

THE URBAN AUDUBON

THE JAVITS CENTER: LEADING FROM
THE ROOFTOPS

A SUMMER OF INCLUSIVE BIRDING

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

THE SUNSET ECO-CRUISE RETURNS

JOIN US AT THE
2022 FALL ROOST



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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PRESIDENT'S PERCH



At the height of the pandemic, the rhythmic call of a Peregrine Falcon shattered the early-morning silence of my Upper West Side neighborhood. Later that day, my husband spied a bird resting on a balcony just a block away.

Soon we spotted a larger falcon—a female—perched on a nearby building. Together, they made a striking pair. For two pandemic years we observed them nearly daily—flying, resting, preening, dining.

NYC Audubon member Bruce Yolton, who runs urbanhawks.com, was watching them too. He took a photo of the female and was able to read her numbered leg band. Bruce learned that “77/BV” hatched at UMass Amherst three years ago. After fledging, 77/BV flew 163 miles southwest, finding happiness in Manhattan with a lithe male bird.

In May 2022, from our building roof, my husband and I spied four snowy eyasses in the inaccessible bell tower of St. Paul and St. Andrew United Methodist Church, at 86th and West End Avenue. On June 7, two eyasses made successful short flights to a nearby building. By end of day, all four had successfully fledged.

As the peregrines honed new-found flight skills and explored balconies, ledges, and rooftops, they attracted a growing, daily audience. New birders, non-birders, the bird-curious, and children flocked to the intersection of 86th and West End to see them, awed to behold the raptors so closely.

This scene was once impossible to imagine. Use of the pesticide DDT caused the peregrine hatch rate to plummet in the middle of the last century. By the mid-1960s, there were no Peregrine Falcons east of the Mississippi. Western populations were devastated as well. The world's fastest bird—capable of speeds over 200 mph—was almost wiped out in the U.S.

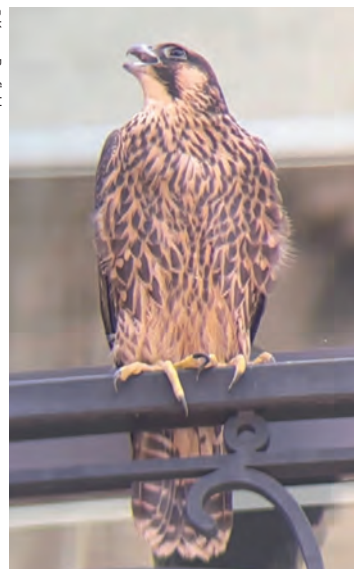
DDT was banned in 1972, and researchers at Cornell University successfully bred peregrines in captivity for reintroduction. As a result of this monumentally important recovery program, more than 6,000 Peregrine Falcons have been released in North America since 1974.

According to Barbara Saunders, who monitors peregrines for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the falcons “slowly made their way back to New York City starting in 1983, nesting atop the Throgs Neck and Verrazzano Bridges.” Barbara notes that local “peregrine pairs now number close to 30 and can be found in all five boroughs” where bridges and tall buildings substitute for their natural cliff-ledge homes.

Human actions—both negative and positive—impact birds. At NYC Audubon, this is front of mind as we collect collision data, monitor and promote green infrastructure, change laws, protect habitats, and advocate for pesticide and rodenticide regulation. Watching a young Peregrine Falcon reminds one why our work is so vital, and just how impactful our actions can be.

This spring and summer, NYC Audubon's conservation volunteer corps experienced record participation (read more on page 6). New Yorkers are eager to get outdoors to learn about, and protect, the natural world—from Peregrine Falcons to Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs to White-throated Sparrows. As you read through NYC Audubon's recent conservation work in this issue, we hope you'll consider how you can be part of our efforts, and help us engage more of your fellow New Yorkers as well. Together we can make the City a safer place for Peregrine Falcons and the many other birds that depend on the City's precious habitats.

© Karen Benfield



A fledgling Peregrine Falcon calls out to its parents.

Karen Benfield

One joyful way to support NYC Audubon's collaborative conservation work is to celebrate with us at this year's Fall Roost. This year we'll gather atop the Javits Center green roof to celebrate the Center's leadership in sustainability and its ongoing partnership with NYC Audubon to transform the Center into a haven for wildlife. (See the back cover for more details.) There are many ways to support NYC Audubon's mission to help birds, however; see page 15 to learn more.

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FALL 2022



The Javits Center green roof hosted 150 pairs of nesting Herring Gulls in 2022 © Javits Center



"Let's Go Birding Together" participants check Turtle Pond from Belvedere Castle © NYC Audubon



Sunset Eco-Cruise guests enjoy the view. Photo by Cyrus Gonzeles



White-throated Sparrow © John Pizniur/Great Backyard Bird Count



Guests from Latino Outdoors at the 2021 Fall Roost © Sabrina Asch Photography

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THE JAVITS CENTER: LEADING FROM THE ROOFTOPS

By Suzanne Charlé

On Tuesday, September 20, NYC Audubon supporters and partners will mingle in an urban farm high above the Hudson River, surrounded by an apple orchard, pear trees, and rows of arugula, zucchini, and other vegetables. The green-roof pavilion atop the Javits Center's new addition is the site of the 18th annual Fall Roost, honoring the Javits Center's major contribution to the environment and to the City's population—both avian and human.

