

# THE URBAN AUDUBON

**"IT'S A BIRD"**

**NATIVE PLANTS: FOR THE  
INSECTS, FOR THE BIRDS**

**THROUGH ATLASERS' EYES**

**DAVID L. BURG—A REMINISCENCE**

**GREAT HORNED OWL**

**THE FALL ROOST**



## MISSION

NYC Audubon is a grassroots community that works for the protection of wild birds and habitat in the five boroughs, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

## VISION

NYC Audubon envisions a day when birds and people in the five boroughs enjoy a healthy, livable habitat.

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## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

By Kathryn Heintz



It has been a heck of a year for all of us, to put it mildly. Thanksgiving 2020 is upon us and we are finding much to be grateful for. New York City Audubon has held its own through the first wave of the pandemic. As you can see in this winter issue of *The Urban Audubon*, we have a new look—and we are intact! We have you, our dedicated members, our loyal donors, and our extraordinary volunteers, to thank. You who believe passionately in us have come through for us and for the birds, sustaining our organization and keeping urban bird conservation work alive in New York City.

We are feeling a resurgence of hope. This year we have missed meeting with our community for trips, classes, lectures, parties, and horseshoe crab and bird counts. We've missed the personal nature of birding—sharing binoculars, chatting confidentially along a wooded path, celebrating together when one of us scores a "life bird." Many of us have managed to go birding individually or with family and close friends. Our staff has learned to share experiences virtually—and to reach a much broader audience. We aren't out of the woods just yet. But as I compose this message in the second week of November, we can now look forward to 2021 and the resurrection of environmental protections for wildlife and wild places, alongside a renewal of federally supported scientific inquiry.

Know too that our ranks are growing. This fall a marked uptick in bird-building collision reporting nationwide led more people to take notice, and take action. Other urban Audubon chapters are investigating this avian catastrophe and reaching to us for expertise; we are here to help with best practices and solutions. Just in time, our [d-bird.org](http://d-bird.org) collision-reporting database is being updated to launch in cities across the country.

2021 is a year to act on the recommendations of our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee. It is our collective responsibility to engage all New Yorkers with our mission and to ally ourselves with our neighbors by reaching out and sharing resources for the benefit of all people in our community, and of all birds in our midst. We are planning expanded outdoor experiences for parks in all five boroughs. And to better engage the youth of the City, our Feathered Friends urban after-school program is going virtual this spring.

There is so much work to do! And we simply cannot save New York City's birds without you. We need your show of support today. Every gift of every size matters. Nothing is too small. As you consider your year-end philanthropic commitment for the birds, please consider joining me in giving an additional \$40 this year in honor of NYC Audubon's 40th anniversary. (We have almost met our "ADD \$40" match! See page 23 and the enclosed envelope for more detailed information.)

Thank you for your dedication and support. Warmest and best wishes for the New Year.



A female American Kestrel stretches its wings.

© François Portmann

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE SEEKS SUGGESTIONS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NYC Audubon is seeking suggestions for new members of the board of directors for three-year terms beginning in June 2021. To make our board more representative of the City's diversity, we are especially interested in candidates who are racially/ethnically diverse, women, residents of boroughs other than Manhattan and Brooklyn, and/or with financial, educational, or New York City government policy/advocacy expertise. Please submit your suggestions to Jeffrey Kimball, chair of the nominating committee, via email at [nominations@nycaudubon.org](mailto:nominations@nycaudubon.org).



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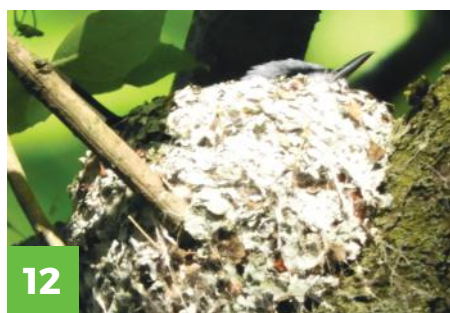
## WINTER 2020-2021



"It's a Bird" © DC/Alitha E. Martinez



Cedar Waxwing © David Speiser



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on nest © Lisa Schepke



David Burg © Noah Burg



Fall Roost music video © Lark Song Media/Karen Benfield

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#### Small Banner Photographs:

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## CONSERVATION NOTES

This fall the NYC Audubon conservation team focused on continuing to make the City safer for migratory birds through various facets of our Project Safe Flight program, as we wrapped up our modified waterbird-monitoring field season. Here are some highlights from the past few months.

### PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

October 3 and 4 proved to be exceptionally deadly days for migratory songbirds. Our volunteers reported finding hundreds of birds around the sample of New York City buildings that we monitor, and more than 100 birds were reported each day to [d-bird.org](https://d-bird.org), our online, crowd-sourced bird-mortality database. While more than 250 live birds were transported to the Wild Bird Fund for rehab and release, hundreds or possibly even thousands of others likely died and went unnoticed and unreported.

If you find an injured bird, pick it up and transport it to a rehabilitator if possible. If you're not able to transport the bird yourself, move it to a nearby green space where it is safe from being stepped on or swept up and thrown away. (Learn more about what to do if you find an injured bird at [nycaudubon.org/finding-a-young-or-injured-bird](https://nycaudubon.org/finding-a-young-or-injured-bird).)

