

# THE URBAN AUDUBON



**THE "FIRST FLIGHT" OF VIRTUAL  
FEATHERED FRIENDS**

**THE BATTLE FOR THE MBTA**

**LISTEN TO THE BAND!**

**BURGIO'S BIRD**

**MONK PARAKEET**

**BIRDS AND BREWS  
ACROSS THE BOROUGHES**



## MISSION

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

## VISION

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

## THE URBAN AUDUBON

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## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

By Kathryn Heintz



By any measure, the past 15 months have been extraordinary. Just over a year ago, we entered a world of the unknown. A brilliantly robust spring 2020 season of fully registered programs simply evaporated. As a community we worried through the summer, had our hopes dashed for the fall, and then settled in for a long winter of uneasy waiting—mourning those we had lost, yet looking to the promise of returning spring.

I write as that eventual spring comes to its zenith, heading toward glorious summer. Warblers abound. During this masked-and-distanced year, people across the City's five boroughs have ventured into their local parks and discovered the exhilaration of our winged creatures. They have joined the ranks of many familiar faces searching the City's natural places in the early hours seeking an avian rarity, or even just a flash of yellow, indigo, or scarlet. You have welcomed these new explorers; you've been birding ambassadors. In this moment of unexpected outcomes, you and the birds are bringing us all back from the brink.

New York City Audubon has survived this crisis as an organization thanks to our dedicated staff and board and thanks to you, our members. Your support and commitment have helped us to emerge intact. Every envelope, every warm note, every warm gesture since a year ago March has lifted our spirits. Your enthusiasm for virtual programming buoyed us to venture further into that brave new world. Your overwhelming generosity over these many months has meant that our conservation and advocacy work has continued unabated. This summer we are counting on your patience—for just a little while longer—as we work hard to prepare a safe and welcoming array of trips, walks, and programs for the coming autumn and beyond. Because of you, NYC Audubon is ready for challenges ahead.

Now, after almost seven years as executive director, and with a bright light glimmering at the end of this long pandemic tunnel, I too am ready for something new, to explore places yet visited. I will step down from my role at the end of the year to make way for a new leader. Tomorrow's challenges require renewed energy and a fresh perspective so that NYC Audubon will continue to innovate and grow. I am thrilled to turn the page so that the next chapter may begin. And I am heartened by the many flourishing programs present in this issue of *The Urban Audubon*: our rebounding field research and volunteer programs, our enthusiastic new Young Conservationists Council, our upcoming summer festivals, and the successful launch of our Virtual Feathered Friends After-School Birding Club are just a few examples of the ways we are connecting New Yorkers to the City's birds and their habitats, ensuring their protection far into the future.



This spring, many new birders got a first glimpse of the spectacular Blackburnian Warbler.

## REMEMBER THE BIRDS

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

A bequest can be expressed in a Will as simply as, "I bequeath [a sum of money, a percentage of my estate, or an IRA, life insurance policy, or investment/bank account] to New York City Audubon Society, 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523, New York, NY 10010." Consult with your attorney to determine what is best for your particular situation.

Visit [nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy](http://nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy) or contact us at [development@nycaudubon.org](mailto:development@nycaudubon.org) to learn more about planning a gift for NYC Audubon.

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## CONSERVATION NOTES

As NYC Audubon's new director of conservation and science, I spent most of my time over my first six weeks learning about all the research, education, outreach, and advocacy that we do here throughout the year. So far, what strikes me most is the remarkable breadth of the work we accomplish for such a small staff. Each of the projects below represents a great deal of effort and passion. I am immensely honored and proud to work with such an amazing group of people dedicated to conserving urban birds. Below, read about all our conservation team has been up to this spring.

—Kevin R. Burgio, PhD

### PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

#### Collision Monitoring

During spring migration, millions of birds make their way via continental pathways, traveling hundreds to thousands of miles to their breeding sites. New York City is an important stopover habitat for dozens of species, ranging from incredibly common to incredibly rare. As these birds travel through cities, window collisions are a constant threat: though some birds are only temporarily stunned, many die on impact. According to NYC Audubon's research, between 90,000 and 230,000 birds are killed in the City each year from window strikes.

This spring marks the 25th year of Project Safe Flight, a community science initiative designed to involve New Yorkers in our continuing research into collisions, and find ways to help birds migrate safely through the City. We collect information from a variety of sources—most notably, data on collisions at selected buildings, collected by volunteers during spring and fall migration. This spring, over 40 volunteer community scientists are surveying seven sites across the City—a record number of both routes and volunteers. Our newest survey site is Brookfield Place, a building in lower Manhattan particularly prone to collisions. As we continue to research and advocate for a safer environment for both birds and humans, it's important to recognize the pivotal role our volunteers play in making this progress possible.

—Aurora Crooks

#### dBird

In early March, just in time for spring migration, we launched the long-awaited, redesigned [dBird.org](https://dbird.org). For many years, NYC Audubon staff answered phone calls from people reporting dead or injured birds across the City, especially during migration, when thousands of birds collide with glass windows. With no system to record and organize these reports, the information we might have learned from them was lost. In 2014, Darren Klein, then NYC Audubon's program manager, designed dBird in consultation with the conservation team to remedy this problem. Created as a simple and easy-to-use website, the original dBird allowed users to log the location of a dead or injured bird without needing to sign into an app. dBird quickly grew, and the data collected provided critical support for the passage of New York City's landmark bird-safe building law last year.

Where did you find the bird? \*



The new dBird allows collision data to be entered and analyzed by bird conservation organizations across North America.

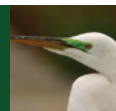
As organizations across the country stepped up their efforts to reduce bird mortality, interest in dBird grew, and we knew we needed to improve it. That opportunity came through a partnership with Seattle Audubon and a generous gift from Jim and Birte Falconer in support of their Bird-Safe Cities initiative. The new dBird, again designed by Darren Klein along with Eric Brelsford, makes it easy for organizations to collect and visualize mortality data and connect those reporting bird deaths in their area directly to conservation efforts. We also added the option to indicate cause of death, which could help researchers learn more about mortality from other sources, such as entanglement and free-roaming cats. Since its first launch, dBird has received more than 6,000 observations, which in recent weeks have come from Texas, Oklahoma, Washington, and Oregon, in addition to New York.

—Kaitlyn Parkins

### GREEN ROOFS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Green Roof Researchers Alliance (GRRRA), a consortium facilitated by NYC Audubon, is in full swing—raising awareness and understanding of green roofs by launching on social media, growing the website [GreenRoofsNYC.com](https://GreenRoofsNYC.com), and collaborating on research. Outreach is now under way for an important change to the City's Green Roof Tax Abatement program: a substantial increase in the amount of abatement available to buildings in certain priority districts. The districts, declared in February after we worked over the past year with elected officials and partners to establish them, meet three criteria: they lack green space, are in an area with a combined sewer overflow system, and have a high rate of heat-related mortality. Thanks to this change, buildings in these vulnerable areas can now receive a \$15-per-square-foot tax abatement for green roof installation, up from \$4.50. This increase is a game-changing amount, which GRRRA collaborators determined is enough to spur green roof installation across the City.

In addition to leading the GRRRA, our scientists just completed a sixth season monitoring biodiversity on the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center green roof—and have found a total of 35 bird species using the roof. New species this year included Hermit Thrush and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. For our seventh field season, begun May 1, we are monitoring for birds, bats, and arthropods.



This year we are especially interested to see how wildlife using the roof respond to developments in the surrounding neighborhood, which include a new pier, a rooftop farm on the Javits Center expansion, and the growth of the Hudson Yards complex.

