

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON

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# THE URBAN AUDUBON

**Birding during the Pandemic: Member Reports**

**Building a Bird-Friendly New York City**

**Photo Essay:  
Birding The Battery**

**Breeding Bird Atlas III  
Takes Off**

**Chimney Swift**



## NYC AUDUBON 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.

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# BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Kathryn Heintz



**F**riends: In this summer *Urban Audubon*, our custom is to expound upon the joys of birding in New York City, just as spring draws to a close. And though this spring's migration has provided some magical birding, sadly, many of us have had to forgo it in person. Even those of us able to get outdoors are missing the joys of birding together.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our world. It has altered the way we live and work. There is tragedy in our community. And yet, there is also hope. Many of our neighbors are discovering nature in our city's parks and green spaces for the first time—and they are noticing birds.

Because of you, NYC Audubon is here to help these budding birders make the leap from discovery to engagement and conservation. Because of you, after 40 years, NYC Audubon is strong. We will survive. Our staff remains intact—if dispersed—and your supportive response to us at this fearful time gives lift to our wings. Despite the disruptions that we too are experiencing, our team remains focused on protecting wild birds and their habitats. We must continue this crucial work.

The crisis also coincides with a time of celebration for NYC Audubon: our 40th anniversary, the launch of our new *Strategic Plan*, and the culmination of Jeffrey Kimball's four-year term as board president. During Jeff's tenure, we have grown our corps and strengthened our board of directors. We have made great progress toward two fundamental goals: diversifying our community through in-person education and outreach, and ensuring bird-friendly building design and green-roof habitats through the passage of landmark legislation. The new law, passed by the New York City Council last December, will save thousands of birds each year.

While celebrations of both recent and long-standing accomplishments have been tempered by this difficult time, NYC Audubon's work has not stopped. As you will read in the pages of this *Urban Audubon*, we continue to engage, advocate, and communicate virtually with our community. And when we are able to be together again—then, we will celebrate.

I offer to you, to our members, our incredible staff, our committed Board and Advisory Council, and our amazing President, Jeffrey Kimball, my unbounded gratitude. I am humbled and inspired by your unwavering support and perseverance. I know that with that support, NYC Audubon will emerge from this calamity stronger than ever.

Please consider contributing to NYC Audubon's 40th anniversary campaign. (Learn more on page 18.) NYC Audubon and New York City's birds need you now.



NYC Audubon's Zoom staff meeting (Conservation Field Biologist Emilio Tobón, bottom left, is observing nesting American Oystercatchers at Breezy Point in Queens.)

## IN MEMORIAM

Harrison D. Maas (1945-2020)

Just as this issue of *The Urban Audubon* was being finalized, we learned of the sudden passing of Harrison D. Maas, on May 25, due to complications following surgery. We are deeply saddened by this tragic news. Board president from 2011 to 2016, Harry was a true friend to NYC Audubon from our early years. We will pay deserved tribute to Harry at our June 10 annual meeting and in the fall *Urban Audubon*. On behalf of NYC Audubon's board, advisory council, and staff, we dedicate this issue to his memory, and express our sincere condolences to the Maas family.

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(From upper left, left to right, by row)  
Danielle Sherman, Tod Winston, Kaitlyn Parkins,  
Kellye Rosenheim, Leo Wexler-Mann, David Cavill,  
Anne Schwartz, Molly Adams, Aurora Crooks,  
Emilio Tobón, Kathryn Heintz, Andrew Maas

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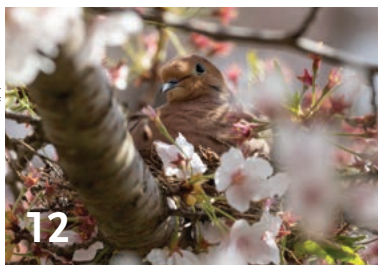
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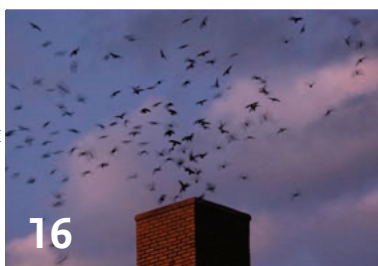
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# CONSERVATION NOTES

In typical years, the approach of spring spurs NYC Audubon's conservation and science team to gear up for a busy field season of studying migrating and breeding birds in the City. From collision monitoring to nest surveys to shorebird banding, spring is my favorite time of year—the months when I get to spend significantly more time outside than in front of my computer.

This has certainly not been a typical year. To keep our staff, volunteers, and communities safe, our fieldwork and community science programs have been put on hold. Our team has shifted its focus to finding creative ways to protect birds while at home. We've been connecting people to birds and conservation virtually, such as via online horseshoe crab information sessions led by Conservation Associate Aurora Crooks, and our virtual Jamaica Bay Horseshoe Crab Festival. (See page 13.) The extra time indoors has also given me the opportunity to delve into our banding resightings and migration tracking technology data. We've been sharing what we've learned from that research through social media.

Birds, on the other hand, are going about their business as usual. As I write these notes in early May, migratory songbirds are moving through the City, beach-nesting and colonial waterbirds are starting to nest, and breeding songbirds are already sitting on eggs.

## IMPACTS OF THE CURRENT CRISIS

Nearly as soon as parts of the U.S. began to shut down in mid-March, we started receiving inquiries from reporters eager to write about how the sudden lack of human presence was affecting wildlife. Many of them automatically assumed they'd be writing about animals returning to the cities and nature flourishing in our absence. This may be true, to some extent, in some cases. Animals, especially the four-legged, land-dwelling kind, may be bolder and more able to cross barriers they once avoided, such as busy roads—allowing them to access

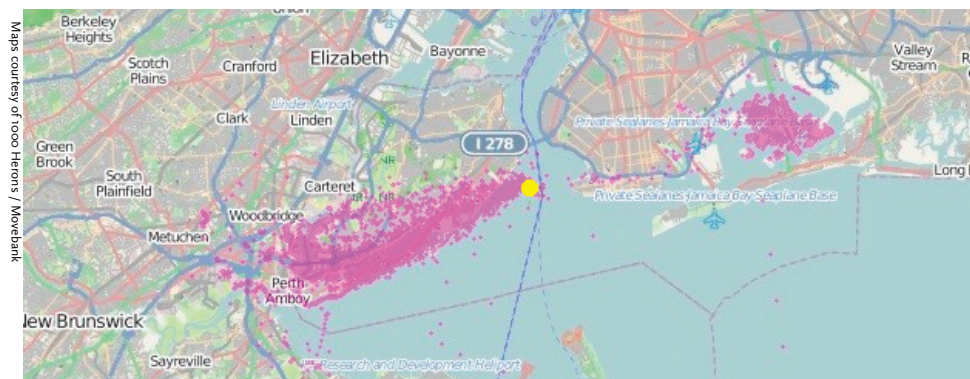
spaces they previously could not. Food sources for some animals that rely on our trash for meals may be changing, reducing in some areas and increasing in others, as human activity patterns shift. A reduction in noise has certainly affected humans' ability to hear and notice birds singing, even if a short-term change is unlikely to have lasting effects on the singing birds themselves. Cat owners might be more likely to keep their cats indoors, which would be great for birds.

It is important, however, to keep in mind the many animals that rely on human interventions in order to survive. These species are likely to be negatively affected by the pandemic crisis. In New York City, beach-nesting birds like Piping Plovers (*Endangered* federally and in New York State), Common Terns (*Threatened* in New York State), Black Skimmers (*Of Special Concern* in New York State), and American Oystercatchers are sensitive to human disturbance, and reports from the field indicate that significantly *more* people than normal are on the beaches this year. Normally the government agencies that manage the beaches cordon off nesting areas with “symbolic fencing” and have a team of staff monitoring the nesting sites while educating the community about sharing the shore with these birds. Agencies now have limited staffing, and it may not be safe for those staff to work in the field, leaving the birds to fend for themselves.

## WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR

On April 6, Edward, the satellite-tagged Great Egret, touched down in New York City after migrating north from South Carolina to breed on Hoffman Island, off Staten Island. Edward was tagged in June 2015 in a collaborative effort among 1000 Herons, NYC Audubon, New Jersey Audubon, and the U.S. Forest Service to learn more about Great Egret migration. He is punctual—every year since he was tagged, Edward has arrived in the City within a day of April 6. Satellite technology, nanotags, geolocators, and field-readable color bands are allowing scientists to continue to study birds like Edward during this crisis, even when we're unable to be in the field.

We've received reports of many resightings of banded birds on their wintering grounds and as they arrive in New York City to breed, including gulls, egrets, ibis, oyster-



Upper image: Edward the Great Egret's migratory routes along the East Coast are shown in pink. Lower image: Edward nests on Hoffman Island (yellow dot), but forages during breeding season at the south-west corner of Staten Island, in the Arthur Kill. After nesting season and before fall migration, he roosts and forages primarily in Jamaica Bay. (Data points show locations logged from June 2015 to May 2020.)



© NYC Audubon



*Banded American Oystercatcher pair “6U and 7U”*

catchers, and terns. In March, many of “the regulars,” as we call our breeding American Oystercatchers, returned to the Rockaway Peninsula. One such pair, “6U and 7U,” is a breeding pair banded in 2013 that has fledged eight chicks since. As of April, several of our banded Black Skimmers, the last species to arrive in the summer, were found to be still lingering in Florida and Georgia.

### GRASSLAND BIRD MEETING

One of the last times we were able to see our colleagues in person was the NYC Grassland Working Group Meeting, in early March. This group of agencies, nonprofits, and academic researchers meets to share grassland research and conservation accomplishments from the previous year. Grasslands are one of most imperiled habitats in the City—and grassland bird species have declined steeply across the U.S. in the past 50 years. Coordinated efforts to protect and restore grasslands, including capped landfills like Brooklyn’s Shirley

Chisholm State Park and Staten Island’s Freshkills Park, are crucial components of a sound urban conservation plan.

### BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

Advocacy and Outreach Manager Molly Adams has been coordinating the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas in New York City. Volunteers in the City have already logged 4,000 hours and confirmed over 50 breeding species. Learn more on page 12.

### PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

Whether people are inside or outside, traveling to work or working from home, migratory birds are still being killed in collisions with glass and disoriented by artificial light at night. We have been able to keep track of collisions this migration season through more than 438 accounts of dead or injured birds reported to [d-bird.org](http://d-bird.org). D-Bird has been an important tool for collecting incidental collision reports since its creation in 2014,

but it has never been more important than it has been this spring. Before the current crisis, our plans had been to have volunteers monitor two routes in Manhattan, one in Brooklyn, and a new route in Long Island City (our program’s first route in Queens). Instead, our volunteers and many others are entering into D-Bird the birds they find on their walks to the grocery store or commutes to essential jobs, allowing us to continue collecting valuable data. (To learn more about recent collision reports, see page 8.)

We hope we may be able to study the effect of light on bird migration during the pandemic by means of remote technologies—using cameras overlooking the City to collect data on light, and weather radar detectors to study bird migration patterns. Our team will be examining this topic over the next few months, in collaboration with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the University of Delaware.

### GREEN ROOFS

Finally, Green Roof Program Manager and Ecologist Dustin Partridge is planning this fall’s Green Roof Researchers Alliance conference: “The 2020 State of Green Roofs” is tentatively scheduled for Climate Week NYC, at the end of September. (The exact date and venue will be announced online and via *The eGret*.) We’ve also been making the Alliance’s website more user-friendly and reporting on exciting green roof research, including updates to legislation, new K-12 education, and findings on native plants and wildlife. Visit [www.greenroofsny.com](http://www.greenroofsny.com) to learn more and get conference updates.

## VOLUNTEER!

Due to the ongoing pandemic, we are currently unable to schedule our usual fall volunteer orientations and events. For information on fall conservation projects such as Project Safe Flight collision monitoring, the Tribute in Light, and the International Coastal Clean-Up,

please check for updates us at [www.nycadubon.org/covid-19](http://www.nycadubon.org/covid-19).

Though in-person conservation work is difficult at this time, birds still need your help. To learn what actions you can take for the City’s birds, see News & Notes and Avian Advocate Updates on page 8.



# BIRDING DURING THE PANDEMIC: MEMBER REPORTS

**O**n a cool morning in early May, Linda LaBella leaves her Upper West Side apartment at 6am. The day before, a Golden-winged Warbler had been spotted in Riverside Park. Word travels fast; if she leaves now, she'll get there before the crowds. Linda disinfects her Citi Bike and heads west. Riding through crowded streets on her way home will be like "playing pinball," but the chance of seeing the warbler draws her into the Manhattan fray.

© Linda LaBella



*From right: Linda LaBella, Gina Goldstein, and fellow birders in the Ramble*

Across the East River, Jay Ackley is "waking up to the sounds of Mourning Doves instead of traffic" for the first time in his 11 years of living in Brooklyn. Jay's apartment is a short walk from Prospect Park, and he's been able to spend time in the Vale of Cashmere looking for migrants before the park gets too crowded. Grand Army Plaza is eerily quiet; people are wearing masks and keeping their distance, but as soon he's past the tree line, the weight of the pandemic temporarily lightens. "This is a priceless time of the year," Jay says. "Birding in a pandemic can be multiple things at once: it's both traumatic and exhausting, but

© Linda LaBella



*Linda LaBella's birding kit, complete with PPE*

there are also aspects that are nice. It's strange, though; we feel like we're getting away with something."

Back on the Upper West Side, 17-year-old Ryan Zucker has become braver in venturing out. "There was a time when I wasn't going outside because I was too worried—but once I got outside, it really helped me manage my thoughts about this whole situation. We all have to improvise to keep birding however we can," he says, "but what's important is that we are staying safe." Ryan was able to see the Golden-winged Warbler in Riverside Park, but only because it's within walking distance for him. "I'm lucky," he emphasizes.

© Ryan Zucker



*The Riverside Park Golden-winged Warbler*

For birders, spring migration is an event worth clearing calendars for—but the pandemic has made travel and social gatherings impossible. Having access to transportation and/or uncrowded spaces are luxuries not evenly experienced across the five boroughs. Birders have had to get creative in redefining what it means to engage with nature. Many have taken a hyper-localized approach.

Tim Healy, a Queens birder, has taken to monitoring a nearby Common Raven's nest, and as he is staying local, has started to focus more on bird behavior. He's even written about "fire escape birding" ([www.nemesisbird.com/birding/apartment-birding-fire-escapism](http://www.nemesisbird.com/birding/apartment-birding-fire-escapism)).

For David Spawn, another Queens birder who lives in Jackson Heights, birding has also been mostly restricted to what's right outside his window. Luckily, at the start of the pandemic, a pair of Mourning Doves decided to nest in his window box—displacing the basil he and his partner had hoped to plant there—and the family has provided endless entertainment. David has also been able to hear an array of birds without being able to see them—but listening to a chorus of songbirds and a pair of nesting cardinals is bittersweet.

"There's also a mockingbird, but I haven't heard him sing in a few days. I hope he's doing okay." Though he misses the excitement of spring migration in the park, a few migrants have stopped close enough for out-the-window birding—including a brilliant male Scarlet Tanager. And he is philosophically optimistic: "There will always be birds."



Large photo © Matt Strobel; inset photo © Tim Healy

*Tim Healy on his fire escape. Inset: a Fish Crow pursues a Red-tailed Hawk.*

Mayra and Noa Cruz, enthusiastic birders known to many by their sign-off of “BIRD ON!” in emailed birding posts, report from the Bronx: “Everyone is so sad; we want to go out for spring bird migration but can’t!” Sequestered in their Co-op City apartment, the sisters have been using a spotting scope to bird from their window, and are racking up a list: “We’ve seen flocks of juncos, Red-winged Blackbirds, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Chipping Sparrows, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a fly-over Common Raven and Turkey Vulture.”

In the wake of self-isolation, more people are turning to birding, whether in-person or virtual. Donna Schulman, a Queens birder and a moderator of “New York Birders” on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/groups/NYBirders](https://www.facebook.com/groups/NYBirders)), has seen an uptick in in-

terest—over 350 new members have joined the group since mid-March.