"There's no better place to tell the story of NYC Audubon's partnership with the Javits Center, and to honor the Center's pioneering path," said Executive Director Jessica Wilson. The success, backed by research, shows the benefits of green roofs and bird-friendly design, providing green space for biodiversity as well as energy savings for the Center.

"It's an inspiring model," she added. "Right now, such a tiny percentage of the City's buildings have a green roof. There's so much opportunity."

This will be the second Fall Roost at the Javits Center. The first, in 2014, recognized the Javits Center's renovation, designed by FXFowle/Epstein, with bird-safe, low-reflecting, fritted glass and a nearly seven-acre green roof, the largest in New York State. Dustin Partridge, PhD, NYC Audubon's director of conservation and science, observes that before the 2014 retrofit, the Javits Center was one of the City's major bird killers; today, "it is one of the most bird-friendly and environmentally sustainable buildings in the City."

In fact, after the Javits Center's renovation, NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight monitoring revealed a striking 90 percent reduction in collisions at the Center.

This research finding was used to support the 2020 passage of New York City's Local Law 15, which requires bird-friendly glass on all new construction. And thanks in part to seven years' worth of NYC Audubon's biodiversity monitoring data from the Javits Center, the New York City Council passed Local Laws 92 and 94, requiring all new construction to have 100 percent green roofs or solar panels, or a combination of both. Developers and property managers in New York City and across the nation are looking to the Javits Center as a guide.

NYC Audubon researchers started studying the Javits green roof's benefits to wildlife in 2014, shortly after the roof was completed. Since then, 37 bird species, 5 bat species, and hundreds of arthropod species have been observed using the roof. The abundance of wildlife on the roof has led to complex interactions, observed



The newest section of the Javits Center's green roof includes a farm and orchard, providing both locally grown produce and wildlife habitat.

by researchers, such as a predator–prey relationship between bats and moths.

The roof also has a large Herring Gull colony, which in 2022 consists of 150 nests and provides a way for NYC Audubon scientists to study methods of population management. Dr. Partridge, working with the Javits Center, established conservation areas where the birds are welcome to nest and are banded by NYC Audubon staff, who use various gentle techniques to deter the gulls from nesting in areas with sensitive equipment. This year, the methods employed by field technicians Allison Starks and Wesley Craig have included a coyote decoy and an “eagle kite.” (Once any eggs are laid, however, the nests are left undisturbed. When the chicks hatch, anyone working on the roof—including workers installing solar collectors—must carry an umbrella, to elude dive-bombing parents.)

Studies at the Javits Center have provided deep information about the benefits of green roofs in making urban environments more resilient in the face of climate change: with just 1½ inches of soil, a green roof manages to absorb and divert up to 81 percent of annual rainfall, reducing overflow in the City sewage system. It also protects the roof—meaning fewer costly repairs—and significantly reduces energy use. In the coming months, more than



In 2022, 150 Herring Gull pairs raised young on the sedum of the original Javits Center green roof.



Native planting areas on the Javits Center green roof include pollinator- and bird-friendly species, such as Purple Coneflower and Joe-Pye Weed.

3,000 solar panels will be installed on the Center’s rooftop, making it the largest solar farm in Manhattan.

“Our green roof is living proof of the power of sustainability,” said Alan Steel, CEO of the New York Convention Center Operating Corporation, which operates the Javits Center. “Thanks to our ongoing partnership with NYC Audubon, we have been able to understand how simple, smart changes to our infrastructure can have a positive impact on the urban environment.”

A longtime member of NYC Audubon’s board of directors, Steel has been a major figure in promoting the greening of cities. He oversaw the completion of the Javits Center’s original bird-friendly retrofit, and championed its new one-acre urban farm and greenhouse, along with a pavilion that was designed using many of the advances introduced in the first renovation. (It’s projected that the farm and greenhouse will produce 40,000 pounds of vegetables for use by in-house chefs.)

Steel, who hired a sustainability and energy manager, notes that in addition to monetary savings, the green roof has many advantages, “externally and internally.” Javits employees have become invested in the project: a number of the Center’s engineers are now qualified beekeepers. (Currently, there are five bee hives.) And, he said, his employees took great heart as more information came out about the advantages in relation to climate change: “It’s a great morale lifter.”



This native bumblebee species and Two-Striped Grasshopper (on Purple Coneflower) are among the hundreds of kinds of arthropods that have been observed on the Javits Center green roof.

The green roof also benefits the local community, with students of all ages taking regular tours. National Geographic recently filmed a walk with NYC Audubon Board Member Chris Cooper for his new birding TV series. (See page 10 to learn more about that project.) “The roof is a fascinating place to be,” says Steel. He is frequently invited to talk about green roofs and sustainability to developers and property owners; he was key speaker about green roof benefits at a conference in Taiwan. Back in New York City, more building owners are taking note, now that the City has offered a green roof tax abatement.

Furthermore, Steel practices what he preaches. For years, he has had a green roof on his own home in Connecticut, where he grows flowers and vegetables. And watches birds.

Explore the Javits Center green roof with us at the 2022 Fall Roost! See details on the back cover. ■

CONSERVATION NOTES

As this issue goes to print, NYC Audubon conservation staff and volunteers are finishing up the field season—and beginning to enter and analyze data from our Project Safe Flight monitoring work, green roof research, Harbor Heron Islands Nesting Surveys, Semipalmated Sandpiper banding, and horseshoe crab monitoring. Read updates on our recent conservation work, and plans for the coming months, below.

PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT Collision Monitoring and dBird

During this year's spring migration, 48 Project Safe Flight volunteers documented over 115 bird collisions across 16 high-collision buildings in Manhattan. Our Project Safe Flight research, thanks in part to funding from Leon Levy Foundation and New York Community Trust, is crucial to providing data that supports the need for collision deterrents, helps determine optimal retrofits, and evaluates the effectiveness of deterrents already in place.

The public also continued to contribute to our monitoring efforts by entering bird collisions at [dBird.org](https://dbird.org), our online, crowd-sourced database. The 569 entries made during the spring season will be analyzed to increase our understanding of patterns of collision in the City. dBird has also further expanded its reach: 52 organizations across the globe now use dBird to document window strikes.

This spring, collision deterrents were installed at one of the buildings monitored by NYC Audubon, Brookfield Place, in lower Manhattan. In addition to being a great step forward in protecting birds, this retrofit also provides us with an opportunity to collect data on the effectiveness of the mitigation measures. While we were able to collect some data after installation during the spring, we will collect more data this fall to gain a more comprehensive picture of collision rates before and after the retrofit. A big thank you to all our volunteers!

—Katherine Chen

Lights Out and Bird-Friendly Buildings

Working with several building owners across the City this spring and summer, we identified high-collision windows and successfully advocated for the installation of bird-friendly films. We expect these retrofits to greatly reduce the number of collisions occurring at these buildings; fortunately, they were put in place before fall migration, when most collisions occur. A few building owners are also working with their tenants to encourage Lights Out programs during migration.

In addition to working for Lights Out and bird-friendly building legislation in New York City, we have continued to be a leader in advising on legislation in other cities. New York City's bird-friendly building law is still one of the most stringent pieces of legislation in the nation, and continues to serve as a model for other cities considering such measures. The most recent city considering bird-friendly legislation is Portland, Maine—a location along the Atlantic Flyway where a reduction in collisions would certainly benefit many of the birds that pass through our metropolis during migration.

—Dustin Partridge, PhD

WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR Harbor Herons

2022 was the 40th year of NYC Audubon's Harbor Herons nesting surveys of the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary. Our survey sites are refuges for colonially nesting waterbirds. While the history of each site is unique, all provide relatively undisturbed breeding habitat in one of the world's most densely human-populated cities. We were fortunate to have a skilled group of volunteers this year, including staff from the Wild Bird Fund, NYC Parks, American Littoral Society, and Rutgers

University, along with unaffiliated bird conservation enthusiasts. Their combined efforts provided another year of important data and observations (see page 8).

This year's wader population numbers were generally comparable to those recorded in 2021 for most islands, but not without exception. Our largest colony in Jamaica Bay, Subway Island, was abandoned—likely because of mammalian predators (Raccoons) reaching the island. Survey highlights included documentation of the first nesting Great Blue Herons in New York County, and the return of Cattle Egrets to Staten Island as breeding birds.

—Shannon Curley, PhD

American Oystercatchers

The “running of the chicks” has arrived! As I write in late June, most of our American Oystercatcher eggs are starting to hatch. More and more people visit the beach at this time, so it is a stressful period for the birds. We installed five “camera traps” at Riis Park this summer. These cameras monitor nesting activity, which includes the presence of predators and neighboring birds. The cameras also monitor human activity, which includes people near the nests, as well as people with pets (mostly dogs, sometimes without a leash)—an



Great and Snowy Egrets gather at a nesting colony on Elders Point East Marsh Island in Jamaica Bay.

© Andrew Maas



activity that is not permitted during the breeding season. Our camera traps may help us understand how all these activities affect oystercatcher productivity.

Our camera traps have had a few technical difficulties, but our field technician Emilia Zhang Heaton has resolved all issues. This is the first year we've used cameras, and it will serve as a pilot for future projects. We will band chicks right before they are able to fly. Look for updates on the breeding season in the winter *Urban Audubon*.

This project is possible in part thanks to funding from the Regina B. Frankenberg Foundation and a Manomet subgrant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative.
—Emilio Tobón



A radio-transmitter nanotag is attached to a migrating Semipalmated Sandpiper.

Semipalmated Sandpipers

This summer we continued our efforts to tag and track migrating Semipalmated Sandpipers. On June 3, we installed mist nests at Jamaica Bay's Little Egg Marsh at 5:30am, following the low tide—the best time to capture these wary shorebirds. We were able to band and place nanotags—tiny tracking devices—on six birds, a good accomplishment for one day. The tagged birds likely continued north within a few days; we will track their journey with the

Motus Wildlife Tracking System. We'll tag more birds in the fall, which will allow us to track their migration all the way to South America. We thank all who helped us during this successful expedition (see page 8). This project is made possible in part by a grant from the Disney Conservation Fund.

—Emilio Tobón

Horseshoe Crab Monitoring

Since 2009, NYC Audubon's corps of community scientists has monitored spawning Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs, whose eggs are an important food source for migrating shorebirds such as the federally Threatened *Rufa* subspecies of Red Knot.

On 12 nights in May and June, we counted and tagged these ancient creatures at three Jamaica Bay locations: Plumb Beach East and West in Brooklyn, and Big Egg Marsh in Queens. This year we were blessed with a record turnout of 300 volunteers, coordinated by Ann Seligman. Ann also served as a site coordinator, along with Nancy Liang and Dottie Werkmeister.

