

THE URBAN BIRD CALL

NEW
TITLE!



**JEFFERSON MARKET GARDEN:
HABITAT IN THE HEART
OF MANHATTAN**

THE COOPER'S HAWK



MISSION & VISION

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

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

NYC Bird Alliance 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 commit to building an equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible organization, dedicated to protecting nature for all of the City's people and its wild birds. For more information, visit go.nycbirdalliance.org/edia.

THE URBAN BIRD CALL (FORMERLY THE URBAN AUDUBON)

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BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

By Jessica G. Wilson, Executive Director
and Mike Yuan, Board President



For our staff and board, this summer has been one of looking back and looking ahead. As we prepare for our Fall Roost gala, which will celebrate 40 years of work to study and protect our city's Harbor Herons (see page 7), our team has sorted through historic maps, photos, data sheets, and press clippings to accurately tell the story of this momentous work. For four decades, our scientists and volunteers have surveyed New York Harbor, documenting the long-legged wading birds we have come to call the Harbor Herons.

This long-term scientific dataset has guided and empowered our advocacy to protect these islands and the charismatic birds that depend on them for breeding. From fighting against development at Goethals Bridge Pond in the 1980s, to establishing the Harbor Herons Wildlife Refuge safeguarding islands along Staten Island in 1991, to protecting South Brother Island in the East River from commercial interests in 2007, NYC Bird Alliance has worked tirelessly to create an interconnected network of protected habitat throughout the Harbor where biodiversity can expand and flourish. This work is just one example of the foundational efforts we'll protect and grow in the years to come.

Our new Strategic Plan, which will be published this fall, will guide our work to protect birds and urban biodiversity for the next five years (learn more on page 6). This next chapter of our organization will no doubt bring challenges, yet we're inspired by our legacy of success. Our decades of conservation work in New York City make us poised for the future, as we continue to grow our impact and strengthen our community. ■

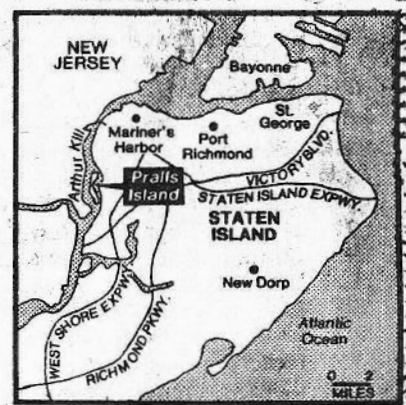
City's Plans Call for an Island That's Strictly for the Birds

Not a single resident of Block 1935, Lot 1, showed up yesterday for a hearing before the City Planning Commission on the fate of their home.

That was not so much a comment on political lethargy as it was on the local residents: several hundred pairs of glossy ibises and snowy egrets.

What the government's numbers described was Pralls Island, a deserted salt meadow and heron rookery in the Arthur Kill off Staten Island.

By doing "as little as possible" to the island, the New York City Audubon Society hopes to manage it as a sanctuary for the birds. "They're not



The New York Times/June 19, 1984

The New York Times covered NYC Bird Alliance's campaign to protect Staten Island's Prall's Island from development in 1984. The advocacy succeeded when the area became part of the Harbor Herons Wildlife Refuge in 1991 under Mayor David Dinkins.



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Supporting responsible use of forest resources

DATA AND DISCOVERY AT JEFFERSON MARKET

By Andrew Maas, Director of Marketing and Communications

The historic Jefferson Market, a beloved public library in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, is known for its legacy of meticulous documentation. Now, in the adjacent Jefferson Market Garden, NYC Bird Alliance Urban Biodiversity Specialist Tod Winston is methodically cataloging a different kind of valuable record: the diverse birds inhabiting this vibrant natural nook.

Waking before dawn, Tod surveys the one-third-acre garden, noting American Robins and Gray Catbirds feeding fledglings, along with calls from Blue Jays and Northern Mockingbirds. He'll return throughout the fall, building a comprehensive list as part of NYC Bird Alliance's expanding green infrastructure biodiversity monitoring efforts.

"Every small patch contributes to a larger vision for our urban birds," says Director of Conservation and Science Dustin Partridge, PhD. "This project, our first deep dive into monitoring a community garden, is showing us how green spaces of all sizes can dramatically enhance urban bird habitat."

But this scientific work tells only half the story. Jefferson Market Garden thrives with community life: volunteers tending flower beds, neighbors gathering for events, children exploring the garden's pathways. Its accessibility inspired an innovative approach: inviting the public to witness and participate in the bird research—a community garden where conservation science unfolds in full view.

