

# THE URBAN AUDUBON

**PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT POINTS THE WAY TO A BIRD-FRIENDLY FUTURE**

**THE FALL ROOST HEADS TO THE ROOF!**

**INTRODUCING THE VOLUNTEERS  
OF PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT**

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER**

**SONGS IN A CITY SOUNDSCAPE**



## 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.

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

NYC 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.

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## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

By Jessica Wilson,  
Executive Director



At NYC Audubon, 2022 has been a year of new beginnings. Now in my 10th month as executive director, I've been thrilled to watch our growing staff bring innovation and passion to NYC Audubon's mission. We've already celebrated some great successes, working together to protect New York City's birds and their habitats. And there's so much more to do.



Jessica (and a Eurasian Eagle-Owl) at Raptorama! in Jamaica Bay.

As NYC Audubon's team has expanded, so has our outreach and conservation work. In our ongoing efforts to reach new communities, connecting New Yorkers of all backgrounds to birds and nature, we've held more than 350 events this year in all five boroughs—more than two-thirds of them free birding outings, and many with new partner organizations. Thousands visited our Governors Island nature center from May through October, and many more engaged with NYC Audubon and the City's wildlife at packed family festivals in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens.

Engagement in NYC Audubon's conservation research also soared in 2022. Nearly 800 volunteers (see pages 6–7) fanned across the City. Community scientists walked collision routes in all five boroughs to collect data on dead and injured birds; counted and tagged horseshoe crabs, which are critical to migratory shorebirds; and monitored nesting herons to better understand their recent decline and find ways to protect them.

Protection is, of course, fundamental. We are dedicated to protecting the birds we love from harm, and building a sustainable future for both birds and people. NYC Audubon's outreach and research would ring hollow if it did not fuel real, positive change for the millions of birds that pass through and live in the City.

Our work is achieving just that kind of change. Two-and-a-half decades of Project Safe Flight research is reaping fruit, as we deepen relationships with trusted partners such as the Javits Center to achieve bird-friendly successes, and marshal our data to find solutions with new partners, including collaborations with 10 collision-prone buildings this fall. (Read more on page 4.) Meanwhile, our Green Roof Researchers Alliance is helping to spread sustainable green roofs across the City's skyline.

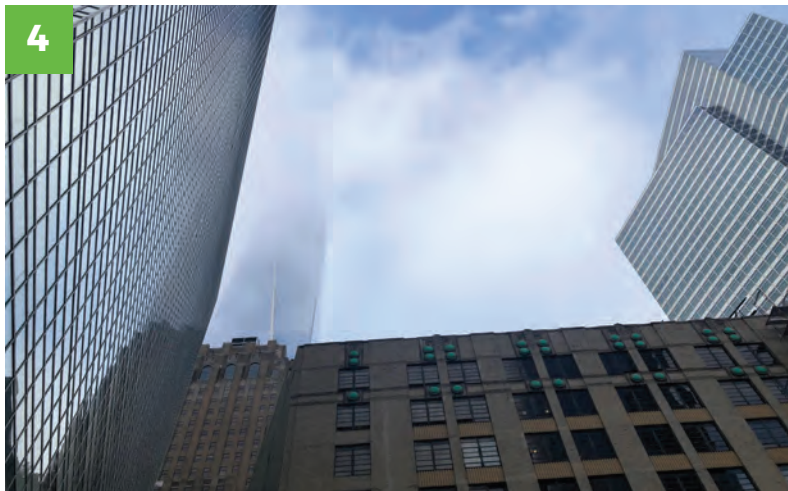
And we must think even bigger. According to the *State of the Birds 2022* report (see page 11), the populations of more than half of all North American bird species are declining. To meet this enormous challenge, building on the great legislative victories of the past few years—New York City's new bird-friendly design and Lights Out laws—we are pressing for more comprehensive bird-friendly legislation at both City and State levels. If we succeed, such laws will be models for the nation. NYC Audubon is now in a position to use our research expertise and long-standing relationships to capitalize on huge opportunities to save the lives of millions of birds.

None of this progress will be possible without your continued support. NYC Audubon's work depends on the generosity of members like you; your support is as critical as it's ever been. Help us seize the opportunities before us. Donate generously to our annual appeal at [nycaudubon.org/fund-our-future](http://nycaudubon.org/fund-our-future) or by using the enclosed envelope; learn more on pages 15 and 16.



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# PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT POINTS THE WAY TO A BIRD-FRIENDLY FUTURE

By Suzanne Charlé

Upon finding a dead Common Yellowthroat on a busy downtown Manhattan sidewalk in April 1997, NYC Audubon member Rebekah Creshkoff was moved—and puzzled. “Apart from canaries,” she recalls, “I had never seen such a yellow bird and had no idea they even existed in New York City. How had it come to be dead on a sidewalk at the bottom of this concrete canyon?” Before long, Rebekah began circling buildings in the World Trade Center area every morning at 5:45, looking for window collision victims. Working alone, over the course of the year, she found 413 casualties. Soon afterwards, three other volunteers—Ned Boyajian, Kellie Quiñones, and Allison Sloan—joined her. NYC Audubon’s Project Safe Flight was born.

Based on 25 years of research data collected by scores of Project Safe Flight volunteers since those first discoveries, NYC Audubon estimates that nearly a quarter

million migrating birds are killed annually in New York City in collisions with window glass. Birds do not perceive glass as a barrier, and collide at full speed when they attempt to fly into reflected habitat or sky. Artificial light at night is thought to be an important contributing factor to the problem, as it can draw nocturnal migrants into densely built areas where they are more likely to suffer window strikes. As our understanding of the magnitude of these threats has grown, Project Safe Flight has evolved to meet them.

## Expanding across New York City and the Globe

Since Rebekah’s first patrol, the number of community science volunteers who monitor bird casualties during spring and fall migration has grown exponentially, as has the scope of the program. For the first time this fall, volunteers monitored routes in all five boroughs of the City. Routes

were identified both through reports by NYC Audubon members and local birders and from bird mortality data collected via NYC Audubon’s crowd-sourced, online database, [dbird.org](https://dbird.org). (As a result, these routes monitor just a sampling of collision-prone buildings; there are likely many other dangerous sites we haven’t yet identified.) As they patrol, monitors record the species and location of each dead or injured bird found. (The injured are taken to licensed rehabilitators; see page 6 to learn more about how another set of dedicated volunteers helps with that effort.)