And please report all collisions to [d-bird.org](https://d-bird.org), which is accepting reports even though the site is in the midst of a major upgrade in design and functionality. The updated D-Bird platform will launch in the spring. Thank you to all who have reported birds this year. In 2020 so far we have received more than 1,900 D-Bird reports, which is more than double what we received in 2019.

This fall, our collision monitoring program expanded to include three New York City boroughs, under the guidance of Conservation Associate Aurora Crooks. Thirty-two volunteer community scientists walked six monitoring routes, four in Manhattan and one each in Queens and Brooklyn. Three of the routes are around buildings with which NYC Audubon is collaborating to install mitigation measures, such as appliqué films that alert birds that the window glass is an obstacle. By monitoring both before and after the window film installation, we will be able to quantify its effectiveness in reducing collisions.

The Salt Marsh Nature Center in Marine Park, Brooklyn, is the latest building in the City to retrofit its problematic windows to prevent bird collisions. Feather Friendly, a dot-patterned vinyl product for the outside surface of windows, has been applied to the building's windows. The dots are unobtrusive to humans and allow a clear view of Marine Park, while alerting birds that the windows are a solid barrier. The project was funded by Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy with other support from the Brooklyn Bird Club, Marine Park Alliance, and NYC Parks.

For the 17th consecutive year, NYC Audubon worked in partnership with the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and Michael Ahern Production Services to ensure the Tribute in Light was safe for birds. This year a small team of eight volunteers and staff conducted the monitoring, following COVID-19 safety protocols. Our team also provided resources and advice to the



This fall, Feather Friendly was applied to the windows of the Salt Marsh Nature Center in Marine Park, Brooklyn.

organizations and individuals monitoring two other light-based September 11 tributes this year, which took place in Shanksville, PA, and Washington, DC. Read more about this year's Tribute in Light on our blog, Syrinx, at [nycaudubon.org/syrinx](https://nycaudubon.org/syrinx).





## WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR

While we were unable to band American Oystercatchers this season because of permit restrictions during the pandemic, NYC Audubon Field Biologist Emilio Tobón monitored their breeding productivity for the 10th consecutive year at three beaches in Queens—Breezy Point, Fort Tilden, and Jacob Riis Park. Overall, he observed 39 territorial pairs, 37 of which went on to breed. A total of 18 chicks hatched, and 11 chicks fledged. The chick survival rate was 0.61 (chick survival = chicks fledged/chicks hatched). The overall productivity was 0.30 (productivity = chicks fledged/breeding pairs), the lowest it has been since our monitoring began in 2012, but very similar to last year's productivity. The American Oystercatcher recovery plan productivity goal is 0.55 chicks per pair, per year.

We've received more reports than usual of oystercatchers entangled in fishing lines on New York City beaches. Both monofilament and braided fishing lines can cause problems when they become wrapped around birds' legs, impairing their movement or tightening enough around a limb to cut off circulation. The Urban Park Rangers responded quickly to requests to assist the birds in the Rockaways, but the birds remained mobile enough, despite their entanglement, to evade capture. If the birds survive the winter and return to the City to nest in the spring, we may be able to capture them on their territories and remove the lines.

In 2018, the American Littoral Society, in partnership with the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, implemented a fishing-line collection and recycling program that currently maintains multiple fishing-line bins across the Jamaica Bay area. In its first two years, the program collected and recycled over



© Bridget Klapinski

This American Oystercatcher, hobbled by fishing line entangled around its leg, was photographed in the Rockaways, Queens.

50,160 yards of monofilament line. For more information see [jbrpc.org/fishing-line-recycling](http://jbrpc.org/fishing-line-recycling).

Discarded fishing line and human disturbance are two major threats to the safety and productivity of the City's beach-nesting birds. The NYC Audubon team is working with management agencies to address these issues and will continue the work in 2021 through a grant from the Disney Conservation Fund. (See News & Notes on page 23 to learn more.) ■

## VOLUNTEER!



NYC Audubon is continuing to follow governmental guidance during this dynamic and changing crisis—and the safety of our volunteers and staff is our top priority.

### AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

We regret that because of the pandemic, we are unable to coordinate a public Christmas Bird Count in Central Park and Manhattan this year. As we go to press in early November, it is unclear whether public counts will be held in the City's other boroughs. Information may be available via the map view of Christmas count circles accessible at [audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count](http://audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count).

### GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The annual Great Backyard Bird Count will be taking place from Friday, February 12 to Monday, February 15, managed by National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology/eBird. To learn how to participate in the count, visit [gbbc.birdcount.org](http://gbbc.birdcount.org).

### LOOKING FORWARD

As spring approaches, updates regarding NYC Audubon's usual spring conservation programs will be announced through the spring *Urban Audubon* and *The eGret* eNewsletter (sign up at [nycaudubon.org/egret](http://nycaudubon.org/egret)), and posted at [nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events](http://nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events). To learn what actions you can take from home to protect the City's birds, see Avian Advocate Updates on page 6. ■



© Dave Ostapuk

A Blue Jay visits Staten Island's Willowbrook Park.



We hope that you all are continuing to be safe and well. Below are some updates on our recent advocacy work. Make sure to sign up to be an Avian Advocate and receive timely action alert emails at [nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates](https://nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates).

## MAINTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDING IN NEW YORK

Environmental programs are critical to New York City's economic recovery and prosperity, as well as bird conservation throughout the state. This fall, NYC Audubon joined nearly 200 organizations in urging state leaders to maintain environmental funding to create jobs, fortify local economies, and address the climate crisis. Read our full letter at [politi.co/3eqaJQ0](https://politi.co/3eqaJQ0).

We must maintain funding for New York's environmental programs: Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), Parks 2020, DEC NY Works Programs, Clean Water Infrastructure Act, as well as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) Program. Each of these programs creates thousands of jobs, saves communities and taxpayers money, and supports multi-billion-dollar industries including agriculture, outdoor recreation, construction, tourism, and commercial fishing.

Urge Governor Cuomo and your state legislators that these programs be considered essential in making funding decisions by visiting [act.audubon.org/a/stronger-and-greener-new-york-state](https://act.audubon.org/a/stronger-and-greener-new-york-state).

## H.R.919 - BIRD-SAFE BUILDINGS ACT

We know that New York City is on board with bird-friendly building design due to the passage of Local Law 15 earlier this year by the City Council, but we must push our representatives to pass bird-safe legislation at the state and national level. The Bird-Safe Buildings Act has already passed in the U.S. House of Representatives; now is the time to keep applying pressure to the Senate. Urge your Senator to pass the Bird-Safe Buildings Act at [bit.ly/3I19Q2P](https://bit.ly/3I19Q2P).

## SUPPORT THE LIBERTY STATE PARK PROTECTION ACT

In September we attended a rally at Liberty State Park in Jersey City, NJ, to protect Caven Point Natural Area, an important habitat for migratory birds, from billionaires and lobbyists pushing for its privatization. Hundreds of people attended the rally to demand



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The wetlands of Caven Point, in New Jersey's Liberty State Park, serve as foraging grounds for Common Terns like this immature bird, photographed in the park.

that the New Jersey governor pass the Liberty State Park Protection Act and prevent a takeover by the already extensive golf course bordering the park.

If public officials permit the purchase of this piece of the park, valuable habitat for over 200 bird species will be destroyed and public lands will be made private for golfers. NYC Audubon's banding data show that Common Terns nesting on Governors Island forage in Liberty State Park, and Caven Point's wetlands are a likely feeding area for our Harbor Herons. The park is also part of the New Jersey-Lower Hudson count circle for the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, which NYC Audubon coordinates each year.

You can help! Over 20,000 people have already signed the petition to protect Liberty State Park. Sign the petition at [bit.ly/3oXpTkb](https://bit.ly/3oXpTkb) and share it with friends. Learn more, watch a video of the September rally, and join the coalition at [folsp.org](https://folsp.org).

## BECOME AN AVIAN ADVOCATE!

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

# STATEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY



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

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

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

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

# "IT'S A BIRD"

By Suzanne Charlé

*Spoiler alert: This article reveals twists and turns within NYC Audubon Board Member Chris Cooper's "It's a Bird" comic that you may want to discover for yourself, before reading about how the comic came to be. Access a free digital copy of "It's a Bird" at [comixology.com](https://comixology.com) and on other digital platforms including Amazon Kindle and Apple Books. (We have also reproduced the opening spread of "It's a Bird" on pages 8-9 of this issue.)*

On Memorial Day morning this year, Marie Javins happened upon a Facebook post by her friend Christian Cooper. Chris recounted that a woman in the Central Park Ramble had called the police after he'd asked her to leash her dog, claiming that an African-American man was threatening her. Javins, who has known Cooper since they worked together at Marvel Comics in the mid-1990s, was horrified.

A tweet by Cooper's sister about the racist incident quickly garnered attention and went viral. Later that same day, George Floyd, pleading "I can't breathe!," died in Minneapolis when a police officer knelt on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds.

Javins, now executive editor at DC Comics, saw an opportunity to contribute something to the growing societal discussion of racial injustice. Her colleagues at work had been saying, "We should do something." But what? Javins' answer: "What do we specialize in? We tell stories. And stories are a great, powerful means of change. I know a good storyteller and his name is Chris Cooper!"

Her colleagues were keen on the idea, and started batting around titles for the comic. Laughing, one quipped, "It's a Bird!" "Perfect!" said Javins.

Cooper, a NYC Audubon board member and, at that time, senior editorial director at Health Science Communications, hadn't written a comic for over two decades. But as soon as he heard the title, "The story just poured out of me." In the wake of the Rodney King verdict in the 1990s, he'd written a similarly socially conscious comic; now

he had another story to tell. "People have to stop 'othering.' Everyone is someone's daughter, someone's son."

In the richly illustrated 10-page comic, Jules, a Black teenager, is given his grandfather's binoculars, which his dad says have "special powers." Out birding, Jules focuses on a Scarlet Tanager—and is amazed to also see Amadou Diallo, shot 41 times by cops on his own doorstep. More sightings follow: An Eastern Bluebird in its house and Breonna Taylor, killed by plainclothes police forcibly entering her apartment. A Yellow Warbler and George Floyd.