The seeds for this unique partnership were planted in 2021, when Susan Sipos, horticulturist/landscape designer for the Jefferson Market Garden, approached NYC Bird Alliance. Building on the garden's existing online bird guide, Susan sought a more formal, scientific collaboration that inherently brought the public into the process.

"We are a garden that creates a welcoming habitat for humans and birds," says Susan. "Giving our visitors an opportunity to learn about what our quiet, passive green space provides to birds will enhance their visit."

NYC Bird Alliance will now offer a behind-the-scenes look at its science work in action. "We're bringing binoculars, explaining data sheets, and displaying daily species sightings on a white board to make this exciting

Market Garden will be posted on NYC Bird Alliance's events calendar at go.nycbirdalliance.org/cal.) By aligning engagement and public programming with its scientific research, NYC Bird Alliance hopes to create a more informed and active community stewarding the protection of green spaces.

"In the face of budget cuts for City Parks, publicly accessible private spaces are more important than ever for providing green space that helps



Urban Biodiversity Specialist and Bird Guide Tod Winston looks for a fledging Northern Cardinal up in a tree while surveying Jefferson Market Garden on an early August morning.

science more tangible for garden visitors and teach about the value of urban green space," Senior Manager of Green Infrastructure Myles Davis explains.

For NYC Bird Alliance, embedding conservation and science work across all of its programs—from bird outings to lectures—is a core strategic imperative, championed in its upcoming Strategic Plan (see page 6). This commitment is crucial for maximizing the organization's impact and reach, ensuring its scientific findings and conservation goals translate into action by a wider audience.

The first public "ecology session" is slated for September, with a larger public program planned for next spring. (All events at Jefferson

birds and connects all New Yorkers with the natural environment," says Director of Advocacy and Engagement Saman Mahmood.

Early surveys vividly underscore this imperative, already yielding fascinating insights, including a large number of resident breeding birds—a testament to how wildlife persists and can even thrive in urban settings.

"According to any field guide, those birds shouldn't be nesting in such a small space," says Dustin. "But they are. They're in the garden foraging and nesting. The more we can inform New Yorkers about these unexpected connections between habitat and birds, the more likely they're to become conservation advocates for urban green spaces." ■

SHAPING A BIODIVERSE, BIRD-SAFE CITY

SCIENCE UPDATES



NYC Bird Alliance scientists work from the rooftops of Manhattan to the beaches of the Rockaways to collect data on wild bird populations and the habitats they need to thrive.

POWER THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS: MAKING LIGHT SHOWS SAFER FOR BIRDS

As light and drone shows become more popular, NYC Bird Alliance relies on strong partnerships to ensure these new technologies don't harm migrating or breeding birds. For the 23rd straight year, our scientists and volunteers will monitor the 9/11 Tribute in Light Memorial in partnership with the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and Michael Ahern Production Services, ensuring unnecessary harm does not come to thousands of night-migrating birds as we memorialize those lost to us on September 11.

This same collaborative approach has guided our monitoring of the New York Botanical Garden's (NYBG) drone show, where preliminary results reveal virtually no impact on migrating birds this spring. Our work with NYBG is quickly becoming a national model, as

we recently consulted with Chicago Botanical Garden to advise on bird-friendly actions for their drone light show. We'll continue this critical research throughout fall migration before publishing our results.

HARBOR HERONS SURVEYS REVEAL ACTIVE COLONIES ALONG EAST RIVER

Our annual Harbor Herons surveys have documented trends of long-legged wading birds in New York Harbor for 40 years—an anniversary that will be celebrated at this year's Fall Roost (see page 7). Our scientists were pleased to observe birds nesting on all of the islands inhabited last year, meaning that none of these important existing colonies were lost in 2025. As we continue to see troubling population decline of the Black-crowned Night Heron, this dataset is critical to protect these vulnerable birds that face habitat loss, predation, and the effects of climate change. ■



© Sydney Walsh / Audubon



All other seasonal staff photos © NYC Bird Alliance

NYC Bird Alliance thanks our remarkable seasonal staff for their work monitoring birds and biodiversity across the City, including at the Javits Center green roof, the Upper West Side's Broadway Mall, NY Botanical Garden in the Bronx, the Harbor Heron Islands, and the beaches of the Rockaways.

ENGAGEMENT UPDATES



NYC Bird Alliance works to create the next generation of conservationists by instilling a love of birds and nature through hundreds of bird outings and events each year.



World Migratory Bird Day at Marine Park, spring 2024.

