

# THE URBAN BIRD CALL



**A MAJOR WIN FOR SHOREBIRDS  
AND HORSESHOE CRABS**

**GUESS WHO'S ON BROADWAY:  
BIODIVERSITY MONITORING ON  
MANHATTAN'S UPPER WEST SIDE**

**SPECIES PROFILE:  
THE REDPOLL**



## MISSION & VISION

NYC Bird Alliance protects birds and their habitats, strengthening urban biodiversity through science, advocacy, and community engagement. We envision New York City as a leader in urban bird conservation, where nature thrives and all New Yorkers appreciate and care for the City's biodiversity.

## COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

NYC Bird Alliance believes all people have the right to a close connection to the natural world and the right to a healthy environment. Preserving our environment is only possible if we all feel that connection. For more information, visit [go.nycbirdalliance.org/edia](http://go.nycbirdalliance.org/edia).

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## PHOTO CREDITS

**Cover Photograph:** More than 1,000 NYC Bird Alliance advocate volunteers contacted Governor Kathy Hochul to help secure passage of the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act this winter, ensuring shorebirds like the Red Knot can continue fueling their migrations along our city's shores. Learn more on page 4. Photo © Ray Hennessey



## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

**A**t NYC Bird Alliance, we're devoted to and focused on birds. We're fortunate to have a city that's home to nearly 500 bird species migrating through our skies, foraging in our parks and green spaces, and nesting on our shores. But more than a third of these species are of conservation concern, making our work more important than ever.

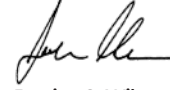
Birds already face myriad threats – habitat loss, climate change, collision hazards, and more – but now as federal protections are pulled back, the biodiversity crisis and conservation movement is on all-time high alert. NYC Bird Alliance's community of birders, scientists, volunteers, and advocates are rising to the challenge. As our team designs innovative research studies, uncovers critical data, and advocates for effective policies, we're creating solutions to the greatest threats facing our wild birds.

This *Urban Bird Call* member newsletter is designed to bring you updates on our science work, urgent calls to action, and invitations to experience the magic of New York City birding through volunteer stewardship and community engagement. Beginning with this issue, we frame these stories through our four strategic goals: reducing collisions, safeguarding waterbirds, protecting habitat, and mobilizing our community (pages 4-5).

You are a crucial part of this work. This spring, join us at special member events and guided bird outings to learn more about local biodiversity, keep your eye on your email for opportunities to raise your voice for birds, and turn your lights off during migration season to ensure birds' safety. Together, we're building a bird-safe city where wildlife and communities thrive. ■



Michael Yuan  
Board President



Jessica G. Wilson  
Executive Director



Community members tour a recently restored Broadway Mall on Manhattan's Upper West Side. See page 3 to learn more about how we merge science, engagement, and advocacy together to make this restoration a win for birds and neighbors alike.

# GUESS WHO'S STARRING ON BROADWAY

By Carol Peace Robins, Publications Committee Member

For five miles along Broadway, the street medians are small green islands known as the Broadway Malls. For 30 years, the Broadway Mall Association (BMA) has maintained these planted malls, adding trees, shrubs, and flowers, but also benches and art installations for millions of New Yorkers in the Upper West Side, Morningside Heights, West Harlem, and Washington Heights.

BMA's latest effort to enhance the 10.6 acres of parkland is called The Great Green Way project. The BMA horticulture team, led by Director of Horticulture Ian Olsen, began the project in 2024, using locally adapted (native) plants to provide better-quality habitat for insects and the 25 million birds that pass through the City every spring and fall.

In 2025, BMA contracted NYC Bird Alliance's science team to assess bird activity in restored malls versus traditionally planted ones. How many birds visit this narrow but expansive green space? Do migrants use the habitat? Does restoration affect biodiversity?

"Collaborating with NYC Bird Alliance was a natural connection for BMA's Great Green Way initiative," said Ian. "We wanted to measure the exact impact these native plants have on our wildlife."

Myles Davis, NYC Bird Alliance's senior manager of green infrastructure, designed a study that would be the City's first large-scale analysis of street medians as bird habitats.