We'll report final numbers in the winter *Urban Audubon*. Part of a statewide project, this research is used to inform horseshoe crab conservation and management plans.

—Katherine Chen

GREEN ROOFS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

This summer our work monitoring the birds, bats, and insects using the Javits Center green roofs continued, made possible in part by a grant from New York Community Trust. We've now documented 37 bird species on the roof, including two additions from this year: Killdeer and Ovenbird.

As for our arthropod monitoring, early results indicate that despite being new, the three main green roof "types" on the

expansion roof host significantly different arthropod communities: The pollinator garden hosts many native bees and pollinating flies, while the food forest hosts primarily ground dwelling insects, such as beetles. Many European Honey Bees and bumblebees have been observed at the farm.

We expect these insect communities to become more similar over time. We are closely monitoring how the insects and vegetation influence bird use of the roof types. As of this writing, a pair of Mourning Doves is nesting nearby and forages on the roof daily.

Our Herring Gull Conservation and Management work on the Javits Center's original green roof also continues. As part of an effort to maintain a Herring Gull colony but keep its size manageable, technicians Allison Starks and Wesley Craig have been on the green roof from sunrise to sunset daily since mid-March. We prevented growth of the colony, reduced conflict between gulls and rooftop maintenance crews, and observed higher nesting density in "conservation zones" designated for nesting than in "exclusion zones," where nesting was discouraged.

In addition, our chick banding program continued; Herring Gull chicks banded on the Javits roof have been observed as far away as New Orleans and Toronto.

—Dustin Partridge, PhD

On Thursday, September 22, the Green Roof Researchers Alliance will gather for its first in-person conference since 2019: The State of Green Roofs in New York City 2022, part of the collaborative Nest Summit during Climate Week NYC at the Javits Center. The event will feature the latest green roof research and tours of the Javits roof. For tickets, visit bit.ly/StateofGreenRoofs2022. ■

VOLUNTEER!

Make a difference for the City's birds and other wildlife. There are many ways to help. Learn more about volunteering with our conservation and education programs at nycaudubon.org/volunteer. Orientations and events will also be announced via The eGret eNewsletter (sign up at nycaudubon.org/egret).

PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT 1

Begins Thursday, September 1

Contribute to Project Safe Flight by monitoring selected buildings for collisions. Monitoring requires a time commitment of about one hour, one morning a week, from September through early November.

Information Sessions (required for new volunteers) will be held on Zoom:

- Thursday, August 11, 6-7pm

- Tuesday, August 16, 6-7pm

- Wednesday, August 17, 9-10am

Registration is required. Learn more at nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events. ■



THANK YOU TO OUR SEASONAL STAFF AND FIELD WORK VOLUNTEERS

Our conservation field research could not be accomplished without the skilled assistance of our seasonal staff, who plan and conduct bird surveys, assist with bird-banding, and coordinate volunteers. Our field volunteers, many experienced conservation professionals with American Littoral Society, NYC Parks, Wild Bird Fund, and other agencies, are also critical to our success.

Annie Barry greeted visitors and led bird walks at our Seasonal Environmental Center at Governors Island's Nolan Park House 17.

Katherine Chen, who recently completed her MA in ecology, evolution, and conservation biology at Columbia University, coordinated our Project Safe Flight collision monitoring volunteers. (Katherine has also just joined our full-time staff! See page 10.)

Wesley Craig and **Allison Starks**, recent graduates with BS degrees in biology from the College of William & Mary and Hofstra University, respectively, monitored Herring Gull nesting and behavioral response to management as seasonal field technicians on the Javits Center green roof.

Shannon Curley, PhD, a researcher at Freshkills Park Alliance and adjunct professor at the College of Staten Island, led our Harbor Herons Nesting Survey for the first time this year, with support from outgoing Survey Leader Tod Winston.

Emilia Zhang Heaton, a graduate of Eckerd College with a BS in environmental studies and psychology, monitored nesting American Oystercatchers in Queens, as a seasonal field technician.

Don Riepe, Jamaica Bay Guardian, recently retired head of the American Littoral Society's Northeast Chapter, and NYC Audubon advisory council member, provided boat transportation and guidance for the Harbor Herons Nesting Survey.

Ann Seligman oversaw our Jamaica Bay horseshoe crab monitoring project as volunteer coordinator while also working as site coordinator at Brooklyn's Plumb Beach East. **Nancy Liang** and **Dottie Werkmeister** served as site coordinators for the project at Plumb Beach West and Big Egg Marsh, Queens.

Thank you also to the volunteers who gave of their time and professional expertise to our Harbor Herons Nesting Survey and Semipalmated Sandpiper banding research this season:

Novem Auyeung	Carla García	Ellen Pehek
Kevin Chaikelson	Marit Larsen	Beryl Perron-Feller
Daniel Chi	Dan Levitan	José R. Ramírez-Garofalo
Georgina Cullman	Rita McMahon	Kellye Rosenheim
Emily Einhorn	Chris Nagy	Neha Savant
Mike Feller	Medha Pandey	Lisa Schepke
Rachel Frank	Catherine Paul	

Note: an acknowledgment of all our valued volunteers, including those who've contributed to Project Safe Flight, our Injured Bird Hotline, Horseshoe Crab Monitoring, and last season's Christmas Bird Count, will appear in the winter 2022-2023 Urban Audubon.



