

THE URBAN BIRD CALL

NEW
TITLE!



**BIRDS, PRIDE, AND
THE NEED FOR SAFE SPACES**

**SPECIES PROFILE:
THE DOUBLE-CRESTED
CORMORANT**



MISSION & VISION

NYC Bird Alliance, formerly NYC Audubon, is a grassroots community that works for the protection of wild birds and habitat in the five boroughs, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers. NYC Bird Alliance envisions a day when birds and people in the five boroughs enjoy a healthy, livable habitat.

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. We commit to building an equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible organization, dedicated to protecting nature for all of the City's people and its wild birds. For more information, visit go.nycbirdalliance.org/edia.

THE URBAN BIRD CALL (FORMERLY THE URBAN AUDUBON)

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BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

By Jessica G. Wilson,
Executive Director



When visiting the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge this spring, I was moved by the tenacity of Red Knots. With a wingspan of only 20 inches, some migrate up to 20,000 miles each year, relying on crucial stopovers like Jamaica Bay to fuel their incredible journey. While we may be overwhelmed by these unprecedented times and political challenges, the incredible journeys of these small birds—and the vital role places like Jamaica Bay play in their survival—inspire me to continue the fight for their protection.

The current political climate poses serious threats to birds and the organizations that work on their behalf. Rollbacks to environmental protections, proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act, and growing attacks on nonprofit advocacy and philanthropy are cause for deep concern. These challenges strike at the heart of our mission and demand a strong, collective response.

At NYC Bird Alliance, we know conservation isn't just about science and policy—it's also about people. With the many threats facing birds, it will take all of us to advocate for their protection and ensure that they thrive. Outreach and inclusion are key to this work, and that's why I'm especially proud of our spring "Let's Go Birding Together" outings which celebrate LGBTQ+ birders (see page 3), and our lineup of programs during Black Birders Week. These experiences are part of our broader efforts to ensure that everyone feels a sense of belonging in nature and empowered to protect it.

As we grow our community, we're also looking to the future. Over the past several months, we've worked with our board, staff, supporters, and partners to shape a new five-year strategic plan that will guide NYC Bird Alliance's mission and ensure we remain resilient, even in the face of political obstacles. Informed by survey input from many of you, the plan centers our commitment to science-based advocacy, inclusive community engagement, and the protection of urban biodiversity. We look forward to sharing more in the months ahead.

Thank you for standing with us. In a time of uncertainty, your support gives us strength and helps make the City safer and more welcoming for the migrating and resident birds and all of us who share their home. ■



© NYC Bird Alliance

Participants on our Black Birders Week outing at Marsha P. Johnson State Park in Brooklyn look far up in the sky for birds. This event was one of seven organized by NYC Bird Alliance throughout the City last year to celebrate and highlight Black birders, scientists, naturalists, and outdoor enthusiasts.

BIRDS, PRIDE, AND THE NEED FOR SAFE SPACES

By Andrew Reiter, NYC Bird Alliance Guide

June is a wonderful time for birding in New York City. Before the City's heat and humidity peaks, June invites birders to the woods and water-fronts as spring migrants finish their journeys north and summer residents begin raising their young. And for many birders, June also marks the start of Pride, the month-long celebration of the LGBTQ+ community.

As New Yorkers observe Pride with marches, parties, and parades, NYC Bird Alliance has something to add to the celebration. Let's Go Birding Together, a program created by Jason St. Sauver, senior education manager at Nebraska's Spring Creek Prairie Audubon, was launched a decade ago to help create safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people within the birding community.

To many, the outdoors provides a place of solace and safety, where people can be themselves without judgment. But historically, certain groups have been excluded from the outdoors. Let's Go Birding Together (an acronym of "LGBT") helps address this need for welcoming spaces for all birders—in this case with a focus on those in the queer community.

"Maybe you don't feel comfortable to be your true self on a bird outing or out in a conservation meeting," says Jason, but Let's Go Birding Together helps "to extend that hand; that invitation of 'we see you'."

Starting in Spring Creek Prairie in 2016 with one outing of 12 attendees, the Let's Go Birding Together program has taken flight as Audubon chapters—as well as National Audubon Society—have adopted the program with great success, engaging thousands of people across the country. In recent years, NYC Bird Alliance's Let's Go Birding Together outings in Central Park have consistently welcomed 50-100 people, inspiring more LGBTQ+ outings



NYC Bird Alliance's Let's Go Birding Together outings welcome the LGBTQ+ community, allies, families, and anyone looking for an inclusive birding experience, drawing hundreds of participants each year.



© NYC Bird Alliance

throughout the year and with key partners, like NYC Queer Birders and Feminist Bird Club.

