

THE URBAN AUDUBON

MEET NYC'S YOUNG BIRDERS

THE MIGRANTS ARE COMING:
TIPS FOR SPRING BIRDING

THE NEW [NYCAUDUBON.ORG](https://nycaudubon.org)

RESOURCES ON RACE AND
THE ENVIRONMENT

SCIENCE IN THE TIME
OF COVID-19



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

Karen Benfield



One of my best friends is a new birder. She texted me recently to share her pride that she had "ID'd a Downy Woodpecker for my bird list today!" She sent me other highlights of her new Life List: a Short-eared Owl at Shawangunk Grasslands, an American Crow at a farm in the Hudson valley, Eastern Bluebirds, and a Dark-eyed Junco. Spotting a Scarlet Tanager in the woods "felt like discovering treasure," she wrote.

Her enthusiasm for the colorful world she has discovered reminded me of just how thrilling it is to be getting started with birds, learning their names, their behaviors, and their routines. Armed with Cornell's *Merlin* app, new binoculars, and a Sibley guide, my friend has renewed purpose in a daily walk, her senses awakened to slight sounds and subtle movements. With migration just around the corner, each of us can share this discovery. If you know a new or potential birder, consider giving them a gift membership to New York City Audubon so that they can join our community and our events!

You can read about the joy of this same discovery through a child's eyes in our feature on young birders (see page 4) and the wonderful prism it provides for appreciating the environment. Young birders can grow to become enlightened voices for conservation. With this in mind, we launch our new virtual Feathered Friends After-School Birding Club this spring. And we remain committed to ensuring all the City's residents feel welcome and empowered in our organization and community: see page 16 for a compendium of resources on race and the environment, a collaboration of NYC Audubon's equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility committee with our staff.

With the privilege and pleasure of watching birds comes the obligation to see them. To see what they require to live and to thrive, and to gain respect for their plucky lives and long migrations. Birds lead us to an appreciation of habitat and the wider world. At NYC Audubon this is front of mind and our conservation work focuses on what the birds in the five boroughs require to survive, to flourish. See page 12 for this issue's conservation updates. And as you read our tips for spring birding from local experts (see page 6) we hope you'll also review our birding best practices and share them with any new birders you know.

Since March 2020, COVID-19 has limited our ability to provide in-person opportunities for birding together. But we are committed to sharing our science and conservation work, and all manner of birdy learning, via Zoom, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and our new website (see page 7). Look for upcoming virtual classes on warbler identification, and an introduction to eBird for beginners, as well as virtual festivals spotlighting horseshoe crabs, terns, and shorebirds in 2021. We have some fabulous online conversations and presentations planned as well. Your NYC Audubon membership gives you access to all our upcoming online programming.

Birds can unite us. A shared reverence for the environment can bind us to each other. At NYC Audubon we anticipate how colorful and beautiful it will be when we flock together later in 2021. Until then, we are grateful for your support and for every new birder discovering the joy of birding in our great city.

© David Speiser



A brilliant male Scarlet Tanager sings its raspy, robin-like song.

Karen Benfield

IN THIS ISSUE

SPRING 2021



4

Thu Lan Perales-Nguyen, Tamrat Gavenas, and John Dean © Lark Song Media/Karen Benfield



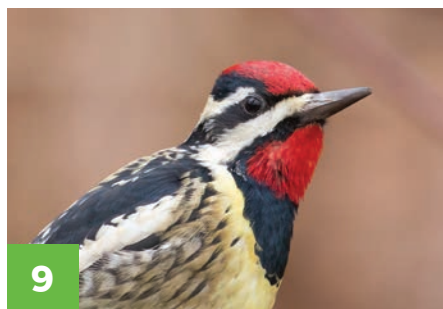
6

Tree Swallow © Laura Meyers



7

The Birding in NYC section of NYC Audubon's new website



9

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker © Jeffrey Kollbrunner/@JKNatureGallery



14

Herring Gull nest on the Javits Center green roof © Jacob K. Javits Conv. Ctr.

FEATURES

4 Meet Three of NYC's Young Birders
by Rebecca Minardi

5 Feathered Friends Goes Virtual!

6 The Migrants Are Coming: Tips for Spring Birding
by Ned Boyajian

7 The New nyc.audubon.org Has Launched
by Andrew Maas and Tod Winston

8 Birding by Subway, Updated

9 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*)
by Don Riepe

10 Jamaica Bay Horseshoe Crab Festival and 2021 Governors Island Season

14 Science in the Time of COVID-19
by Suzanne Charlé

16 Resources on Race and the Environment
by the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee and NYC Audubon Staff

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover Photograph:

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DEPARTMENTS

10 Events & Adventures
10 Members-Only Events
10 News & Notes
11 Avian Advocate Updates
12 Conservation Notes
13 Volunteer!
17 Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

18 Book Reviews
19 Author Event
20 Thank You to Our Volunteers
22 Donor Acknowledgments
23 40th Anniversary Campaign
23 Remember the Birds
24 Become a Member of NYC Audubon

MEET THREE OF NYC'S YOUNG BIRDERS

By Rebecca Minardi

In our work to protect birds and the natural spaces they need, few efforts are more important than introducing young people to the joy and wonder of birding. NYC Audubon's KIDS Member program provides guided children's walks, while our Feathered Friends program provides after-school fun (and is "going virtual" this spring). Below, three past and present KIDS Members share some of what they've learned along their birding journeys... so far.

Thu Lan Perales-Nguyen, 11, became a birder in second grade. It all started during a discussion with her sister: Thu Lan posited that pigeons must be smart in order to survive life in the City; her sister was not so sure. A trip to the library and several books later, Thu Lan won the argument and had a new hobby. Her mother, Hong, says that birding has become a great way to spend time together, especially early in the morning. They've found the New York City birding community to be very welcoming and willing to share its knowledge with them.

Thu Lan and her mom recall a visit to Central Park in 2018, when a Mandarin Duck was a frequent visitor there. Having encountered a small crowd oohing and aahing over a lovely bird they believed to be the Mandarin Duck, Thu Lan stepped up and politely insisted that the group was in fact admiring a *Wood Duck*. She remained firm despite others' protestations, until vindicated by a second observer who confirmed the species mix-up. (A few days later, after several attempts, she got to see the actual Mandarin Duck.)



© Hong Nguyen



© Melody Andres

At 8 years old, Thu Lan Perales-Nguyen (now 11) correctly distinguished the exotic Mandarin Duck drake (left) from the native Wood Duck drake (right).

Hong notes that though her daughter is small in stature, she has considerable knowledge—and adds that when travel is again possible, Thu Lan will make sure to research what bird species can be seen on their next vacation. Hong says that birding has become a family pastime and helps them all spend more time outdoors. Thu Lan is considering pursuing ornithology as a career and would like to tell other kids that birding is easy and something you can do anywhere, even in New York City. "The City is busy and noisy, and it can make you feel small. But the pace is slower in the park, and the birds and squirrels don't care who you are."

Tamrat (Tam) Gavenas, 13, says that though he's always been interested in birds, it was also in second grade that he really caught birding fever. His teacher asked everyone to choose a New York City bird to study, and Tam chose the formidable Great Horned Owl. Though he hasn't seen one in his home borough of Manhattan, he's spotted one upstate. He says it's definitely the bird he's studied the most, and he is especially interested in owl feathers. "Imagine you're a mouse and an owl silently flies up on you," he says, and explains how an owl's feathers are structured so that its wing beat is silent. Tam likes to watch hawks and raptors stalk and capture their prey; once in Central Park, he saw a Red-tailed Hawk nab a rodent. We joke that Central Park could use a few more hawks to cut back on its over-abundance of rats.



© M. GAVENAS

Tam Gavenas became a NYC Audubon KIDS Member as soon as he could: he received his member certificate as a present on his eighth birthday.

Tam is excited that NYC Audubon's Feathered Friends After-School Birding Club will soon offer virtual birding meet-ups, in hopes they will inspire other kids to look at the science behind birds. (See the next page to learn more.) Like Thu Lan, Tam would like to study ornithology in the future, with a focus on birds' flight patterns and migration habits. "I kind of want to study how climate change impacts bird migration; will they start staying in one place or continue heading south?" This is an important question, and we are glad this next generation is thinking about such issues.



John Dean meets a colony of Gentoo (pronounced “JEN-too”) Penguins, which live in Antarctica and on the islands of the Southern Cone.

John Dean, 12, remembers first getting interested in birds when he was just 4. He birds in the parks near his home in Brooklyn and especially enjoys Prospect Park, where Dennis Hrehowsik and Bobbi Manian of the Brooklyn Bird Club lead walks. During migration season, John gets out at least once a week; his favorite migrant to spot is the colorful Blackburnian Warbler. He also has a soft spot for penguins. Before the current travel restrictions, he was able to visit several penguin colonies during a trip to Antarctica with his family. When we can travel again, he would love to visit southern Texas during spring migration.