CLIMATE WEEK EVENTS (SEPT 21-28)

Two-thirds of U.S. bird species are at risk due to climate change. This September, join NYC Bird Alliance for bird outings, green roof tours, and panel events that'll focus on

SAVE THE DATE: 126TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Join us on Sunday, December 14 for the 2025 Christmas Bird Count! Be on the lookout for our November eGret eNewsletter for more details and registration information.

the importance of biodiversity for a climate-resilient future. More information is at go.nycbirdalliance.org/cw.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY (OCT 11)

We're celebrating the magic of migration with free bird outings in all five boroughs! Explore the urban green spaces that migrants use to rest and refuel on their epic journeys. Programs include outings at Sunset Park, Sherman Creek, Crotona Park, and more. Find an outing near you at go.nycbirdalliance.org/wmbd.

CONNECT WITH OTHER BIRDERS

Fall migration brings festival fun and conservation celebrations to New York City:

- **Sept 13-20:** Latino Conservation Week
- **Oct 4:** City of Forest Day
- **Oct 5:** Raptorama at Jamaica Bay
- **Oct 11:** Raptorama at Marine Park
- **Oct 25-26:** Pumpkin Point on Governors Island

For more information, visit go.nycbirdalliance.org/cal to find events near you. ■

ADVOCACY UPDATES



NYC Bird Alliance speaks up for birds and their habitats with advocacy efforts across the City.

NYC'S BIRD-FRIENDLY LAW INSPIRES CHICAGO BILL

Building on decades of research, NYC Bird Alliance achieved a landmark victory for biodiversity in 2020 when Local Law 15 went into effect—the most comprehensive bird-friendly building legislation in the U.S. to date. This law requires all new construction in New York City to include bird-friendly materials, and now its impact is spreading elsewhere across the country. Invited by Chicago legislators, NYC Bird Alliance recently provided expert testimony to encourage similar legislation, demonstrating that our work is a model for the growing bird-safe movement.

DEAR GOVERNOR HOCHUL: BIRDS NEED HORSESHOE CRABS

Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs are a keystone species, and their eggs are a vital food source that brings migrating shorebirds like the Red Knot to our beaches each year. The Horseshoe Crab Protection Act would extend New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's authority to regulate



©Tom Murray/CC-BY-2.0

Common Yellowthroats are one of the most commonly found collision victims in New York City.

management of horseshoe crabs, protecting local biodiversity. This bill passed both the State Assembly and Senate and just needs the Governor's signature to finally become law. Take action by visiting go.nycbirdalliance.org/hscbill.

PROPOSED INCENTIVE FOR BIRD-SAFE DESIGN

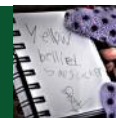
New York State may institute financial support for New Yorkers who want to make the City safer for birds. A proposed bill in the State Assembly, A.00775 (Rosenthal), would provide the first financial relief for building owners who choose bird-safe glass and materials when significantly altering their buildings and windows, encouraging more New Yorkers to invest in bird-safe design. ■

DEMAND #LIGHTSOUT LEGISLATION

Scan this code and ask your City Councilmember to support Lights Out legislation and make the City safer for birds. We've already written a script!



Take Action



THIS FALL: STRATEGIC PLAN ENSURES RESILIENT FUTURE

As threats to biodiversity grow, our work to make the City safer for birds through collision reduction, habitat enhancement, and waterbird protection is more important than ever. NYC Bird Alliance's new Strategic Plan will guide our work for the next five years, strengthening our efforts and expanding our impact. Stay tuned: we're excited to share this vision of growth with you this fall in our eGret eNewsletter.

PASSING OF LLOYD SPITALNIK

NYC Bird Alliance is deeply saddened by the loss of birder and photographer Lloyd Spitalnik, who passed away this August. Lloyd's remarkable bird photographs have graced our publication and website for more than a decade. In addition to helping create the Jamaica Bay Shorebird Festival, which just celebrated its 20th year, Lloyd co-led our organization's Camera Club with former board member David Speiser in the early 2010s.

NYC Bird Alliance remembers Lloyd for his deep knowledge of birds, passion for photography, and his sharp wit. David celebrates Lloyd's legacy in an article published at go.nycbirdalliance.org/lloydtribute. One of Lloyd's world-class photos of a Cooper's Hawk in flight is featured on our back cover.

LILI TAYLOR REFLECTS ON THE TRIBUTE IN LIGHT

Ahead of September 11, we're pleased to share an excerpt from *Turning to Birds*, a new collection of essays by actress, activist, and NYC Bird Alliance board

member Lili Taylor. In this essay, Lili reflects on her first year volunteering as a collision monitor at the 9/11 Tribute in Light back in 2017. Read the stunning essay with a special introduction from Lili about her deep connection to birds and why NYC Bird Alliance's Lights Out and Project Safe Flight collision reduction programs are so critical for their protection, written specifically for our readership: go.nycbirdalliance.org/lilitribute.