When asked what they miss most, a majority of the birders interviewed responded: “Shorebirds.” Steven Lester, a Bronx native, usually goes to Jamaica Bay to observe them during spring migration. Now the risks outweigh the benefits of the trip. “Birds are going to keep coming back. Have faith in the cycles of nature,” he reminds himself.

In Manhattan, Nancy Shamban sits near her window with Baby, a big tuxedo cat, watching sparrows enthusiastically dive at a block of suet. Nancy has been birdwatching since the 70s, and typically spends mornings with Gabriel Willow’s NYC Audubon group in Bryant Park. Two people she’s known through birding have passed away from COVID-19. Nowadays she only leaves her Greenwich Village apartment for essentials. She slices an orange to put on her fire escape; maybe she’ll get some warblers today. She’s heard through the grapevine that they’re in town.

Nancy has been comparing sightings with Joyce Wright, a birder in Staten Island. Next to Nancy’s collection of common species, Joyce’s list is impressive—she’s seen four pairs of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. But Nancy doesn’t let this get her down: “I’m just as excited by my catbird and mamma robin as I would have been if I saw the Golden-winged Warbler earlier this week.”



© Nancy Shamban

*An encounter in Greenwich Village*

As Nancy and I finish up our chat, a catbird lands on one of her orange slices. “You’ll never believe who just landed on my fire escape,” she whispers, before we hang up.

*Note: After the completion of this article, we learned that Roberto Cruz, father of Mayra and Noa Cruz, had passed away from COVID-19. By email, Mayra and Noa recalled how much their father enjoyed his particular style of birding: viewing and printing out the photos taken by his daughters during their birding trips, using a camera he had given them. NYC Audubon extends its sincere condolences to the Cruz family.*



© Scott Adams

*A parent Mourning Dove perches warily by its two fledglings, at bottom right.*

# NEWS & NOTES

## HORRIFIC COLLISIONS BRING NEEDED ATTENTION TO BIRD-KILLING BUILDING

© Ursula Mitra



On May 16, dozens of migratory songbirds were found dead outside the Circa Central Park building, which faces the northwest corner of Central Park. These casualties are just a small sampling of the 90,000-230,000 birds that die from window collisions each year in the City. The recent passage

of Int. 1482/Local Law 15 addresses new and substantially renovated buildings in New York City. *Existing* buildings like Circa Central Park are our next challenge. Until we can secure legislation that would address such existing structures, we must identify the deadliest buildings, individually approach building owners and key tenants, offer assistance, and encourage the installation of simple remedies. This is happening right now with Circa Central Park; NYC Audubon and its colleagues are actively engaged in forging a collaborative solution.

You can help. If you find a dead bird, report it to our bird-collision database, <https://d-bird.org>. If you are a resident of a building that is the site of a high number of collisions, reach out to Advocacy and Outreach Manager Molly Adams at [madams@nycaudubon.org](mailto:madams@nycaudubon.org). And finally, sign up to be an Avian Advocate! See below.

## NYC AUDUBON GREEN ROOF TEAM PUBLISHES NEW RESEARCH

NYC Audubon's green roof wildlife monitoring program has added to the science of green roof ecosystems with research published in the journal *Northeastern Naturalist*. Analysis of insect and bat acoustic survey data from the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center green roof showed that bat activity correlates with moth abundance on the roof. The findings suggest that urban green roofs provide wildlife habitat, and that bats forage on urban green roofs when their preferred prey (moths) are present. The study was authored by Green Roof Program Manager and Ecologist Dustin Partridge, PhD; Senior Conservation Biologist Kaitlyn Parkins, MS; Fordham University Professor J. Alan Clark, PhD; and Conservation Scientist Emerita Susan Elbin, PhD. View the study abstract at <https://bit.ly/2z9C8Wt>. To request a PDF copy of the study, write Dr. Partridge at [dpartridge@nycaudubon.org](mailto:dpartridge@nycaudubon.org).

## AVIAN ADVOCATE UPDATES

Molly Adams

We hope that you all are continuing to be safe and well. While the PAUSE order continues, below are some quick advocacy actions that you can take from home, for both birds and people.

### ADVOCATE FOR NYC'S PARKS

Last year, New Yorkers for Parks' Play Fair Coalition successfully secured a historic \$44 million increase in the NYC Parks budget. This year, the coalition is asking the Mayor and the City Council to add \$47 million to the NYC Parks budget to focus on keeping open spaces safe, healthy, and well maintained, and on protecting jobs within NYC Parks. The original ask for 2020 was \$200 million, but in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and impending reductions in the City budget, the Coalition reduced the ask to focus on key priorities: ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to safe, healthy, and beautiful parks, gardens, and natural areas; and protecting and creating jobs. As many as 340 NYC Parks workers may lose their livelihoods on July 1, 2020, if budget funding is not secured. Please protect our parks and their staff by signing the Play Fair for Parks petition at <https://bit.ly/3bWBp8a>.

### ADVOCATE TO #SHARE THE SHORE

Many of New York's iconic shorebird species have arrived from their wintering grounds and are starting to nest on local beaches right now. Unfortunately, our beaches are busier than usual, and off-leash dogs are disturbing nesting areas for endangered birds like Piping Plovers. Many of these birds are without stewardship programs that normally enforce protection. (See Conservation Notes on page 4.). We need your help more than ever to spread the word to #ShareTheShore! Learn more and take the pledge to "Be a Good Egg" at <https://bit.ly/3ecEKlh>.

© François Portmann



*The beach-nesting Piping Plover is Endangered federally and in NY State.*

### WATERFRONT ALLIANCE "RISE TO RESILIENCE" CAMPAIGN

NYC Audubon is thrilled to join the Waterfront Alliance in this diverse coalition that "calls on our federal, state, and local leaders to implement an agenda that makes building climate resilience an urgent priority in 2020 and beyond." The Rise to Resilience coalition is unified by the belief that "to improve the health of our region's people and environment, we must have clear leadership, approach the problem holistically, and fund community- and science-based solutions in a way that is transparent, and prioritizes equity and justice in everything we do." Learn more or join the coalition at <https://rise2resilience.org>.

### 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. Learn more and get involved at [www.nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates](http://www.nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates).

# BUILDING A BIRD-FRIENDLY NEW YORK CITY

Mary Jane Kaplan

New York City Audubon's recently published *Strategic Plan 2020–2025: A Vision for the Future* (available at [www.nycaudubon.org/sp](http://www.nycaudubon.org/sp)) places great importance on education about the City's birds and their needs. Educational efforts have always been central to the organization's mission, and most members are familiar with the components: walks and classes offered to adults and schoolchildren, a regular lecture series, *The Urban Audubon*, *The eGret*, and various online offerings.

A section of the plan entitled "Professional Education," however, states: "We will expand the educational modules we offer to architects, facilities managers, and other real estate professionals to all five boroughs."

Professional education? Few people know about NYC Audubon's program to teach architects about the importance of considering bird-friendliness in the design of buildings and associated landscapes. The program grew out of a joint effort by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and NYC Audubon. Its first product, in 2007, was *Bird-Safe Building Guidelines*, a publication now in its third edition, with a new name—*Bird-Friendly Building Design*—and in wide circulation among architects and builders around the country ([www.nycaudubon.org/BFBD\\_2019.pdf](http://www.nycaudubon.org/BFBD_2019.pdf)). More recently, ABC's Christine Sheppard (formerly curator of birds at the Bronx Zoo) arranged with the American Institute of Architects for the class, also called "Bird-Friendly Building Design," to count among architects' required continuing-education credits.

In 2011, Dr. Susan Elbin, director of conservation and science at NYC Audubon (now emerita), began leading one-hour "lunch and learn" classes on bird-safe building design for architectural firms in the City. As of this spring, about 500 NYC architects have taken the class. The presentation begins with a topic that might seem obvious to most readers of *The Urban Audubon*: "Why do birds matter?"

But according to Deborah Laurel, a partner in Prendergast Laurel Architects and a member of NYC Audubon's board who has served as an instructor, many people are not aware of birds and the dangers they confront in cities.