John notes that birding has gotten him more interested in protecting the environment (he doesn’t like it when people let their cats outside, for example), and like his fellow young birders, is

considering making birds a part of his career. When asked how he would get other kids interested in birds, he says that he would take them somewhere “normal,” such as a park, ball field, or their own neighborhood, just to show them that birds are “wherever you are.” This is a great reminder to all of us who may be homebound or at least neighborhood bound; no matter where you are, there are birds!

Might you or someone you know (between the ages of 8 and 12) like to become a NYC Audubon KIDS Member? NYC Audubon’s KIDS Memberships are FREE and include a welcome letter and membership card, The Urban Audubon, The eGret eNewsletter, invitations to KIDS member walks, and a 30 percent discount on most local trips and classes. Write us at kids@nycaudubon.org to learn more. ■

FEATHERED FRIENDS GOES VIRTUAL!

This March, NYC Audubon launches its virtual Feathered Friends After-School Birding Club, based on the program founded by Board Member Chris Cooper. Our new weekly online version seeks to recreate the interactive fun and camaraderie of an in-person club, while teaching birdwatching and ornithology concepts drawn from our conservation work. The program has been designed with an equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility framework in mind, while adhering to current best teaching practices. The program’s content is aligned with third-grade learning standards, but the club will be open to elementary students of all ages.

Education and Public Programs Manager Danielle Sherman has developed the new club in collaboration with several skilled consultants

and volunteers: Shannon Curley, PhD (read about Dr. Curley’s research on page 14) has been ensuring that all sessions impart key scientific concepts, while consultant Ruthie Gold has been creating engaging session plans and will also join Danielle as a club facilitator. Conservation Associate Aurora Crooks has also assisted with content, as have Chris Cooper and fellow Board Member César Castillo.

Fun surprises planned for the club’s young members include “celebrity” guests and virtual field trips. Weekly prompts will encourage students to get outside and bird during the week, and also invite their families into the world of birdwatching. Special attention will be given to students’



Tree Swallows communicate on Staten Island.

emotional well-being and mental health, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Look for a more extensive account of our first spring season of virtual Feathered Friends in the summer issue of *The Urban Audubon*.

THE MIGRANTS ARE COMING: TIPS FOR SPRING BIRDING

By Ned Boyajian

New Yorkers have been finding a new or renewed love of birding: solace and joy during troubled times. We are lucky to live in one of the world's premier birding locales: during the year, over 350 species—almost a third of all the bird species in North America—can be found along the City's 578 miles of water-front and in its 30,000 acres of wetlands, forests, and grasslands.



© François Portmann

The Hooded Warbler is an exciting springtime find in New York City.

If you're new to birding, or just in need of a refresher, here are some tips from experienced local birders to help you get the most out of spring migration, which in New York City is at its peak from late April through mid-May. Come on out and get to know the birds!

Prioritize Learning the Locals. Thumbing through a Sibley or Peterson guide can be daunting: there are a lot of birds. Start by "learning your locals," advises Jeffrey Ward, birder, science communicator, and Bronx native. Use ebird.org to get a sense of what species you can expect in a specific place, in a particular season, adds Jeffrey Kimball, NYC Audubon's past president.

Look Beyond Feather Color. Colors are important, yet can be deceptive, Kimball warns. Take families of birds together, learn their overall shapes and forms—and the sizes and shapes of their bills. Understanding how birds think—their preferred habitat and behavior—helps in finding and identifying them, points out Donna Schulman, who moderates the New York Birders Facebook group. "Luckily, 2020 has been a banner year for bird behavior books. There's David Sibley's *What It's Like To Be A Bird*, the *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior* by John Kricher, and *How Birds Work* by Marianne Taylor."

Make Up Mnemonics. "Songs get easier when you turn a song into English, like 'Pleased, pleased, pleased to meet you' from the Chestnut-sided Warbler," says Ward. "What also helps is learning the local bird calls so you're able to tell which are the 'different' ones."

Book Birding Time. Schulman says, "I clear my calendar for the first two weeks of May, sometimes the last few days of April too. I start dropping hints to my family and non-birding friends, such as, 'I believe Mother's Day is best celebrated on the first rainy day of May.'"

Scout a Route. "Walk around your neighborhood with new eyes and find your own local birding patches," says Schulman. In New York City, even the smallest parks can hold great surprises during migration season.

Bolster Your "Bins." Picking the right binoculars can be confusing. "Look for 7x42 or 8x42," Kimball advises. (The first number refers to magnification, the second to lens diameter.) "You want the 42 so the bird you're looking at is less likely to hop out of view," he explains. "You won't necessarily get more value from higher magnification than 8, since bigger, heavier binoculars tend to shake more."

Expect to Make Mistakes. All birders, even experts, misidentify birds. Consider a mistake a chance to learn, say Ward and Kimball.

Go Out! "No matter how helpful apps and websites can be, learning in the field is the best option, says Ward. "Seeing the bird make the song just sticks *that* song with *that* bird forever! Mix in some online practice along with some field practice and you'll become a migrant pro in no time."

Find many more birding resources on NYC Audubon's new website, including our "Birding 101" and "Go Birding" sections. See the facing page and visit nycaudubon.org/birding-in-nyc to learn more. ■

REMEMBER YOUR BEST BIRDING PRACTICES!

NYC Audubon recommends adherence to the American Birding Association's Code of Birding Ethics, which asks that you:

- Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger.
- Be particularly cautious around active nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display sites, and feeding sites.
- Limit the use of recordings and other audio methods of attracting birds, particularly in heavily birded areas. (This includes popular New York City parks, where out of both concern for the birds and mutual respect for fellow birders, we recommend you refrain from playing bird recordings.)
- Always exercise caution and restraint when photographing, recording, or otherwise approaching birds.

Owls: Because these nocturnal birds are easily disturbed, we do not condone the public posting of owl locations, or the playing of recorded sounds to lure owls and other sensitive species into view.

Read the American Birding Association's entire Code of Birding Ethics at aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics.