Harbor Herons Surveyors (left to right) Lisa Schepke, Shannon Curley, PhD, Tod Winston, Rachel Frank, Dustin Partridge, PhD, and José R. Ramírez-Garofalo

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



We hope that you all are safe and well. In this edition of Avian Advocates, we provide updates on Lights Out and anti-pesticide advocacy efforts and ask you to help us protect community gardens in the City that provide important habitat for urban wildlife.

NEW YORK STATE ANNOUNCES LIGHTS OUT INITIATIVE

Lights Out policies are continuing to gain momentum. Following last December's unanimous passage by the New York City Council of Lights Out bills requiring all City-owned buildings to turn off unnecessary nighttime lighting during peak migration periods, on May 20 the New York State Department of Conservation announced its own Lights Out initiative applying to all State-owned buildings. Similar to the New York City legislation, this initiative directs all buildings owned or managed by the State to turn off all nonessential outdoor lighting from 11pm to dawn during peak spring and fall migration. State agencies will also be encouraged to draw blinds, when possible, and turn off nonessential indoor lighting during these times, as well.

While we are thrilled that both City- and State-owned buildings have now "turned their lights out," we still need to pass legislation that will apply to privately owned buildings in the New York City. The more buildings turn off their lights during migration, the fewer birds will die from collisions. Please be on the lookout for ways you can help support Lights Out legislation for privately owned buildings in future Avian Advocates Action Alert emails.

PETITION TO DESIGNATE COMMUNITY GARDENS AS CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS

NYC Audubon has joined Earth Justice, New York City Community Garden Coalition, and 69 other organizations in submitting to New York City government agencies a petition that identifies community gardens meriting Critical Environmental Area designation. Community gardens are a source of much-needed open space and healthy produce, and also provide important habitat for birds and other wildlife. To help support this effort, please sign the online petition at nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates.



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The Golden-crowned Kinglet, a frequent window collision victim in New York City, will benefit from more comprehensive Lights Out legislation.

"NEONICS" BILL DOES NOT PROCEED TO A VOTE

The Birds and Bees Protection Act (BBPA), a bill previously reported here that would have banned excessive use of harmful neonicotinoid insecticides in New York State, was unfortunately not passed before the end of New York's legislative session on June 4. We are disappointed that the bill did not advance to a vote in the State Senate, but thank all of you who signed the petition and reached out to your representatives to advocate for this important piece of legislation. Audubon New York and National Resources Defense Council, which have spearheaded this effort, plan to build upon this year's momentum to get a new BBPA passed next year. We will report on future opportunities to support the bill in Avian Advocates Action Alert emails and in this column.

To get current updates and find out how to contribute to all the bird-friendly advocacy efforts above, and to sign up to be an Avian Advocate, please visit nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates. ■

STATEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY



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

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

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

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

NEWS & NOTES



NYC AUDUBON WELCOMES NEW STAFF

This spring and summer, three dynamic new staff members joined NYC Audubon:

Katherine Chen, a recent graduate of Columbia University with an MA in ecology, evolution, and conservation biology, and who also coordinated our collision monitoring volunteers this spring, became our community science and outreach manager in late June.

Aidan Donaghy, a recent graduate of Fordham University with a BA in anthropology and humanitarian studies, joined in early June as development associate.

Jesse McLaughlin, a recent graduate of NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study and an FAO Schwarz Fellow, joined our staff in July as advocacy and engagement associate. This two-year-long fellowship program is partly funded by a grant from the FAO Schwarz Foundation.

Welcome Katherine, Aidan, and Jesse!

We also thank our seasonal staff for their conservation work on the City's streets, beaches, islands, and green roofs. See page 8 to learn more about their contributions.

BOARD AND ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWS

NYC Audubon welcomes new Board Members **Gina Argento**, **Linda N. Freeman, MD**, **Andre C. Meade**, and **Vivek Sriram**, elected at our June annual meeting of members. (Learn more about all three on page 12.)

Also at the meeting, **Karen Benfield** and **Deborah Laurel** were re-elected as president and secretary, respectively, while **Christian Cooper**, **Alan Steel**, and **Michael Tannen** were elected as vice presidents. **Sarah (Sally) Jeffords'** term on the board has ended; we thank Sally for her service as vice president and are pleased to welcome her as a member of the advisory council.

Get to know all NYC Audubon's board members at nycaudubon.org/bod. You will also find a listing of our program committees. We welcome the participation of NYC Audubon members; to get involved in a committee, contact Board President Karen Benfield at kbenfield@nycaudubon.org.

CHRIS COOPER SPREADS THE GOOD BIRDING WORD

This May, National Geographic announced the forthcoming TV show *Extraordinary Birder*, hosted by NYC Audubon Vice President Christian Cooper. According to National Geographic, "Lifelong birder Christian Cooper takes us into the wild, wonderful, and unpredictable world of birds... to show us the remarkable world in the sky above." The series does not yet have an official release date but will air on one of National Geographic's channels or on Disney+. ■

LAURA MEYERS, 1945-2022



© Jeremy Meyers

Spanish-English guide of the birds of New York City, Laura also managed our Flickr page for a number of years. (The Great Egret photo below is hers.)

Laura was a lifelong visual artist working in innumerable media, from sculpture to mechanical objects to photography. In recent years, she and partner Alan Levy spent much of their time traveling the country, following bird migration patterns. In the words of son Jeremy, Laura's "warmth, quirky charm, and delight in the natural world and the inner workings of the mind endeared her to all those she encountered in her travels."