Manhattan, with its hundreds of glass-clad skyscrapers, is home to seven routes, including one in Times Square added this year. Volunteers in Brooklyn and Queens monitor one route in each borough. In Staten Island, NYC Audubon Community Science and Outreach Manager Katherine Chen decided to focus on the St. George



Large Photo: The glass-clad buildings of the World Trade Center area are particularly deadly for migrating birds. Inset Photo: Though progress is being made, we are far from our goal of a bird-safe city: this past October 23, 22 dead birds were found by World Trade Center buildings, including the pictured eight Yellow-rumped Warblers, two Black-throated Blue Warblers, two White-throated Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Palm Warbler, and Swamp Sparrow.



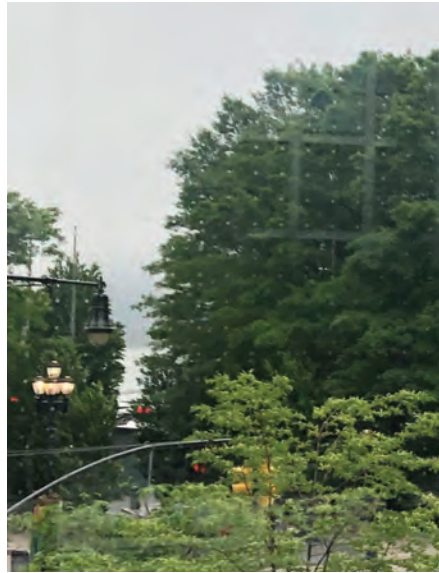
Ferry Terminal and the café at 1 Richmond Terrace, a potentially dangerous place for birds: “Large windows there reflect green areas where birds stop to rest and refuel.” In the Bronx, five volunteers walk a route past two glass-clad Albert Einstein College of Medicine buildings.

And the volunteers who do all the legwork? This fall, collision monitoring was carried out by a record 73 monitors, including 43 new recruits. This expansion of both routes and volunteers has increased NYC Audubon’s ability to identify problematic buildings, and has also connected us with new communities across the City—getting residents invested in the birds that visit their neighborhoods. ([dbird.org](http://dbird.org), in the meantime, is now used by 62 organizations around the world.)

### Making the City Safer, One Building at a Time

Armed with 25 years of Project Safe Flight data, NYC Audubon is increasingly able to bring the owners of problematic buildings to the table to find bird-friendly solutions. Success stories are useful, as well: After Manhattan’s **Javits Center** replaced its glass façade with bird-safe alternatives in 2014, NYC Audubon’s monitoring demonstrated a 90 percent reduction in collisions, according to Dustin Partridge, PhD, NYC Audubon’s director of conservation and science. “Today, Javits is one of the City’s most bird-friendly buildings.”

- This past summer, **1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge**, made aware of the bird deaths caused by its glass windows facing Brooklyn Bridge Park, installed Feather Friendly bird-safe film on a significant portion of its façade.
- In the World Trade Center area, **Brookfield Place** recently installed BirdDivert, a ultraviolet-light-reflecting film, on its glass-clad Liberty Street Bridge and eliminated artificial light at two high-collision parts of the building.
- Brookfield Place may have been encouraged by the installation last year of Feather Friendly on the deadly glass railing of nearby **Liberty Park**, which reduced collisions there. (Read more about that collaborative success, enabled by our volunteers, on page 6.)
- In midtown Manhattan, the **KPMG New York** building, a frequent location of bird-collision deaths, made its internal lighting motion-activated, reducing light during the height of spring and fall migration.



The ultraviolet-light-reflecting dots of BirdDivert bird-safe film are just visible on the windows of Brookfield Place’s Liberty Street bridge. Over time, our monitoring will reveal the effectiveness of this method.

NYC Audubon continues to monitor these sites even after bird-friendly measures are taken, to ascertain whether bird deaths have actually declined. Early results are promising, and we hope to report findings in future issues of *The Urban Audubon*.

### Using Project Safe Flight Data to Enact Systemic Change

Given the sheer acreage of glass façades in New York City, the fight to make its buildings more bird-friendly also requires a “top-down” approach: legislation. In 2019, NYC Audubon led a coalition of partners advocating in favor of the City’s landmark bird-friendly building design legislation, Local Law 15. Our Javits Center collision-monitoring data provided critical scientific evidence justifying the need for the law, which now requires that all new construction and significantly altered buildings use bird-safe materials. Soon to follow, research from NYC Audubon’s annual monitoring of the Tribute in Light (see page 8) supported passage in December 2021 of Lights Out Laws Int. 271 and Int. 274, which require that all City-owned buildings turn out nonessential outdoor lighting and use occupancy sensors during peak migration.

As a recognized leader in the field, NYC Audubon shares best practices on collision monitoring, outreach, building consultations, advocacy, and legislation with other cities around the nation. But our successes here at home are just the



The greenery-facing windows of 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge were treated with Feather Friendly bird-safe film. The dots on such window treatments must be spaced closely enough that birds perceive an impenetrable barrier.

beginning. More must be done, and at a larger scale. In New York City, we are working with partners to shape new Lights Out Legislation that applies to privately owned buildings, as well as legislation that addresses preexisting bird-killing glass. And New York State has taken up the fight as well. In collaboration with Audubon New York, we are advocating for passage of a statewide Lights Out bill, the Dark Skies Protection Act. (See page 10.)