After that introduction, the class content is in two parts. First, the problems: the lights and glass that lead to birds crashing to their deaths on New York City's streets and sidewalks. Second, the solutions: the different types of bird-safe glass available and the ongoing research to create even better ones, as well as examples of successful projects like the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center (learn more at [www.nycaudubon.org/UAfall2013](http://www.nycaudubon.org/UAfall2013)).

The class, given at no charge, is taught by NYC Audubon staff members and volunteers like Deborah Laurel. Marketing has been largely by word of mouth. One participant, Thomas Faust of PBDW Architects, learned about it in an architectural publication and organized a session for his firm in March

2019. It was well attended and remains the most popular lunch-and-learn class ever given there: according to Faust, much more interesting than most classes, "which tend to involve things like concrete." As a result, the firm's associates were thinking about the problem even before the New York City Council passed a law mandating bird-safe glass in new and renovated buildings (to go into effect as of October 2020).

Christine Sheppard of ABC feels the classes are useful in overturning prejudices against bird-friendly glass that developed years ago, when the only effective products available were unattractive. Now, as exemplified by the new Statue of Liberty Museum (pictured below), "People don't even notice the glass, and architects are beginning to realize that it's not necessary to build a concrete bunker to save birds. We can use glass!"



*The Statue of Liberty Museum, designed by FXCollaborative. (See the summer 2019 Urban Audubon at [www.nycaudubon.org/UASummer2019](http://www.nycaudubon.org/UASummer2019) to learn more.)*

## PHOTO ESSAY: BIRDING THE BATTERY



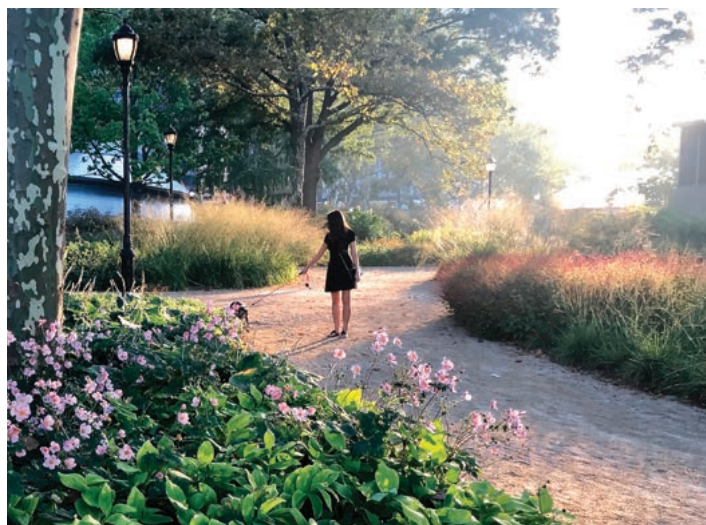
Several years ago in May, I responded to a notice announcing free bird walks sponsored by The Battery Conservancy and led by urban naturalist and NYC Audubon Guide Gabriel Willow. For several years before that, I had been surveying parts of the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge as a community scientist for the Harbor Herons Foraging Study, conducted jointly by NYC Audubon and New Jersey Audubon. However, I had rarely looked at birds in Manhattan.

I live downtown, and these regular morning walks with Gabriel soon led me to a new relationship with New York City's birds—and with The Battery. The park itself has been gradually transformed by The Battery Conservancy, which was founded in 1994 by Warrie Price. The park's big old trees are still there. But plantings of new saplings, bushes, flowers, and grasses (as well as an urban farm) have brought new life to the park, offering sustenance for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife.

I began taking pictures of the birds I saw to help me learn to identify them. It was also fun to show the photos to my friends, who thought that pigeons and sparrows were the only birds in New York City. We all learned a lot—and of course I had to buy a better camera and a telephoto lens. Eventually I was even able to catch shots of flashy but elusive migrating warblers and other songbirds.

Despite crowds of tourists gathered for the Statue of Liberty ferries, The Battery contains quiet spaces where people, as well as birds, can find refuge. Even on cold and windy winter days, you may be diverted by passing geese, or by gulls posturing on the piers with Lady Liberty behind them.

My most thrilling encounter occurred around dusk on a winter evening. The tourists were mostly gone, and I was walking along a path near the waterfront with my new camera when a large form suddenly dropped close to my left side. I felt a rush of wind as it passed. After



disappearing for a few moments in some low bushes, it flew up into a tree and looked back at me over its shoulder. A young Red-tailed Hawk was checking me out, and not in a kind way. My heart began to race; I was surprised by an ancient dread of being alone in the dark woods with a predator.

One afternoon soon after, I'd noticed a hawk sitting on a large branch—when a frisky squirrel started climbing up the trunk of the same tree. I thought maybe the squirrel hadn't noticed the hawk, but then it deliberately crept out on that very branch, sneaking up behind it. When the hawk suddenly turned, the squirrel scurried around to the other side of the tree trunk for a few moments. It then came back and climbed out on the branch again, teasing the hawk, which couldn't easily get its talons into position to grab it. Maybe the squirrel was trying to annoy the hawk so it would move away—but what a wild and dangerous game.

I'd never have imagined that all this was happening right here in The Battery!

NYC Audubon's "The Battery Bird Walks" normally run two days a week, spring and fall. Please check [www.nycaudubon.org/covid-19](http://www.nycaudubon.org/covid-19) for information and updates on all NYC Audubon walks this fall.

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Photos © Gail Karlsson unless otherwise noted.

**Page 10, clockwise from upper left:**  
Scarlet Tanager; Common Yellowthroat, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, flowerbed courtesy of The Battery Conservancy; Ring-billed Gulls

**Page 11, clockwise from upper left:**  
Yellow Warbler; Red-tailed Hawk and Gray Squirrel; Red-tailed Hawk; garden path courtesy of The Battery Conservancy

## EVENTS & ADVENTURES



**A**s we publish this virtual summer *Urban Audubon* in late May, NYC Audubon has opted to delay scheduling in-person summer and early fall programs due to continuing uncertainty about when such gatherings will again be possible. We are following governmental guidance during this dynamic and changing crisis—and the safety of our members, staff, and guides is our top priority. For updates on possible upcoming programs, including Events & Adventures, festivals, and Governors Island programming, visit [www.nycaudubon.org/covid-19](http://www.nycaudubon.org/covid-19) in the coming weeks. New information will be posted as we learn more.

For convenient updates right in your inbox, make sure to sign up for *The eGret* newsletter at [www.nycaudubon.org/egret](http://www.nycaudubon.org/egret). And follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) (@nycaudubon) for emerging virtual programming and other suggestions for staying involved with birding and bird conservation efforts.

We hope you enjoy all the accounts of birding, both in-person and virtual, throughout the pages of this issue. NYC Audubon's guides and staff look forward to seeing and birding with you all again, as soon as it is safe again for all concerned.

## BREEDING BIRD ATLAS III TAKES OFF

*Molly Adams*

**N**ew York State's third Breeding Bird Atlas, launched January 1, is off to a staggering start. By the first week of May, over 519,000 observations had been submitted to the Atlas, surpassing the amount of data collected during the entire period of New York State's second Atlas (conducted from 2000 to 2005). This means that in just a little over four months, the current Atlas has collected more data about the distribution of breeding birds in the state than was collected during the whole six years of the second Atlas! We thank the use of eBird and an updated methodology this time around for the data upsurge.

As of late May, we have 1,171 Atlas volunteers, just under 20 fewer than the total number of volunteers who participated in the second Atlas. Already confirmed are 161 breeding species in the state, more than half of the total species documented in the last Atlas. Statewide, the Canada Goose has the highest number of confirmed breeding observations so far, with other species such as American Robin, European Starling, and Osprey trailing behind.

In New York City, several dedicated volunteers in each borough have collectively spent over 4,000 hours "atlasing," confirming over 50 breeding species. In the City, we can already see diversity in these confirmed species—from American Robins and Mourning Doves to Killdeer and Piping Plovers. New York City currently hosts the only confirmed record in the state for breeding Barn Owl, considered a sensitive species. Despite the pandemic and the state PAUSE order restricting travel for many, the third Atlas is off to an impressive start.