NYC Audubon extends its sympathies to Alan, Jeremy, and the rest of Laura's family. Details of an upcoming service will be shared on Laura's Facebook page.

We were saddened to hear of the passing this past June of Laura Meyers. A generous contributor of exquisite bird photography to *The Urban Audubon* as well as to NYC Audubon's website and upcoming



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Help us save water and energy and limit climate change emissions by reducing paper use. Receive the new, easy-to-read online *Urban Audubon* digitally going forward (you can view this fall issue at nycaudubon.org/ua), and you'll receive an email notification as soon as *The Urban Audubon* is published online—right before the print version hits mailboxes. Opt out of receiving the printed *Urban Audubon* at nycaudubon.org/go-digital or by scanning the QR code below.



(If you prefer a paper copy, there's no need to do anything; we are happy to continue providing it to you on sustainable paper stock.)

A SUMMER OF INCLUSIVE BIRDING

ENGAGING DIVERSE AUDIENCES WITH BIRDS AND CONSERVATION

This summer NYC Audubon held a number of special birding events designed to create a welcoming and inclusive birding experience, including our third annual Black Birders Week walk, several LGBTQ+ Pride events, and a Young Conservationists Council walk. NYC Audubon is committed to expanding such offerings as we work to make birding and conservation safe and accessible for all.



Young Conservationists Council Members Akilah Lewis and Efua Peterson led a walk in Central Park.



Vice President Chris Cooper and Young Conservationists Council Member Efua Peterson led our third annual Black Birders Week walk in Central Park.



This year's Central Park "Let's Go Birding Together" Pride Walk, co-led with National Audubon and Feminist Bird Club, was so enthusiastically attended that we split into five separate birding groups, led by ten guides! We also held Pride bird walks this year in Brooklyn's Prospect Park and on Governors Island.

All photos © NYC Audubon

EVENTS & ADVENTURES

FALL WALKS AND TRIPS

Trips and Classes: View our complete listings of fall trips and classes and register at nycaudubon.org/local-trips-and-classes.

Members-Only Walks: Members-only walks are free for contributing NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up. Learn more and register at nycaudubon.org/members-only.

REGISTRATION DATES

NYC Audubon Members: For NYC Audubon members, registration for all events (both members-only walks and fee-based trips and classes) begins on **Monday, August 15, at 9am**. See our website (links above) for details.

Nonmembers: Trips and Classes registration for nonmembers begins on **Monday, August 22, at 9am**. See our website (link above) for details.

FALL LECTURES

We're planning a variety of free lectures this winter thanks to the generous support of Claude and Lucienne Bloch. Check nycaudubon.org/lectures this fall for details.

FALL FESTIVALS

5TH ANNUAL JAMAICA BAY MONARCH AND POLLINATOR FESTIVAL
Saturday, September 24, 10am-1pm

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

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge to celebrate Monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Learn from experts and enjoy activities for the whole family. Learn more at nycaudubon.org/festivals.

5TH ANNUAL RAPTORAMA: JAMAICA BAY AND MARINE PARK!
Saturdays, October 15 and 22, 10am-1pm

With American Littoral Society, Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, Marine Park Alliance, and Gateway NRA

Learn about hawks and owls and see live raptors at Jamaica Bay, Queens, or Marine Park, Brooklyn! Learn more at nycaudubon.org/festivals.

STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH THE EGRET

Sign up for the eGret email newsletter at nycaudubon.org/egret and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (@nycaudubon).



MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

By Carol Peace Robins



GINA ARGENTO, president and CEO of Brooklyn's Broadway Stages, has over 30 years of experience in the film and television studio production industry. She joined the family business after earning a master's degree from St. John's University. Throughout her tenure at the company, she has been dedicated to building a sustainable, inclusive, and economically productive film and television culture in New York.

In 2016, Gina was instrumental in fostering Broadway Stages' partnership with NYC Audubon to create Kingsland Wildflowers, the 24,000-square-foot green roof atop the company's sound stage in an industrial area of Greenpoint, Brooklyn. In 2019, Broadway Stages created 30,000 more square feet of green roofs on its buildings. The roofs are planted with native grasses and wildflowers to create a bird- and bee-friendly meadow that soaks up stormwater, cleans and cools the air, and saves energy costs.

Gina is also an active volunteer with the Greenpoint YMCA, the Campaign Against Hunger, and other organizations. As a new NYC Audubon board member, she says, "I look forward to learning more about birds and protecting the various species that call New York City home, including those that stop by for a short visit as they migrate through the City."



ANDRE C. MEADE works in asset management as a partner and research analyst at The Capital Group. His primary areas of responsibility include the U.S. utility, power generation, and energy infrastructure industries. He is particularly interested in renewable energy, and has become increasingly concerned about the impacts of windmills on birds.

Since childhood, Andre has been fascinated by birds, having discovered them through poring over his father's ancient Peterson guide in their lakeside home in New Jersey. That led to trips to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, camping, and other birding opportunities. Andre has a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University and a master's in public policy from Harvard. He also served a short stint with the National Park Service in ecosystem management.

Andre now lives in Manhattan's Noho district with his wife Tara, a graphic designer, and their two young children, a two-year-old and a five-month-old. As a member of NYC Audubon, Andre frequently participates in local walks, and thoroughly enjoyed a recent excursion to Ecuador.