“Project Safe Flight transforms the senseless death of individual birds into valuable research data that we use to advocate for bird-saving building retrofits and legislative change,” says Dr. Partridge. “We have a long way to go before New York City’s buildings are truly bird-friendly, but by continuing to support legislative change with scientific findings, we will get closer to the bird-friendly future we all wish to see.” ■

# INTRODUCING THE VOLUNTEERS OF PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

By Carol Peace Robins

As millions of birds migrate along the Atlantic Flyway in spring and fall, many pass straight through New York City. NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight program, founded in 1997, is dedicated to making the City safer for these migrants. Collisions with windows are a huge cause of bird mortality, killing an estimated one billion birds per year across the U.S., and as many as a quarter million birds per year in New York City, according to our Project Safe Flight research. Those local research findings, a rare 25-year data set, have been collected largely by NYC Audubon's community scientists: dedicated volunteers who patrol the City streets looking for collision victims and ensure that any injured birds have the best chance of recovery.

Today, Project Safe Flight's volunteers are grouped in three teams: **Collision Monitoring** volunteers walk a determined route known to be dangerous to birds and record any collision victims found, adding their findings to the Project Safe Flight database. **Injured Bird Response Team** members receive thousands of calls and emails annually from well-meaning New York City residents, and determine the best course of action to help. Our **Injured Bird Transporters** then take over, crossing the City to reach birds in need and get them to licensed rehabilitators with whom we have longtime partnerships, such as the Wild Bird Fund on Manhattan's Upper West Side. These volunteers spend hundreds of hours helping the City's birds. Here's your chance to meet some of them.

Four or five days a week, starting at 6am, Collision Monitor and Injured Bird Transporter **Melissa Breyer** arrives at her World Trade Center territory. "My most emotionally overwhelming day happened there on September 14, 2021. It was a mass casualty. I found 270 carcasses at three buildings—all within 90 minutes. Guards and passersby were helping me, dropping birds in my lap. I also brought 30 injured birds to the Wild Bird Fund."

The previous year had been no better. In fall 2020, Melissa, fellow Collision Monitor (and Injured Bird Transporter and Injured Bird Response Team member) **Calista McRae**, and many other volunteers collected more than 1,200 stunned and dead birds at the World Trade Center, in total. Come spring migration 2021, with deaths mounting again, Breyer and McRae tweeted photos and grim statistics. The situation became a major news story, creating an opportunity for NYC Audubon to advise the Port Authority of NY & NJ on retrofitting a particularly deadly glass railing in Liberty Park with bird-safe film. During a recent patrol of the park, Melissa recalled a happy observation, just a week or two before: A Common Yellowthroat, flying rapidly across the park towards the now-bird-safe glass railing, "put on the brakes when it saw the film on the glass—it stopped in midair like a cartoon, and landed on top of the railing!"



Melissa Breyer surveys Liberty Park's now bird-safe railing.

Both Melissa and Calista stress that such retrofits are just the beginning, however. "The saddest thing for me continues to be the response, or total lack of response, from people with the ability to change glass," Calista observes. "But there are moments where it at least feels like you managed to make a difference for an individual bird—when you stop a warbler from being stepped on or get a stunned bird out of a revolving doorway. Or hearing from the Wild Bird Fund that a bird you thought for sure was going to die was eventually released." Melissa agrees: She's now taken over 200 birds to the Wild Bird Fund, but still remembers being told that the first injured bird she'd rescued, for which she'd held out little hope, had recovered and been released. "I burst out crying!"

Less dramatic, perhaps, but equally important, is the role of **Jairus James**, a member of our Injured Bird Response Team. Jairus explains to "often distraught" individuals how to contain the injured bird they've found in a paper bag or box, and recommends they transport it to the Wild Bird Fund, if possible, or wait for him to contact an Injured Bird Transporter to do so. "I remember the woman who had trouble bending down to move an injured mourning dove. She got help, then put an umbrella over it and sent me photos." He also mentioned those who wonder about pigeons nesting on their air conditioners. "When I mention that moving the nest may cause the parents to abandon it, they actually give up turning on AC for a period of time." NYC Audubon staff report that Injured Bird Response Team members like Jairus and Calista work long hours, and praise their dedication: "Some evenings, I see the



Social media posts from Project Safe Flight volunteers Calista McRae and Melissa Breyer in May 2021 brought attention to the bird-killing glass railing of Manhattan's Liberty Park.





© Jairus James

Jairus James at the window with his Pineapple Green Cheek Conure, Apple.

emails shooting back and forth till the middle of the night,” says Associate Director of Content Tod Winston.

And by the way, though Jairus does his volunteering remotely, he does get personal with certain birds—like his three gorgeous pet parrots, named Apple, Mango, and Kiwi.

Last there’s Collision Monitor Divya Anantharaman, a taxidermist by trade who has had to tell clients who’ve found dead birds that she cannot stuff their specimens for their own display purposes because the victims must go to museums or research centers. Her monitoring route is in Brooklyn Heights. “Finding dead birds,” she says, “is so upsetting because it’s all so preventable. Most problems today are huge and insurmountable, but this is so easily fixed.” She spreads the word about bird-friendly glass

to building staff and to anybody who expresses an interest in what she’s doing. She mentions 1 Hotel Brooklyn, which added bird-friendly treatment this past summer. “I haven’t found any casualties there this season,” she thankfully reports. (Read more about this success story on page 5.)

Thanks to the efforts of Community Science and Outreach Manager Katherine Chen, hired earlier this year, our volunteer corps is still growing. We look forward to introducing more NYC Audubon volunteers in the next *Urban Audubon*.

**Learn more:** Read a report on the September 14, 2021 mass collision event, including Melissa Breyer’s photos, in the winter 2021–22 *Urban Audubon Conservation Notes*, at [nycaudubon.org/ua](https://nycaudubon.org/ua). ■



© Karlijn Van Houwelingen

Divya Anantharaman collects a dead American Woodcock, a frequent victim of window collisions in New York City.

## VOLUNTEER!

**M**ake a difference for the City’s birds and spend time with other birders this winter by volunteering with a winter bird survey; details below. Learn more about volunteering with our conservation and education programs at [nycaudubon.org/volunteer](https://nycaudubon.org/volunteer) or in The eGret eNewsletter (sign up at [nycaudubon.org/egret](https://nycaudubon.org/egret)).

### THE 123RD ANNUAL AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is carried out in all five boroughs in late December. See how many counts you can join! Learn about the history of the CBC at [nycaudubon.org/cbc](https://nycaudubon.org/cbc).