Cooper emphasizes that "It's a Bird" isn't a literal depiction of any specific event. Rather, it is informed by his experiences and those of many other Black people, all woven together in the style of magical realism. For instance, Cooper's dad, a civil rights activist, gave him the binoculars he uses: "On my 50th birthday—wow!" Jules wears glasses, like Cooper. ("Many white people react very differently to a large Black man who's wearing little nerdy glasses, versus one who isn't," Cooper notes.) As for his choice of birds, he was inspired by those presented in the recent

street art of SoHo. (See a photo essay of the Soho bird murals in the fall 2020 *Urban Audubon*, at [nycaudubon.org/UAfall2020](https://nycaudubon.org/UAfall2020).)

When DC Comics asked Alitha Martinez to pencil the illustrations for "It's a Bird," she leapt at the chance. As a child of Caribbean immigrants from Curaçao and Honduras, she was coached to speak "perfect American English" and to forget her native language. Now living in Manhattan, she is hesitant to let her teenage son leave home without her: "He's a strapping boy.... I'm afraid of what might happen to him."

Martinez illustrated Cooper's story faithfully; not a birder, she had to do "lots of research" to get the birds right. She had to study the horrifying pictures of George Floyd's death, and imagine others. But for the last scene, she drew on "all the triumph and power" that attracted her to comics in the first place. When at the end of the story, Jules encounters a woman who, rather than leash her dog, threatens to call the police and claim she's being attacked by an African-American, "I wanted big bombastic music, that sense of Superman: It's going to be OK." As Jules turns away, the woman's words shrink in size, while the victims of racial violence rise into the sky, a holy host of ghostly winged superheroes.

"It is about the ones we've lost and how we keep from losing any more," says Cooper.

What's next? "It's a Bird" is the first chapter in *Represent!*, DC's new biweekly digital series spotlighting "stories of personal experiences, unheard voices, and social revolution." Additional chapters will be available in 2021. Although some installments will focus on social issues, others will be more personal: an upcoming chapter will be about a family farm. "Stories are a powerful means of change," says Javins. Judging by the thousands of "It's a Bird" downloads so far, that's just what readers are looking for. In the meantime, Cooper is busy at work on a birding-related memoir for Random House. ■



"It's a Bird" is the first chapter of the new *Represent!* digital series from DC Comics.

See pages 8-9 for a sneak peak of "It's a Bird."



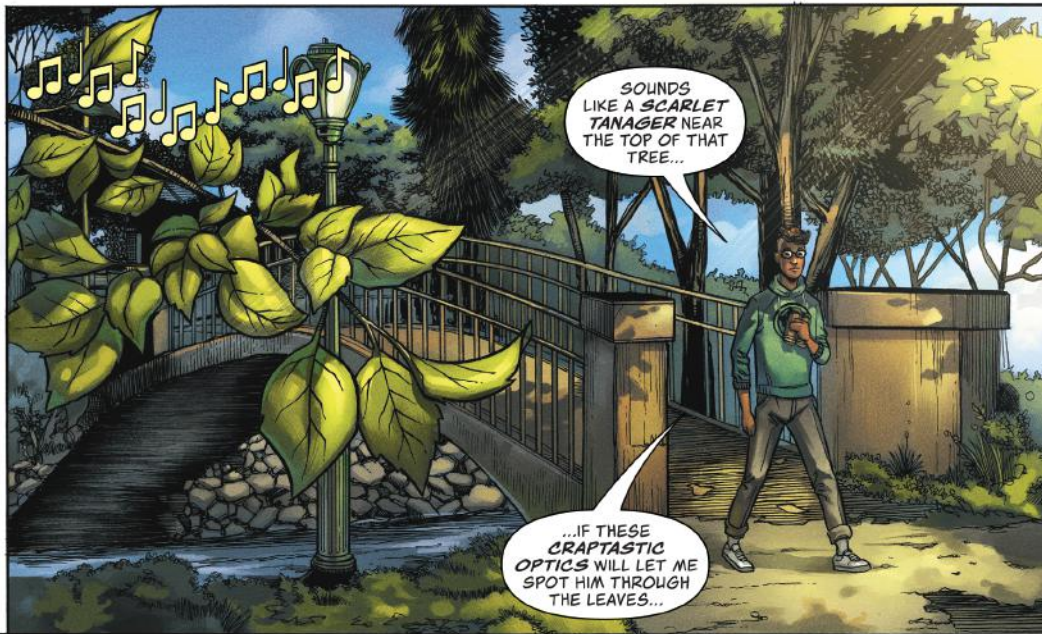


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Pencils: Alitha E. Martinez

Inks: Mark Morales  
Colors: Emilio Lopez  
Letters: Rob Clark Jr.

Editor: Mario Javins  
Assoc. Editor: Liz Erickson  
Thanks: Bobbie Chase





Access a free digital copy of "It's a Bird" at [comixology.com](https://comixology.com) or via Amazon Kindle or Apple Books.



# NATIVE PLANTS: FOR THE INSECTS, FOR THE BIRDS

Interview with Tod Winston, by Ned Boyajian

**N**YC Audubon Birding Guide and Communications Content Manager Tod Winston is also a former program manager of National Audubon's Plants for Birds program. Longtime volunteer and past NYC Audubon Board Member Ned Boyajian asked Tod a few questions about our area's native plants and their benefits for insects and birds.