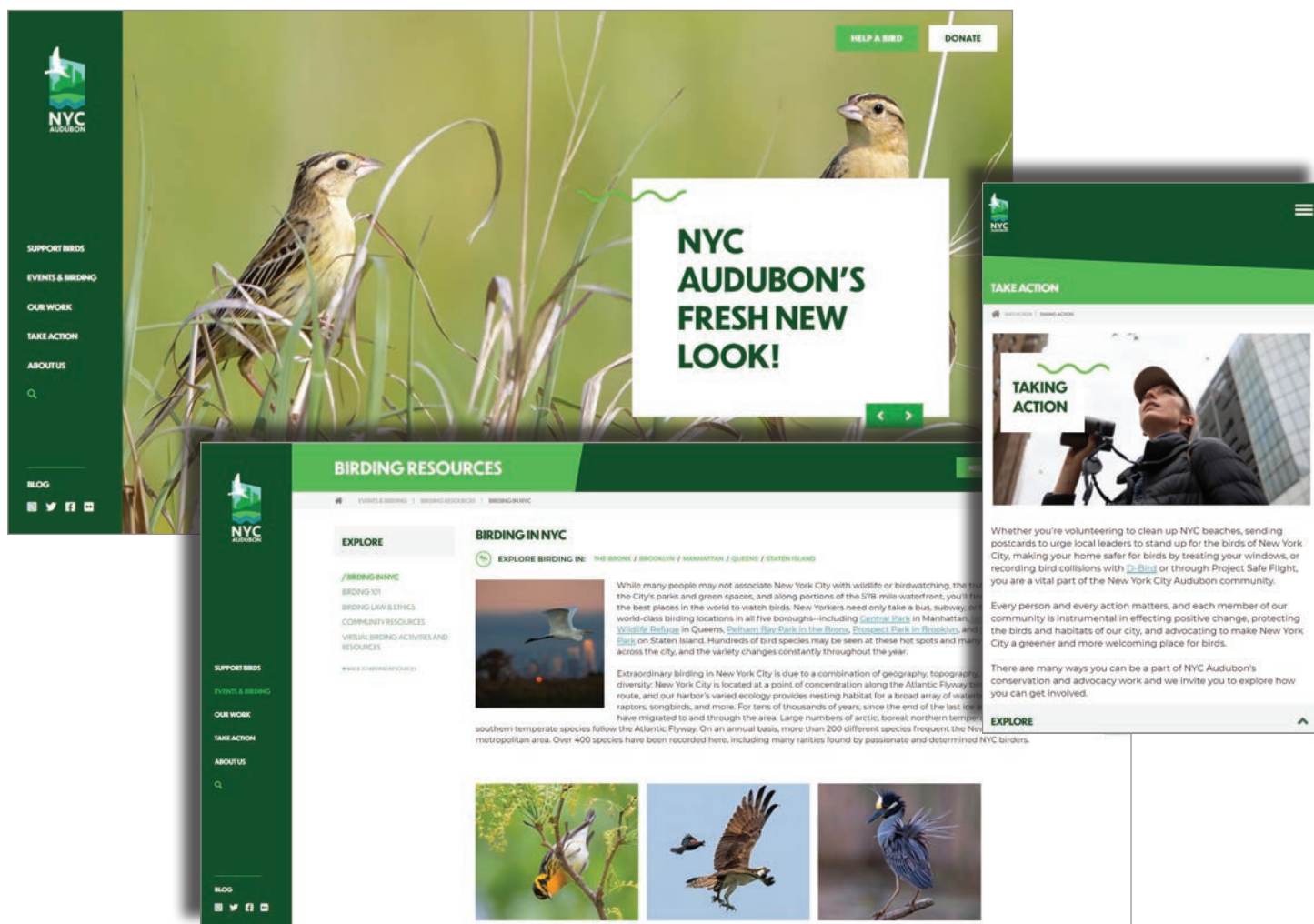
THE NEW NYCAUDUBON.ORG HAS LAUNCHED

By Andrew Maas and Tod Winston

We are very happy to announce the new nycaudubon.org, conceived in collaboration with the talented firm Reitdesign. Building upon the excellent content created for our site's first iterations in 2001 and 2012, our new site sports NYC Audubon's fresh new color scheme and logo in a modern web platform. Updated and expanded content offers a new perspective on all that NYC Audubon does to protect the New York City's birds and their habitat. New features include:

- a mobile-friendly web experience, allowing a seamless transition from desktop to mobile on all pages
- new conservation program sections presenting Project Safe Flight, Waterbirds of New York Harbor, Habitat Protection, and Raptors of NYC
- Get to Know the Birds profiles featuring the principal species we work with: from migrating songbirds to shorebirds to nesting raptors to the Harbor Herons
- Take Action pages enabling engagement with Avian Advocate actions and including simple things we all can do to make make New York City more bird-friendly
- Birding in NYC pages profiling over 100 New York City birding hotspots, created in collaboration with birders across the City and featuring hotspot maps of each borough
- access to current NYC Audubon stories via our social media platforms and publications, including a homepage Instagram feed, blog, and featured articles from *The Urban Audubon*
- improved experience for members, donors, and program participants thanks to better integration with our new donation, membership, and events technology
- a more efficient website back end allowing NYC Audubon staff to keep our site up to date and running smoothly

Come visit us! Explore nycaudubon.org to see all our new site has to offer. ■



Counterclockwise from top left: NYC Audubon's new homepage, Birding in NYC page, and Take Action page (in mobile view)

Bobolinks, Osprey/Red-winged Blackbird © Lloyd Spillank, Great Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron © Francis Portmann, Blackburnian Warbler © David Speiser, Project Safe Flight volunteer Anne Novak © Sophie Butcher

BIRDING BY SUBWAY, UPDATED

NYC Audubon's Birding by Subway brochure has been expanded to include additional New York City parks such as Brooklyn's Shirley Chisholm State Park, Marine Park, and Calvert Vaux Park, and updated with current subway routes. Copies are being mailed to NYC Audubon members and supporters this spring, and you can also view and download Birding by Subway online at nycaudubon.org/bbs. If you'd like another paper copy for a friend, please write us at info@nycaudubon.org.

Support for this update was provided by Con Edison. ■



TOP 10 BIRDING STOPS

- CENTRAL PARK, MANHATTAN (SpFW)**
Q36 72nd St., 101st St.
 Manhattan's 843-acre centerpiece is a magnet for spring and fall migrants, making it one of the best birding spots in the United States. When shifting weather patterns cause a migrant "fall-out," the density of songbirds is what birders dream of.
WHERE TO GO: Enter at 72nd Street to Strawberry Fields and bird to the Lake and Flamingo, or at 101st Street and explore the Great Hill and North Woods. Visit the Reservoir for wintering waterfowl.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds, wading birds, waterfowl, and raptors
- JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE, QUEENS (SpFW)**
Q36 Broad Channel, **Q36** 205th St., **Q36** 205th St.
 Part of Gateway National Recreation Area, the refuge covers 9,000 acres of open bay, salt marsh, mudflats, ponds, fields, and woods. Over 300 species have been recorded in the bay, world-renowned for its shorebird migration.
WHERE TO GO: Walk north about three-quarters of a mile (or take the Q36 or Q37 bus) to the Visitor Center. Explore the East and West Ponds and the forested paths of the North and South Gardens.
BIRDS TO SEE: shorebirds, waterfowl, wading birds, marsh birds, songbirds, and raptors
- PROSPECT PARK/BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN (SpFW)**
Q36 Prospect Park, **Q36** Grand Army Plaza / **Q36** Eastern Parkway-Brooklyn Museum or **Q36** Prospect Park
 With 526 acres of woods, meadows, and bodies of water, Prospect Park offers a striking diversity of bird habitat. On peak spring days, nearly 100 species have been spotted here. The nearby Brooklyn Botanic Garden offers excellent birding as well.
WHERE TO GO: Enter at Lincoln Road, Grand Army Plaza, or Barclay Pritchard Square. Explore the Vaux Garden, Midwood, Long Meadow, Lookout Hill, Peninsula, Lullwater, and Prospect Lake.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds, wading birds, waterfowl, and raptors
- VAN CORTLANDT PARK, BRONX (SpF)**
Q36 Van Cortlandt Park-242nd St.
 Over half of this accessible park's 1,145 acres offer excellent bird habitat, including deciduous forests, meadows, wetlands, and a constructed lake. Over 60 species breed here.
WHERE TO GO: Enter at West 242nd Street and explore the Putnam Trail, John Kieran Nature Trail, Van Cortlandt Lake, Tibbetts Brook, and nearby freshwater wetlands.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds, wading birds, waterfowl, and raptors
- THE AMUNDSEN TRAIL: GREAT KILLS PARK AND THE GREENBELT, STATEN ISLAND (SpFW)**
Q36 Oakwood Heights
 Walk two blocks to the Amundsen Trail (White Trail), which connects High Rock Park and the Staten Island Greenbelt to the north with Gateway National Recreation Area's 1,200-acre Great Kills Park to the south.
WHERE TO GO: Hike south to visit the beaches, marsh trails, mudflats, and woodland of Great Kills Park (Crooke's Point is particularly productive)—or northwards toward the wooded trails of High Rock Park and visit the Greenbelt Nature Center.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds, raptors, waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, marsh birds, and seabirds
- FOREST PARK, QUEENS (SpF)**
Q36 Kew Gardens-Union Turnpike, **Q37** Bus
 The forested eastern end of this 530-acre park is a songbird migration hotspot; the park's "knob and kettle" terrain, a leftover from the last ice age, hosts magnificent oak and pine groves.
WHERE TO GO: From the subway, walk or take the Q37 bus to enter at Metropolitan Avenue and Forest Park Drive and explore the "Waterhole," a migrant songbird haven, as well as the Little Gully, Gully, and Horseshoe. Bird with a friend; it's easy to get lost.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds and raptors
- PELHAM BAY PARK, BRONX (SpFW)**
Q36 Pelham Bay Park
 At 2,705 acres, this remote and wild New York City Park includes open water, salt marsh, rocky shores, old and new-growth forest, shrubland, rare coastal tall grass meadows, and dry and wet oak savanna.
WHERE TO GO: The most accessible part is the southern zone. Cross the walkway over I-95 and turn left to reach the Pelham Bay Nature Center and explore Huntington Woods, wet meadows, and the waterfront. A visit to Hunter and Twin Islands in the beautiful and rugged northern part of the park is also worth the effort.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds, raptors, waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, marsh birds, and seabirds
- CLOVE LAKES PARK, STATEN ISLAND (SpF)**
Q36 From St. George Ferry Terminal, **Q36** Victory Blvd. & Clove Rd. or **Q36** Forest Ave.
 Over half of this 196-acre park is made up of hilly woodlands, ponds, and streams, and is known on Staten Island as the place to see warblers and other neotropical migrants, particularly in spring.
WHERE TO GO: Start at Martine Avenue and explore the wooded paths along the stream that runs between Brooks, Martine, and Clove Lakes. A pair of Great Blue Herons has nested in recent years next to the Martine Avenue Bridge.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds, waterfowl, wading birds, and raptors
- INWOOD HILL PARK, MANHATTAN (SpFW)**
Q36 Inwood-207th St. or **Q36** 215th Street
 This 150-acre park is the site of Manhattan's only old-growth forest, a tulip poplar and oak woodland that hosts nesting forest birds. The park also includes a small adjacent salt marsh and offers great views of the Hudson River.
WHERE TO GO: Enter at 215th Street and Indian Road to explore the park's bays, shoreline, and mudflats; hike up forested "Inwood Hill"; and check the ball fields for grassland birds. The Dyckman Street Pier may offer wintertime views of Bald Eagles.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors
- THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN, BRONX (SpF)**
Q36 Bedford Park Blvd., **Q36** Bus
 This 250-acre preserve, home to resident Wood Ducks and Great Horned Owls, comprises gardens, ponds, wetland areas, a 40-acre old-growth forest, and a wild portion of the Bronx River.
WHERE TO GO: Walk nine blocks (or take the Q36 bus) and enter at the Mott St. Gate to explore the Twin Lakes area and forest trail, cross Hester Bridge to reach the River Trail.
BIRDS TO SEE: songbirds, wading birds, and raptors

Find more details at www.nycaudubon.org/bbs

Sp: spring; Su: summer; F: fall; W: winter

This guide has been updated and reprinted thanks to the generous support of Con Edison.

conEdison

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*SPHYRAPICUS VARIUS*)

By Don Riepe

If you notice a tree marked with horizontal rings of neatly bored holes, this beautiful woodpecker is the culprit. I've seen numerous trees with these holes, but rarely have I seen the actual bird. It is also the bird that my non-birder friends make fun of: "Hey, did'ja see any of them Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers?" The comical name somehow reinforces the perception that birders are eccentric and nerdy, devoted to an unusual pastime. (In reality, of course, birding is one of the fastest-growing recreational activities in the U.S. A study in 2017 estimated that about 12.2 million people in the U.S. participated in birdwatching activities and 57 million households fed backyard birds. And now because of the pandemic, there has been a dramatic upsurge in these activities.)