- ◆ **Bronx & Westchester:** Mon., Dec. 26, Michael Bochnik, [bochnikm@cs.com](mailto:bochnikm@cs.com), [hras.org/participate](https://hras.org/participate)
- ◆ **Brooklyn:** Sat., Dec. 17, Bobbi Manian, [roberta.manian@gmail.com](mailto:roberta.manian@gmail.com), (registration deadline: Sat., Dec. 10)
- ◆ **NJ-Lower Hudson (including Manhattan):** Sun., Dec. 18, Katherine Chen, [christmasbirdcount@nycaudubon.org](mailto:christmasbirdcount@nycaudubon.org), [nycaudubon.org/cbc](https://nycaudubon.org/cbc)
- ◆ **Queens:** Sun., Dec. 18, Corey Finger, [10000birdsblogger@gmail.com](mailto:10000birdsblogger@gmail.com), [qcbirdclub.org](https://qcbirdclub.org) (registration deadline: Sun., Dec. 4)
- ◆ **Staten Island:** Saturday, Dec. 17, Cliff Hagen, [chagen72@gmail.com](mailto:chagen72@gmail.com)

### THE 25TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Join birders all over the world from Friday, February 17 to Monday, February 20, 2023, and record all the birds you see in your yard or local parks. Visit [birdcount.org](https://birdcount.org) to learn how to participate in this annual tradition run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada/Oiseaux Canada.

## THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

From October 2021 through September 2022, **nearly 800 New Yorkers volunteered their time and energy** with NYC Audubon to help birds—so many, that we couldn’t fit all their names in *The Urban Audubon*!

Visit [nycaudubon.org/thank-you-volunteers](https://nycaudubon.org/thank-you-volunteers) to see the names of all our dedicated volunteers. We are so grateful for all you do: walking Project Safe Flight routes; counting and tagging horseshoe crabs, waterbirds, or wintering birds; writing articles for *The Urban Audubon*; donating photography; or serving on our board of directors, advisory council, or young conservationists council. [You are NYC Audubon](https://nycaudubon.org/ua). ■



© NYC Audubon

Our oystercatcher banding team gathers in Jacob Riis Park, Queens.

## CONSERVATION NOTES

It's been a productive fall for NYC Audubon's conservation staff: overseeing our fall Project Safe Flight collision monitoring and working with partners to make the City's buildings more bird-friendly, continuing biodiversity monitoring on the Javits Roof, and analyzing waterbird data collected during our spring and summer field season. Read about the progress we've made below.

### PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

#### Collecting Data on Collisions

Now in its 25th year, NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight has expanded to include more volunteers, more buildings, and more boroughs—enabling us to make the City safer for migrating birds and engage more communities across the City in our efforts. This fall, a record 73 Project Safe Flight volunteers monitored a record 32 buildings located along a record 11 routes. For the first time, we had at least one route in each of the five boroughs. The data collected by our Project Safe Flight research, funded in part by Leon Levy Foundation and The New York Community Trust, is critical to justifying the need for collision deterrents and determining optimal retrofit methods. We also evaluate the effectiveness of deterrents that have been installed in response to Project Safe Flight collision monitoring data, including bird-safe film installations and Lights Out implementation. (Read more about these projects on page 4.)

In addition to the data collected by our Project Safe Flight collision monitors, collisions are also recorded by New Yorkers through [dbird.org](https://dbird.org), our online crowd-sourced data collection tool. The over 2,000 collision reports contributed by the public in 2022 will be analyzed to better understand collision dynamics across the City and to guide our research and advocacy efforts. Furthermore, dBird continues to expand: 62 organizations across the globe now use the database to document collisions.

—Katherine Chen, Community Science and Outreach Manager

#### The Tribute in Light

One of the primary contributors to window collisions is artificial light at night, which attracts and disorients night-migrating birds. (In our area, most birds other than raptors migrate at night.) Artificial light pulls birds into inhospitable urban areas, where they may collide with windows either at night or in the morning, when glass reflects sky or habitat. The powerful lights of the annual Tribute in Light memorial are a special case of this phenomenon: birds become entrapped and disoriented by the huge light beams, circling for hours on end and exhausting themselves. For the past 21 years, in partnership with the 9/11 Memorial & Museum and Michael Ahern Production Services, NYC Audubon's scientists and volunteers have monitored the Tribute memorial to prevent large numbers of birds from staying in the Tribute's beams for long periods of time. Throughout the night, we methodically count the number of birds in the twin beams; if the number reaches a certain threshold, we request that the production team turn off the lights briefly to allow the birds to disperse and continue their migration.

This year, on the night of September 11, 2022, persistent rain created poor flying conditions and the fog seemed to dissipate the effect of the light beams. No more than 10 individual birds were observed in the beams at any one time and no birds remained for very long; the beams were able to stay on all night, marking the sober anniversary continuously. Huge thanks to all the volunteers

who braved the cold and wet weather to join us in keeping the Tribute in Lights safe for birds. (Read more about this year's Tribute monitoring on our blog, *Syrinx*, at [nycaudubon.org/blog](https://nycaudubon.org/blog).)

—Katherine Chen, Community Science and Outreach Manager

#### Lights Out and Bird-Friendly Buildings

This year's fall collisions had at least one positive outcome: NYC Audubon is now in conversation with more than 10 major property owners about bird-friendly retrofits and Lights Out initiatives for their buildings. By bringing our collision monitoring data to the table, we are able to show exactly how each building is contributing to bird deaths, and offer solutions to the problem.

To assist with these bird-friendly consultations, we are currently expanding a library of bird-safe film and glass options that we can show to building owners, architects, and developers who are considering bird-friendly design. The library will hold a collection of bird-friendly technologies organized by type (e.g., dot matrix film, ultra violet, or ceramic frit) and labeled with their American Bird Conservancy Threat Factor rating. We expect this library to be useful for hands-on demonstration of how unintrusive bird-friendly design can be.