— Dustin Partridge, PhD

## WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR

### Harbor Herons

At press time, we were busy planning our annual nesting survey of the Harbor Heron islands, which is conducted in the second half of May. As we were unable to visit the islands in 2020, we are eager to see what the birds are up to this year! We hope to visit islands across the harbor including South Brother and Mill Rock Islands in the East River, Hoffman and Swinburne Islands in the lower harbor, and Subway, Elders Point Marsh, and Little Egg Islands in Jamaica Bay.

In 2019, these wild islands hosted seven breeding wader species—from most to least abundant, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Glossy Ibis, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Little Blue Heron, and Cattle Egret. (We are interested in seeing whether this last species, which appeared on

Hoffman island in 2019 after many years of absence, is present this year.) Behind the scenes, in recent months we have been analyzing the three decades of data collected during the Harbor Herons program and discussing plans for publication of our research. Stay tuned for more news on our analyses, as well as for a report on this year's nesting survey, in the fall *Urban Audubon*.

—Tod Winston

### American Oystercatchers

A new American Oystercatcher breeding season is under way. The research that we have done for the last 10 years will continue this year, with the fresh addition of a partnership with Dr. Sara Kross and graduate student Katie Maffett from Columbia University. This new collaboration will allow us to answer many questions via motion-triggered trail cameras. We may be able to ascertain the main causes of nest loss and predation of eggs and chicks, as well as the role that human activity plays in the productivity of this species.

This spring, we'll employ new software to collect data directly from the field. The NestStory platform will provide us with a new way to share and visualize the data we collect. The software will be especially useful for our American Oystercatcher research, since it will allow us to follow every pair in detail during the breeding season, including precise nest locations and banded individuals. We'll use NestStory to collect information on other species as well, like the Black Skimmer and both Common and Least Terns, which often share nesting grounds with oystercatchers.

Finally, this year I received a U.S. Geological Service master banding permit, which allows us to continue our bird-banding research. In previous seasons, all our banding was done through the permit belonging to Conservation Scientist Emerita Dr. Susan Elbin. We are going to miss her this field season!

—Emilio Tobón

*Read more about our banding program, and about Emilio Tobón and his new master bander permit, on page 9. You can learn more about the birds we study and protect via the new bird species profiles on our new website: [nycaudubon.org/our-work](https://nycaudubon.org/our-work). ■*



© Alan McDonley/CBBY-NC 2.0

In 2019, a Cattle Egret was observed on Hoffman Island during our Harbor Herons nesting survey, after an absence of almost 10 years as a breeding bird in the harbor. Will we find the species this year? Stay tuned.

## VOLUNTEER!

**M**ake a difference for the City's wildlife. There are many ways to help. Contact us at [communityscience@nycaudubon.org](mailto:communityscience@nycaudubon.org) about the projects listed below. Further updates regarding these and other fall volunteer events, such as beach clean-ups and tree plantings, will be posted at [nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events](https://nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events) and announced via The eGret eNewsletter (sign up at [nycaudubon.org/egret](https://nycaudubon.org/egret)).

### PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

**Begins Wednesday, September 1**

Contribute to NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight by monitoring designated New York City buildings for collisions. This opportunity requires a time commitment of about one hour one morning a week from September through early November. Orientations will be held in August; please check our website for details.

### TRIBUTE IN LIGHT MONITORING

**Saturday, September 11, begins at 8pm**

**With National September 11 Memorial & Museum**

Each year a tireless group of volunteers monitors the Tribute in Light to ensure that migrating birds do not become entrapped in the light beams. An orientation will be held in early September; please check our website for details. ■



# THE “FIRST FLIGHT” OF VIRTUAL FEATHERED FRIENDS

By Danielle Sherman

**H**ow do you translate the magical experience of going outdoors to see birds to a virtual space? More important, how do you keep inspiring a love of birds in kids when you can't be with them in person? These were the questions we at NYC Audubon faced when we set ourselves the task of adapting Chris Cooper's wildly popular Feathered Friends after-school program at the Bronx's AmPark Neighborhood School to a virtual setting. Though COVID-19 continues to prevent us from delivering the program in person, we know how crucial it is to get these elementary-school kids excited about birds. Generous donations from participants at last year's Fall Roost gala made it possible for us to develop a virtual program to do just that.

We knew it would be a challenge to create an engaging virtual program that captured the essence of the original. With help from Chris himself, Board Member César Castillo, Conservation Associate Aurora Crooks, and consultants Dr. Shannon Curley and Ruthie Gold, we got to work. Our team focused on interactivity, engagement, and fun. We decided to pilot the program with AmPark Neighborhood School in the spring, with an eye towards expanding further in the fall.

We kicked things off with AmPark on March 16, with over 30 students eager to learn about birds. With help from our wonderful volunteers Loretta, Erik, Mary Beth, Michele and Jaqui, we've been able

to provide an interactive experience where every student can get attention. And, boy, are these students eager to learn about birds! From the start, they have been eagerly identifying any bird that pops up on their Zoom screens. They take every opportunity to tell us their favorite bird facts, like why flamingos are pink, or how to tell male from female cardinals. Based on feedback from AmPark staff, it's clear that for many of these young people, Feathered Friends is a chance to shine. They're learning all kinds of things: bird anatomy, bird behavior, how to be a good birdwatcher—and they've even been able to ask scientists all their burning bird questions. It's truly been a nonstop

bird nerd bonanza at the Virtual Feathered Friends After-School Club.

What does the future hold for our fledgling club? In the short term, we'll continue to work with the birdy kids at AmPark Neighborhood School, whether it be virtual or in person. We'll use the lessons learned this spring to improve and expand the program. And hopefully someday soon, we'll offer Feathered Friends After-School Club to budding birders all around NYC!

*Help us expand the Feathered Friends After-School Program across New York City with your donation to NYC Audubon. See page 19 to learn more. ■*



© Bonnie Taylor Barry/Shutterstock

**Among the many hot topics discussed by this spring's virtual Feathered Friends After-School Birding Club: the differences between the female (left) and male Northern Cardinal—and the source of the pink coloring of flamingos. (See photo on page 2; flamingos' intense pink colors are produced by beta carotene pigments drawn from their diet of algae, larvae, and brine shrimp.)**

## STATEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY



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

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

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

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



# BURGIO'S BIRD

By Kevin R. Burgio, PhD

**O**n an overcast day 14 years ago, I was standing in my bedroom, looking out at a snow-covered hill in my yard. I was in my late 20s, worried and even a little scared. My doctor had told me that the increased shaking of my hands over the previous few months was essential tremor, which effectively ruled out becoming a dentist as I had planned. I had spent six years in the U.S. Air Force as a dental assistant and hygienist and then three years working in a public health dental clinic. After being aimless for so many years, I finally thought I'd figured out what to do with my life—and now because of my stupid shaky hands, that was no longer a real option.

While stuck in this revelry of self-pity, I noticed movement outside, something sort of stumbling down the hill. I quickly tried to figure out what it was. It was a bird—that much I could tell—but not something I had ever seen before. It looked like a big brown bowling ball with a weird long skinny beak. I didn't know much about birds, but I thought this one must be from another world. Briefly forgetting everything else, I was determined to figure out what that damn thing outside my window was. I googled, and I read. I read, and I googled. And, after an embarrassing amount of time, I came to conclude that it was an American Woodcock.

I read more about this silly bird. I watched footage of woodcocks “dancing.”