**Native plants support their native ecosystems, providing food, shelter, for birds, mammals, insects. How should one go about thinking of which native plants to grow?**

When considering which plants to choose, particularly for a smaller garden or terrace, think about what most songbirds eat. Native plants have coevolved with our birds to provide the kind of nutrition they need, in the form of fruit, seeds, and nectar. And native plants have evolved with native insects, many of which cannot survive without the native host plants that their larvae (caterpillars, for example) eat. As it happens, 96 percent of land birds—from Scarlet Tanagers to Northern Cardinals to Ruby-throated Hummingbirds to American Kestrels—feed insects to their chicks.

And they feed them *a lot* of insects. A typical clutch of Carolina Chickadee nestlings downs as many as 9,000 caterpillars in the 16 days between hatching and fledging, according to the research of entomologist Douglas Tallamy. This explains why non-native plants are “bad” for birds; most native bugs cannot digest those plants, and so a non-native landscape does not provide all the protein-rich bugs that baby birds (and many young animals) need to grow.

**Is it true that native plants tend to require less insecticide?**

I'd say we should examine the question! Since a major benefit of growing native plants is the insects the plants support, we must change our mindset about insects. When



© Bill Dwyk

A parent Wood Thrush delivers a meal of juicy caterpillar.

we start paying attention to all the creatures in a garden, we realize what a fascinating variety of bugs exist, right under our noses. Many are important pollinators. For harmful, out-of-control insect problems on a favorite plant, organic alternatives that are not toxic to birds, such as neem oil or insecticidal soap, can be used in moderation.

**There is growing pressure to plant trees, lots of them, to push back against climate change. Why is it important to plant native trees?**

To state the obvious, native trees are very large native plants! And many native species provide huge amounts of food for birds in the form of insects, as well as fruit, nuts, or nectar. Experienced birders know that on a big spring migration day, native oak trees are abuzz with warblers, tanagers, vireos, and other songbirds. This is because the oaks are also abuzz with countless tiny insects. Just one native tree can provide a huge amount of food for birds and other wildlife.

**If you have a yard, can growing native plants save you money?**

You may discover you already have many bird-friendly plants already growing in your yard, so there's no need to buy them. Many plants traditionally considered “weeds” are actually excellent resources for birds: The purple berries of Pokeweed are sustenance for fall-migrating birds, and the orange flowers of Jewelweed provide nectar for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, while the plant's seeds are eaten by Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. “Weedy” Black Cherry or Hackberry trees provide loads of fruit for birds.

**Will native plants help draw more birds to one's yard?**

Absolutely. In a study of suburban properties in southeast Pennsylvania, eight times more Wood Thrushes, Eastern Towhees, Veeries, and Scarlet Tanagers were found in yards with native plantings, compared with yards landscaped with typical non-native ornamentals.



© Dennis Derby/Audubon Photography Awards

A Magnolia Warbler hunts for insects in the spring catkins of a Box Elder tree, a native species in New York City.



## What are a few species that are helpful to plant in New York City?

Assuming that most folks will be looking for compact plants, I'd suggest:

- 1) Goldenrod (important for butterflies including Monarchs; provides seeds for birds over the winter)
- 2) Common Milkweed or Butterfly Weed (host plant for Monarchs; nectar source; soft fibers provide nesting material for American Goldfinches, Warbling Vireos, and orioles)
- 3) Dwarf Inkberry Holly (its fruit lasts through the winter)
- 4) Dwarf Chinkapin Oak (acorns for Blue Jays and other birds; caterpillars for songbirds)

## How can I learn more?

Explore Audubon's Plants for Birds site and native plant database: enter your zip code to see species native to your area at [audubon.org/plantsforbirds](https://audubon.org/plantsforbirds). Also check out the excellent and comprehensive NYC Parks *Native Species Planting Guide for New York City* at [on.nyc.gov/2YzQHxW](https://on.nyc.gov/2YzQHxW).

NYC Audubon's new website, coming in early 2021, will include a new native plants page with more local resources, including plant suggestions from Board Member Chris Cooper. Finally, make sure to read our review of entomologist Douglas Tallamy's new book, *Nature's Best Hope*, below! ■

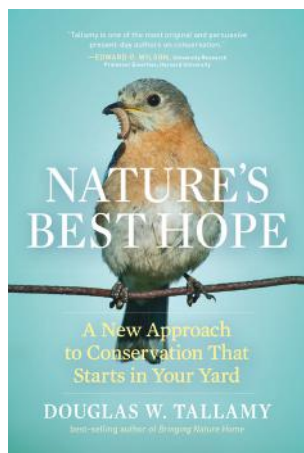


© David Speller

A Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeds at the flowers of native Jewelweed.

## BOOK REVIEW

By Carol Peace Robins



**NATURE'S BEST HOPE:  
A NEW APPROACH TO CONSERVATION THAT  
STARTS IN YOUR YARD**  
By Douglas W. Tallamy  
Timber Press, 2020

Entomologist Douglas Tallamy's newest book was a step ahead of a September United Nations report, which *The New York Times* described as warning of a "catastrophic biodiversity collapse" that "endangers humanity's food supply, health and security."\*

In *Nature's Best Hope*, Tallamy grimly reports that "ninety-five percent of the country has been logged, tilled, drained, grazed, paved, or otherwise developed." Some of us living in cities and suburbs have little or no relationship with the natural world. In these areas, occupied by barren lawns and invasive exotic plants,

wildlife populations as a whole, and specific species in particular, are rapidly declining because the native plants they depend on have been supplanted.