—Dustin Partridge, PhD, Director of Conservation and Science

### GREEN ROOFS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Biodiversity Monitoring

For more than a decade, NYC Audubon scientists have monitored the biodiversity on the network of green roofs at the Javits Center. We are finding that the arthropod community—which already varies in abundance and richness between roof types—strongly influences bird activity. As of this writing, we have recorded nearly 50 bird species using the green roof network. The highest bird activity has been observed in the farm and food forest. For example, on one autumn day we observed 65 individual birds of 18 species, including flocks of Blue Jays, Mourning Doves, and Cedar Waxwings, in addition to numerous Common Yellowthroats, Swamp Sparrows, and Eastern Phoebe. Newly observed species this fall have included Tennessee Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, and



© David Spelzer

A Lincoln's Sparrow was spotted this fall on the Javits Center green roof.



Blue Grosbeak. Research Associate Tod Winston, Seasonal Field Technician Emilia Heaton, and I will finish monitoring at the end of November. We are eager to analyze this year's data.

On the original sedum roof, several volunteers, led by Conservation Field Biologist Emilio Tobón, captured and banded a record 39 Herring Gull chicks and 2 adults. Over time, re-sightings of "our" banded gulls will provide a clearer picture of Herring Gulls' local movements and long distance dispersal patterns, and also determine their degree of fidelity to their original nesting colony. (During our biodiversity monitoring, we observed the first adult Herring Gull that had hatched on the roof and returned—four years later—to nest! It is possible that this individual may continue to nest on the green roof for the next 25 years.)

—Dustin Partridge, PhD, Director of Conservation and Science

### Green Roof Researchers Alliance

Efforts by the Green Roof Researchers Alliance to advance green roof investments continue. In September we held our fourth State of Green Roofs Conference in person at the Javits Center's Nest Summit, part of Climate Week NYC, with the theme of "action." Attendees enjoyed an inspiring talk from high school student Ajani Stella about youth involved in the climate crisis; green roof tours; and discussions on the health benefits of green roofs, ecological case studies, and plans for New York City's future. (See News & Notes on page 11 to learn about several other green roof conferences NYC Audubon participated in this fall.)

—Dustin Partridge, PhD, Director of Conservation and Science

## WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR

### Harbor Herons

This was the 38th year of NYC Audubon's annual Harbor Heron nesting surveys of the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary. It was a "full survey" year: over two weeks, we surveyed all 18 islands across the Harbor where waders have previously nested. Here are some highlights of our findings:

- **Stable nesting wader populations over the past four years, but an overall decline over the past decade:** In total, 1,188 active wader nests of 9 species were recorded in 2022, compared to 1,186 nests of 7 species counted during our last full survey in 2019.
- **Some species are doing better than others:** Black-crowned Night Heron and Glossy Ibis populations are declining at an alarming rate while other species, like Snowy Egret, appear stable.
- **An increase in the largest wader colony this year, Hoffman Island,** off of Staten Island: 422 nests were observed (including two pairs of Cattle Egrets, absent from the harbor for over a decade, until 2019), representing a 12 percent increase in nesting pairs on this island over 2021, but a stable population since our 2019 survey.
- **The first Great Blue Heron nest in the borough of Manhattan,** a single pair located on Mill Rock Island: Great Blue Herons nest sporadically in the our area; previous records include a pair confirmed on Goose Island, The Bronx (2011–2012) and a pair in Clove Lakes Park, Staten Island (2013–2019).

—Shannon Curley, PhD, Harbor Herons Nesting Survey Leader



© Daniel Chi

Great Egret chicks peer from their nest on the Bronx's South Brother Island.

### American Oystercatchers

As part of our ongoing effort to monitor nesting American Oystercatchers and support their successful breeding, this year we banded a total of 16 oystercatcher chicks in Queens: 5 chicks in Jacob Riis Park, part of Gateway National Recreation Area, and 11 chicks at Arverne, a NYC Parks beach east of Breezy Point.

Monitoring this year indicated that conservation action may be needed near Breezy Point. While we registered the highest number of breeding pairs (52) since we began monitoring oystercatchers in 2011, total productivity (the number of chicks per breeding pair) was lower than the productivity needed to maintain a stable population. Even more alarming, of the four Rockaway beaches we monitor, only the five nesting pairs in Jacob Riis Park had productivity high enough to indicate population growth. Very few chicks survived on other beaches, despite a record number of nesting pairs.

Extremely low productivity indicates that some pressure, such as predation or disturbance, may be causing egg loss and chick death. Thus, this year we conducted a camera-trap study at Jacob Riis Park to pilot methods for a larger study and to identify potential risks in the area. Images from the camera, which is motion-activated, are still being processed, but early analysis shows the presence of some predators, high rates of human disturbance, and interactions of nesting oystercatcher pairs with other birds.

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

—Emilio Tobón, Conservation Field Biologist

## CONSERVATION NOTES



### Semipalmated Sandpipers

This summer and fall, we continued our efforts to track migrating Semipalmated Sandpipers, research made possible in part by a grant from the Disney Conservation Fund. We have been collecting information on northbound Semipalmated Sandpipers for nearly seven years. During this year's spring migration, we were able to band and place nanotags—tiny devices that allow us to track long distance movement—on six birds. We will soon analyze the data to learn more about this species' migration patterns after leaving Jamaica Bay. Our nanotag data also now contributes to National Audubon Society's Bird Migration Explorer. (See page 11.)

This fall we began banding southbound birds for the first time, in response to planned offshore wind farms. (Read more about local wind power plans at [nycaudubon.org/wind-power-horizon](https://nycaudubon.org/wind-power-horizon).) The goal of this additional banding is to determine if the proposed wind farms present a significant risk to shorebirds leaving Jamaica Bay during fall migration. While we were optimistic we would catch a large number of southbound birds, we quickly learned that our spring

capture methods were not effective in the fall, and we banded only one bird. We have learned from our effort and will be changing our capture methods next fall.

—Emilio Tobón, Conservation Field Biologist

### Horseshoe Crab Monitoring

Every spring, NYC Audubon community science volunteers gather on beaches in Jamaica Bay to count and tag spawning Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs, the eggs of which are a critical food source for migrating shorebirds. Part of a statewide project, this research is also used to inform horseshoe crab conservation and management plans. As reported in the fall *Urban Audubon*, a record 300 NYC Audubon volunteers contributed to this year's efforts. And now, our 2022 monitoring results are in: Our volunteers counted 1,827 crabs and tagged 600 of them. Based on this count, we estimated 14,375 horseshoe crabs across the three beaches we monitored in Queens and Brooklyn. Thank you to all our volunteers for their diligent efforts.