© David Spelner

**The American Woodcock, a curious discovery to many who first encounter it, winters in our area and along the coast as far north as Massachusetts.**

I learned about how they are affected by heavy metal poisoning. I didn't realize it at the time, but that was the moment a new layer of the world revealed itself to me. Before, birds had just been background noise, just something blending in with the rest of the world—but after that, I started seeing them; started hearing them. It turns out, birds were just flapping around all over the place, and I had hardly ever noticed.

Thanks to this new way of seeing the world, I signed up for an ornithology course, with no real expectations other than getting some college credits for going outside and looking at birds. That sounded pretty cool to me! However, it ended up being much more than that—much

more than I had ever imagined. Within a couple of weeks, the professor asked me if I was doing research in anyone's lab. Being a first-generation college student (and just the second person in my family even to finish high school), I had no idea undergraduates could do research. She offered me a position in her lab, working with her postdoc. That was in 2008, and I have been a member of her lab in one capacity or another ever since.

While it may sound strange to say, as I start my new job here at NYC Audubon, I have never been so grateful for a neurological disorder and an American Woodcock. Without them, I might be doing a root canal at this very moment. ■

## LEARN MORE ABOUT NYC AUDUBON'S NEW DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION AND SCIENCE

Dr. Kevin R. Burgio received his PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut in 2017. He then spent two years as a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Connecticut in Science Communication, followed by a year at the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies as its undergraduate research program coordinator and research specialist. Most recently, Dr. Burgio has been a postdoctoral research associate with Environment and Climate Change Canada, exploring how climate change has affected populations of North American bird species. Dr. Burgio was selected as a Barry Goldwater Scholar as an undergraduate and was a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow.

Dr. Burgio's conservation research has focused on using an integrative approach to understanding how climate change and other disturbances affect the distributions and extinction risk of birds. He has published his conservation research in journals including *Conservation Biology*, *Science Advances*, and the *Journal of Ornithology*. He is a subject editor for the scientific journal *Avian Conservation and Ecology*. He has also published articles about birds and science in media outlets such as *The Washington Post*, *Salon*, and *American Scientist*, and been quoted on his research in *The New York Times*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, and *Audubon*. His goal is to bridge the divide between ecological theory and on-the-ground conservation in order to make the best possible

decisions for now and the future. He also advocates for inclusiveness in science. You can follow him on Twitter @KRBurgio.



© Kevin R. Burgio

# THE BATTLE FOR THE MBTA

By Suzanne Charlé

In 1918, Congress passed the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) thanks to the initial efforts of bird conservationists in Massachusetts. This “bedrock environmental law,” as David O’Neill, current president of Mass Audubon, describes it, makes it illegal to kill or possess native birds of over 1,000 North American species—from Blue Jays to Bald Eagles. (In practice, the term “migratory” in the act’s name applies to *all* native birds, based on an understanding that all native birds shift their ranges somewhat during the year.) Thanks to the MBTA, for the last century corporations and others have been held responsible for preventable deaths, saving millions of birds every year.

Until 2017, that is, when the hurricane that was the Trump Administration struck. Siding with corporations, the Department of the Interior issued a legal opinion stating that “incidental” (as opposed to purposeful) killings were not in violation of the MBTA. “That meant that industrial activities that lead to bird fatalities—such as an oil spill or failure to cover a waste pit—were not covered by the law, no matter how inevitable the deaths of birds,” explains Sarah Greenberger, National Audubon’s senior vice president for conservation policy. To wit: British Petroleum would have faced no consequences when its Deepwater Horizon oil spill killed an estimated one million birds in 2010. (In fact, in the final court settlement, BP paid over \$20 billion for projects to restore and protect coastal and marine ecology.) Greenberger emphasized that “all obligations were wiped away” by this rollback.

National Audubon, along with many other environmental organizations and eight states, sued and won in August 2020. Invoking *To Kill a Mockingbird*, U.S. District Court Judge Valerie Caproni of Manhattan began her decision with, “It is not only a sin to kill a mockingbird, it is also a crime”—and ruled that the unintentional or incidental “take” of native birds is indeed illegal under the MBTA. The Department of the Interior’s opinion, Caproni wrote, “violated the unambiguous language and overriding conservation purpose of the MBTA.”

Unabashed, the Trump Administration published a final rule this January, based on its opinion, stating that the MBTA applies only to intentional bird killings; the rule was to take effect in February. National Audubon, other environmental groups, and 12 states promptly filed a second federal lawsuit, arguing that the Department of Interior was flouting the century-old law. In turn, the new Biden Administration first delayed the effective date of the Trump rule and then, on March 8, announced that it would soon issue a new rule to replace it. (The Administration also rescinded the legal opinion upon which the rule had been based.)

The rule, however, still went into effect. And even though the Biden Administration is moving forward with the process needed to replace it, “It’s a complex situation,” Greenberger explains. Public comments are required and “that takes time,” perhaps a lot. She stresses that it will be important to strengthen the MBTA by having industrial groups, environmental organizations, and the government devise sensible standards that companies can follow and that can be enforced.

Also necessary is a general permitting process to provide relief from liability for situations where incidental killings can’t be prevented. Currently, the permitting process is long, involved, and expensive because it’s on a case-by-case basis. “There’s space for refinement,” says Greenberger, adding that Audubon and other environmental groups are engaging with the Administration to create a framework that will both minimize harm to birds and simplify the permitting system. Projects should first, avoid impact; second, minimize bird deaths; and third, provide compensation for any breaches. Just what that compensation looks like will depend on many factors. “The Biden Administration is interested,” notes Greenberger, adding that the President is “intent on deploying a 21st-century infrastructure, including green energy.”

The future looks promising, but further progress depends on additional action by both Congress and American citizens. Congressman Alan Lowenthal of California introduced the Migratory Bird Protection Act, H.R. 5552, in 2020, and is again sponsoring it in 2021. This new legislation would clarify that incidental take is illegal, and thus its interpretation would not be subject to the whim of future administrations. NYC Audubon is urging members to ask their representatives and senators to be cosponsors of the act. Take action to uphold the century-old bird protection act at [act.abcbirds.org/a/take-action-mbta](https://act.abcbirds.org/a/take-action-mbta). ■



© Keith Michael

Many raptors such as the Peregrine Falcon die from electrocution from perching on power lines, a frequently reported type of “incidental take.”



# LISTEN TO THE BAND!

By Carol Peace Robins

There are many keys to identifying a bird: shape, size, color, and song are among the most useful. And then, there are leg bands. These human-affixed markers aren't meant to identify the species of bird, however, but to track the bird along its travels and through its lifespan, helping scientists better understand migration patterns and population dynamics.

NYC Audubon Senior Conservation Biologist Kaitlyn Parkins puts it this way: "Banding lets you collect data you could never get any other way." Currently, the main species banded by NYC Audubon every spring are all waterbirds: Common Terns, Black Skimmers, American Oystercatchers, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Double-crested Cormorants, and Great Egrets (along with a few Glossy Ibis, Snowy Egrets, and an occasional Little Blue Heron).

Our top human affixer—a.k.a. master bander—Emilio Tobón (see profile below) earned his master bander permit from the 100-year-old Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL), part of the U.S. Geological Survey, after apprenticing under Conservation Scientist Emerita Dr. Susan Elbin. A BBL master bander permit authorizes bird-safe capture, banding, and release by both the master bander and those overseen by him or her.

The BBL also provides master banders with lightweight metal bands, each engraved with a unique serial number. Banders record the band number and information about each bird they band, including species, sex, age, weight, measurements, and location; carefully place the band on the bird's lower leg; and then release the bird where it was found. Many research teams, including NYC Audubon, also attach an additional colorful plastic band specific to their research project with a large code called a "field-readable" band, which is easier to see and decipher. Field-readable bands enable the public to read and report banding codes on living, moving birds in the wild.