LINDA N. FREEMAN, MD, is a child and adolescent psychiatrist, now in private practice after retiring from her position as an associate clinical professor at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. Columbia is also where she received her medical degree, following a BA from the University of Pennsylvania.

Five years ago, an unusual situation sparked her interest in birds: a seriously ill preadolescent patient regularly became energized whenever they talked about birds and birding. In order to better engage with her patient, Linda began attending NYC Audubon programs to learn about these exciting creatures. Her clinical plan bore fruit. What's more, she became hooked herself, birding first in Morningside and Riverside Parks. Now as a resident of Manhattan's Upper East Side, she loves NYC Audubon walks, including Black Birders events, walks in Central Park, and excursions to Cape May and the Delmarva Peninsula.

Because of her professional experience, Linda is keenly aware of what being part of nature can do for mental health. She would love to pass on to future generations the emotional satisfaction that comes from sharing the natural world, and to make young people aware of the importance of protecting birds, their habitat, and the environment as a whole.

Dr. Freeman has certainly come to the right place!



VIVEK SRIRAM, founding partner of KCVS Partners, has over 20 years of strategy and portfolio management experience across fixed income markets. Vivek was born in Madras, now Chennai, in the south of India, where as a child he and his family spent happy hours observing wildlife and visiting national parks. He holds a bachelor's degree in civil

engineering from India's University of Kerala.

Vivek arrived in America in his early twenties and received his MBA at the University of Maryland. He currently lives in Park Slope, Brooklyn, with his wife of 15 years, Abja Midha, executive director of a volunteer legal services organization. Together they've traveled to many ecotourism hotspots in Latin America, Africa, and of course, India. Vivek praises his wife's keen observation skills, and points out it was she who orchestrated a trip to Colombia to see the endemic Santa Marta Parakeet, endangered due to habitat loss. An avid birder, Vivek's favorite local destinations are Prospect Park, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Croton Point Park, and Connecticut's Black Rock State Park.

At home in more civilized surroundings, Vivek and Abja enjoy restaurants, plays, and the opera. "Just a typical New York City couple," says Vivek. ■

THE SUNSET ECO-CRUISE RETURNS

This past June, after two years ashore, NYC Audubon's supporters, partners, and friends once again set sail from the South Street Seaport to explore the wild islands of New York City—while enjoying wine, cheese, and great company along the way. Eco-Cruise program creator Gabriel Willow was back as our guide aboard a generously donated New York Water Taxi vessel, as we journeyed up the East River to the Harbor Heron colonies of U-Thant, Mill Rock, and North and South Brother Islands. Birding highlights included nesting Black-crowned Night-Herons, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Egrets, and Osprey—all testament to the value of these island wildlife preserves, monitored and protected by NYC Audubon for forty years. (All these bird species are also featured in the evening's parting gift, *A Birds' Guide to the Battery and New York Harbor*, donated by author Gail Karlsson.) See more photos of the evening at nycaudubon.org/sunset-photos-2022.

NYC Audubon is thrilled to bring back this annual tradition offered to members at the Conservationist level and above, as well as to funders and partners who make our work possible. We hope to see you aboard next summer!



All photos by Cyrus Conzelius



1. U-Thant Island's Double-crested Cormorant colony.

2. Advisory Council Member Claude Bloch and grandson Jonah Nielsen look for egrets, with wife and grandmother Lucienne Bloch.

3. NYC Audubon board members Linda Freeman, Marcy Boyle, and Elizabeth Norman chat on the South Street Seaport pier.

4. Eco-Cruise Guide Gabriel Willow and Board President Karen Benfield.

5. Young Conservationists Council Member Akilah Lewis with Advisory Council Member Tom Stephenson and wife Wendy.

6. Director of Conservation and Science Dustin Partridge and Executive Director Jessica Wilson chat with Eco-Cruise guests.

7. Eco-Cruise Guide Gabriel Willow delights the crowd with New York City lore (and birds!) ■

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (*ZONOTRICHIA ALBICOLLIS*)

By Rebecca Minardi

A few years ago, I was biking in downtown Detroit when I spotted a bird in distress. It was peak spring migration, and the White-throated Sparrow sat hunched in the middle of a busy street, looking dazed. I watched her weakly fly up and bump the side of an idling bus. As she huddled on the pavement again, I ran toward her, hoping to scoop her up before she was run over. A police officer passed as I tried to grab her, and he kindly blocked traffic as I wrapped her gently in a scarf, placed her in my bike basket, and pedaled home. I was triumphant as she recovered and flew away later that afternoon.

The White-throated Sparrow, sometimes overshadowed by showier songbirds, is a peculiar and wonderful species. At about 6.5 inches in length, the bird is a large, plump sparrow with a long tail. Its face pattern is often striking, marked by a bright white throat, yellow eye spots, and a jaunty black and white striped crown. Some members of the species, however, are “tan-striped,” and lack the bright white of their more dazzling kin. (See both forms below, and another “white-striped” bird on the cover.) These distinct “white-striped” and “tan-striped” color morphs are maintained because of a particular pattern of mating preference: males of both morphs tend to choose white-striped females,

while females prefer tan-striped males. (Tan-striped birds are the less aggressive of the two, and some researchers posit that less aggressive males make better fathers!)