Tallamy insists that it's not good enough just to protect our wild national parks, forests, and refuges. We need to transform built-up areas between these vigorous ecosystems with native plants and trees to provide wildlife with more continuous healthy environments.

His proposal: We must restore the areas where we live and work—yards, corporate landscapes, municipal parks—by replacing at least half of lawns, including exotic plantings, with native vegetation. Doing so would turn 20 million far-ranging acres into a newly linked natural food web. Tallamy calls his plan Homegrown National Park.

It's a plan both exceedingly optimistic and utterly compelling. That the whole population will sign on to this transformation seems very ambitious. But readers unfamiliar with the subject, on learning of the environmental benefits and pure joy of inviting cardinals and bumblebees and Monarchs to their yards and neighborhoods, just might join the growing native plant movement by heading outside and digging in. To spur people on, Tallamy supplies online resources including National Audubon's Plants for Birds program.

*Nature's Best Hope* illustrates our landscape challenges with examples of homes surrounded by sterile lawns. To see

examples of similar yards beneficially and creatively transformed, pick up Tallamy's earlier book, *The Living Landscape*, a large-format picture book of native garden designs. His seminal work on the ecological importance of native plants, *Bringing Nature Home*, is required reading for anyone interested in wildlife ecology.

While Tallamy's proposal may be just one part of the massive efforts required to truly "give Nature hope" on a global scale, it is an important effort for birds and wildlife, to which almost anyone can contribute. And his ideas are making headway: As the native plant movement has caught on in the past few decades, in large part thanks to Tallamy's research, the public has started demanding change at a governmental level.

A state law was passed in New Jersey in 2017 requiring that transportation authorities use only native plants to landscape roadways. In New York City, the City Council passed Local Law 11 in 2013, requiring the use of native species when planting in natural areas, and the creation of a native plant guide to be updated every five years. According to NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver's introduction to the guide, Local Law 11 is "aimed at decreasing the presence of exotic monocultures in favor of native plants throughout the landscapes of New York City, big and small." ■

\*Read the recent United Nations report *Global Biodiversity Outlook 5* at [cbd.int/gbo5](https://cbd.int/gbo5).

# THROUGH ATLASERS' EYES: THE BIRDS OF BREEDING BIRD ATLAS III

By Molly Adams



**Y**ear one of the third Breeding Bird Atlas in New York State (running from 2020 to 2024) is nearly over. Major accomplishments were documented in both the City and statewide, with nearly four times the amount of data submitted in this first year than in the entire second Atlas (conducted from 2000 to 2005). Across the state, over 1,500 Atlasers submitted more than 100,000 checklists. Of the 250 breeding species documented in the state, 215 have already been confirmed this year.

In New York City, Atlas volunteers confirmed several notable breeding species, including Blue Grosbeak, Acadian Flycatcher, Pileated Woodpecker, and Sedge Wren—the latter two being Atlas firsts for the City. Both Blue Grosbeak and Sedge Wren nested at two of the City's capped landfill parks, emphasizing the importance of these reclaimed waste sites, now transformed into rich habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Grassland birds have rapidly declined throughout North America and have experienced some of the steepest population declines of any group of birds in the United States. In August,

three pairs of Sedge Wrens, which specialize in grassland habitat, were found nesting in the grasslands of Staten Island's Freshkills Park during routine bird-banding operations. The Sedge Wren is listed as Threatened in New York State and is a rare visitor to New York City. These three pairs are the first to breed in the City since the 1960s, making this an Atlas record here. They join a growing breeding colony of Grasshopper Sparrows at Freshkills Park.

While not strictly a grassland bird, the Blue Grosbeak is a species that lives in habitats that include a mix of grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees—and the species also seem to be attracted to our City's capped landfills. As there are very few documented breeding pairs of Blue Grosbeaks in New York State, this year we are very excited about a successful nest found in Brooklyn's Shirley Chisholm





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State Park, which opened just last year. (Blue Grosbeaks also bred in recent years in Freshkills Park, but this year's Brooklyn nest is the first confirmed Atlas record in New York City since the first Atlas, conducted from 1980 to 1985.)

You can see a few more confirmed New York City breeding species on these pages. Data is still being processed for this year, so stay tuned for more updates from the NYBBAT team. We look forward to reports of winter breeders!

