike) are frequent collision victims. The lives of countless kinglets will be spared by comprehensive Lights Out and bird-friendly building legislation.

REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Including NYC Audubon in your estate plan is a generous way to ensure that New York City remains a haven for the birds you love. 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 discuss your particular situation. Learn more at nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy.

Contact Director of Development Matthew Coody at 646.502.9611 or at mcoody@nycaudubon.org to discuss making a bequest to NYC Audubon. ■