Learn more about the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas, which is being conducted over a period of five years, from 2020 to 2024, at [www.ebird.org/atlasny/home](http://www.ebird.org/atlasny/home). If you have questions about participating in the New York City count, Contact NYC Regional Coordinator (and NYC Audubon Advocacy and Outreach Manager) Molly Adams at [madams@nycaudubon.org](mailto:madams@nycaudubon.org).

12 [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org)

© Clockwise from top left: Ryan Mandelbaum, Alyssa Bueno, José R. Ramirez-Garofalo



*Photos by Atlas volunteers, clockwise from top left: a nesting Mourning Dove in the Bronx, a male Northern Cardinal in Brooklyn, and two Double-crested Cormorants engaged in courtship display off the coast of Staten Island.*

# VIRTUAL BIRDING

Rebecca Minardi

In this period of social distancing, traditional birding has become tricky. It is especially trying for us bird lovers during this migration and breeding season. Though it's still safe to go birding outdoors by keeping a six-foot distance from others and refraining from sharing binoculars, scopes, and guidebooks, there are several ways you can enjoy birds from the comfort of home. Welcome to Virtual Birding!

**Bird Cams** are a great place to start—if you haven't yet gotten hooked yet, now's your chance. Cams are an easy way to see nesting birds and new species, all over the world. Cornell Lab ([www.allaboutbirds.org/cams](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams)) offers nest watches (including Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Royal Albatrosses) and feeder watches (my favorite: Ontario FeederWatch).

**Social media** connects you with other birders and gives you access to beautiful bird photos. Join a group, such as the New York Birders, on Facebook, or follow your favorite birders, such as Kenn Kaufman, on Twitter. Or see gorgeous bird photos on Instagram by searching #bird or #birdphotography.

**Podcasts**, audio programs often posted in episode form, are easy to find, download, and listen to on any smart phone, tablet, or computer. Short and sweet ones include *Birdnote* and

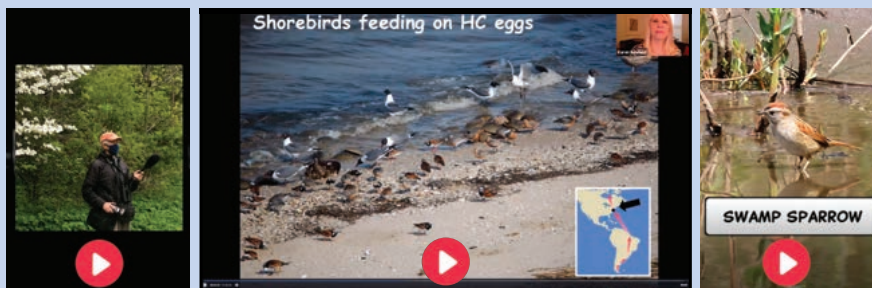
*For the Birds*. *Talkin' Birds* is a call-in show for all things bird-related, while *This Birding Life* and *Out There with the Birds* have are longer, deeper dives into specific birding topics.

**Courses, lectures, and games** are fun ways to brush up on and even improve your birding skills from home. The Cornell Lab's excellent Bird Academy (<http://academy.allaboutbirds.org>) offers a catalog of for-a-fee courses, but its eBird Essentials class is free. And it offers free recorded lectures on such topics as conservation, bird ID, and migration. Bird Academy also hosts games for both children and adults on bird ID, songs, and more. My favorite game is Bird Song Hero (<http://academy.allaboutbirds.org/features/bird-song-hero>).

**Virtual bird walks and meetings** are being offered by many Audubon chapters and other birding organizations. The American Birding Association (ABA) launched a Virtual Bird Club open to anyone; find past "meetings" at <https://twitter.com/aba>. The ABA also often offers live Q&As on birding topics. Detroit Audubon is turning many of its normally in-person bird walks into virtual experiences ([www.detroitaudubon.org/birding/field-trips](http://www.detroitaudubon.org/birding/field-trips)). And simply Googling "virtual bird walk" will pull up a host of "walks" across the country that you can livestream or view photos from.

Though we are facing unprecedented changes to our lives and reduced access to the outdoors, we can continue to foster our love of birds in new ways. Hopefully sooner than later, we'll all be able to take these new skills and experiences back into the real world.

## NYC AUDUBON GOES VIRTUAL



NYC Audubon has been creating a variety of virtual programming to connect you with the City's birds and their conservation during this time. We hope you enjoy!

**Jamaica Bay Horseshoe Crab Festival** - NYC Audubon explores the wonders of the ancient horseshoe crab and details its importance to our shorebirds: <https://bit.ly/3calvY1>

**Virtual Birding by Ear** - Created by Advisory Council Member Tom Stephenson (author of *The Warbler Guide* and creator of the *Bird Genie* app), this video series analyzes birdsong recorded by Tom in Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

**Episode 1:** Introduction to Vocalizations: <https://bit.ly/2LQRLEU>

**Episode 2:** Focus on the American Robin: <https://bit.ly/2ZxB6OR>

**The Masked Birder!** - Created by Board Vice President Karen Benfield and her company, Lark Song Media, this series spotlights how people everywhere are turning to birds and nature to find comfort during the pandemic.

**Episode 1:** Jamaica Bay with Advisory Council Member Don Riepe: <https://bit.ly/3e3QUMY>

**Episode 2:** The Central Park Pond with birder Cathy Weiner: <https://bit.ly/2LRNbpX>

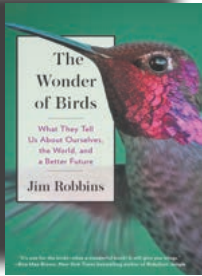
For future programs, a chance to stream *Birders: The Central Park Effect*, and our staff's favorite virtual birding resources, visit [www.nycadubon.org/digital-resources-and-activities](http://www.nycadubon.org/digital-resources-and-activities).



Just another day at the Cornell Lab FeederWatch Cam at Sapsucker Woods (Pileated Woodpecker and Baltimore Oriole, screenshot taken May 20, 2020)

© Courtesy of the Cornell Lab FeederWatch Cam (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), hosted by Wild Birds Unlimited

## BOOK REVIEWS



*THE WONDER OF BIRDS: WHAT THEY  
TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES,  
THE WORLD, AND A BETTER FUTURE*  
By Jim Robbins  
Spiegel & Grau, 2017

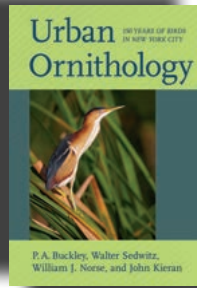
We currently live in a world where large tracts of land are burning uncontrollably, coral reefs are bleaching at an alarming rate, and sea level is rising—all while the planet's sixth extinction is in full swing. Every day, it seems as if another insurmountable environmental tragedy is brought to our attention.

Jim Robbins's *The Wonder of Birds* offers readers a lifeline. This collection of richly researched and compellingly told case studies illustrates the relationships that exist between humans, birds, and the natural world. Robbins brings together an impressive array of conversations with ornithologists and naturalists who have devoted their lives to avian conservation. The resulting narrative shows how these people strive to make a difference—and how anyone can join the cause. For example, simply entering bird sightings into eBird contributes data that can help us understand and protect imperiled bird populations.

*The Wonder of Birds* reminds us that human history and natural history are interconnected, that these relationships are paramount to understanding our own humanity, and that we can—and must—play a role in ensuring the survival of the birds we love.

I first came across *The Wonder of Birds* through the recommendation of a colleague—someone who does not identify as a birder. It didn't take long before the book, which spans topics from the significance

of seabird guano to the strikingly familiar family dynamic of bee-eaters, was making its rounds through our office. In these dispiriting times, Robbins's anecdotes and up-to-date scientific findings both evoke and confirm Emily Dickinson's much-quoted verse: "Hope" is truly "the thing with feathers." —IJG



*Urban Ornithology: 150 Years of  
Birds in New York City*  
By P.A. Buckley, Walter Sedwitz, William J.  
Norse, and John Kieran  
Comstock Publishing Associates, 2018

*Urban Ornithology* is, as the authors explain, a "quantitative long-term historical analysis of the migratory, winter, and breeding avifaunas" of New York City from 1872 to roughly 2016.