During 2025's spring and fall migration seasons, NYC Bird Alliance scientists paid weekly visits to 22 malls between West 73rd and West 169th Streets. Three malls along this stretch had completed restorations, sixteen were slated for restoration, and three were traditionally planted, with no restoration planned.



From the Upper West Side to Washington Heights, Tod Winston and the NYC Bird Alliance science team are conducting the City's first large-scale study of street medians as bird habitat, proving these restored habitats are vital for migratory species like the Mourning Dove and Downy Woodpecker.

Using what's called "point counts," each surveyor first stood still for five minutes and recorded the number of birds and species seen or heard. An American Robin foraging for nesting material; an American Kestrel on a nearby rooftop; a Barn Swallow passing overhead. Then the surveyor did a walk-through to further document species richness and bird abundance. Carefully navigating unruly hedges and the occasional litter, not to mention taxis and buses whizzing by, our scientists were on high alert. Then, it was on to a nearby control site – often an adjacent avenue with no malls or green space – to compare bird activity.

The results have been a hit: birds use the malls as rest stops and 36% of species found were long-distance migrants. Overall, 39 species (including the American Redstart and Baltimore Oriole) were documented as using the malls, and 25 of them were interacting with the native-planted habitats. Furthermore, bird numbers and species are greater at restored malls. Our scientists found 80% more species and 57% more abundance compared to nearby control sites without planted medians.

"These early, clear results provide essential evidence to advocate for

similar habitat restorations across the City, benefiting the local environment for birds and people," said Dr. Dustin Partridge, NYC Bird Alliance's director of conservation and science. He credited the organization's "solid team of scientists" and BMA's vision and commitment, whose "investment in native biodiversity and desire to quantify the impact through monitoring will motivate others to invest in habitat restoration."

"It is wonderful to see that the bird survey validates that even the initial restorations are providing better habitat for local and migratory birds in the middle of busy Manhattan," said Andrew Genn, BMA executive director. "We look forward to continuing this collaboration between our organizations."

NYC Bird Alliance will continue this research through 2026. With such novel and important data, the findings will be submitted for publication in a scientific journal, providing the credible, peer-reviewed evidence needed to inspire habitat restoration projects in cities nationwide. As we observe more birds and species making their Broadway appearance, these findings will encourage more restored medians in and beyond New York City, for the benefit of birds and people. ■

© NYC Bird Alliance. Inset photos: Michelle Titch

# SHAPING A BIODIVERSE, BIRD-SAFE CITY

## REDUCING COLLISIONS

*NYC Bird Alliance's collision-reduction science, research, and advocacy have saved hundreds of thousands of birds, emerging as a national model for bird-friendly buildings and legislation.*

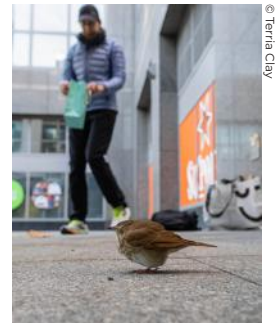
### INJURED BIRD RESPONSE FINDS A NEW NEST

NYC Bird Alliance thrives because of our thousands of volunteers. Last year alone, our Injured Bird Responders handled 3,500 inquiries about hurt or orphaned birds, empowering everyday New Yorkers to care for injured birds and safely get them to rehabilitators. This March we took the next step in growing this impact by transitioning coordination of Injured Bird Response to Urban Wildlife Alliance (UWA), a local non-profit with more than a decade of experience in community-based animal rescue and rehabilitation. By sharing our proven model with trusted partners, we're helping ensure even more birds get the care they need. This spring, if you find an injured bird, email [helpline@urbanwildlifeny.org](mailto:helpline@urbanwildlifeny.org).