When observers spot a banded bird, even hundreds or thousands of miles away from its banding site, they can report the band code, time, and location to [reportband.gov](https://reportband.gov) at the BBL, which compiles the information and sends the data (called



© Doug Gochfeld

This immature Little Blue Heron, banded in Jamaica Bay (and assigned code "17"), was photographed by Brooklyn birder Doug Gochfeld.

an "encounter") to the appropriate banders two weeks later. NYC Audubon's band encounter database includes more than 1,100 reports.

The information, Parkins notes, is vital to understanding annual avian visitors to New York City. And sometimes, as in the case of the American Oystercatcher, NYC Audubon's research contributes to a larger effort like that of the American Oystercatcher Working Group. This group of scientists from the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and Latin America meets yearly to compare data on everything from oystercatcher productivity to predator management.

Of course, there's more to the banding story: from how to catch each bird (by mist net, various sorts of specialized traps, or by hand, depending on the bird), to when (never in the rain), to the sort of band or tag used. (The latest tracking devices include tiny nanotags used for radiotracking, attached with super glue(!), to the bird's back.) It's fascinating stuff, but nothing compared to the valuable scientific data that banded birds give to conservation groups such as NYC Audubon. ■

## MEET MASTER BANDER EMILIO TOBÓN

Emilio Tobón, born in Mexico City, loved animals as a child, so he decided to study wildlife biology in college and became enamored of seabirds. He researched Elegant Terns in the Gulf of California and Magnificent Frigatebirds off Mexico's Pacific coast. He also spent five years studying and conserving the seabirds of New Zealand. In 2008, he moved to New York City and began volunteering with Dr. Susan Elbin. Since 2011 he has been NYC Audubon's conservation field biologist. And now, he's our master bander.

Most of the time, you'll find Tobón on the beaches of the Rockaways in Queens—where American Oystercatchers spend the spring and summer breeding and raising their young, after wintering along the Atlantic

coast and the Gulf of Mexico, all the way to South America. Banding this species has made him a huge fan (although the Magnificent Frigatebird remains his favorite). He discloses that American Oystercatchers are quite aggressive toward each other while they are defending their territory. But in a bander's hand, they're very tranquil. "Not at all like the Northern Cardinal, which never stops fighting. With the oystercatcher, you really need to feel it, to be aware you have a good grip on it all the time."

Tobón lives near Inwood Hill Park, Manhattan, with his wife, a biologist at The New York Botanical Garden, and their nine-year-old son. "I'm not much of a birdwatcher," he says—but that depends on your definition



© Debra Kieny

Tobón holds a banded young oystercatcher.

of the word. He certainly watches over American Oystercatchers, awaiting the day he can bring his son to the Rockaway beaches to see what exactly his father does all day.

# NY BBA III: LOOKING FORWARD AFTER A BANNER FIRST YEAR

By Molly Adams

**T**he New York Breeding Bird Atlas III is now in its second year. During the groundbreaking first year, more than 1,800 people submitted over 600,000 breeding observations. A total of 281 bird species were submitted with some kind of breeding code last year, and 213 of these were confirmed as nesting in the state. (In comparison, 251 breeding species were confirmed over the entire second Atlas, from 2000 to 2005). Over 75 percent of all blocks and over 80 percent of the state's priority blocks had Atlas activity. Now that the Atlas has acquired a year's worth of data, we have more insight on how participants can best use their time going forward to contribute data that the Atlas is lacking.

One of the best parts of atlasing is its clear goals: for each of the 1,815 priority blocks in New York ([ebird.org/atlasny/effortmap](http://ebird.org/atlasny/effortmap)), we need to finish all the block completion elements ([ebird.org/atlasny/about/block-completion](http://ebird.org/atlasny/about/block-completion)) over the next four years:

- Visited at 3+ times of year (e.g., April, June, July)
- All accessible habitat types in a block are visited
- 20+ hours of daytime birding
- 2+ hours of nocturnal birding
- 55-95+ species reported (highly variable throughout the state)
- 50 percent of reported species marked as "Confirmed"

Essentially, every priority block needs more nocturnal atlasing. To complete a block for the Atlas, the goal is at least two hours of nocturnal birding, ideally spread over two visits—once during March and April, and then once in May to July. A nocturnal checklist in eBird is a list that starts later than 20 minutes after sunset, or earlier than 40 minutes before sunrise. Make sure to keep separate checklists for daytime and nocturnal birding. Find more nocturnal atlasing tips at [ebird.org/atlasny/news/nocturnal-atlasing-guide](http://ebird.org/atlasny/news/nocturnal-atlasing-guide).

For more information on how you can use your time atlasing



© Don Riepe

**Nocturnal atlasing is needed to detect species such as the Barn Owl. (These nestlings were photographed last year in Jamaica Bay.)**

this year to most help the Atlas, use the strategic atlasing guide at [ebird.org/atlasny/about/strategic-atlasing](http://ebird.org/atlasny/about/strategic-atlasing). Most important, have fun! If you have any questions about atlasing in NYC or Long Island, please send an email to [nybba3.nycli@gmail.com](mailto:nybba3.nycli@gmail.com).

## SAVE THE DATE: BIG ATLAS WEEKEND—JUNE 25-27

Join us for a weekend full of atlasing with fun challenges, rewards, and opportunities. Help us meet the atlas goal of covering all priority blocks while having fun atlasing in the prime breeding season. We've even convinced the Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas to join the fun and hope to turn this into an annual event highlighting breeding birds.

Make sure to check the Atlas calendar for other upcoming events, at [ebird.org/atlasny/about/events](http://ebird.org/atlasny/about/events). ■

## DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT KELLYE ROSENHEIM IS OFF TO SEE THE BIRDS!



© NYC Audubon

**Kellye Rosenheim at our annual Central Park Christmas Bird Count compilation at the Central Park Arsenal.**

Kellye Rosenheim, NYC Audubon's director of development, has announced that she will step down from her post on July 15 in order to spend more time enjoying birds. We owe Kellye a tremendous debt of gratitude for her exceptional guidance of our fundraising, membership, and communications efforts over the past six years.

Among the many achievements under her watch, we launched Bird Trivia Night, Birds and Breakfast gatherings for American Kestrel Circle supporters, and the upcoming spring fundraiser Cooper and Cooper in Conversation. She and her team of volunteers made the annual Fall Roost benefit a must-attend party beautifully showcasing our work and providing merriment for all attendees. Over the past year, she and her development

and communications colleagues overhauled our online membership and donation platform. Beyond these efforts, we will certainly miss her always-cheerful presence, infectious enthusiasm for birds, attentiveness to our supporters, boundless creative energy, and wicked sense of humor.

We look forward to seeing what the next chapter has in store for Kellye. Maybe a follow-up to her *Birdwatching in New York City* and *on Long Island* book? Whatever she pursues, she has left some very big shoes to fill; but fill them we must. We are looking for a qualified individual to be our new director of development. If you or someone you know might be interested in this position, please see the description at [nycaudubon.org/about-us/our-people/join-our-team](http://nycaudubon.org/about-us/our-people/join-our-team).



# MONK PARAKEET (*MYIOPSITTA MONACHUS*)

By Don Riepe

In 1970, I was working as a substitute teacher at Richmond Hill High School in Queens when a flock of fast-flying, emerald-green birds flew by the window. I soon discovered that these strange, colorful newcomers were Monk Parakeets, native to South America. Also known as Quaker Parrots, these Blue-Jay-sized birds are named for their gray forehead, face, and breast, evoking either a monk's hood or the colonial-era clothing of Quakers. At close range, the species' sharply hooked yellow bill stands out in contrast to its cool gray face. But in rapid flight—often the way this bird is spotted, after it makes its presence known with a sharp chattering—the bright flash of its green upperparts, blue-green tail, and deep-blue flight feathers leaves the strongest impression, as it did with me that day 50 years ago.