Nomenclature aside, the sapsucker is a small to medium-sized American woodpecker that breeds as far north as Alaska and winters south to Panama. It shares its black, white, and red coloring with several other woodpeckers native to our area. It can often be quickly distinguished, however, by the vertical white stripe along the front edge of each of its folded wings. The male is quite striking in plumage, with a bright red forehead and throat; the female



Immature sapsuckers are well camouflaged.

also has a red forehead, but a white throat. The "belly" of both sexes is light yellow, giving the species its name. (Watch out for first-year birds, which are brownish and lack red highlights.) Like the Northern Flicker, the sapsucker is a migratory woodpecker. It does not breed in New York City, however, and is seen here only during spring and fall migration and in winter.

Sapsuckers feed mainly on tree sap, berries, fruit, and insects, but will also eat "bast," the soft cambium layer beneath tree bark, especially in winter. Sapsuckers favor birches, Red Maple, oaks, poplars, and hollies, and sometimes also feed on conifers. The damage from their holes (called "sapwells") does not usually kill the tree, but can cause harm by allowing insects and fungi to invade the tree's cambium layer. (Ecologically speaking, an occasional dead tree isn't necessarily a bad thing; dead or dying trees then provide food, in the form of insects, as well as nesting habitat for many other species of woodpeckers and cavity-nesting birds.)

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have been known to follow sapsuckers to their sapwells, as tree sap is a rich food source during migration, particularly when flower nectar is scarce in early

spring. There are also several records of Pine Martens feeding on the sap, and I personally observed a Norway Rat feeding on sap from a bruised shrub branch in Jamaica Bay.

Sap dripping from sapsucker trees also attracts many species of butterflies and moths; it can be the only food source for overwintering Mourning Cloak butterflies before spring wildflowers are in bloom.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are considered a keystone species because of the important role they play in forest ecology. The species appears to be stable across its range, or possibly increasing. They are fairly common in some of our more urban parks, where many trees may be well marked with sapwell rings. Listen for the sapsucker's down-slurred, cat-like call, and you just may catch one at its work. ■



Sapsuckers leave a very distinctive pattern of sapwells behind on their favored trees.



Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (here, an adult male) often become sticky with sap.

EVENTS & ADVENTURES



As this spring *Urban Audubon* goes to press, NYC Audubon has opted to delay scheduling of in-person winter programs due to ongoing uncertainty about when such gatherings will be safe. We are continuing to follow governmental guidance during this dynamic and changing crisis—and the safety of our members, staff, and guides is our top priority. Updates regarding virtual events such

as classes and workshops will be announced through The eGret eNewsletter and posted to our website as they become available. Visit nycadubon.org/local-trips-and-classes to learn about all spring programs, including virtual classes.

To view “virtual birding” programs and other suggestions for staying involved with birding and bird conservation efforts during this

time, visit nycadubon.org/virtual-birding.

For convenient updates right in your inbox, make sure to sign up for The eGret eNewsletter at nycadubon.org/egret. And follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram ([@nycadubon](https://www.instagram.com/nycadubon)).

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. ■



© Lloyd Sprainik

Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, and Semipalmated Sandpipers are among the shorebird species that depend on horseshoe crab eggs for sustenance during their long migratory journeys.

FIFTH ANNUAL JAMAICA BAY HORSESHOE CRAB FESTIVAL

Saturday, May 15, 10am

With the American Littoral Society, Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, National Park Service, and New York Aquarium

Save the date and celebrate the Atlantic Horseshoe Crab with us this May! During the full and new moons of May and June, female horseshoe crabs lay billions of eggs at the high tide line. At the same time, thousands of migrating shorebirds arrive to feed on the eggs, regaining the body weight they've lost during their long journey north. During this festival you'll see experts handle live horseshoe crabs and learn about their important ecological and medicinal values. You can also participate in our many family-friendly activities and talks by experts. Visit nycadubon.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



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

2021 GOVERNORS ISLAND SEASON

Stay tuned for more information about our 2021 Governors Island season! Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot yet announce details about this year's residency at Nolan Park #17. Visit nycadubon.org/gov-island for updates.

NYC AUDUBON MEMBER EVENTS

We hope that you enjoyed NYC Audubon's virtual offerings this winter: trips around Jamaica Bay, to the Galapagos Islands, and to the Yucatan. Coming up: A **Wildflower Walk with Andrew Garn** (see page 19). Though at press time our ability to hold safe live events this spring remains uncertain, we hope to resume in-person birdwatching soon. Be on the lookout for updates in The eGret eNewsletter and in your email inbox. 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@nycadubon.org. **Thank you for your continuing support!**

NEWS & NOTES



ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING, BOARD ELECTION, AND CONSERVATION UPDATE

Wednesday, June 9, 6pm

Join NYC Audubon for a run-down of highlights of the conservation accomplishments of the past year and a discussion of where NYC Audubon's is heading next, as we seek to grow our organization, advocate for birds and habitat, and better reflect the diverse communities of New York City. Our board election and annual meeting will precede the talk. For details on how to participate visit nycadubon.org/member-events.

WE'VE HIRED OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION AND SCIENCE

Just as we go to press, we have confirmed the appointment of Kevin R. Burgio, PhD, as NYC Audubon's new Director of Conservation and Science. Dr. Burgio joins us March 1. We look forward to introducing him in the summer issue and working with him in the years ahead.

NYC AUDUBON BIENNIAL REPORT

NYC Audubon's 2019-2020 Biennial Report is set to arrive this March. Digital publication will be announced in The eGret eNewsletter. ■



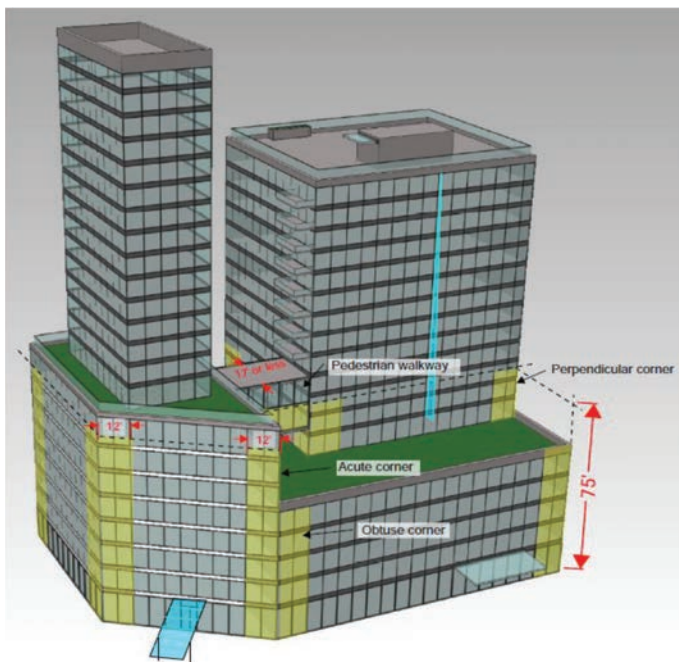
We hope that you all are continuing to be safe and well. Below are some ways to advocate right now for New York City's birds. Make sure to sign up to be an Avian Advocate and receive timely action alert emails at nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates.

BIRD-FRIENDLY BUILDING DESIGN GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL LAW 15 OF 2020

As of January 10, 2021, all new buildings and alterations that replace all exterior glass in New York City are required to use bird-friendly materials in compliance with Local Law 15 of 2020. The new law, which was passed just over a year ago by the New York City Council, is the most comprehensive bird-friendly building legislation in the U.S. This victory follows years of dedicated advocacy work by NYC Audubon and a coalition formed through the Bird Safe Building Alliance and American Bird Conservancy among architects, ornithologists, and community members with expertise in real estate development.