### JERSEY CITY PASSES BIRD-SAFE LEGISLATION

Throughout 2025, NYC Bird Alliance lent its scientific research and advocacy expertise to help make nearby Jersey City more bird-friendly. Drawing on our experience

advancing New York City Local Law 15, which requires bird-friendly materials for new buildings and major renovations, we submitted comments to help introduce Jersey City's similar bill. NYC Bird Alliance staff members Katherine Chen, Saman Mahmood, and Zak Kaletsch attended a Jersey City City Council meeting to give public comments. Although the legislation was initially vetoed by Jersey City's outgoing mayor, the City Council brought it back for a vote under new Mayor James Solomon, who introduced the original bill, and it passed unanimously. NYC Bird Alliance is proud to have partnered with Jersey City Birds to make this victory possible, creating more bird-safe buildings along the Hudson River. ■



© Terria Clay

An injured Hermit Thrush is rescued by a volunteer, taken to the Wild Bird Fund.

## SAFEGUARDING WATERBIRDS

*Through long-term scientific monitoring and evidence-based advocacy, NYC Bird Alliance works to protect nesting sites and coastal habitat critical to the health of the harbor's ecosystem.*

### A MAJOR WIN FOR SHOREBIRDS AND HORSESHOE CRABS

In December, after a multi-year advocacy effort by NYC Bird Alliance and our partners, Governor Hochul signed into law the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act, which will ensure that by 2029, these ancient creatures – critical for shorebirds – will be protected from commercial harvest in New York State. This accomplishment is thanks to the more than 1,000 NYC Bird Alliance advocates who reached out to their state legislators and the governor in 2025, emphasizing the importance of birds and biodiversity. This is a huge victory for the Red Knots, plovers, sandpipers, and other shorebirds that flock to our beaches and rely on horseshoe crab eggs to fuel their annual migrations.

### BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON: PATH TO PROTECTION

NYC Bird Alliance scientists have made a shocking finding: a 55% decline in Black-crowned Night Heron populations since 2000. Without intervention, the largest remaining population in the Northeast may be extinct from New York Harbor by 2037. This data was revealed in analysis of NYC Bird Alliance's 40 years of Harbor Herons wading bird research.

Now, NYC Bird Alliance's science and advocacy teams are preparing a bold plan to protect this charismatic bird, which will be based on a manuscript that is in review at the international scientific journal *Conservation Science and Practice*. In Fall 2025, NYC Bird Alliance advocated with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for the Black-crowned Night Heron to be listed as a High-Priority Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the New York State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Submitting to SWAP is an important step towards protecting the species, allowing New York State to secure additional funding, prioritize research, and spark comprehensive conservation action. ■



© David Ringler

Black-crowned Night Herons could disappear from New York Harbor by 2037, according to new NYC Bird Alliance research.

# RECENT HIGHLIGHTS & PROJECT UPDATES

## PROTECTING HABITAT

*NYC Bird Alliance protects and enhances bird habitat across New York City's parks, rooftops, shorelines, and neighborhoods. Our science-based approach shows how green infrastructure and habitat protection strengthen biodiversity and climate resilience.*

### FIGHTING BACK AGAINST FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

The Rockaway Beach Endangered Species Nesting Area (RBESNA) spans Beach 38th to Beach 57th Street in Edgemere, Queens. This one-mile stretch of beach is a critical biodiversity hotspot, providing nesting grounds for five rare beach-nesting bird species, including the federally threatened Piping Plover. However, recent proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) would greatly reduce protections of critical habitats like RBESNA and species like the Piping Plover. With federal changes threatening local birds and ecosystems, our



© Mircea Costina

Piping Plover chicks at Rockaway Beach face new threats as proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act would strip protections for critical habitat.

advocacy team has expanded its focus to include federal legislation to combat such threats.

### RESTORING THE QUEENS COASTLINE

Long Island Sound is a vital estuary and important bird habitat. Working with partner organizations Save the Sound and Douglas Manor Environmental Association, our science team has been conducting biodiversity monitoring in a coastal park in northeast Queens to understand the benefits of an upcoming wetlands restoration along its shoreline. Wetlands offer tremendous benefits – providing critical habitat, buffering against storms, and supporting local ecosystems – and the restored portion, which links Upper New York Bay with Long Island Sound, will be more resilient against rising sea levels and richer for local biodiversity. Over the past three years, we've documented 94 bird species in the area; our work will capture the ecological benefits of restoring this much-needed marsh habitat. ■

## MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES

*NYC Bird Alliance inspires New Yorkers to connect with nature and take action for birds and biodiversity. Our inclusive programs turn a love of birds and nature into stewardship and effective advocacy.*



© Michelle Talich

600+ volunteers counted every bird in Manhattan for NYC Bird Alliance's annual Christmas Bird Count, including this crew at Little Island.