—Katherine Chen, Community Science and Outreach Manager ■

## ADVOCACY UPDATES



Several important pieces of bird-friendly legislation being considered in New York City and State need your support. To learn what actions you can take to help pass the bills detailed below, visit [nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates](https://nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates).

### SUPPORT CITY- AND STATEWIDE LIGHTS OUT LEGISLATION

Artificial nighttime lighting attracts night-migrating birds to dangerous urban areas, disorienting them and making them more likely to strike glass windows. Two bills that will protect migrating birds by limiting lighting need your support, at City and State levels:

- We are continuing to fight for passage of **Lights Out Bill Int. 265**, which will save tens of thousands of birds' lives every year by requiring that all *privately owned* buildings in New York City turn out nonessential outdoor lighting and use occupancy sensors for indoor lighting between 11pm and 6am during peak migration. This important bill, introduced last year, did not proceed to a vote—though in December 2021 we celebrated the passage of two other bills, Int. 271 and Int. 274, which currently enforce these same limits in *City-owned* buildings.
- The **Dark Skies Protection Act (S7663)**, introduced by Senator Brad Hoylman (D/WFP-Manhattan) and Assemblymember Patricia Fahy (D-Albany), will require that most nonessential outdoor lighting across New York State be extinguished after 11pm, be motion-activated, or be covered by an external shield.

### HELP SPREAD GREEN ROOFS ACROSS THE CITY

Green roofs provide many environmental benefits, including absorption of rainwater, insulation, reduction of the urban "heat island effect," and habitat for birds and other wildlife. We are working with several partners to improve New York City's Green Roof Tax Abatement program, which provides a reduction of taxes



© Keith Michael

Although it's a dazzling sight to human beings, New York City's bright nighttime skyline is dangerously attractive to nocturnally migrating birds.

payable to New York City, so that these funds can help offset the costs of green roof installation. Proposed changes will make the abatement more accessible to City residents by reducing the current four-inch soil depth requirement to two inches, and by extending the number of years funds are available through the abatement.

Currently, a \$15 tax abatement per square foot of green roof space is available in certain priority community districts of the City. We're also working on several other recommendations for the program: increasing the baseline abatement amount from \$5.23 to \$10 per square foot in non-priority areas, and the total programmatic cap from \$1 million to \$10 million. To learn more about this program, visit [greenroofsny.com/financingoptions](https://greenroofsny.com/financingoptions).

To find out what steps you can take to contribute to the bird-friendly advocacy efforts above, and to sign up to be an Avian Advocate, visit [nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates](https://nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates). ■



## NEWS & NOTES

### STAFF NEWS

This August we were happy to welcome **Roslyn Rivas** to the NYC Audubon staff. As our new public programs manager, she manages our bird outings, classes, festivals, and lecture series. A lifelong wildlife enthusiast born and raised in the Bronx, Roslyn was previously the program coordinator of National Audubon Society's Plants for Birds program. She holds a BS in ecology and evolutionary biology from Yale University and a graduate certificate in wildlife management from Oregon State University. Read more about Roslyn and all our staff at [nycaudubon.org/our-staff](https://nycaudubon.org/our-staff).

We congratulate **Sohel Shah** on his promotion to the position of senior associate for conservation and communications.



Roslyn holds a Merlin at Raptorama! in Marine Park, Brooklyn.

### BOARD AND ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWS

NYC Audubon welcomes new Advisory Council Members **MaryJane Boland**, **Ronald Bourque**, **Mike Feller**, **Ellen Hartig**, **Mary Leou**, **Georgia Silvera Seamans**, and **Shino Tanikawa**. NYC Audubon's advisory council includes experts working in the fields of science, conservation, communications, education, real estate, law, advocacy, and more. Past members of the board of directors and adjunct committee members may also serve on the advisory council. The advisory council is dedicated to the conservation issues facing birds and habitat and provides valuable guidance to the organization's initiatives and to the amplification of our mission. Learn more at [nycaudubon.org/our-leadership](https://nycaudubon.org/our-leadership).

### WE SEEK SUGGESTIONS FOR OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NYC Audubon's board of directors is made up of diverse and dynamic individuals who volunteer their time, offering guidance and expertise in a wide range of issues that steer the organization's work.

We seek new board members for three-year terms which begin next June. To make our board more representative of the City's diverse population, we are especially interested in candidates who represent new perspectives, backgrounds, and communities; residents of Staten Island, Queens, and the Bronx; and/or candidates with financial, marketing, fundraising, or policy/advocacy expertise. Submit suggestions to Jeffrey Kimball, chair of the nominating committee, at [nominations@nycaudubon.org](mailto:nominations@nycaudubon.org).

### COLLABORATIVE PROGRESS IN JAMAICA BAY

NYC Audubon has been in productive discussions with the leadership of the National Park Service's Gateway National Recreation Area regarding enhancements to the visitor experience and the ecosystem management policies in the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Areas of focus include removal of invasive species; maintenance of trail-side viewing access at the East and West Ponds; seasonal management of water levels in the East Pond to enable foraging by migratory shorebirds; study of American Oystercatcher egg loss at Breezy Point, Queens; and predator management on Jamaica Bay's Harbor Heron Islands to support these islands' declining wading bird colonies.

### SHARING OUR EXPERTISE ON BIRD-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE

This fall, Director of Conservation and Science **Dustin Partridge, PhD**, met with conservation partners and shared NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight research, green infrastructure expertise, and collaborative successes with bird-friendly design at several professional conferences:

- The **CitiesAlive Green Roofs & Walls Conference** in Philadelphia, PA, convened green infrastructure researchers and professionals.
- **Urban Biodiversity: A Transatlantic Dialogue**, hosted by New York University School of Law, drew experts from New York City and Berlin, Germany, to discuss global biodiversity targets.
- **For the Birds: Why We Must Build with Birds in Mind** brought together NYC Audubon, longtime partner FXCollaborative, and other architecture professionals to discuss bird-safe solutions.