P.A. Buckley, Walter Sedwitz, William J. Norse, and John Kieran—New Yorkers all—began this multigenerational project in the 1960s, using as a starting point their own fieldwork, which dates back to the early 1900s, when Bronx native Kieran started birding as a teenager. Despite the title, the book's primary focus is on the northwest Bronx: Van Cortlandt Park, Woodlawn Cemetery, Jerome Park Reservoir, and the surrounding environs. (Early records for Central Park and Prospect Park, they explain, are sparse.)

The book's detail is astonishing, and often from personal experience, as is evident in the opening paragraph: "It was a dark and very stormy night," it begins, and goes on to describe an "out of reality" event in November 1932, when hundreds of thousands of Dovekies were blown ashore, from Nova Scotia to Cuba.

New York City got its fair share, including a group of five that made it to the Spuyten Duyvil (at the juncture of the Harlem and Hudson Rivers). There they were quickly noticed by some boys—who caught and ate all five. It was the Great Depression, the authors remind us.

The introduction describes the area's topology with maps dating back to 1609, when Henry Hudson first dropped anchor. It details how the landscape changed with increasing speed, especially in 20th century, as highways replaced swamps, drastically reducing bird habitat. Thankfully, most of Van Cortlandt Park (originally the estate of Jacobus Van Cortlandt, the City's mayor in the early 1700s) and the surrounding area is still home to native forests and wooded swamps.

Starting with observations dating from 1872 to the 1890s by pioneering ornithologists Eugene P. Bicknell and Jonathan Dwight, the authors combed information from books, specimens, and records from hundreds of institutions and individuals, including present-day sources. From these records, the authors detail the historical and current status of 301 study-area species, including 123 breeding species.

The book's species profiles offer insights not only into the life of birds but also into the sleuthing skills of the authors. In the late 19th century, the Northern Bobwhite was a common native resident, according to Bicknell (1872-1901). Its numbers started declining in the 1930s because of intense urbanization—and despite repeated attempts to reintroduce, the species had all but disappeared by the 1960s. In December 1969, Walter Sedwitz and Paul Buckley, hearing rumors that bobwhites had been seen on Riker's Island, obtained permission to visit the island, escorted by corrections officers. Their persistence was rewarded: "To our great surprise we quickly located 20-30."

New modes of birding brought new discoveries. Helicopter surveys in the 1970s discovered heronries on the City's maritime

islands, leading to NYC Audubon's now 35-year-old Harbor Herons Nesting Survey. The first survey teams were then surprised to find that the Spotted Sandpiper was nesting on almost all the islands—a bird believed to be nearly extirpated as a breeder in the City.

Calling the book “a phenomenal compendium,” Geoffrey LeBaron, director of the Christmas Bird Count for the National Audubon Society, declared: “We need more studies like it!” That is clearly what the authors hoped when they provided an extensive list of “systematic future actions to fill gaps in our knowledge,” suggestions for ways to create better habitat, and an appendix with 38 tables for deeper dives into the material.

About the authors: Sadly, only Buckley, a Riverdale native and senior scientist emeritus at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, lived to see the book's publication. Kieran, a sports journalist for *The New York Times* who managed to sneak stories about New York City wildlife into the newspaper, wrote numerous books, including a biography of John James Audubon and the award-winning *A Natural History of New York City*. He continued to record observations until his death in 1981. Norse compiled Christmas Counts in the Bronx, and Sedwitz loved to roam its Jerome Park Reservoir. All contributed to ornithological books, journals, and other publications. —SC

## URBAN HOTSPOT: DETROIT

Rebecca Minardi

It's no surprise to us in New York City that amazing birding spots are found in the middle of the most densely inhabited human landscape in the U.S. But we may not realize how many other American cities have prime birding locations nestled within their urban spaces. Look no further than Detroit. Located within the Great Lakes region, the “Motor City” hosts several spectacular birding hot spots within its borders, and the Detroit River is designated as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society due to its impressive numbers of wintering waterfowl. In fact, Detroit became an official Urban Bird Treaty City in 2017.

The crown jewel of Detroit, Belle Isle, is one of the largest city parks in the country, at 982 acres. Featuring designs by Frederick Law Olmsted, Belle Isle contains grasslands, young forests, and a rare wet-mesic forest full of oak, dogwood, and willow species. Here you can find a successful Bald Eagle's nest started in 2018—along with Eastern Screech-Owl and Great Horned Owl, dozens of warbler species during migration season (including the rare Kirkland's), and nesting Wood Ducks and Tree Swallows.

The city offers other parks and urban green spaces perfect for birding. Eliza Howell Park, in northwest Detroit, contains forest and prairie habitats where grassland birds nest. South of Eliza Howell is the stunning Rouge Park. Rouge Park follows the course of the Rouge River, making it a great place to scout for riparian bird species. Closer to downtown, several smaller spaces host a wide variety of species. Tiny William G. Milliken State Park and Harbor, part of the beautifully restored Detroit RiverWalk, is a wetland habitat perfect for nesting Marsh Wrens and Red-winged Blackbirds. You can also find rafts of waterfowl on the Detroit River throughout the winter.

Just up the road from the RiverWalk is Elmwood Cemetery. In many cities, cemeteries offer a rare glimpse of a region's original topography before urbanization—and provide excellent bird

habitat. Elmwood includes a freshwater creek (called “Bloody Run” in commemoration of a Revolutionary War battle fought on the site). Frederick Law Olmsted also left his mark here, recommending that non-native trees be replaced by stands of native species. In 2016, the cemetery became Detroit's first accredited arboretum. Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks are seen here, as well as warblers and other songbirds aplenty during migration.

Though Detroit is most famous for its auto industry and music, in time it may also become known for its diverse habitat and commitment to protecting the birds that call this city home. Next time you're looking for a birding destination—once it's safe to travel—keep Detroit in mind! Visit Detroit Audubon to learn more: [www.detroitaudubon.org/birding/detroit-area-hotspots](http://www.detroitaudubon.org/birding/detroit-area-hotspots).



© Joy VanBuhler

*The Detroit RiverWalk*

# CHIM CHIM CHER-ROOST!

## CHIMNEY SWIFT (*CHAETURA PELAGICA*)

Hillarie O'Toole

A few years ago, a series of high-pitched chirps drew me to the window of my new apartment in upper Manhattan. Peering out, I could faintly make out dozens of small, flying critters. “Bats!” I exclaimed excitedly to my husband, as I rushed outdoors to get a better look. The mysterious fliers dipped and dived so erratically, I struggled to sight them through my binoculars. Once I got one into focus, however, I quickly retracted my first guess—and googled “small bat-like birds NYC.” (At that time, I had just begun to explore my new interest in urban ecology, and though I quickly discovered my initial assessment was off the mark, I would later happily observe many bats in nearby Fort Tryon Park.)

Often mistaken for bats or swallows by the novice birder, Chimney Swifts have earned the nickname “flying cigars” for their streamlined bodies and stubby tails. Their common name is derived from their modern-day choice of home: With the arrival of Europeans in North America, hollow trees—the swifts’ natural roosting sites—began to disappear due to deforestation. But the birds adapted quickly, choosing chimneys as their preferred roosting locations. The birds thus became a rare native example of a “synanthropic” species—one that, like the Eurasian House Sparrow and Rock Pigeon,

© Steven Kerling



*The aerodynamic Chimney Swift is well adapted to feeding on flying insects.*

benefits by living in proximity to humans. In recent decades, however, many traditional chimneys have been capped or replaced with more energy-efficient heating systems. That reduction in nesting sites, in addition to the challenges of continued habitat loss, insecticide use, and climate change, likely contributed to a 72 percent decline in Chimney Swift populations between 1966 and 2015, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

These small migratory birds live solely in the western hemisphere, wintering in South America and making their way to the eastern U.S. and southern Canada to breed. Spending most of their time in flight, they eat, bathe, and even sleep in mid-air, coming to a standstill only when roosting. While Chimney Swifts’ claws are not suited for perching on branches, they are perfect for clinging to the

inside of hollow trees, caves—and chimneys. The birds build their nests directly on vertical surfaces, using sticks and materials they gather while in flight and pasting them to the wall with saliva. Young swifts leave the nest as early as two weeks after hatching, and cling to their nest site’s walls until they are old enough to fly.