"Some of the best birding experiences are built on partnerships," says Martha Harbison, communications director at National Audubon Society and co-organizer of Feminist Bird Club NYC. "Each partner brings its strengths, passion, and knowledge to the collective whole, building bridges between communities. The collaboration between NYC Bird Alliance, Feminist Bird Club NYC, and NYC Queer Birders for Let's Go Birding Together is a perfect example of three communities coming together to celebrate our shared passion and humanity."

Many champions of the Let's Go Birding Together movement identify as allies rather than members of the LGBTQ+ community, and that's intentional, Jason says. "We've always made it very clear: this is for everyone. Just know it will be a

safe space for people in the LGBTQ+ community."

"The enthusiasm for these outings speaks to a real need," says Tasha Naula, NYC Bird Alliance's public programs manager. "The outings create moments where people can be fully present with the birds and fully themselves—deepening everyone's connection to nature in ways that benefit both people and birds."

Recognizing the utmost importance of creating welcoming spaces for all birders in our current political climate, NYC Bird Alliance remains committed to connecting all New Yorkers with nature—a critical part of the organization's mission. With its broad reach, Let's Go Birding Together invites birders of all experience levels into the field. Not only does this initiative provide a safe (and fun) space to bird, but there is also great conservation benefit in welcoming as many people to the hobby as possible.

"When we create safe spaces for people to gather, we're not just watching birds—we're changing perceptions about who belongs in birding and conservation," says Tasha. "That representation matters for recruiting the next generation of bird advocates. With the threats facing birds being so huge, we need everyone working together on solutions to protect them." ■

JOIN AN LGBT OUTING THIS JUNE

NYC Bird Alliance is hosting free Let's Go Birding Together outings in Central Park and Staten Island's Greenbelt on June 22.



Learn more
and register

PROTECTING BIRDS AND HABITATS IN THE CITY'S FIVE BOROUGHES

CONSERVATION UPDATES



NYC Bird Alliance scientists work from the rooftops of Manhattan to the beaches of the Rockaways to collect data on wild bird populations and the habitats they need to thrive.

NEW STUDY: CAN STREET MEDIANS PROVIDE BIRD HABITAT?

We're excited to announce a new partnership with Broadway Mall Association. Studying the ecology of the planted street medians spanning Broadway from West 60th to 168th street, NYC Bird Alliance aims to understand how birds use these small urban green spaces and how

replacing traditional plantings with native ones can affect biodiversity. Our team will be conducting regular bird surveys in these areas, and as a fun addition to our field work, we will regularly post our survey results on eBird. Visit go.nybirdalliance.org/ebirdmalls.

buildings surrounded by green space that, as of this spring, seems fairly lethal for birds.

MONITORING AVIAN FLU AND ADJUSTING RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

NYC Bird Alliance has closely monitored outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI, also known as avian flu) since 2022, when it began to spread in wild bird populations in the U.S. This winter, waterbirds were found dead in the Bronx Zoo, Central Park, New Jersey Parks, and washing ashore on New York City beaches. We have been taking precautions to protect birds and our team, including educating our staff and volunteers and altering our Harbor Heron research protocols for 2025, conducting surveys by boat instead of on foot. Learn more at go.nybirdalliance.org/flu. ■



Tod Winston, urban biodiversity specialist and bird guide, records bird sightings along the Broadway Mall median at West 137th Street as part of our new Broadway Mall survey project.

COLLISION MONITORING TO STUDY SUBURBAN BUILDING RISKS

Monitoring for bird-building collisions in New York City often takes place on busy city streets. This data is critical for New York City but less applicable for rural and suburban areas, which is where most of the country's over one billion bird collisions occur each year. For the first time, Project Safe Flight volunteers are now monitoring a large, suburban-style office park in Staten Island—a complex of glassy

ADVOCACY UPDATES



NYC Bird Alliance speaks up for birds and their habitats with advocacy efforts across the City.

SAFER DRONE SHOWS FOR BIRDS

As large drone shows light up New York City's skies with increasing frequency, NYC Bird Alliance is helping their potential ecological impacts come into focus. In partnership with New York Botanical Garden, we're conducting pioneering research to understand how migrating and breeding birds respond to drone light shows, using thermal imaging technology to track bird behavior before, during, and after such shows at NYBG this spring and summer. We're also working with City Councilmember Gale Brewer on drafting science-based legislation to regulate when and where drone shows

can operate across the City, ensuring that this growing entertainment trend doesn't come at the expense of birds.