### 126TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT BY THE NUMBERS

On December 14, 2025, more than 600 volunteers signed up to help NYC Bird Alliance count every bird in Manhattan we could find, a community science tradition known as the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Scan the QR code to see the count results from New York City and across the western hemisphere. Save the date: this year's CBC will be held on Sunday, December 20, 2026.



Learn More

### CONNECT WITH OTHER BIRDERS

Spring migration season will bring festival fun and conservation celebrations:

- Earth Day on Governors Island (April 18)
- Gowanus Community Festival (April 25)
- NYC Bird Alliance Member Events (April-May)
- World Migratory Bird Day (May 9)
- Horseshoe Crab Festival at Jamaica Bay (June 7)



See Events  
Calendar

We have 100+ guided outings planned across New York City this spring. Find one near you at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/cal](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/cal).

### CALLING ALL BIRD PHOTOGRAPHERS

Throughout the year, NYC Bird Alliance hosts hundreds of free bird outings across the five boroughs. We're seeking volunteers to attend assigned outings (free of charge!) and take high-resolution photos of our guides, event participants, and, of course – birds! Your photos may be included in future newsletters and communications. Visit [go.nycbirdalliance.org/vol](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/vol) to learn more. ■

## NEWS & NOTES



We mourn the loss of Board Member Elizabeth Norman, a passionate champion for making birding more accessible and inclusive for all.



Supporters and board members welcome new staff member Zak Kaletsch at a Kestrel Circle event inside Central Park's Davis Center.

### CHECK OUT OUR NEW SHOP

You asked, we listened! We're thrilled to announce the launch of our long-awaited online shop at [shop.nycbirdalliance.org](https://shop.nycbirdalliance.org), where every cap, tote, and mug contributes to our mission of protecting the wild birds and habitats of New York City. Get your exclusive NYC Bird Alliance gear today, and show the world you're part of our flock. ■



### LOSSES TO OUR COMMUNITY: REMEMBERING ELIZABETH NORMAN AND JOE ELLIS

NYC Bird Alliance is heartbroken by the loss of Board Member Elizabeth Norman. A leader in city government and finance, Elizabeth steered us through significant growth. As Chair of our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee, she was an early champion of our name change and a fierce advocate for inclusivity. We will miss her compassion, fiscal stewardship, and unwavering commitment to making birding and conservation accessible to all. Read Executive Director Jessica Wilson's full remembrance of Elizabeth's legacy at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/elizabeth](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/elizabeth).

We are also saddened to share the news that Joe Ellis recently passed away. A longtime National Audubon board member, Joe served on NYC Bird Alliance's Advisory Council for 30 years – since its inception in 1996 – and brought wisdom, generosity, and a deep love of birds to everything he did. A lovely obituary from his family is available to read at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/joe](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/joe).

### GROWING NYC BIRD ALLIANCE'S ADVOCACY IMPACT: WELCOMING ZAK KALETSCH

In September 2025, NYC Bird Alliance welcomed Zak Kaletsch to our staff in a new role as Senior Associate of Advocacy and Outreach. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Zak works to engage communities across the City, as well as city officials and partner organizations, to grow awareness and inspire action for bird conservation. Learn more about Zak and the future of our outreach at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/zak](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/zak).

### SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR ANNUAL MEETING: JUNE 3

Join us on Wednesday, June 3, for our virtual Annual Meeting of members. NYC Bird Alliance members will elect board directors and officers, and leadership will share an update on our science, engagement, and advocacy efforts to build a biodiverse, bird-safe city. More information and proxy ballots will be sent via mail and email in May.