In its native range, the Monk Parakeet is a year-round resident from southern Brazil south to central Argentina. Imported into the U.S. for the pet trade in the 1960s, the species has become established in the wild through both accidental and purposeful introductions. Today, thriving populations occur in several U.S. localities, particularly New York, Connecticut, Illinois, Oregon, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and Puerto Rico—as well as further afield, in Italy, Spain, Israel, United Arab Emirates, and Japan.

In New York City, the Monk Parakeet's growing population is centered in Brooklyn and Queens, though they have been reported in all five boroughs. As they are originally from subtropical areas,



© Ryan F. Mandelbaum

**Monk Parakeets gather at one of multiple entrances to a nest built upon the entranceway of Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery.**

the hardy birds can survive our Northeast winters. In the 1980s I remember seeing them at Brooklyn College, where they built their large nests around air conditioners and athletic-field lighting fixtures. Another well-known Brooklyn site is Green-Wood Cemetery, where a colony nests on the historic Gothic Revival archway at the main entrance gatehouse.

These intelligent birds make good pets and are good at mimicking human speech. In their native South American range, Monk Parakeets are often considered crop pests because of their predilection for cereal grain and citrus fruit. Their primary diet is made up of a variety of fruit, seeds, buds, and flowers. So far, in New York State, they are found in and around urban centers, so have had minimal reported impacts on rural agriculture.

The parakeets' nests, however, do sometimes provoke legitimate concerns from electrical companies. The birds nest communally and often build huge stick structures on telephone poles. The Monk Parakeet is one of only three known parrot species to build stick nests, and the only one to use them exclusively. A single nest typically contains up to 20 chambers, with separate entrances for multiple pairs. As the birds build and maintain their nests year-round, they can create an ongoing maintenance problem for utility companies, an issue that our director of conservation and science has studied in the past ([peerj.com/articles/601](https://peerj.com/articles/601)).

In 1973, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation initiated a failed campaign to eliminate Monk Parakeets; the state of New Hampshire bans owning them outright. Despite these concerns and management issues, these adaptable birds will probably become a stabilized non-native species along with House Sparrows, European Starlings, and Mute Swans, all of which have managed to find their niche in large swaths of North America.

For me, Monk Parakeets are a welcome sight, reminding me of the tropics as they fly freely over New York City. ■



© Kelley Murphy/Audubon Photography Awards

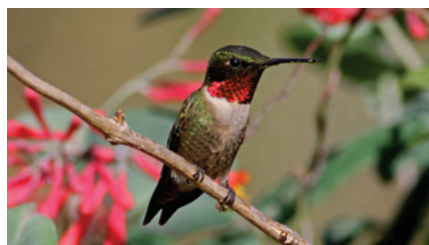
**The Monk Parakeet's rapid flight doesn't often allow an opportunity to appreciate the rich blue of its flight feathers.**



# BIRDS AND BREWS ACROSS THE BOROUGHS

By Hillarie O'Toole

**H**ow can one top off a glorious day of birding? Sometimes (for adults 21 and over), nothing beats a nice cold brew. New York City has a growing number of locally owned craft beer establishments where thirsty birders can toast the sights of the day. The birding and beer pairing list below is just a sampling of what the City has to offer. Quoted descriptions of birding locations are taken from the newly redesigned NYC Audubon website (check out [nycaudubon.org/birding-in-nyc](http://nycaudubon.org/birding-in-nyc)), where you can now explore recommended birding locations borough by borough. Always remember to bird—and drink—responsibly!



© Will Stuart

**Ruby-throated Hummingbirds sometimes nest in The New York Botanical Garden.**

## THE BRONX

Nestled within the Arthur Avenue Retail Market, you will find the Bronx Beer Hall. Located just a mile from The New York Botanical Garden, whose “diverse habitats have attracted a reported 229 bird species and make it a migrant hotspot,” the Bronx Beer Hall is an ideal place to taste a variety of craft beers, complemented by a menu that includes Italian dishes from fellow Market vendors Mike’s Deli and Cafe al Mercato.



© Bob Feldman/Audubon Photography Awards

**Tree Swallows breed (and tussle over territory) at Ridgewood Reservoir.**

## BROOKLYN

One could plan a multiday bird-and-brew tour with all the options now available throughout Brooklyn. If you happen to find yourself birding at Ridgewood Reservoir, “a rich property of woodlands and wetlands” with 170 documented bird species, it will be worth the bit of a trek to Bushwick to experience the fine craft creations of the Kings County Brewers Collective. KCBC is a truly bird-friendly establishment, as brew master Pete Lengyel has founded an informal

beer-drinking birding group called the “Beerders” and for the past several fall migrations has offered the “Safe Flight IPA,” with a portion of sales donated to support NYC Audubon’s Project Safe Flight.



© François Portmann

**Central Park’s beautiful Loch is a good place to find southward-bound Louisiana Waterthrushes, in late July through August.**

## MANHATTAN

At the northern end of Central Park you will find “the Meer, a lake that hosts waterfowl in migration and during mild winters” and the Loch, “a babbling brook coursing over falls” that offers “some of the most tranquil and thrilling birding in the Park.” There is no shortage of phenomenal restaurants and places to grab a beverage post-birding near this beautiful section of Central Park. Just a short train ride on the C line or a little over a mile walk up Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, you will find Harlem Hops, which bills itself as Manhattan’s first 100-percent African-American-owned craft beer bar. It offers a bespoke collection of beers, many made by local, small-batch, and family-owned small businesses.

Bonus Manhattan pairing: When visiting the NYC Audubon Nature Center on Governors Island, be sure to visit Threes Brewing, located at the Liggett Terrace food court.

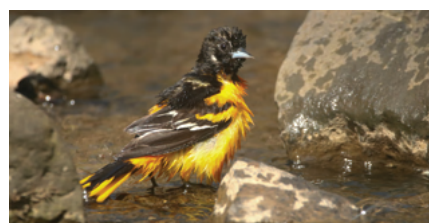


© Don Riepe

**Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge can offer startling numbers of Great and Snowy Egrets.**

## QUEENS

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is known as “one of the best places in New York City to observe migrating species” and “one of the most significant bird sanctuaries in the northeastern United States.” Luckily, for birders who also love beer, one of the most charming seaside breweries is just a bike or train ride away in Rockaway Beach. Rockaway Brewing Company, on Beach 72nd Street, offers a rotating list of original brews and a fantastic seasonal menu to enjoy on its spacious outdoor patio.



© Dave Ostapuk

**Nesting birds like the Baltimore Oriole may come for a dip at Clove Lakes Park.**

## STATEN ISLAND

Just a short bus ride from the Staten Island Ferry, you will find Clove Lake Park, which attracts “an impressive variety of warblers, vireos, tanagers” and the “only pair of Great Blue Herons known to nest in New York City.” Equally as easy to get to by bus from the Ferry is the Flagship Brewing Company, founded in 2014 in the Tompkinsville section of the island. On weekends, you will often find local food trucks in its parking lot. ■

## EVENTS & ADVENTURES



As this summer *Urban Audubon* goes to press, NYC Audubon has opted to delay scheduling in-person programs due to continuing uncertainty about the COVID-19 pandemic. We are continuing to make the safety of our members, staff, and guides our top priority. Updates regarding virtual events such as classes and workshops will be announced through The eGret eNewsletter and posted to our website. To view “virtual birding” programs and other suggestions for staying involved with birding and bird conservation during this time, visit [nycaudubon.org/virtual-birding](https://nycaudubon.org/virtual-birding). For updates right in your inbox, make sure to sign up for The eGret eNewsletter at [nycaudubon.org/egret](https://nycaudubon.org/egret). And follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (@nycaudubon). 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.