White-throated Sparrows are short-distance migrants, wintering throughout the eastern lower 48 and breeding in the upper Midwest and Northeast, as well as across Canada. In parts of New England and New York, the species may be present year round. These gregarious sparrows often form surprisingly large flocks during migration, foraging mostly on the ground as they hop about looking for seeds and insects. They seem to appear almost out of thin air when startled, bouncing into shrubs from leaf litter or grass.

The White-throated Sparrow nests on or just above the ground. Its song, heard not just on nesting territory but also during migration and in the winter months, is clear and poignant, bubbling up from thickets to strike any birder’s heart with joy. Described variously as “Old Sam Peabody...Peabody...Peabody” or “Oh Sweet Canada...Canada...Canada,” the song is a much studied example of shifting bird “culture”: in 1999, researchers recorded a new song variant, in which the traditional triplets (“Canada”) had been shortened to doublets (“Cana”). This song variant started in Western Canada and

spread thousands of miles eastward over the past two decades, possibly aided by the fact that eastern birds winter in proximity to western birds—and heard this catchy new song version before heading back north to breed. From its coloration to its song, this species is surprising.

Sadly, my brush with this beautiful and wild bird on the streets of Detroit may not have ended as well as I’d hoped. While some birds may be simply stunned after a collision (usually against windows), I’ve learned that many later succumb to their injuries, and are best looked after by a rehabilitator. Perhaps because they often forage on or near the ground, White-throated Sparrows are particularly prone to window strikes: according to NYC Audubon’s Project Safe Flight data, they are the most frequent collision victims in New York City.

According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, White-throated Sparrow populations declined by about 35 percent between 1966 and 2014 over most of the bird’s range, but declined 63 percent in the U.S. In addition to deaths from collisions, contributors to the decline may include habitat loss and pesticide use on the birds’ nesting grounds.

In New York City, where collisions pose the greatest threat to this winter visitor, there are thankfully myriad ways we can help. We can turn both indoor and outdoor lights off at night, especially in tall buildings encased in glass, and always during migration. We can retrofit our windows with screens, paint, markings or dangling string to break up the reflections in the glass. NYC Audubon has helped accomplish several recent successes along these lines on a large scale: landmark bird-friendly building legislation in 2020, and Lights Out legislation in 2021. Let’s keep working at it, to ensure we continue to hear the haunting strains of White-throated Sparrows every spring—no matter how much their songs change through the years.

Learn more about frequent window-collision victims and how to help them at nycadubon.org/project-safe-flight. ■



Large photo © César A. Castillo; inset photo © Oliver Trimvick BV SA 2.0

“Tan-striped” (inset) and “white-striped” White-throated Sparrows

SUPPORT NYC AUDUBON

GIVE MIGRATING BIRDS SAFE PASSAGE THROUGH NEW YORK CITY

As New Yorkers look forward to the glories of fall migration—awaiting the millions of songbirds, waterbirds, and raptors already winging their way south on an epic journey—let us remember that *each and every one of us has the power to help them*. Fifty years ago, concerned people brought a stop to the use of the pesticide DDT. Step by step, they then helped endangered Peregrine Falcons thrive again, even in the heart of New York City (see page 2). We must attack the problem of window collisions, the cause of an estimated 1 billion bird deaths each year across the U.S., with similar zeal, strategy, and perseverance.

NYC Audubon is committed to making the City safer for the countless migratory birds that depend on New York City's habitats, during both their spring and fall journeys. Through decades of Project Safe Flight collision monitoring, grassroots advocacy, and collaborations with forward-thinking partners like the Javits Center, we have become a national leader in urban bird conservation. We have achieved great victories in recent years. But there is so much more to do. We can and must make New York City a bird-friendly model for the world to follow.

The only way we can continue this work is through your financial support. Visit nycaudubon.org/donate and join us in this fight.

BECOME A YOUNG CONSERVATIONIST

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

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

GIVE MONTHLY

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

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN KESTREL CIRCLE

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

GIVE A MATCHING GIFT

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

REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Please consider remembering the birds in your estate plan; see page 8.

To learn more, contact Director of Development Matthew Coody at 646.502.9611 or mcoody@nycaudubon.org.



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In the spring, the White-throated Sparrow stops through New York City on its way to breed across the northeastern U.S. and Canada, where it builds a grass-lined nest on or near the ground. Comprehensive bird-friendly design and Lights Out laws will give the millions of young sparrows that migrate south in the fall a better chance to return and raise their own families.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Contributing members are essential to our conservation and outreach work.

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

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

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

☐ American Kestrel Circle \$2,500 ☐ Conservationist \$500 ☐ Advocate \$250
☐ Supporter \$100 ☐ Family \$75 ☐ Friend \$25 ☐ Dual Friend \$50
☐ Young Conservationist(18-35) \$25 ☐ Student/Senior(65+) \$15 ☐ Dual Senior \$30

I'd like to ADD a gift for NYC Audubon's community outreach and education work:

☐ \$50 purchases a pair of quality binoculars ☐ \$150 underwrites a free bird walk

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

☐ Enclosed is my check payable to NYC Audubon

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

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

Mail this form with your payment to:
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Honoring the Javits Center

and its sustainability partnership
with NYC Audubon

September 20, 6pm
Javits North Rooftop Pavilion & Terrace

Join us to toast the
inspirational sustainability
journey of this iconic venue.
Proceeds support
NYC Audubon's work
in conservation,
engagement,
and advocacy.