The photos on these pages were taken by Atlas volunteers in order to document breeding activity. We thank them and all their fellow Atlasers for their diligent work. ■

## PHOTOGRAPHY

- 1 Blue Grosbeak male on territory in Shirley Chisholm State Park, Brooklyn © Doug Gochfeld
- 2 Cooper's Hawk adult in Prospect Park, Brooklyn © Peter Paul
- 3 Ruby-throated Hummingbird fledgling in Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens © Lisa Scheppke
- 4 Pileated Woodpecker male and chick in Staten Island Greenbelt © José R. Ramírez Garofalo
- 5 Green Heron family in Prospect Park, Brooklyn © Daisy Paul

- 6 Tree Swallow male in Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens © Ryan F. Mandelbaum
- 7 Yellow Warbler female with nesting material in Pelham Bay Park, Bronx © Jack Rothman
- 8 Acadian Flycatcher fledglings in Prospect Park, Brooklyn © Ryan F. Mandelbaum
- 9 Sedge Wren adult in Freshkills Park, Staten Island © Shannon Curley
- 10 Clapper Rail chicks at Plumb Beach, Brooklyn © Ryan F. Mandelbaum

# GREAT HORNED OWL (*BUBO VIRGINIANUS*)

By Don Riepe

The Great Horned Owl, also known as “Tiger of the Woods” or “Hoot Owl,” is a large, fierce, nocturnal predator. Surprisingly, it is also the most common owl in New York City. A permanent resident and nester, it is found in all five boroughs—especially Staten Island, where it has been recorded in as many as seven parks. In recent years, it has nested right along the trail at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. And on two occasions, I’ve seen and heard one hooting from a neighbor’s dock in Broad Channel, Queens, in the early morning hours. I believe it was trying to communicate with—or chase away—a fake owl on my neighbor’s roof (meant to deter seagulls and pigeons from landing there).

Great Horned Owls are very adaptable: they live in a variety of habitats throughout the Americas from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, including deserts of the southwest, suburbia, farmland, urban parks, and up to the northern limit of boreal forests. They eat rats, mice, rabbits, and other small mammals, but will also take larger prey such as skunks, small raccoons, muskrats, and even small dogs and domestic cats. They have been documented snatching young Peregrine Falcons and Ospreys right from their nests.



A young Great Horned Owl in its nest in Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge



An adult Great Horned Owl

Great Horned Owls do not make their own nests, but rather use tree cavities or take over the nests of squirrels, hawks, herons, crows, and even Bald Eagles. In a New Hampshire swamp, I observed a pair using a Great Blue Heron nest. In Texas, one nested on a ledge right above the entrance to Lady Bird Johnson’s Wildflower Park. Since these owls are “early nesters,” usually laying eggs in February, they will lay claim to old nests before migratory birds return to them. Once established, even Bald Eagles won’t be able to dislodge them from a nest site despite having nearly twice their wingspan and three times their weight.

In the wild, these owls usually live an average of 13–15 years. Captive owls can live much longer; one captive bird lived to the ripe old age of 38. Adult Great Horned Owls have very few, if any, predators, but young owls that leave the nest too early can be killed by bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, foxes, and other predators.

Causes of mortality of both young and adult owls include illegal shooting,

poisoning, and collisions with motor vehicles, telephone and guy wires, and even soccer nets! Long Island wildlife rehabilitator Bobby Horvath told me that in the last two months, he retrieved three Great Horned Owls that had become tangled in soccer nets. The solution may be to cover the nets with canvas when not in use. Although the Great Horned Owl is a “species of low concern,” according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s *Red List of Threatened Species*, North American Breeding Bird Survey data indicates that its population declined by about 33 percent across North America between 1966 and 2015.

As with all raptors, female Great Horned Owls are larger than males; the largest female on record weighed 5.5 pounds. (The average weight is 3.1 pounds.) The bird’s “horns,” technically called “plumicorns,” are actually feather tufts. These may assist with sound transmission, serve to communicate with other owls, or help camouflage the owl’s silhouette while sitting in trees. No one knows for certain. One thing is sure: these majestic raptors have adapted well to human environments and are always an exciting find in New York City’s parks.

(If you encounter a Great Horned Owl while birding, maintain your distance and avoid disturbing it. Do not share or post its exact location. An owl in the City may already be under stress. When flushed from its daytime roost, this nocturnal bird may be harassed by crows, jays, and other birds, and be unable to find another suitable place to rest.) ■

Give a “Hoot Owl” to an owl fan in your life: see artist Janet Mavec’s limited-edition Great Horned Owl pendant in the Give a Gift for the Birds section, on the back cover.

## REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Make sure that New York City remains a haven for the birds and wildlife you love. A bequest to NYC Audubon is a generous and straightforward way to safeguard birds and their habitat in New York City’s five boroughs. This can be expressed in a will as simply as, “I bequeath [a sum of money, a percentage of my estate, or an IRA, life insurance policy, or investment/bank account] to New York City Audubon Society, 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523, New York, NY 10010.” Consult with your attorney to determine what is best for your situation. To learn more about planning a gift for NYC Audubon, visit [nycadubon.org/leave-a-legacy](https://nycadubon.org/leave-a-legacy), or contact Director of Development Kellye Rosenheim at (646) 502-9611 or [development@nycadubon.org](mailto:development@nycadubon.org).



# DAVID L. BURG—A REMINISCENCE

April 26, 1950 (New Haven, CT)–July 11, 2020 (Stewart State Forest, NY)

By Peter P. Blanchard III

*“[Reaching the empty beach, the shorebirds] were an extension of myself, of ends I had not yet imagined. In their high awareness they seemed to touch us all in our neglect. I was not alone on the beach. The earth had once again rescued me from exile.”*

— John Hay, *In the Company of Light* (1998)

At the age of 70, David Burg departed this world doing what he loved to do, exploring nature on a hike with a friend. David not only explored the natural world, he revered and celebrated it through action. His independent and indomitable spirit lives on in the urban wilds that he championed.