To assist with this monumental shift in the way buildings are built, the NYC Department of Buildings has released a Guidance Document and Bulletin. Please take a look at the resources below and feel free to share them widely.

- **Abbreviated Bulletin.** This one-page PDF provides a quick summary of the bill and its background: on.nyc.gov/2YvgHrT
- **Complete Bulletin.** This three-page PDF includes more technical detail of the bill and its requirements: on.nyc.gov/2MDUmFE
- **Guidance Document.** This 23-page PDF is the most complete set of design and construction guidelines specific to the new law that is available: on.nyc.gov/2NP3yb2



A figure from *Bird-Friendly Building Design and Construction Requirements Guidance Document* depicts locations where fly-through conditions (highlighted yellow) exist, for which the installation of bird-friendly materials is required.



© François Portmann

Last fall, the Northern Parula was the most frequent collision victim found by Project Safe Flight volunteers in the City. Implementation of Local Law 15 will prevent many deaths of this diminutive warbler in the future.

URGE NEW YORK LEADERS TO MAINTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDING

Environmental programs are critical to New York's economic recovery and prosperity, as well as to bird conservation throughout the state. Late last year, NYC Audubon joined nearly 200 organizations in urging state leaders to maintain environmental funding to create jobs, fortify local economies, and address the climate crisis. Read our full letter at politi.co/2NNCyZw.

We must maintain funding for New York's environmental programs: Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), Parks 2020, DEC NY Works Programs, Clean Water Infrastructure Act, as well as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) Program.

Each of these programs creates thousands of jobs, saves communities and taxpayers money, and supports multibillion-dollar industries including agriculture, outdoor recreation, construction, tourism, and commercial fishing.

Tell Governor Cuomo and your state legislators that when making difficult funding decisions, these programs must be recognized as essential. Make your voice heard now by using this link: act.audubon.org/a/stronger-and-greener-new-york-state.

MAIL YOUR ADVOCACY POSTCARDS!

As a NYC Audubon member or donor, you will receive two advocacy postcards this spring (mailed along with our updated *Birding by Subway* brochure): one card in support of upgrading conservation protections for Black Skimmers, and one in support of conservation funding in New York State (see above). If you haven't done so already, please make sure to mail your cards! ■

BECOME AN AVIAN ADVOCATE!

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

CONSERVATION NOTES

NYCAudubon's conservation team spent the winter hard at work, sharing data with colleagues in virtual conferences, summarizing and analyzing data from the fall field season, and preparing for a busy spring 2021 field season. After a year of adapting our programs to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, our team is looking forward to 2021 with anticipation, in hopes we will be able to resume most of our research projects and surveys.

PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

Led by Conservation Associate Aurora Crooks, our team of 32 volunteer community scientists surveyed six Project Safe Flight routes over eight weeks of fall 2020 migration. This volunteer effort resulted in the most collision victims found during a Project Safe Flight season on record: 403 Birds (332 dead, 71 stunned/injured). The most common species found were Northern Parula (34), Black-throated Blue Warbler (24), White-throated Sparrow (22), Black-and-white Warbler (19), Ovenbird (19), Common Yellowthroat (17), and Golden-crowned Kinglet (13). The highest concentration of birds, 164 individuals, was found during the two-week period of October 1 through October 15.

The NYC Audubon staff also noted a rise in public concern about bird-building collisions in 2020. One supporting data point is the increase in reports to our crowd-sourced database, dbird.org, last year: entries totaled 2,240, which is 2.6 times the number of reports we received in 2019.

The data collected by volunteers at two monitored buildings

is being used to advise building management on mitigation measures that can be installed at targeted facade areas. An appliqué film that allows birds to perceive and avoid window glass, such as Feather Friendly, is to be applied to the most problematic windows. After the film is applied, our team will be able to determine its effectiveness by comparing the number of collisions before and after installation.

At other locations, we are compiling collision data in hopes of persuading management to pursue similar solutions. As the NYC Audubon team can only advise a limited number of buildings at a time, we have also put together resources for individuals who wish to reach out independently to a building's management to discuss collision prevention. If you are interested in contacting decision-makers at a building to discuss bird collisions and possible solutions, contact Senior Conservation Biologist Kaitlyn Parkins for assistance at kparkins@nycaudubon.org.

WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR

Despite being unable to gather in person, the annual meeting of the Harbor Herons Working Group was held virtually on December 3. The 60 participants, who included academic researchers, land managers, and nonprofit and agency scientists, enjoyed 19 virtual presentations on waterbird work that was completed around the New York-New Jersey Harbor in 2020. Presenters shared data they were able to collect in 2020 and discussed how they have dealt with the many challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.



A selection of Harbor Herons Working Group participants discusses the year's waterbird research on December 3, 2020.



NYC Audubon staff presented on American Oystercatcher breeding productivity on the Rockaway Peninsula, Queens, our only waterbird program that was able to proceed in 2020.

Looking forward to the 2021 field season, we expect to be able to conduct our field work safely with modifications, if needed, due to the continuing pandemic. We plan to resume the Harbor Herons nesting survey for its 36th year in May. And through a partnership with Columbia University, our American Oystercatcher monitoring program in Queens will be augmented with “camera traps,” motion-triggered cameras placed in the nesting areas, to help us better understand the causes of the oystercatchers’ nest losses. We expect that our most popular community science program, Horseshoe Crab Monitoring, will take place as usual, timed with the full moons of May and June. Finally, we are planning our migratory shorebird banding program, which will include the banding of ten additional Semipalmated Sandpipers with radio-transmitter nanotags. Our team cannot wait to get back in the field with the birds!

121ST AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Though we were unable to hold our traditional public Christmas Bird Count this past December, small socially distanced teams of volunteers were able to safely collect count data on Sunday, December 20. The New Jersey-Lower Hudson Count Circle, compiled by NYC Audubon, had quite good coverage given the circumstances. A total of just over 25,000 individual birds of 102 species was counted. Highlights in Manhattan included not one but two Western Tanagers, plus a Greater White-fronted Goose. The New Jersey portion of the count nabbed Iceland Gull and Common Redpoll. The final tally is available at nycadubon.org/cbc. ■



© Keith Michael

Two Western Tanagers were found in Manhattan during 2020's Audubon Christmas Bird Count. This bird, photographed in Chelsea in December, shows the wingbars that help distinguish this species.

VOLUNTEER!



While scheduling of in-person volunteer orientations and events has been delayed this spring because of the continuing pandemic, some events and orientations are being held in virtual formats. See below. Further updates regarding these and other spring conservation projects, such as Horseshoe Crab Monitoring, the Spring NYC Shorebird Blitz, and beach cleanups, will be posted at nycadubon.org/volunteer-events and announced via The eGret eNewsletter (sign up at nycadubon.org/egret).

PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

Light and glass pose major threats to migratory birds as they move through New York City. Help NYC Audubon biologists

collect data on building collisions during migration by monitoring designated buildings for collisions. This opportunity requires a time commitment of about one hour, one morning a week, from April through early June. Virtual orientations will be held Thursday, March 18, and Wednesday, March 24, 6-7:30pm. To learn more and register, contact us at communityscience@nycadubon.org.



© Laura Meyers

The Black-and-white Warbler is a frequent window-collision victim in New York City.

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

The third New York State Breeding Bird Atlas is already in its second year! During the five-year Atlas (running from 2020 through 2024), thousands of birders will survey breeding birds in our state—and you can be a part of it. All you need to participate is an eBird account and time to observe birds and their breeding behaviors anywhere in New York State. To learn more and get started, visit ebird.org/atlasny/about/atlas-essentials. You can read about upcoming Atlas-related events (both virtual and in-person) at ebird.org/atlasny/about/events. If you have questions about joining the Atlas in the City, Contact NYC Atlas Coordinator Molly Adams at madams@nycadubon.org. ■

SCIENCE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

By Suzanne Charlé

During the COVID-19 pandemic, scientific studies around the country have been put on hold: In the Rocky Mountains, the longest-term dataset on marmots, dating to 1962, was disrupted; a field expedition by Scripps Institution of Oceanography on marine mammal acoustics didn't set sail. The same has been true for researchers working with NYC Audubon. Senior Conservation Biologist Kaitlyn Parkins recounts, "Fellow researchers and I were constantly on Twitter, lamenting the field studies that were interrupted or changed. The most important thing was to keep our volunteers, our graduate students, and ourselves safe." The pandemic's impact on research projects has also depended on the ease of access to study areas (most of the researchers had to depend on public transportation), as well as on rules instituted by various city, state, and federal agencies.

And so in spring 2020, NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight collision-monitoring program was canceled, as was the annual Harbor Herons nesting survey. "There's 35 years' worth of Harbor Herons data, but there will be none for 2020." All in all though, Parkins said, it isn't that disruptive to the wading bird project: "One year is a blip—we can still see long-term trends." And despite the lack of our usual spring collision-monitoring data, in the fall we expanded our monitoring routes to all five boroughs. Also, in 2020 the public entered a record number of collision reports in our online database at dbird.org.