### SUMMER AND EARLY FALL FESTIVALS



© Keith Michael

Common Terns display on Governors Island.

#### 8TH ANNUAL “IT’S YOUR TERN!” FESTIVAL

Saturday, July 17, Noon-4pm

With the Trust for Governors Island

Come celebrate the terns of Governors Island! Common Terns, listed as a threatened species in New York State, have nested for several years on Governors Island’s waterfront. Learn what makes these little seabirds so special. Free activities for the whole family. Visit [nycaudubon.org/festivals](https://nycaudubon.org/festivals) for more information and to register. (Note that at time of publication, we have not yet determined whether the festival will be virtual or in-person.) No limit. Free



© François Portmann

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

#### 4TH ANNUAL JAMAICA BAY MONARCH AND POLLINATOR FESTIVAL

Sunday, September 19, Time TBA

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

Join us for a festival celebrating monarch butterflies and other pollinators like moths, bees, and birds! Enjoy live presentations and activities with fun for the whole family. Visit [nycaudubon.org/festivals](https://nycaudubon.org/festivals) for more information and to register. (Note that at time of publication, we have not yet determined whether the festival will be virtual or in-person.) No limit. Free ■



© François Portmann

Black-bellied Plovers and assorted shorebirds stop by Jamaica Bay.

#### 16TH ANNUAL SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL AT JAMAICA BAY

Saturday, August 14, Time TBA

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

Save the date for a celebration of Jamaica Bay’s shorebirds! August is the perfect time to explore the diversity and abundance of New York City’s shorebirds, particularly at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Kids and adults alike will be able to enjoy this dive into shorebirds. Visit [nycaudubon.org/festivals](https://nycaudubon.org/festivals) for more information and to register. (Note that at time of publication, we have not yet determined whether the festival will be virtual or in-person.) No limit. Free

### NYC AUDUBON MEMBER EVENTS

As we look forward to being together again in the field, we hope that you have enjoyed NYC Audubon’s virtual offerings. NYC Audubon members may view recordings of past events on our YouTube channel by using the links that the membership office has provided by email. When it is safe to hold live in-person walks again, you’ll hear about it first in The eGret eNewsletter, so be sure you’re signed up to get this twice-monthly source of NYC Audubon news, at [nycaudubon.org/egret](https://nycaudubon.org/egret). In the meantime, if you’d like to suggest an exciting hotspot to add to our bird walk schedule (either in person or virtual), please write to [membership@nycaudubon.org](mailto:membership@nycaudubon.org).

Thank you for your continuing support!



# VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS WITH NYC AUDUBON

This spring, we hosted a variety of virtual events to connect with you during this time of limited in-person activities. In case you missed them, you can read about a selection of events below; find more webinars at [youtube.com/user/nycadubon](https://youtube.com/user/nycadubon) and [nycadubon.org/virtual-birding](https://nycadubon.org/virtual-birding).

## THE INAUGURAL FLAPPY HOUR: A SOARING SUCCESS

The evening of April 16, NYC Audubon's Young Conservationists Council held its first virtual Flappy Hour—and got viewers up close and personal with owls. Participants met Penny the Eastern Screech-Owl, presented by longtime New Jersey rehabilitation center the Raptor Trust. Dr. Shannon Curley, of the Freshkills Park Alliance, introduced the group to the many owl species that visit New York City throughout the year, and discussed how to observe them ethically.



Courtesy of the Raptor Trust

Special guest Penny the Eastern Screech-Owl from the Raptor Trust

With Young Conservationists Council members including Chair Simon Keyes, Tim Healy, and an owl-attired Ryan Mandelbaum at the helm, the evening also offered plenty more fun—from Owl Zoom backgrounds to a fast-paced trivia game with prizes including totes from Bird Collective and hot sauce from Aves Spice Co. After this inaugural success, we can't wait to see what else the Young Conservationists have planned.

The Young Conservationists Council, formed in early 2020, is a group of eight young New Yorkers who are committed to sharing the wonders of this city's diverse ecosystem with the next generation of New Yorkers, and who are dedicated to protecting and conserving its natural habitats. Stay tuned for the fall *Urban Audubon*, when we will announce more about this new initiative and how you can get involved.

## D. BRUCE YOLTON HELPS US GET TO KNOW PALE MALE

On April 8, [urbanhawks.com](https://urbanhawks.com) founder D. Bruce Yolton treated a rapt virtual audience to "A Year with Pale Male," an intimate look into the day-to-day habits of the world's most famous Red-tailed Hawk. Yolton shared his detailed knowledge of the bird's life cycle: from mating on Valentine's Day (or thereabouts); to "egg-rolling" in late March; to fledging and "child care" (mostly by Pale Male himself) during the summer; to the winter days, when he and current mate Octavia spend their days apart, but roost near one another in Central Park at night.



© D. Bruce Yolton

Octavia and Pale Male on their Fifth Avenue nest

We also learned about the history of these storied birds since Pale Male's arrival in the park as a year-old bird in 1991. Yolton gave a firsthand account of NYC Audubon's successful fight to reinstall a nesting platform at the red-tails' park-facing co-op building, after the nest was removed in late 2004. And we learned about the growth of the red-tail population over the past 30 years: the charismatic bird is now a breeding species, and a common sight, in all five boroughs. The sad fate of Pale Male's mates, many of which have died from poisoning or other accidents, provoked discussion of rodenticides and other human-caused perils for raptors in New York City, and of all the work NYC Audubon does to protect the City's raptors.

Visit [urbanhawks.com](https://urbanhawks.com) to see more of Bruce's photographic accounts of birds of prey. To learn more about Pale Male and other urban raptors and how to make the City a safer place for them, visit [nycadubon.org/urban-raptors](https://nycadubon.org/urban-raptors).

## COOPERS' TALK

As this issue goes to press, we are looking forward to "Cooper & Cooper in Conversation," which promises to be a lively evening with Emmy Award-winning CNN anchor and journalist Anderson Cooper and activist, writer, birder (and NYC Audubon Board Member) Chris Cooper. We're excited to host this exchange of ideas about Central Park, nature, birds, and bringing people into enjoyment of the outdoors. Stay tuned for updates on the event in the fall *Urban Audubon*. ■



Anderson Cooper and Chris Cooper

Anderson Cooper courtesy of CNN.  
Chris Cooper © Jesse Dittmar/Redux





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

## NEW YORK STATE'S RESTORE MOTHER NATURE BOND ACT IS BACK ON THE BALLOT IN 2021

It has been an honor for NYC Audubon to be a part of the Clean Water and Jobs Coalition. This group has worked hard to fight for environmental funding in the state since the initial introduction of the Restore Mother Nature Bond Act in 2020, and we're pleased to announce that despite crushing setbacks due to COVID-19, it is back on the ballot for 2021. Here is a summary of what the approved state budget holds for the environment and for birds.

- The \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Bond Act was reauthorized and will be placed on the ballot in 2022.
- \$500 million will be provided to replace aging water infrastructure and ensure that all New Yorkers have access to clean water.
- \$185 million will fund improvements at our State Parks and Department of Environmental Conservation facilities—including the creation of the New York State Birding Trail.
- The Environmental Protection Fund was fully funded at \$300 million, and full funding was restored for the Theodore Roosevelt, Constitution Marsh, Rheinstrom Hill, and Montezuma Audubon centers and sanctuaries.