Chimney Swifts start to arrive in the New York City area in early April. A study quoted in *Urban Ornithology: 150 Years of Birds in New York City* (see review on page 14) found that the species breeds widely throughout all five boroughs. Just before fall migration (from August through early November), they can be locally abundant at staging sites near favorite chimneys, including one at St. Ann’s Church in the Bronx, where as many as 300 birds were counted going to roost in 2007. Last fall, I observed hundreds circling the chimney of Upper Manhattan’s Success Academy at dusk, like a “bird cyclone.” Even larger numbers of birds are sometimes observed: on September 1, 2017, a total of 1,625 swifts was tallied from the Fort Tilden hawk-watch platform, according to eBird records.

As chimneys have become both less swift-friendly and less prevalent in urban architecture, parks and bird lovers have started to create structures that mimic the Chimney Swift’s preferred nest site. Swift towers have been constructed in all five boroughs, including notable projects in Brooklyn’s East River State Park (recently renamed Marsha P. Johnson State Park), Clay Pit Ponds State Park Reserve in Staten Island, and the Long Island City waterfront in Queens—where a plaque honors Geoffrey Cobb Ryan, cofounder and past president of NYC Audubon.

This spring has been unusual to say the least, as we all navigate these uncertain times apart, yet together in spirit. As I write these lines in late April, the swifts have returned to upper Manhattan, like clockwork, within two days of their arrival last year. Watching their aerial acrobatics and listening to their cheerful chatter from my window, I feel hope and comfort in the resilience and beauty of nature.

Visit [www.chimneyswifts.org](http://www.chimneyswifts.org) to learn about Chimney Swift conservation efforts.

© Steve Benoit



*A large Chimney Swift flock enters its roosting site for the night.*

# LOOKING BACK—AND FORWARD

Jeffrey Kimball

As I wind down my four-year term as president of the board of New York City Audubon, we find ourselves in a profoundly unprecedented time. We have all suffered and struggled, some of us even losing loved ones, and all of us losing many of the freedoms and activities that we cherish—not least of which is being outdoors in the spring witnessing the spectacle of avian migration.

The good news is that an eminently qualified person is available to carry NYC Audubon forward. Karen Benfield has been an active board member for the past five years, and is known to many of our members for spearheading the Fall Roost, our annual October fundraising gala, since 2015. Under Karen's leadership, the Roost has grown into an even more successful event, one that authentically showcases NYC Audubon's values and accomplishments. A person of many talents, Karen is also responsible for producing and directing the wonderful, original short films shown at the last five Roosts. (Visit [www.nycaudubon.org/our-history](http://www.nycaudubon.org/our-history) to see the most recent film.) Karen has been enthusiastically and unanimously recommended by the board, and her candidacy will be presented in June at the annual board meeting. I believe that Karen's leadership, joined with that of our most excellent executive director, Kathryn Heintz, will place NYC Audubon in very good hands for many years to come.

That is not to say that we face no challenges, however—especially in this singular time of social distancing and economic uncertainty. Many businesses and nonprofit organizations may cease operations in the days ahead, but not NYC Audubon. Under Kathryn's strong leadership, we have been on stable financial ground for several years, and thanks to Controller David Cavill and two tirelessly dedicated board members, Dianne Benner and Sandy Ewing, we have been particularly savvy about using government and private programs to bolster our bottom line during the shutdown. And we can proudly say that not a single member of our permanent staff has been laid off or furloughed. While we have had to suspend our field trips, we have been connecting with our members virtually (see page 13) and have managed to

© Ryder Kimball



*NYC Audubon Board President Jeff Kimball*

carry out some of our field research, such as the monitoring of nesting American Oystercatchers on Long Island beaches and the collection of data on bird-glass collisions during spring migration.

In 2014, I was thrilled when asked to join the board of NYC Audubon, and further honored when I was tapped to be president two years later. I love birds and nature, of course, but for me this organization represents something more than that. Ever since moving to the City from my home in Northern California almost forty years ago, I have been enamored of the idea of urban wildlife. That birds and bats, that butterflies and fireflies, that nature *at all* can exist among us humans and the trappings of our civilization is a continual source of wonderment for me. To enhance and preserve New York City's wildlife, to be sure, is our organization's mission; and as the "urbanest" of all Audubon chapters, we are in a unique position to serve as a role model for other urban environments.

In just the last few years, NYC Audubon has furthered its mission in many ways. We can be proud of two great accomplishments, in particular: Last December, thanks to collaborative work with many partners, the New York City Council passed

groundbreaking legislation that will amend the City's building code to require that new construction and significantly altered buildings use bird-friendly materials. And, in the past few years we have greatly expanded our outreach footprint, serving parks and neighborhoods in all corners of the City with educational programs targeted to diverse communities. Along the way, our board of directors has striven to better reflect the City we serve: the board now has more than 30 percent representation by people of color and members from all five boroughs.

The world will not be the same when we come out on the other side of this extraordinary and bewildering time. But in just two months, we've seen how New Yorkers can come together and make sacrifices to protect one another in the face of great need. Our future work is clear: we must channel this cooperative spirit toward protecting the environment we all share. As I pass along the responsibilities of the board presidency at this trying juncture, I know NYC Audubon will remain strong under Karen Benfield's guidance—growing and adapting to new challenges as we continue to protect birds and other wildlife, even in this densest of urban habitats.

# SUPPORT NYC AUDUBON: NOW MORE URGENT THAN EVER

It's been a rough year. Last fall, two scientific studies revealed that there are three billion fewer birds in North America than there were in 1970—and that two-thirds of North American birds are at increasing risk of extinction from global temperature rise. On the heels of this unsettling news came the pandemic. We're now just beginning to fathom what this disruption means for nature and people.

According to an April poll conducted by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, "In the wake of this crisis, more Americans say they want to support hospitals and health causes. They are holding back on giving to education and environment." NYC Audubon shares a deep concern for the health and safety of our community, and of each individual, during this crisis. And yet, vital work on behalf of the environment cannot wait.

Our tenacious NYC Audubon staff is continuing the work of conservation science, advocacy, and educational outreach from our homes. We are frugal, flexible, and lean, and these qualities are sustaining our organization.

NYC Audubon's special challenge this spring and summer is to make up for the loss of revenue from canceled trips and classes and from our postponed inaugural spring luncheon, as well as from the vanishing funding that normally underwrites our research, monitoring, and data-gathering. We have applied for emergency relief from every source for which we are eligible, but the loss in traditional revenue puts our organization at a disadvantage just as we are making headway on two critical fronts: diversifying our community through in-person education and outreach, and preventing the needless death of more than 90,000 birds each year from collisions with glass.

Help NYC Audubon come through this crisis intact and remain a strong and respected voice for birds, people, and nature in all five boroughs. **Every gift, in every amount, is essential.**



*Make our city safe for birds like this Prothonotary Warbler, photographed in Central Park during the pandemic by seventeen-year-old birder Ryan Zucker.*

## DONATE

### 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 below or donate online at [www.nycaudubon.org/donate](http://www.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. See the membership form below or donate online at [www.nycaudubon.org/donate](http://www.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 IN YOUR ESTATE PLAN

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. This 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, Inc., a not-for-profit organization with offices at 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523, New York, NY 10010." Consult with your attorney to determine what is best for your situation. Visit [www.nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy](http://www.nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy) or contact us (see below) to learn more about planning a gift for NYC Audubon.

To discuss how you can contribute to NYC Audubon's future, contact Executive Director Kathryn Heintz at [kheintz@nycaudubon.org](mailto:kheintz@nycaudubon.org) and 646-434-0423, or Director of Development Kellye Rosenheim at [krosenheim@nycaudubon.org](mailto:krosenheim@nycaudubon.org) and 646-502-9611.