The National Park Service issued no research permits in 2020 for Gateway National Recreation Area's Breezy Point, in Rockaway, Queens, the site of our 11-year survey of American Oystercatchers. Oystercatchers share breeding grounds with Piping Plovers (listed as Endangered in New York State), and without a permit, NYC Audubon Field Biologist Emilio Tobón couldn't enter fenced-off nesting areas. But he notes, "I was lucky. I *could* walk the entire four miles of beach at the water's edge. I couldn't see the exact number of oystercatcher eggs, but I was able to complete the survey almost as thoroughly as previous years."



An American Oystercatcher chick is fed by its parent.

During the 2020 breeding season, Tobón counted 37 nesting oystercatcher pairs; 11 chicks fledged. (In 2019, he documented 36 nests and 11 successful fledges.) He'll continue in the future. "Productivity has declined since 2015. We suspect that's due to predatory feral cats and other wildlife kills, as well as human disturbance." Tobón plans to use camera traps to better understand the causes, and also explore the possibility of more physical protection around nesting areas.

Even the Jacob K. Javits Center green roof—upon which NYC Audubon has been monitoring wildlife since 2014—wasn't above the fray. "This was an important year for data collection, making our ecological monitoring the longest on any green roof," said Green Roof Program Manager and Ecologist Dustin Partridge, PhD. But in April, the Javits Center became a COVID-19 field hospital, preventing access until mid-June. Even then, entry wasn't frequent. Though he's still working on the data, Partridge noted that in the absence of frequent human visitors, nesting Herring Gulls seemed to spread their nests out to new parts of the roof. They also changed their eating habits: In years when the neighborhood was busy with tourists, the

gulls feasted on chicken bones and other human leftovers. "This year, it was fish and crabs and eels—they'd shifted their diet to foods from the river." Partridge, who is also managing director of the Green Roof Researchers Alliance, hopes that COVID-19 constraints and the subsequent surge in public interest in green spaces and birds will highlight the importance of installing green roofs. Currently, the alliance is working on improving the Green Roof Tax Abatement so that neighborhoods in the City most impacted by heat and stormwater runoff receive a greater tax abatement than areas with less need for green space.

On Staten Island, Shannon Curley, PhD, a research associate with the Freshkills Park Alliance, reported, "We've been lucky and relatively unimpeded." Dr. Curley and fellow research associate José Ramírez-Garofalo are working on a survey of grassland birds at the innovative Freshkills Park, a 2,200-acre grassland and wetland habitat on the site of the Fresh Kills landfill. The park, which is undergoing a multi-decade transformation and is normally open only for guided tours and events, was closed to the public last year. But bird-wise, things have continued to go quite well. Since the survey started in 2015,

© David Spiller

some 200 bird species have been recorded. In 2020, exciting newcomers arrived: four pairs of Sedge Wrens (The last to nest in Staten Island was recorded in 1943!), two pairs of Eastern Meadowlarks, and five pairs of Bobolinks. Other highlights: The park's population of Grasshopper Sparrows is growing; an astounding 53 pairs nested in 2020, compared to 30 pairs in 2015. The team also counted eight successful nesting pairs of Osprey, which produced 16 fledglings. Thanks to banding research, they know that many of the birds that nest at Freshkills, such as Gray Catbirds and American Robins, come back year after year. That, Ramírez-Garofalo noted, "means it's a quality habitat!"

Christina Colón, PhD, associate professor of biological sciences at Kingsborough Community College, and Mark Botton, PhD, professor of biology and co-director of the environmental science program at Fordham University, launched their study of Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs at Jamaica Bay's Plumb Beach in 2010. "The work required a lot of arms and legs," she explained, noting it was perfect for her many biology students interested in STEM careers. Over the past nine years, whole classes of ecology students and countless summer research students have documented egg density, counted juvenile crabs, and tagged the crabs' carapaces in collaboration with NYC Audubon and Cornell Cooperative Extension. Until 2020, that is, when the pandemic shut down data collection.

The pause, Colón explained, has had several silver linings: There was time to write up a backlog of manuscripts, the findings of which should be published in 2021. The pandemic's constraints also inspired a virtual meeting of scientific minds: Colón had several CSTEP (Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program) students study "epibionts"—organisms that "hitchhike" on horseshoe crab carapaces, such as barnacles, mussels, and green algae. Working strictly remotely (one all the way from Singapore), the students compared years of data collected in Jamaica Bay with a data set from an earlier Delaware Bay study by Botton and Loveland. By systematically compiling and standardizing all sheets across all years and both sites into one data interface, they were able to improve the functionality of the data set and make it available for other students.



A Grasshopper Sparrow is banded in Staten Island's Freshkills Park.

This pandemic-inspired collaboration advanced both Colón's and Botton's publication agenda and was also a great teaching tool. Students could, by studying the data set, propose and test various hypotheses. "In-person field work is problematic for some students who don't have easy access to transportation or money for gear, and for those with physical disabilities," observed Colón, adding, "By

working with data online during this time, we're giving opportunities to students to be involved in field research that they otherwise may not have considered doing, had it not been for COVID. Now that we have demonstrated that students can have a productive and meaningful remote research experience, there's definitely a greater equity path forward."

In anticipation of another field season in lockdown, Colón is now putting a DNA data set online for more students to analyze. In 2017 DNA from gut contents of juvenile crabs was compared to DNA from the surrounding sediment. The study yielded tens of thousands of sequences from thousands of taxa ranging from plants to fungi, worms to microbes. This mountain of digital data represents a veritable treasure trove of research opportunities for endless future cohorts of students. While online sleuthing of DNA fragments from unknown gut microbes is exciting, it cannot replace the thrill and camaraderie of good old-fashioned field work with live animals. However, the future of scientific research is increasingly in the laboratory and at the computer. Perhaps the experience of learning data analysis with online tools as a summer research intern will yield benefits long after COVID-19 is gone. ■



Horseshoe crabs like this large female and three smaller male suitors, photographed at Brooklyn's Plumb Beach, host a great variety of "epibionts," organisms that live on top of other organisms. Older horseshoe crabs tend to carry a larger community of such hitchhikers.

RESOURCES ON RACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

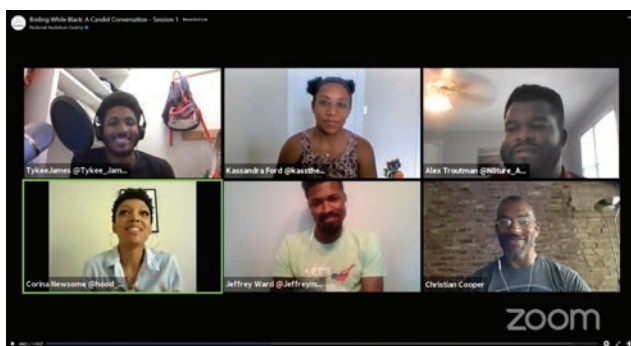
By the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee,
in collaboration with NYC Audubon Staff

This past year, our nation as a whole has been called to a reckoning with continuing racial injustice. Numerous assaults on Black Americans, including the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the racist confrontation borne by NYC Audubon Board Member Chris Cooper in the Central Park Ramble, spurred many to action. Black Lives Matter protests rightly demanded we do more to protect Black people, and to recognize and counter the racism in our midst.

NYC Audubon's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee has collaborated with our staff in compiling this selection of recommended resources focused on the experience of Black people in nature, and about the realities of racism in the birding and wider conservation communities. We've also included links to virtual environmentally themed communities created by and for people of color to foster connections across the globe. Though this list of resources is in no way comprehensive, we hope it will serve as a launching point for further learning and connection. Look for more recommended resources on related topics in future issues of *The Urban Audubon*.

VIDEOS AND PODCASTS

Several panel discussions, lectures, and video profiles with and by Black ornithologists and naturalists provide a powerful primer on the themes of racism and the environment.



"Birding While Black: A Candid Conversation" with National Audubon

"Birding While Black: A Candid Conversation," a panel convened by National Audubon, offers a gripping first-hand discussion of the racism experienced by Black birders, including Chris Cooper, birding guide and educator Jeffrey Ward, and ornithologist Corina Newsome: bit.ly/3ftTpbO

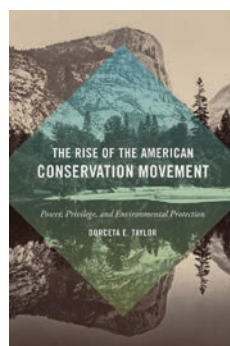
"Untold Stories of the Environmental Movement: Race, Power and Privilege," a lecture by Dorceta E. Taylor, PhD, includes her experiences as an African-American woman teaching in the field of American conservation and provides an introduction to the powerful themes and history of injustice that her scholarship has documented: vimeo.com/221281726

On Being with J. Drew Lanham, PhD, is a conversation in which Dr. Lanham discusses his deep and complex connection to nature as a Black naturalist and scientist: bit.ly/3pvjmNc. (This animated short from StoryCorps, "Learning to Fly," is also a beautiful portrayal of the roots of Dr. Lanham's love of the natural world: storycorps.org/animation/learning-to-fly.)