### THIS SPRING: SAVE BIRDS WITH THE FLICK OF A SWITCH

As our advocacy team works with the New York City Council to pass more comprehensive Lights Out legislation (which would require privately owned commercial and industrial buildings to turn off non-essential lights at night), we remind you to turn your lights out this spring migration. Artificial light draws migrating birds into dangerous urban landscapes, making them more susceptible to collisions. Keep spring migrants on track by turning your lights out at night. Learn more at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/light](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/light). ■

## THERE'S MORE ONLINE! DIGITAL URBAN BIRD CALL STORIES

Visit [go.nycbirdalliance.org/digital-ubc](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/digital-ubc) to find more bird-filled stories.

# LEAVE A LEGACY FOR THE CITY'S BIRDS

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

## INCLUDE NYC BIRD ALLIANCE IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST

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

## NAME NYC BIRD ALLIANCE AS A BENEFICIARY

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

## ALREADY INCLUDED US IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS?

Thank you! Please let us know by emailing Matthew Coody at [mcoody@nycbirdalliance.org](mailto:mcoody@nycbirdalliance.org). If your documents still reference "NYC Audubon" given our name change in 2024, rest assured that there's no need to update.

*To explore your planned giving options, contact Director of Development Matthew Coody at 646.502.9611 or [mcoody@nycbirdalliance.org](mailto:mcoody@nycbirdalliance.org).* ■



With a planned gift to NYC Bird Alliance, you can help ensure New Yorkers are still spotting Baltimore Orioles in Prospect Park for generations to come.

## ENJOY YOUR MEMBER BENEFITS



Angie Co, Bird Collective co-founder and NYC Bird Alliance board member, leads a spring member event in Prospect Park.

**Thanks for being part of our flock. As a NYC Bird Alliance member, you enjoy:**

- 30% off paid bird outings and classes
- 10% off all items in our NEW online shop
- Invitations to free member events
- Early registration for most outings and classes

And most importantly, your membership helps NYC Bird Alliance protect our city's wild birds. To view all benefits by membership level, visit [go.nycbirdalliance.org/benefits](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/benefits). ■



## SAVE THE DATE 2026 FALL ROOST

**Tuesday, October 13 at 6pm**

**Tribeca 360° | 10 Desbrosses Street, NYC**

The Fall Roost gala is NYC Bird Alliance's signature annual fundraising event.





## NYC BIRD ALLIANCE

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**NYC BIRD  
ALLIANCE**  
A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL AUDUBON

DATED MATERIAL:  
Spring 2026 Issue

# THE REDPOLL

By Don Riepe, Advisory Council Member and Former Board Member

One of the great birding highlights of the cold season in New York City is the possible arrival of winter finches – a suite of species including Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, Red and White Crossbills, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, and Redpolls.

The Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*) is a small, lively finch with streaked brown plumage, a distinctive red cap on its crown (or poll), and black chin markings. Males usually display a rosy blush on their chests, adding to their beauty. Highly adaptable, these sparrow-like birds survive in cold climates and are often seen foraging for seeds, especially from birch and alder trees. They can be found in a variety of habitats, including boreal forests, tundra, scrublands, and even suburban areas.

While Redpolls are uncommon local visitors, occasional migratory irruptions caused by poor seed crops farther north cause them to move southward in search of food, a survival strategy that can bring them to New York City. (Learn more about Redpolls and winter finch irruptions online at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/irruptions](http://go.nycbirdalliance.org/irruptions).)

This past fall, one such Redpoll, arriving in Manhattan to forage, met an unfortunate but not uncommon end. In November, one of our Project Safe Flight volunteer collision monitors found one, a victim of a window collision. This bird, photographed to the right, is the first Redpoll to be found by our volunteers in over 25 years.

This spring migration, as we admire the finches, warblers, and vireos passing through our city, it's critical that we also work together to reduce collision hazards. As

NYC Bird Alliance conducts scientific research and advocates for bird-friendly legislation, remember that you can help save birds too. Join us in taking advocacy action: make your windows bird-safe and turn lights out at night to reduce artificial light and keep our beautiful migrants on track. ■



© NYC Bird Alliance

This Redpoll, found by a Project Safe Flight volunteer, was the first one recorded in our collision reduction program's history.