HORSESHOE CRAB PROTECTION

Horseshoe crabs, whose eggs provide essential nutrition for migrating shorebirds like the Red Knot, remain under threat from commercial harvesting in New York Harbor. Following Governor Hochul's veto of the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act last year, we mobilized grassroots support from our Avian Advocates volunteers to highlight this ancient marine arthropod's ecological importance and demand protections—specifically two additional lunar harvest

closures for 2025 that would restrict harvesting during critical spawning periods. While these measures were ultimately not included in the NY State budget, we remain committed to this cause. Alongside the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition, we'll build on last season's advocacy efforts to secure protections in the next budget cycle. ■

RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR BIRDS

Sign up for Avian Advocates emails to receive the latest news on how you can help these critical initiatives.



Subscribe to action alerts

ENGAGEMENT UPDATES



NYC Bird Alliance works to create the next generation of conservationists by instilling a love of birds and nature through hundreds of bird outings and events each year.

NEW CONNECTIONS FOR NYCHA IN NATURE

NYC Bird Alliance's pilot program NYCHA in Nature continues to grow, with exciting new partnerships to connect NYC Housing Authority public housing residents with nature and birds in their neighborhoods. This spring we hosted five outings and partnered with Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to bring the program to a new NYCHA campus in Williamsburg.

This summer, we'll participate in the NYC Open Streets program on Coney Island to engage nearby NYCHA residents and build excitement for future programming in the area. We're also thrilled to be participating in NYCHA's Summer Family Days events, offering fun and educational bird-focused activities for residents of all ages.

COLLISON MONITORS NEEDED IN STATEN ISLAND AND THE BRONX
Help NYC Bird Alliance scientists reduce bird-building collisions by collecting data on collisions you find.

SEE OUR SUMMER CALENDAR

Spring migration season may be over, but summer means plenty of fantastic birding in New York City.



View our events calendar

We particularly need community science volunteers who can monitor buildings in Staten Island and the Bronx this fall. This opportunity requires a time commitment of about one hour one morning a week from September through mid-November. One-hour information sessions will be held on August 12, August 13, and August 15. Learn more and register at go.nycbirdalliance.org/vol.

SUMMER FESTIVAL FUN

Join NYC Bird Alliance at the annual Jamaica Bay Shorebird Festival on August 17, the perfect time to spot the City's incredible diversity of shorebirds. See our upcoming lineup of festivals at go.nycbirdalliance.org/fest. ■



© Winston Qin

A Project Safe Flight volunteer holds a Brown Creeper killed by a window collision. Up to 250,000 birds die after striking reflective glass in New York City each year.



© Debra Krensky

A Lesser Yellowlegs (left) and Stilt Sandpiper (right), photographed at the annual Jamaica Bay Shorebird Festival.



© Don Riapo

NYC Bird Alliance celebrated World Migratory Bird Day 2025 with seven outings hosted across the boroughs, including Jamaica Bay (pictured here).

NEWS & NOTES

STATE OF THE BIRDS REPORTS A BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

The 2025 State of the Birds Report was released in March, published by a coalition of science and conservation groups. This latest report shows that U.S. birds are declining sharply across a range of habitats, making our conservation work more critical than ever. You can read the full State of the Birds Report at go.nycbirdalliance.org/stateofthebirds25.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030 UPDATE

Our strategic planning process continues to move forward. Thank you to everyone who provided input on our mission, vision, and values via the survey included in the spring issue. Your valuable feedback is now informing the crucial process of identifying our core goals and objectives to focus on over the next five years and how to achieve them. We anticipate publishing our strategic plan this fall, strengthening NYC Bird Alliance's efforts to protect New York City's birds and habitats.

TEDxFORDHAM UNIVERSITY TALK

NYC Bird Alliance's Director of Conservation and Science Dustin Partridge, PhD, recently gave a TEDx Talk hosted by Fordham University that explores cities' crucial role in wildlife conservation. He shares a compelling vision for cities as vital conservation hubs, demonstrating how urban green spaces and infrastructure can foster thriving biodiversity. Watch Dustin's TEDx talk on YouTube at go.nycbirdalliance.org/tedx.

BIRD-FRIENDLY DAVIS CENTER OPENS IN CENTRAL PARK

In April, Central Park Conservancy unveiled the newly remodeled Davis Center near the North Woods and Harlem Meer. We're proud to be a program partner at this community hub, which features bird-friendly glass and a green roof. Learn more about the new Davis Center and our partnership with Central Park Conservancy in *The Urban Bird Call* online: go.nycbirdalliance.org/davis. ■



All photos of Kestrel Circle Members © NYC Bird Alliance



Scarlet Tanager © Daniel Piarand



Our Kestrel Circle members gathered in Central Park on May 7 for our annual Birds and Breakfast event, held this year in partnership with BirdLife International, highlighting the essential connection between local conservation efforts and worldwide initiatives to safeguard migratory species like the Scarlet Tanager (pictured above) throughout their entire journey along the Atlantic Flyway. Learn about Kestrel Circle membership at go.nycbirdalliance.org/kestrel-circle.