Faces of Change with Corina Newsome profiles the biology graduate student and community engagement manager for Georgia Audubon as she discusses the importance of connecting communities of color with the environment: on.thegrio.com/3pqeUir

BOOKS

These fundamental works are "required reading" for those interested in achieving a deeper understanding of the relationship between race and one's experience of nature in the U.S.



The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection, by Dorceta E. Taylor, PhD: Dr. Taylor's scholarly but readable work is a comprehensive history of the modern conservation movement, chronicling how it has been influenced by race, class, and gender—and came to carry the stamp of white privilege.



Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors, by Carolyn Finney, PhD: In her groundbreaking book, Dr. Finney reveals how our country's legacy of racial oppression and violence has shaped cultural understandings of the "great outdoors" and racialized our experience of nature and the environment.



The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature, by J. Drew Lanham, PhD: This powerful account by South Carolina ornithologist Dr. J. Drew Lanham explores the contradictions of finding joy and freedom in the same land to which his ancestors were tied by forced labor, and of being a Black man in the profoundly white field of ornithology.

ONLINE PUBLICATIONS

This online listing includes some more focused research and discussion on various related themes.

Racial and Ethnic Differences in Connectedness to Nature and Landscape Preferences Among College Students by Dorceta E. Taylor, PhD: bit.ly/3iSpZre

People of Color and Their Constraints to National Parks Visitation by David Scott, PhD, and KangJae Jerry Lee, PhD: georgewright.org/351scott.pdf

The Nature Gap: Confronting Racial and Economic Disparities in the Destruction and Protection of Nature in America by Jenny Rowland-Shea, Sahir Doshi, Shanna Edberg, and Robert Fanger: ampr.gs/3ooLoJN

How ‘Nature Deprived’ Neighborhoods Impact the Health of People of Color by Alejandra Borunda: on.natgeo.com/3iPr5nG

VIRTUAL CONSERVATION/OUTDOOR COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

A rapidly growing number of online resources provide community and connection for people of color interested in nature and environmentalism.

twitter.com/blackafinstem

instagram.com/indigequers

instagram.com/indigenouswomenhike

intersectionalenvironmentalist.com

latinooutdoors.org

melaninbasecamp.com

nativelikewater.org

nativewomenswilderness.org

outdoorafro.com

outdoorasian.com

pgmone.org (People of the Global Majority in the Outdoors, Nature, & Environment)

vamosafuera.org

instagram.com/wilddiversity

EXPLORE FURTHER: ANTI-RACIST READING LIST

As a starting point for further reading on the broader fields of racism and anti-racism, we recommend this list compiled by anti-racism scholar and author Ibram X. Kendi, PhD, for The New York Times: nyti.ms/2Yyo029. ■



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“The wild things and places belong to all of us.” —J. Drew Lanham, PhD, from *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man’s Love Affair with Nature* (Pictured: a woodland trail in Upper Manhattan’s Inwood Hill Park)

STATEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

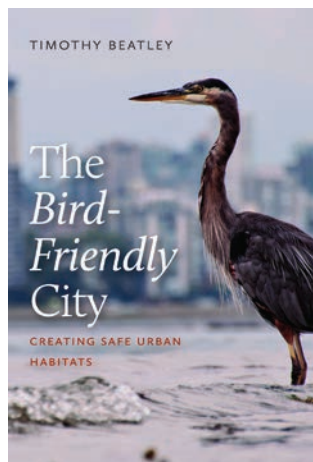


New York City Audubon believes all people have the right to a close connection to the natural world and the right to a healthy environment. Preserving our environment is only possible if we all feel that connection.

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. ■



THE BIRD-FRIENDLY CITY: CREATING SAFE URBAN HABITATS
By Timothy Beatley
Island Press, 2020

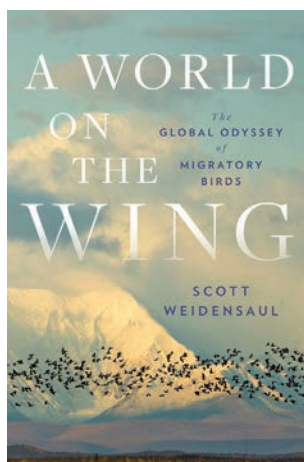
Timothy Beatley is a man with a mission. In an increasingly urbanized world, he finds it essential to ensure that cities offer space where people can experience nature. His title at the University of Virginia School of Architecture describes his goal: Professor of Sustainable Communities in the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning. His research has taken him around the world to study strategies for improving habitat for birds and other wildlife in urban areas.

A long series of books has resulted, many with the word “biophilia” in their titles—Professor Beatley is also the founder and director of Biophilic Cities, a network of organizations that share his goals. *The Bird-Friendly City* profiles projects in several cities, including:

- Portland, Oregon, where “catios” are being promoted to offer outdoor access to domestic cats without harm to birds;
- London and Pittsburgh, where swifts suffer from the lack of chimneys suitable for nesting;
- Phoenix, where a colony of burrowing owls was saved by relocating them;
- Singapore, where hornbills were given safe homes in the midst of dense housing developments; and
- Toronto, which has become a leader in promoting bird-friendly glass and building design.

The important contributions to these projects by volunteer individuals and groups (including local Audubon chapters) are fully acknowledged, as are the people who made short films to illustrate them (biophiliccities.org/bcfilms). New York City and NYC Audubon are spotlighted in two chapters: “The Benefits of Birds in a World Shaped by Humans,” in which Dr. Susan Elbin, NYC Audubon’s former director of conservation and science, is interviewed about our programs; and later on in a section called “Beyond Glass,” which focuses on Green Roof Program Manager and Ecologist Dustin Partridge’s work.

The book is amply illustrated with black-and-white photos. It is a pleasure to read, not just because Beatley is a gifted storyteller, but also because of his optimistic viewpoint. While admitting that advocates for the natural environment face a hard road, including the formidable challenges of climate change, he remains hopeful—a “half-full glass” person, in his words. —MJK



A WORLD ON THE WING: THE GLOBAL ODYSSEY OF MIGRATORY BIRDS
By Scott Weidensaul
W. W. Norton & Company, 2021

Nature writer and researcher Scott Weidensaul unveils the gobsmackingly spectacular and complex topic of bird migration with *A World on the Wing*. This is a page-turner: a vividly written account of where and how certain bird

species migrate, based on studies in recent decades using new techniques. Various species of migratory birds can:

- put alternating halves of their brains to sleep, resting as they fly, sometimes for months;
- temporarily shrink digestive organs, which they won’t need during migration;
- use quantum mechanics to gain their ability to navigate via electromagnetic fields (This is a technical point that your humble reviewer does not pretend to understand.); and
- “drink” from their own organs and muscles to avoid dehydration during long flights.

There’s adventure, too. Weidensaul travels the world to investigate research and conservation efforts. He dodges gunmen and insurgents, as well as an irritable grizzly bear.

A World on the Wing, however, is more than a travel tale, and bigger than an appreciation of avian marvels. Weidensaul is painfully aware of the great man-made threats faced by many bird species. He continually points out examples of conservation efforts that must take migratory patterns into account to be successful. The scarce Kirtland’s Warbler, for example, winters exclusively in the Bahamas (see the map on page 19). Eighty percent of these Caribbean islands lie three feet or less above sea level, however—indicating that “rising oceans pose an existential threat to this now-recovering species.”