Read about this fall's **Green Roof Researchers Alliance conference** on page 9, and about NYC Audubon's recent bird-friendly consultation work with New York City building managers on page 5.

### STEEP DECLINES IN GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY REPORTED

Worldwide species declines in the past 50 years are detailed in two reports published by our partners this fall. **State of the Birds 2022**, from the U.S. Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, indicates that more than half of all North American bird species are declining and offers conservation actions to be taken. It is available at [stateofthebirds.org](https://stateofthebirds.org). **Living Planet 2022**, from the World Wildlife Fund, describes the interconnected global crises of climate change and an average 69 percent decline in global wildlife species populations since 1970, and recommends steps towards a more sustainable future. It is available at [livingplanet.panda.org](https://livingplanet.panda.org).

### EXPLORE OUR BIRDS' AMAZING MIGRATION JOURNEYS

National Audubon's new, virtual **Bird Migration Explorer** allows you to trace the heroic annual journeys made by over 450 North American bird species, and learn about the challenges they face along the way. (You can even track the movements of Semipalmated Sandpipers, tagged by NYC Audubon staff and volunteers, after these far-ranging sandpipers briefly stop over in New York City!) Check out the Bird Migration Explorer at [explorer.audubon.org](https://explorer.audubon.org). ■

### TAKE OUR URBAN AUDUBON SURVEY!

What do you like about *The Urban Audubon*? What don't you like? Do you have ideas for new content you'd like to share? Let us know your opinions at [nycaudubon.org/ua-survey](https://nycaudubon.org/ua-survey) or by scanning the QR code at right with your mobile phone.



### GO DIGITAL WITH THE URBAN AUDUBON

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# THE FALL ROOST HEADS TO THE ROOF!

By Carol Peace Robins

**D**own on the farm might not seem the likeliest setting for a New York City environmental organization's benefit gala. But for NYC Audubon's 18th annual Fall Roost, honoring the Javits Center, up on the farm, high atop the Javits building, was just the right spot! This past September, NYC Audubon supporters and friends mingled there amid nearly nine acres of green roofs—including an acre of farmland that produces 40,000 pounds of produce a year, an orchard, pollinator and shade gardens, and a great expanse of sedum that hosts 150 nesting Herring Gulls. And the entire roof network, NYC Audubon has learned through its ongoing wildlife monitoring, is abuzz with insects and birds.

This year's Fall Roost, NYC Audubon's most significant fundraising initiative to support our work protecting birds and their habitats, was a hopping, open-air affair. To the tunes of two delightful bands, Mostly Modern Pops and Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks, Roost guests drank Scarlet Tanagers (gin, strawberry, and club soda) and nibbled on hors d'oeuvres sourced from the green roof farm. Attendees also bid on over 40 tempting

silent auction items, ranging from birding excursions with local experts to bird photography and high-end outerwear. Then there was the Wine Pull, offering the chance to win a \$100 bottle of wine (while guaranteeing an enjoyable table wine).

When it came time for the evening's program, a short film by Board President Karen Benfield's Lark Song Media showed NYC Audubon's science staff at work on the Javits roof and depicted the Center's many benefits to birds and other wildlife. NYC Audubon Executive Director Jessica Wilson then honored the Javits Center for recognizing the vital importance of green roofs to environmental sustainability. Noting our longtime collaboration with the Center, beginning with its replacement of highly reflective glass with bird-friendly glazing in 2014, she noted that the partnership was also a major force in enabling the passage in 2019 of Local Laws 92



## ROOST PHOTOGRAPHS (all guests identified left to right)

**1.** Roost guest Sam Uzbay, Young Conservationist Council Chair Simon Keyes, Board Vice President Chris Cooper, and fellow guest Michael Pontecorvo on the Javits Center rooftop terrace, as the sun sets over the Hudson River; **2.** Paul Sweet, Divya Anantharaman, and fellow Roost guests check silent auction bids on their phones; **3.** The stunning Javits Center North Rooftop Pavilion; **4.** Guest Alan Drogin searches for a Tennessee Warbler spotted earlier that afternoon at the Javits Center rooftop farm.



and 94, City laws requiring solar panels or green roofs on all new construction and on buildings undergoing roof renovations.

Alan Steel, Javits Center president and CEO, proudly described how the Center went from being the number one bird killer in New York City to a bird-safe building with the second-largest green roof in the country, welcoming 39 species of birds. Or, that was what he'd planned to say: Steel said he'd just learned that right before Roost guests arrived, that very evening, three new species had been spotted at the rooftop farm—Tennessee Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, and Least Flycatcher—bringing the species total to 42! (As of publication time, ongoing NYC Audubon bird monitoring has raised that total to nearly 50.)

Amid late-season tomatoes, apples just begging to be picked, and colonies of busy bees, it was hard to imagine a more natural

place to gather with people who care so much about sustaining our birds and their habitats.

*Overall, the 2022 Fall Roost raised nearly \$450,000 to support NYC Audubon's conservation work—the highest total in Roost history. Many thanks to Co-Chairs Gina Argento, Karen Benfield, MaryJane Boland, Marcia Fowle, Cathy Heller, Tatiana Kaletsch, Barbara Leatherwood, Jenny Maritz, and Vivek Sriram for making this year's event such a great success. (And thank you to all our generous guests, volunteers, and staff! See page 14.)* ■



#### ROOST PHOTOGRAPHS (all guests identified left to right)

**5.** Executive Director Jessica Wilson presents an award to Board Vice President Alan Steel, CEO of 2022 Roost honoree the Javits Center; **6.** NYC Audubon staff members pose at the Roost “selfie wall”: Development Associate Aidan Donaghy, Advocacy and Engagement Associate Jesse McLaughlin, Community Science and Outreach Manager Katherine Chen, Senior Associate for Conservation and Communications Sohel Shah, and Public Programs Manager Roslyn Rivas; **7.** NYC Audubon board leaders gather by the Javits Center rooftop farm: Sandy Ewing, Deborah Laurel, Marcy Boyle, Tatiana Kaletsch, Vivek Sriram, Gina Argento, Mike Yuan, Karen Benfield, Alan Steel (also Javits Center CEO), Executive Director Jessica Wilson, Jeff Kimball, Dr. Dick Veit, Dr. Linda Freeman, Elizabeth Norman, and Angie Co.