BIRD EXPERT TIM HEALY JOINS BOARD

We're thrilled to welcome **Tim Healy** to the board of directors. Tim has been involved with NYC Bird Alliance for several years, leading bird outings, guiding our Young Conservationist Council, and volunteering as a bird monitor at the 9/11 Tribute in Light. (Read more about Tim at go.nycbirdalliance.org/leadership.) We also thank **Gina Argento**, whose term on the board ended in June, for her commitment to our work and her continued partnership at the Kingsland Wildflowers at Broadway Stages green roof. ■



Lili Taylor reads a passage from her acclaimed book *Turning to Birds* during a special "Bird Awe Walk" in Prospect Park with NYC Bird Alliance's Tod Winston on June 14.



For the 23rd straight year, NYC Bird Alliance scientists and volunteers like new board member Tim Healy (pictured above) will monitor the 9/11 Tribute in Light to ensure migratory birds do not get caught in the powerful beams.

LEAVE A LEGACY FOR THE CITY'S BIRDS

By including NYC Bird Alliance in your estate planning, you can ensure that wild birds continue to thrive in our city for generations to come. Below are some easy ways to make a lasting impact.

INCLUDE NYC BIRD ALLIANCE IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST

Simply designate "New York City Bird Alliance, 71 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010" as a beneficiary in your will or irrevocable trust. Your bequest can be adjusted at any time.

NAME NYC BIRD ALLIANCE AS A BENEFICIARY

Consider listing NYC Bird Alliance as a residual or co-beneficiary of your retirement account, bank account, or life insurance policy. This is a simple but impactful way to support bird conservation.

ALREADY INCLUDED US IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS?

Thank you! We'd love to hear from you. If your documents still reference "NYC Audubon" given our name change in 2024, rest assured that there's no need to update.

To explore your planned giving options, contact Matthew Coody, director of development, at 646.502.9611 or mcoody@nycbirdalliance.org. ■



©Christine Cieslak

Pair of Herring Gulls atop the Javits Center green roof.



Tickets are flying fast! Get yours at
nycbirdalliance.org/roost2025

2025 FALL ROOST

Tuesday, October 14 at 6pm

Tavern on the Green

Celebrating 40 years of Harbor Herons

Join us in toasting NYC's waterbirds and the champions working to protect them. Proceeds support NYC Bird Alliance's work in conservation, advocacy, and engagement.

Scan for more





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**NYC BIRD
ALLIANCE**
FORMERLY NYC AUDUBON

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COOPER'S HAWK

By Don Riepe, Advisory Council Member and Former Board Member

The Cooper's Hawk is one of the City's most striking raptors. Also known as the big blue darter, striker, chicken hawk, and flying cross, the Cooper's has short, broad wings and a long, narrow tail, ideal for maneuvering in woodlands. In flight, their square heads project beyond their wings, giving them a signature cross-like appearance when mid-air.

After facing continent-wide decline in the mid-1900s due to the use of DDT, a pesticide which caused egg-shell thinning and reproductive failure, Cooper's Hawk populations have returned and it is now considered a species of low conservation concern. However, Cooper's Hawks are no exception to the lethal threats that face all urban raptors: 70% of Cooper's Hawk deaths in urban areas are caused by collisions, according to Cornell Lab of Ornithology. And given their opportunistic nature, they'll hunt birds but also ambush small mammals such as rats and mice, increasing their risk of rodenticide poisoning and highlighting the urgent need for safer, more effective methods of rodent control.

While Cooper's Hawks can be spotted in New York City throughout the year, fall migration is the best time to see them as they migrate south on days with strong northwest winds. If you want to see large numbers of raptors this fall, travel to Cape May, NJ where you can see hundreds—even thousands—in a day if conditions are right. There are also many excellent hawkwatching areas within a close drive of the City, including the Greenwich Audubon Center, where organization partner National Audubon Society holds

an annual Hawkwatch Festival in late September. But for local action, one of the best places to view these raptors is between mid-September and mid-October along the coast of Fort Tilden at Breezy Point, Queens, atop a hawkwatch platform on the bunker in Battery Harris East.

You can also learn more about Cooper's Hawks and other amazing raptors at one of NYC Bird Alliance's two Raptorama festivals this fall. Perfect for families, you can interact with these amazing animals up-close. Learn more on page 5. ■



© Lloyd Spitznink

THERE'S MORE ONLINE! DIGITAL URBAN BIRD CALL STORIES

Visit go.nycbirdalliance.org/digital-ubc to find more bird-filled stories.