Even common migratory species have unexpected migration patterns that suggest priorities important to protecting them: Most Wood Thrushes from the Northeast, it turns out, “head to a narrow swath of eastern Honduras and northern Nicaragua for the winter, while those from the mid-Atlantic crowd into the jungles of the Yucatán Peninsula.” When it comes to Ovenbirds, on the other hand, data drawn from geolocator and banding research shows that “Ovenbirds from the Philadelphia suburbs mostly migrate to the Caribbean, especially to the island of Hispaniola, while those from just



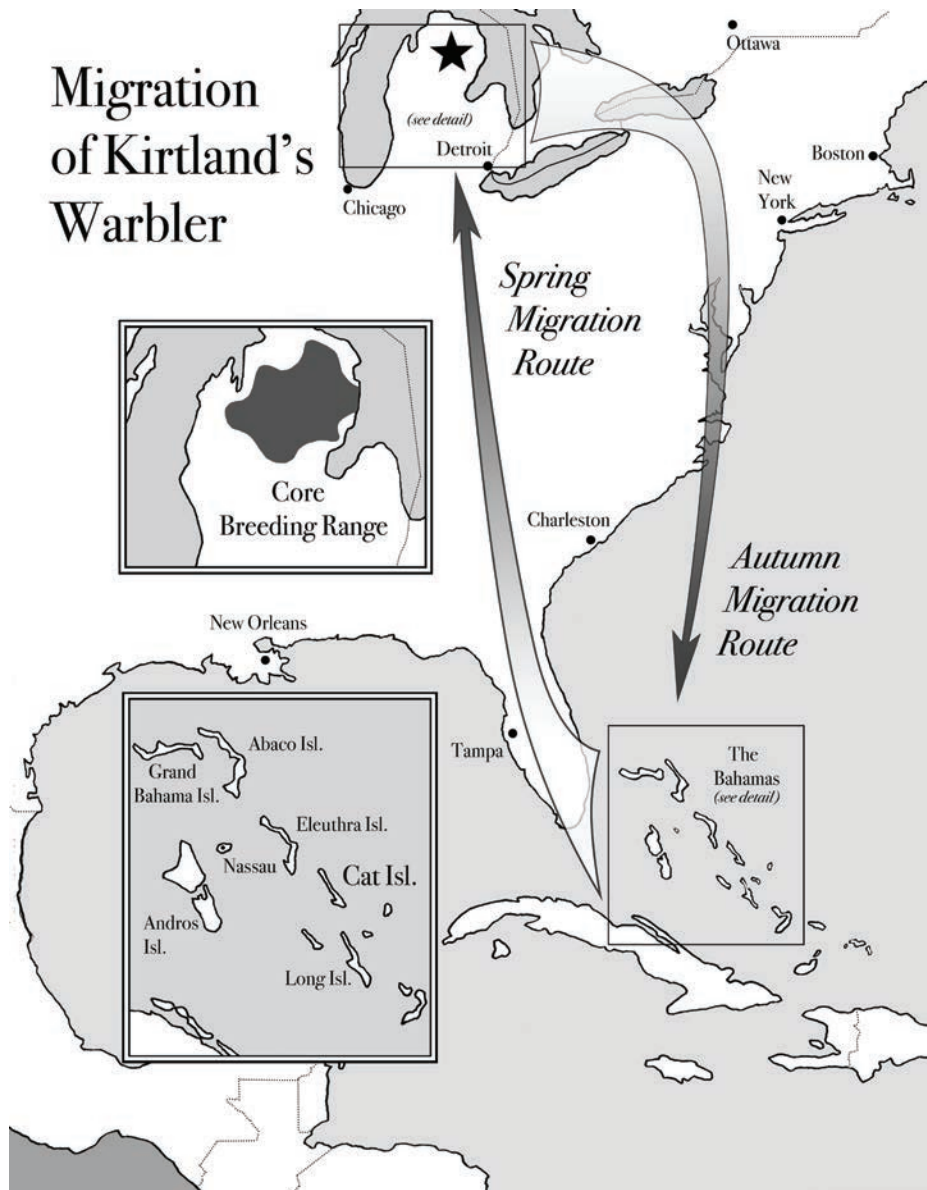
across the Alleghenies near Pittsburgh fly straight across the Gulf of Mexico to northern Central America. Lose one part of the wintering range, or one critical way station in between, and you may lose an entire regional population.”

Research also is uncovering the complexity of habitat needs at different stages of a bird's life. One example: Ornithologists have thought of “dog-hair thickets”—very dense stands of sapling trees—as little use to nesting birds. But a Pennsylvania-based study of fledgling

Golden-winged Warblers (a Species of Special Concern in New York State) found that many take cover in these stands. A variety of habitat at different ages or stages is essential to preserving this threatened warbler, along with many other bird species.

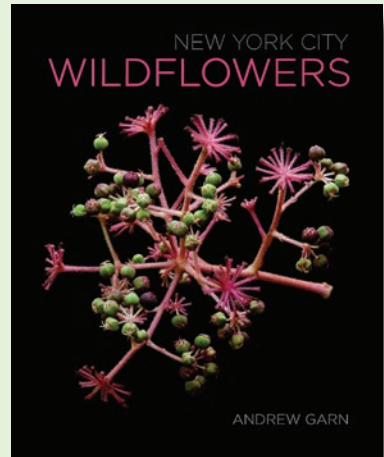
Weidensaul's superb work, due for publication on March 30, 2021, reveals the wonder and fragility of birds' complex migration patterns, and issues a clear call for effective conservation efforts to preserve them.—NB ■

Migration of Kirtland's Warbler



The rare Kirtland's Warbler, which made an unexpected appearance in New York City's Central Park in May 2018, normally migrates north far inland of our location, as it travels between its very limited wintering and breeding ranges.

AUTHOR EVENT FOR NYC AUDUBON MEMBERS



A VIRTUAL WILDFLOWER WALK THROUGH NEW YORK CITY Monday, April 19, 6pm

Local author and nature photographer Andrew Garn, creator of *The New York Pigeon: Behind the Feathers*, has a new book! *Wildflowers of New York City*, to be featured in the March issue of *Audubon* magazine, captures the oft overlooked beauty of our urban flora. Join us as Andrew leads us on a virtual tour of the City's flowering wildlife: to the swamps of Staten Island, the rich forests of Central Park, the marshes of Jamaica Bay, the rocky hills of the northern Bronx . . . and many sidewalk cracks in between.

This event and others in our member series are a benefit of NYC Audubon membership. Please register using the registration link provided in a member email sent by Director of Development Kellye Rosenheim on February 20, or write Kellye at krosenheim@nycaudubon.org for assistance.



From top to bottom: Japanese Angelica and Tulip Poplar are among the exquisite flowers of Andrew Garn's new book.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

NYC Audubon's conservation and outreach work would not be possible without the help of hundreds of volunteers who donate thousands of hours each year. Despite limitations imposed by the pandemic this past year, our work carried on, at times in virtual format. If you volunteered during the period of January through December 2020 and your name is not on this list, please let us know. We want to make sure you receive the recognition you deserve.

LEGEND

AA = Avian Advocates
AC = Advisory Council
BBA = NY Breeding Bird Atlas III
BD = Board of Directors
CBC = Christmas Bird Count
CON = Conservation
EO = Education and Outreach
FR = Fall Roost
GI = Governors Island
IBT = Injured Bird Transporters and Raptors NYC Group
JB = Jamaica Bay (includes Horseshoe Crab and Shorebird Surveys)
OA = Office Administration
PA = Photography/Art
PSF = Project Safe Flight
TIL = Tribute in Light
UA = *The Urban Audubon*
WE = Website and The eGret eNewsletter

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Past Audubon Christmas Bird Count volunteers at work

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NYC Audubon's conservation work and public programs are made possible by the philanthropic contributions of members, friends, corporations, foundations, and government agencies. We are grateful to all those who have sustained our work over the past six months, especially during these difficult times. Thank you also to the members and donors whose 1,591 gifts in amounts up to \$2,499.99 collectively provided \$226,915 in support of our mission from July 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

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Estate of Barbara A. Millar



© Lawrence Pugliare

A Great Egret visits Staten Island's Mount Loretto Unique Area.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

Success! On behalf of the staff and board of directors, we thank you for your support of New York City Audubon and the City's birds in this tumultuous past year. In spite of everything, our office never stopped working—remotely, of course—to protect wildlife and wild places. We achieved successes on many fronts: 2020 began with a huge victory, as the new mandate for bird-friendly design in New York City was passed by the New York City Council. Much of the year was then devoted to helping craft a workable set of rules with our coalition of partners and the NYC Department of Buildings, before the law went into effect on January 10, 2021. Last year was also a time to reflect on our responsibility to our community and commit ourselves to making real progress towards greater equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. In March we'll launch the new virtual Feathered Friends After-School Birding Club to connect children across the City with each other and with the resources they need to get outside and bird.

Thanks to the passion that our members and supporters feel for conservation, we succeeded in meeting our 40th Anniversary Campaign fundraising goals. You gave generously and kept our work going during this difficult time. We thank you, and the birds thank you.



We set a goal of \$1,040,000—and by making up for a shortfall in the \$40,000 gift category in other categories, we saw a total of \$1,106,000 in anniversary gifts. But you can still help. The birds still need you. If you have not made a gift, please consider donating to start our fiscal year off sound and strong. **Your support is essential. Donate at nycaudubon.org/donate.**

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Contributions are essential to our work supporting wild birds in New York City:

Anniversary Leadership Gifts: [] \$40,000 [] \$10,000 [] \$5,000
Anniversary Celebration Gifts: [] \$2,500 [] \$1,000 [] \$500 [] \$100

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

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.

If you'd like to learn more about planning a gift for NYC Audubon, visit nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy, or contact Director of Development Kellye Rosenheim at 646-502-9611 or development@nycaudubon.org.



NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON

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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 (once physical distancing restrictions are lifted). 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 the bottom of page 23.

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

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**.

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☐ American Kestrel Circle \$2,500 ☐ Conservationist \$500 ☐ Advocate \$250
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