# NYC AUDUBON'S CAMPAIGN FOR THE FUTURE

Join us in our efforts to ensure that birds have a safe home in New York City. NYC Audubon's *Strategic Plan 2020–2025: A Vision for the Future* (view it at [www.nycaudubon.org/sp](http://www.nycaudubon.org/sp)) creates a road map to guide us forward. In celebration of our 40th anniversary, we are committed to raising \$1,040,000 this year. We're just about halfway there, at a total of \$631,680 raised; as you can see below, we still have a long way to go to reach our goal.



50% achieved

Our Goals: 10 Gifts of \$40,000



65% achieved

40 Gifts of \$10,000



92.5% achieved

40 Gifts of \$5,000



40% achieved

1,000 "ADD \$40" Gifts  
(to be matched 1:1)

Please be sure to ADD \$40 (or \$400, or \$4,000) when you give, renew your membership, or register for NYC Audubon events throughout the year. Every "ADD \$40" gift will be matched up to a total of \$40,000. Donate at [www.nycaudubon.org/donate](http://www.nycaudubon.org/donate).

DONATE

## ANNUAL MEETING AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE

A VIRTUAL GATHERING WITH NYC AUDUBON  
Wednesday, June 10, 6pm

NYC Audubon conducts scientific monitoring in New York City to understand how birds are using our urban environment and how this environment affects them, via Project Safe Flight, our Jamaica Bay program, and our Harbor Herons project. Join us virtually as our team provides updates on the past year's conservation and advocacy successes throughout the five boroughs, including the passage of bird-friendly building legislation by the New York City Council last December. We will also provide an update on how we are continuing our work during the COVID-19 PAUSE order. Our board election and annual meeting will precede the presentation.

Register at [www.bit.ly/2LLqALE](http://www.bit.ly/2LLqALE).

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE** Contributions are essential to our work. Help us reach our goal of \$1,040,000 in individual gifts during our 40th Anniversary year.

Count me/us in with my/our support of wild birds in New York City:

**Anniversary Leadership Gifts:** ☐ \$40,000 ☐ \$10,000 ☐ \$5,000

**Anniversary Celebration Gifts:** ☐ \$2,500 ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$100

☐ Other amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Additionally, I would like to ADD \$40 to my gift above!**

**"ADD \$40" gifts received before October 31, 2020 will be matched.**

TOTAL AMOUNT: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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

NYC Audubon is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax deductible within the limits prescribed by law. A copy of the latest Annual Financial Report may be obtained online at [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org) or [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) or upon request from the New York State Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, 15th Floor, NY, NY 10005 or NYC Audubon, 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523, NY, NY 10010.

# PARTNER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## PARTNERSHIPS

Conservation and outreach are not possible without working partnerships. NYC Audubon collaborates with government agencies and other nonprofit and community organizations to reach broader audiences and achieve common conservation goals. Recent partnerships have included the following organizations:

Alabama Audubon  
Alive Structures  
Alliance for Flushing Meadows Corona Park  
American Bird Conservancy  
American Institute of Architects New York  
American Littoral Society  
American Museum of Natural History  
Arader Galleries  
Arnold Glas  
Audubon Mural Project  
Audubon New York  
Audubon Urban Collaborative Network  
The Battery Conservancy  
BIRDLINK NYC  
Birds & Beans Coffee  
Bird-Safe Buildings Alliance  
Broadway Mall Association  
Broadway Stages  
Brooklyn Bird Club  
Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy  
Brooklyn Marine STEM Education Alliance (BMSEA)  
Bryant Park Corporation  
Cafe Mesa De Los Santos  
Catchafire  
Caveat NYC  
Central Park Arsenal Gallery  
Central Park Conservancy  
Christodora  
College of Staten Island  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Constitution Marsh Audubon Sanctuary  
Department of Youth and Community Development  
Earth Matter NY  
Ennead Architects  
The Evergreens Cemetery  
Fairhope Graphics  
Feather Friendly  
Feminist Bird Club  
Fordham University  
The Friends of Governors Island  
Friends of Pelham Bay Park  
Freshkills Park Alliance  
FXCollaborative  
Gateway National Recreation Area  
Gitler & \_\_\_\_\_  
Glen Island Park, Westchester County Parks  
The Gray Mare  
Green Horizons  
Green Roof Researchers Alliance  
Greenbelt Native Plant Center  
Green-Wood Cemetery  
Hackensack Riverkeeper  
Harbor Estuary Program  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary  
IBEX Puppetry  
The Intrepid Museum  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
Jamaica Bay-Rockaways Parks Conservancy  
Kings County Brewers Collective  
Kingsland Wildflowers at Broadway Stages  
Latino Outdoors NYC  
LeFrak City  
The Linnaean Society of New York  
The Lower East Side Girls Club of NY  
Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences  
Materials for the Arts  
Metropolitan Society of Natural Historians  
Michael Ahern Production Services  
Morgan Stanley  
National Audubon Society  
National Park Service  
National September 11 Memorial & Museum  
Natural Areas Conservancy  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
The Nature Conservancy  
New Jersey Audubon  
New Jersey Meadowlands  
The New School  
New York Aquarium  
New York City Council Committee on  
Housing and Buildings  
The Office of New York City Council  
Member Andrew Cohen  
The Office of New York City Council  
Member Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.  
The Office of New York City  
Council Member Mark Gjonaj  
The Office of New York City Council  
Speaker Corey Johnson  
New York City Department of Buildings  
New York City Department  
of Environmental Protection  
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation  
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation,  
Natural Resources Group  
New York City Department of Youth and  
Community Development  
New York City Mayor's Office of Resiliency  
New York City Mayor's Office of Sustainability  
New York Harbor School  
New York Natural Heritage Program  
New York State Department of  
Environmental Conservation  
New York State Ornithological Association  
New York University Wallerstein Collaborative for  
Urban Environmental Education and Sustainability  
New Yorkers For Parks  
Newtown Creek Alliance  
Nicolas Holiber: Birds on Broadway  
NOosphere Arts  
Oceana New York  
Outdoor Afro  
Palisades Interstate Parks Commission  
Patagonia  
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey  
Prendergast Laurel Architects  
Prospect Park Alliance  
Prospect Park Audubon Center  
Queens Botanical Garden  
Queens County Bird Club  
Randall's Island Park Alliance  
The Raptor Trust  
Riverside Park Summer on the Hudson  
Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and Equity  
Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus  
Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay  
Shoals Marine Laboratory  
Student Conservation Association  
Swarovski Optik  
The Trust for Governors Island  
Underdog Strategies  
Urban Bird Treaty Program  
U.S.D.A. APHIS/Wildlife Services  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance  
The Waterbird Society  
Waterfront Alliance  
Wave Hill  
Wild Bird Fund  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
The Woodlawn Cemetery and Conservancy

## NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS, CORPORATIONS, AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES FOR THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Achelis & Bodman Foundation  
Altman Foundation  
American Littoral Society  
The Apple Hill Fund  
Arnold Glas  
Atlas Obscura  
AXA Foundation  
Benevity Giving Platform  
Birmingham Audubon Society  
Broadway Stages  
The Bronx Is Blooming  
The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation  
Central Park Conservancy  
Con Edison  
The Dobson Foundation  
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation  
The Durst Organization  
The Ferriday Fund  
Ford Foundation  
FXCollaborative  
Ginarte Gallardo Gonzalez Winograd LLP  
Hallingby Family Foundation  
Harry & Rose Zaifert Foundation  
Hudson River Foundation  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
Kelly-Nacht Fund  
Kimball Foundation  
Kings County Brewers Collective  
Leaves of Grass Fund  
LeFrak Organization  
Leon Levy Foundation  
Lily Auchincloss Foundation  
The Ludlow Hotel  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences  
The Marta Heflin Foundation  
Materials for the Arts  
Morgan Stanley  
National Audubon Society  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
National Park Service  
New York City Council  
New York City Department of Environmental  
Protection  
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation  
The New York Community Trust  
New York State Department of Environmental  
Conservation  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and  
Historic Preservation  
New York University  
Orchard Jewelry by Janet Mavec  
Parsons School of Design  
Patagonia  
Peak View Foundation  
Robert and Joyce Menschel Family Foundation  
Robert F. Schumann Foundation  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
The Walt Disney Company Foundation  
Wood Thrush Fund