SUPPORT NYC BIRD ALLIANCE

GIVE NOW TO HELP BIRDS THRIVE IN NEW YORK CITY

Your contribution powers NYC Bird Alliance's work to protect New York City's birds and the habitats they depend on—strengthening urban biodiversity through innovative science, bird-friendly advocacy, and community action.

MAKE A DONATION

Donate to support NYC Bird Alliance's critical conservation, advocacy, and engagement efforts. Give at go.nycbirdalliance.org/donate.

BECOME A MEMBER

Join our flock by becoming a member of NYC Bird Alliance. Check out our membership levels and perks at go.nycbirdalliance.org/join.

GIVE MONTHLY

Provide ongoing monthly support to protect birds throughout the year. Make a huge difference for as little as \$15 per month. Set up recurring donations at go.nycbirdalliance.org/donate.

GIVE A MATCHING GIFT

You can easily double or triple your donation through your company's matching gift program. Contact your employer's personnel office to learn how.

REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Including NYC Bird Alliance in your estate plan is a generous way to ensure that New York City remains a haven for the birds you love. Discuss a bequest with your attorney or learn more at go.nycbirdalliance.org/legacy.

Contact Director of Development Matthew Coody at mcoody@nycbirdalliance.org or at 646.502.9611 to discuss making a bequest to NYC Bird Alliance. ■



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NYC Bird Alliance's research shows the Black-crowned Night Heron could disappear from New York Harbor in 10 years. Your support empowers NYC Bird Alliance to ensure a future for these incredible birds in our city. See our findings in our State of the Harbor Herons 2024 report at go.nycbirdalliance.org/hh2024.



Tickets on sale now! Get yours at nycbirdalliance.org/roost2025

2025 FALL ROOST

Tuesday, October 14 at 6pm

Tavern on the Green

Celebrating 40 years of Harbor Herons

Join us to celebrate NYC waterbirds. Proceeds support NYC Bird Alliance's work in conservation, advocacy, and engagement.



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**NYC BIRD
ALLIANCE**
FORMERLY NYC AUDUBON

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DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT

By Don Riepe, NYC Bird Alliance Advisory Council Member and Former Board Member

With their striking silhouettes, Double-crested Cormorants are a familiar sight along New York City's waterfront. There are approximately 40 species of cormorants in the world, and they are found on every continent except Antarctica. The Double-crested Cormorant is the most common of all the cormorant species and most widely distributed of the six species found in North America, ranging from Alaska to Mexico and throughout the lower 48 states.

In 1980, I found the first cormorant nest in lower New York Harbor, on Hoffman Island just south of the Verrazano Bridge. One nest, one chick. Today, there are hundreds of nests on Hoffman and nearby Swinburne Island, as well as many other islands in the harbor and in Jamaica Bay. The Double-crested Cormorant has become one of the most prolific colonial nesting birds in NY Harbor, sharing nesting grounds with Great and Snowy Egrets, Black- and Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Glossy Ibis, and Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, collectively known as the Harbor Herons.

For over 40 years, NYC Bird Alliance has conducted annual Harbor Heron surveys, monitoring NY Harbor island colonies to count nests and young, and to assess habitat conditions. Cormorant nests are rather messy affairs built from large sticks and, in New York City, are often mixed with human-made materials such as netting, rope, and trash. Cormorants nest in large colonies, though their guano can

kill the trees in which they nest, altering habitats that could otherwise be used by nesting wading birds. Learn more at go.nycbirdalliance.org/hh.

Cormorants nest in big colonies and usually fledge three to four young each year. After leaving the nest, the young form juvenile flocks—upwards of 30 birds or more clustered together.

Unlike other waterbirds, cormorants lack the productive oil glands that keep feathers waterproof, making the birds less buoyant and more agile

swimmers, which allows them to dive and swim underwater to catch their food. The drawback of this adaptation is that they must dry their wings in the sun. You can easily spot Double-crested Cormorants with outstretched wings sunning themselves on piers throughout the harbor. ■



Double-crested Cormorants look out at the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge from their nesting spot on uninhabited Swinburne Island in New York Harbor.

© Don Riepe

THERE'S MORE ONLINE! DIGITAL URBAN BIRD CALL STORIES

Visit go.nycbirdalliance.org/digital-ubc to find more bird-filled stories.