All Fall Roost photos © Cyrus Gonzalez

# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE FALL ROOST

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## SPECIAL THANKS

The 2022 Fall Roost  
Co-Chairs and NYC  
Audubon's entire staff,  
who went above and  
beyond the call of duty to  
make the event a success.

**Note:** If you meant to make a donation during this year's Fall Roost and do not see your name above, please contact us at [development@nycaudubon.org](mailto:development@nycaudubon.org). We will gratefully acknowledge your support in the next issue of *The Urban Audubon*. ■

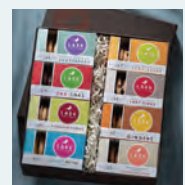
## GIVE A GIFT FOR THE BIRDS

This holiday season, spread your love of birds along with good cheer by giving a bird-friendly gift!

A **NYC Audubon membership** is a gift that keeps giving, both to the recipient and to the birds. Learn about membership levels to suit the bird-lover in your life—whether a young professional, student, senior, or a whole family—at [nycaudubon.org/gift-membership](https://nycaudubon.org/gift-membership).

If you're looking for a holiday treat, "cookies for grown-ups" from Fall Roost supporter **Lark Fine Foods** ([larkfinefoods.com](https://larkfinefoods.com)) are sure to please.

Find more gifts that help birds—from Birds & Beans bird-friendly coffee to birdy gear and fashion from Brooklyn's Bird Collective—at [nycaudubon.org/bird-gifts](https://nycaudubon.org/bird-gifts). ■





# SUPPORT NYC AUDUBON

## GIVE MIGRATING BIRDS SAFE PASSAGE THROUGH NEW YORK CITY

There are many ways to support NYC Audubon's work to protect migrating birds and their habitats, now and into the future. Give now to help the birds you love thrive in New York City.

### SUPPORT OUR YEAR-END CAMPAIGN

Fund the future of wild bird conservation by donating at [nycaudubon.org/fund-our-future](https://nycaudubon.org/fund-our-future). See the back cover to learn more.

### BECOME A MEMBER

Join our flock by becoming a member of NYC Audubon! With membership levels geared toward young professionals, families, seniors, and more, your dues support NYC Audubon's conservation work and connect you to like-minded New Yorkers through special members-only bird outings and events, discounts on outings and classes, and other perks. Join at [nycaudubon.org/membership](https://nycaudubon.org/membership). (Already a member? Give the gift of membership! See page 14.)



© David Speller

Help the "Yellow-rump," New York City's winter-time warbler, make it safely to its northerly nesting grounds next spring.

### 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 monthly donations at [nycaudubon.org/donate](https://nycaudubon.org/donate).

### GIVE A MATCHING GIFT

You can double or triple the value of donations through a matching gift program. Contact your employer's personnel office to learn how. Be sure to specify *New York City Audubon* as the designee.

### REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Including NYC Audubon in your estate plan is a generous way to ensure that New York City remains a haven for the birds you love. 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 discuss your particular situation. Find more details at [nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy](https://nycaudubon.org/leave-a-legacy).

Contact Director of Development Matthew Coody at 646.502.9611 or [mcoody@nycaudubon.org](mailto:mcoody@nycaudubon.org) to learn more. ■

## EVENTS & ADVENTURES



### WINTER OUTINGS AND CLASSES

**Outings and Classes:** Our complete listings of winter outings and classes will be available to view at [nycaudubon.org/local-trips-classes](https://nycaudubon.org/local-trips-classes) by **Friday, December 9, at 5pm**.

**Members-Only Walks:** We look forward to offering a full roster of members-only walks across the City in spring 2023!

### REGISTRATION DATES

**NYC Audubon Members:** For NYC Audubon members, registration for fee-based outings and classes begins on **Monday, December 12, at 9am**.

**Nonmembers:** Outings and Classes registration for nonmembers begins on **Wednesday, December 14, at 9am**.

### STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH THE EGRET

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

### WINTER 2022-2023 LECTURE SERIES

Get ready for an exciting series of virtual lectures starting this November! From science, to film, to activism, and more, our series will feature a diversity of topics relating to the world of birds and NYC Audubon's work. Below is just a sampling of our fall roster of speakers:

- **Gabriela Venable**, through her study of the diversity of hummingbird plumage color, has found that hummingbirds' feathers contain more colors than previously estimated to exist in all bird species combined.
- **Jeff Kimball**, director and producer of *Birders: The Central Park Effect*, joins us on the 10-year anniversary of his film's release to discuss how New York City birding has changed in the last decade.
- **Alyssa Bueno**, a Bronx birder and photographer, will share her nature photography techniques and discuss ethical practices in the field.

See our full lecture schedule and find registration information at [nycaudubon.org/lectures](https://nycaudubon.org/lectures). This series is made possible by the support of Claude and Lucienne Bloch. ■

## THERE'S MORE ONLINE! DIGITAL URBAN AUDUBON STORIES

This issue, we introduce **Digital Urban Audubon Stories**: articles you can read right on our website, complemented by birdsong, dynamic range maps, and other special audiovisual features. Find and enjoy the articles below at [nycaudubon.org/digital-ua](https://nycaudubon.org/digital-ua).

- **Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*)**, by Tod Winston: Learn all about the "butter-butt," NYC's winter warbler!
- **Songs in a City Soundscape**, by Hillarie O'Toole: Learn about the effects of urban noise—and occasional quiet—on birdsong.
- **Book Review** by Suzanne Charlé: In his new book, *Sounds Wild and Broken*, David George Haskell explores how animal sounds evolved. ■



**NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON**

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Help scientists like Katherine Chen,  
NYC Audubon's Community Science  
Manager, collect critical data that  
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Katherine Chen holding a Semipalmated Plover at  
the Rockaways in Queens; Photo by Roslyn Rivas