## THE BIRD-SAFE BUILDINGS ACT HAS BEEN REINTRODUCED

In March, U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley and Senator Cory Booker reintroduced H.R. 919, the Bird-Safe Buildings Act. This bill will reduce bird collisions by requiring federal buildings to incorporate bird-safe materials and design. Ask your representatives to support the Act at [act.abcbirds.org/a/take-action-bird-safe-buildings](https://act.abcbirds.org/a/take-action-bird-safe-buildings).

## NYC AUDUBON ADVOCATES PUSH TO PROTECT CONEY ISLAND CREEK

At the end of February, NYC Audubon and local environmental organizations and advocates submitted comments to the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) asking them to deny federally required environmental permits needed to install a ferry landing at the Kaiser Park fishing pier in Coney Island Creek and requesting a public hearing. While NYC Audubon recognizes that increased methods of transportation to and from Coney Island are necessary, we believe that the chosen site poses a threat to local wildlife and the communities that use the creek.

Over 260 species of birds have been observed in Coney Island Creek, some of which are federally Endangered or Threatened species and/or New York State Department of Conservation's Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). These species include Piping Plovers, Roseate Terns, Red Knots, and a Great Egret banded by NYC Audubon as a chick that returned several years later and used the creek as a foraging ground for the entire summer in 2017. Out of all the recorded species in and around



International Coastal Clean Up volunteers at Brooklyn's Kaiser Park, on Coney Island Creek

Coney Island Creek, over 60 are listed as SGCN, with at least 25 considered high-priority species.

The required state permits to start construction and dredging have already been approved by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), despite the many concerns raised by community members and environmental organizations. As of mid-April, we have not heard that USACE has made any decisions regarding the permits or a public hearing. Thank you to all of our members and advocates who took this action.

## NYC AUDUBON VOLUNTEERS ADVOCATE FOR SEABIRDS

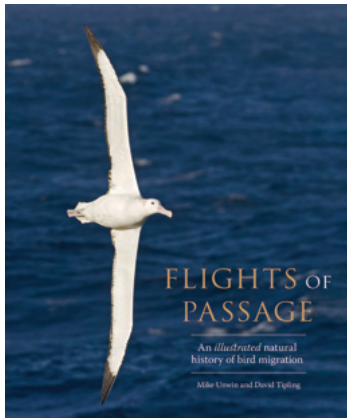
In April, a number of our dedicated advocacy volunteers joined Audubon New York and National Audubon for Seabird Advocacy Week. Globally, seabird populations have declined by a staggering 70 percent since the 1950s. Seabirds rely on small, schooling fish like sardines and anchovies—known as forage fish—for food. Volunteers attended advocacy training sessions and met with U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer and U.S. Congressman Gregory Meeks to demand greater protections for seabirds.

To better protect seabirds, we must expand the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, our nation's only federal fisheries management law. Congress must also direct funding to protect coastal and marine habitats to boost seabird populations, mitigate the climate crisis, and protect communities from storms.

To write to your member of Congress, visit [bit.ly/3fdTthU](https://bit.ly/3fdTthU). Read National Audubon's report on this year's Seabird Advocacy Week at [bit.ly/33HmwVL](https://bit.ly/33HmwVL). ■

## BECOME AN AVIAN ADVOCATE

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



**FLIGHTS OF PASSAGE: AN ILLUSTRATED  
NATURAL HISTORY OF BIRD MIGRATION**

By Mike Unwin and David Tipling  
Yale University Press, 2020

Enthusiasts of bird migration are enjoying a bonanza of new books and articles on the subject, in part thanks to the bounty of new information being gleaned from technologies like geolocators, which have been adapted for use on even the smallest birds. We have come a long way from the days when birds' disappearance in winter was explained by their changing into different species or hiding in the mud at the bottoms of ponds.

The new book *Flights of Passage*, by Unwin and Tipling, resembles their previous collaborations, *The Enigma of the Owl* and *The Empire of the Eagle*, in offering sumptuous design and glorious photos. In

this case, however, the textual information is more extensive, including for each of 67 species a template covering lifestyle and population status as assessed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as well as maps showing breeding and non-breeding distribution and simplified migration routes.

The 67 species covered are divided into six groups, based more on behaviors than on taxonomy: wildfowl and diving birds, seabirds, shorebirds and waders, songbirds, raptors and owls, and "other." These particular species were chosen, according to the introduction, to "showcase migratory behavior across a broad spectrum," although, the authors admit, "it would have been just as easy to select 67 other species," since all bird migration is an amazing phenomenon.

Some of the winning endurance records will already be familiar to readers of ornithological literature: the longest nonstop flights, attributed to Bar-tailed Godwits going from the Arctic to New Zealand; or the longest-distance record, set by Arctic Terns with their pole-to-pole travels. Other record-breakers are less well known, like the Bar-headed Goose, which reaches 20,000 feet in altitude while crossing the Himalayas, or the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, which takes the prize for the most distance traveled per gram of weight (500 miles, in a 20-hour flight across the Gulf of Mexico).

Unwin and Tipling share many more facts about familiar birds that may surprise, however:

- Common Loons reach 75 mph in flight.
- Atlantic Puffin chicks migrate before they can fly—they swim away from their nests and spend their first winter at sea.
- Sandhill Cranes often cover 400 miles in a single day.
- Blackpoll Warblers make the longest over-water flight of all land-based birds (nearly 1,800 miles) when they travel from the northeast coast of North America over the Atlantic to northern South America.
- Migrating raptors depend on thermals in flight, and thus their migration routes avoid large expanses of water, leading to huge gatherings at their favorite crossing spots, like Gibraltar and Vera Cruz.

The book offers a bit of relief from the current uncertainty over the continued existence of many bird species. Of the total 67 described, only 9 are given a status other than "Least Concern," although the caveats added by the authors may lead one to question the IUCN's judgments. Aside from ever-continuing habitat loss and climate change, which is expected to present challenges to all migrating creatures, the most formidable tests may be faced by the bird species that migrate across the Mediterranean, where hunters are known to take down over 500 million birds every year, and by the seabirds



© David Tipling

Adult Emperor Penguins (*Aptenodytes forsteri*) return to their colony across sea ice of the Weddell Sea, Antarctica.



endangered by longline fishing nets and plastic junk in the oceans.

What especially distinguishes this book, like previous ones from this duo, is its stunning photography. Seven Snowy Owls perched gracefully on a piece of deadwood, all staring into the camera. Red-necked

Phalaropes swimming in the shadow of a Humpback Whale's tail. An aerial view of Emperor Penguins looking tiny against the ice-covered landscape they must cross to reach the sea. Thousands of Red Knots packed onto the sand at high tide in England. The roof of a church in Spain holding no less

than *four* White Stork nests. A huge flock of Red-billed Queleas—supposedly the most abundant wild bird in the world—at a waterhole in Kenya. A tiny Reed Warbler taking care of a Common Cuckoo chick, already larger than she is. Pick up this absorbing book and revel in the photos. ■

## NYC AUDUBON STANDS COMMITTED TO SAFE, ACCESSIBLE, AND INCLUSIVE BIRDING

In light of recent allegations of criminal and abusive behavior experienced by women birders in other parts of the country, NYC Audubon stands committed to continuing our work to expand accessible and inclusive birding, and to share the magic of birds and nature as widely as possible.

Everyone—particularly women, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and members of all marginalized communities—has the right to be free from harassment, intimidation, abuse, or assault while birding or engaging in any outdoor activities. We must create a safe and comfortable environment for all. To

this end, before NYC Audubon resumes in-person walks and trips later in 2021, we are committed to strengthening our own protocols and trainings to ensure that we offer welcoming and positive interactions with nature in New York City and beyond.

### STAFF AND VOLUNTEER PROTOCOLS

NYC Audubon staff completes annual sexual-harassment prevention training provided by the NYC Commission on Human Rights. As we prepare to safely restart our trips and classes program in 2021 following the pandemic, we are

extending that training to our paid and volunteer birding guides and trip leaders.

This spring, NYC Audubon initiated an ongoing conversation among members of the Audubon Urban Collaborative Network with National Audubon, to explore the possibility of National Audubon creating web-based trainings and a code of conduct for the Audubon network. The trainings would focus on sexual-harassment prevention and anti-bias/inclusiveness, in the context of a variety of scenarios that Audubon chapter staff and volunteers may experience across the country. ■

## NEWS & NOTES



### THE NEW YORK STATE BIRDING TRAIL IS COMING TO A PARK NEAR YOU

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) is at work on the new New York State Birding Trail, a network of easy-to-get-to birding locations in each region of the state. This digital trail map will launch this summer at [ibirdny.org](http://ibirdny.org), providing information on places anyone can go to find birds—with special emphasis on reaching a diverse audience and promoting an inclusive experience for all. NYC Audubon has provided input on the New York City segment of this new effort, which is being led by NYSDEC in partnership with other agencies including State Parks, NYC Parks, the National Park Service, and Empire State Development/ILNY.

### THE WEST POND IS BEING REINFORCED

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge's West Pond, a critical source of local fresh water, may be partially closed this summer—but for good reason. National Park Service and Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy are partnering on a living shoreline project to restore almost 15 acres of salt marsh for wading birds, rails, and shorebirds—and to strengthen the pond's protective levee.

### A FAMILIAR FACE COMES TO GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Former NYC Audubon Executive Director Glenn Phillips has been named Executive Director of San Francisco's Golden Gate Audubon Society. We wish Glenn all the best in this new endeavor.

### DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT KELLYE ROSENHEIM STEPS DOWN

After six years of excellent service to NYC Audubon, Kellye Rosenheim has announced she will leave her post on July 15. See page 10.

### WE WELCOME OUR NEW CONTROLLER, MONIKA DORSEY

We are happy to announce that Monika Dorsey has joined the NYC Audubon team as our new controller. Monika has extensive experience in accounting and management. With a bachelor's degree from New York University in biology, concentrating on field studies and with a minor in geology, Monika considers working with NYC Audubon the realization of lifelong interests. ■



## PARTNER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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  
American Bird Conservancy  
American Institute of Architects New York  
American Littoral Society  
American Museum of Natural History  
Audubon Connecticut  
Audubon New York  
Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania  
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 Marine STEM Education Alliance  
Bryant Park Corporation  
Central Park Conservancy  
College of Staten Island  
Columbia University  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Earth Matter NY  
Ennead Architects  
Fairhope Graphics  
Feather Friendly  
Feminist Bird Club  
Fordham University  
Frank J. Guarini Center on Environmental,  
Energy, and Land Use Law  
Freshkills Park Alliance  
The Friends of Governors Island  
FXCollaborative  
Gateway National Recreation Area  
Green Roof Researchers Alliance  
Green Roofs for Healthy Cities  
Greenbelt Native Plant Center  
Hackensack Riverkeeper  
Harbor Estuary Program  
The Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
Jamaica Bay-Rockaways Parks Conservancy  
Kingsland Wildflowers at Broadway Stages  
Latino Outdoors NYC  
The Linnaean Society of New York  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences  
Michael Ahern Production Services  
National Audubon Society  
National Park Service  
National September 11 Memorial & Museum  
Natural Areas Conservancy  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
The Nature Conservancy  
New Jersey Audubon  
The New School  
New York Aquarium  
The Office of New York City Comptroller Scott  
M. Stringer  
New York City Council Committee on  
Housing and Buildings

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 Parks &  
Recreation, Wildlife Unit  
New York City Mayor's Office of Climate and  
Sustainability  
New York City Mayor's Office of Resiliency  
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  
Newtown Creek Alliance  
Nicolas Holiber: Birds on Broadway  
Outdoor Afro  
Patagonia  
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey  
Prendergast Laurel Architects  
Public School 41, Greenwich Village School  
Queens Botanical Garden  
Queens County Bird Club  
Ramapough Lenape Nation  
Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus  
Seabird Mortality Working Group  
Seattle Audubon  
Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation  
The Trust for Governors Island  
Urban Bird Treaty Program  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance  
The Waterbird Society  
Wild Bird Fund  
Wildlife Conservation Society

### **New York City Audubon thanks the following foundations, corporations, and governmental agencies for their financial support:**

Altman Foundation  
AmazonSmile Foundation  
American Littoral Society  
The Apple Hill Fund  
Arnold Glas  
Atlas Obscura  
AXA Foundation  
Bird Collective  
Broadway Stages  
The Bronx Is Blooming  
The Capital Group Companies Charitable  
Foundation  
Central Park Conservancy

Con Edison  
Disney Conservation Fund  
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The Ferriday Fund  
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Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
Jim & Birte Falconer (via Seattle Audubon)  
Kimball Foundation  
Kings County Brewers Collective  
Lark Fine Foods  
Leaves of Grass Fund  
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Leon Levy Foundation  
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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  
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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
The Walt Disney Company Foundation  
William C. Bullitt Foundation  
Wood Thrush Fund

# HELP US SHARE THE LOVE OF BIRDS WITH ALL OF NEW YORK CITY

It's so exciting! I never knew to just look around me, and I'd see so many birds." How many of us have heard that recently? The pandemic has been a great trial for us all, in countless ways. But it's also led people to seek solace in the outdoors and, in doing so, find a wealth of wildlife and wild birds, right here in New York City. At NYC Audubon, we find ourselves presented with an unexpected and welcome prospect: to broaden our community, not just in numbers, but in a diversity that truly reflects this great city's multiracial and multinational population. Help us meet this opportunity. Now, it's more important than ever to support the outreach and conservation that is at the core of our work protecting birds and their habitats in New York City.



© François Portmann

The Indigo Bunting is always an exciting find in New York City parks during migration. Did you know that the bunting's lilting song can also be heard in nesting territories in Staten Island, Queens, and Brooklyn? Help us protect this species during both migration and the breeding season.

## GIVE MONTHLY

Provide ongoing monthly support to ensure our birds are protected throughout the year. You can make a huge difference for as little as \$15 per month. See the membership form at right or visit [nycaudubon.org/donate](https://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 (once physical distancing restrictions are lifted). See the membership form at right or donate online at [nycaudubon.org/donate](https://nycaudubon.org/donate). Contact us to learn more.

## GIVE A MATCHING GIFT

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

## REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Please consider remembering the birds in your estate plan: see the bottom of page 2.

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

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Contributing members are essential to our conservation and outreach work.**

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

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

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

☐ American Kestrel Circle \$2,500 ☐ Conservationist \$500 ☐ Advocate \$250  
☐ Supporter \$100 ☐ Family \$75 ☐ Friend \$25 ☐ Dual Friend \$50  
☐ Student/Senior(65+) \$15 ☐ Dual Senior \$30

☐ Additionally, I would like to add a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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SAVE THE DATE

# Fall Roost 2021

Thursday, September 9  
The Central Park Zoo