David’s path toward environmental advocacy had an early start. To counter the asthma from which he suffered as a boy, his mother took him on long road trips through rural Connecticut. As the farms, fields, and woodlands rolled by, his fascination with the land began to build. An intellectually curious father and a gardening uncle also fostered David’s receptivity to the natural world. Despite a learning disability, David was bright and was an avid reader. His Jewish upbringing heightened an awareness of societal needs and of responsibility to higher causes.

Beginning in 1966, without a high school diploma, David launched himself into fieldwork for a number of institutions and organizations, including Yale University’s Department of Ornithology, Massachusetts Audubon, the Berkshire Museum, The Nature Conservancy, and the Nature Reserves Authority of Israel.

As his wife Jean pursued a medical degree, the family moved to a number of urban settings, including Pittsfield, MA, Boston, Philadelphia, and eventually the Bronx, where they settled in 1985. According to his son, Noah, David found in the Bronx “a serendipitous setting which helped him to marry his early passion for the wilds of New England with his interest in activism and social justice.” A love affair with nature in New York City was beginning.

Once settled in the City, David began 15 years on NYC Audubon’s board of directors, serving as president from 1993 to 1995. At the time of his death, he was a member of the advisory council. From 1994 to 1996, David was a project planner for coastal habitat restoration, enthusiastically marshaling NYC Audubon’s volunteer efforts at Bayswater State Park and Dubos Point Wetlands Sanctuary in Queens.

David was a quintessential environmental activist. While government agencies and environmental nonprofits are prime movers in the conservation of natural areas, individual citizens can play a key role in catalyzing and advancing that conservation. In physical energy, in presence, and in spirit, David stood behind the large-scale published studies of remaining open space around Jamaica Bay by NYC Audubon and The Trust for Public Land: *Buffer the Bay* (1987) and *Buffer the Bay Revisited* (1992).

David was amazed and enthralled by the continued existence of natural landscapes in the heart of a great city. While these lands were often maligned and neglected, under the relentless pressure of housing development and industrial expansion, David found that urban nature was holding its own. From his perspective,



David Burg, photographed by his son Noah on a hike last year

the remaining natural areas in the five boroughs represented a patchwork of a once magnificent quilt: the precolonial Hudson River estuary with its wooded shores and vast marshes.

The conservation and stewardship of land within the confines of a city is neither an easy nor an assured task. David was quick to recognize primeval marshland’s extraordinary coexistence with roaring jets overhead, scrawled graffiti on rocks, and endless flotsam and jetsam, the tide-born “gifts” of the City’s coastal waters. During a 1994 interview for CBS Morning News, he walked along the Pelham Bay shoreline and made a sweeping statement that encompassed all the “islands” in his urban sea: He proudly announced, “This type of beauty is found throughout New York City.”

David is survived by his wife Jean, son Noah, daughter-in-law Amber Reed, and grandsons Isaac, Milo, and Oren. Oldest grandson Isaac, a recent college graduate living in Brooklyn, inherited his grandfather’s love of learning and knack for generously sharing all he knew; Isaac is involved with childcare programs, preschool learning pods, and tutoring.

With his son Noah, David traveled and tent-camped far and wide, sharing a love of the outdoors and a passion for nature. Noah’s early adventures with his father ranged from monitoring bluebird nest boxes to caring for a menagerie of injured birds, which included a Wood Duck, a grebe, a Great Horned Owllet (rescued from drowning) and a Peregrine Falcon (a victim of Hurricane Gloria). Noah holds a PhD in ornithology and lives with his family in Oregon. Despite the distance between West and East Coasts, the apple has not fallen far from the proverbial tree. ■

*Conservationist and environmental activist Peter Blanchard has collaborated with NYC Audubon on three long-range studies in which David Burg was involved, including Buffer the Bay Revisited, Jamaica Bay Coastal Habitat Restoration Project at Bayswater Point State Park and Dubos Point Wetlands Sanctuary, and An Islanded Nature: Natural Area Conservation and Restoration in Western Staten Island, including the Harbor Herons Region. A supporter of NYC Audubon for many years, Blanchard is also the founder of Greenwood Gardens, a public garden in Short Hills, NJ.*

# GIVE THE GIFT OF BIRDS

By Rebecca Minardi

**T**his holiday season, share your love of birds with the people you love. (And don't forget that a NYC Audubon membership is a gift that keeps giving—both to the recipient, and to the birds. See the back cover to learn more about gift memberships—and also find one more gift, Janet Mavec's limited-edition gold Great Horned Owl pendant.)



**Standard Issue 8x25 Binoculars**  
(\$89.95 at [nocsprovisions.com](https://nocsprovisions.com))

These palm-sized bins are the perfect pair for the budding birder in your life. Available in an array of colors and designed for taking photos through a smartphone; great for kids who've caught the birding bug. (Note: for adults, we recommend full-sized 7 or 8x42 binoculars.)



**Bird Collective T-Shirt**  
(\$35 at [birdcollective.com](https://birdcollective.com))

Check it out; not only will you be styling in this soft tee featuring three birds we know and love, but 30 percent of its purchase price goes directly to NYC Audubon.



**Cookies for Grown-Ups**  
(from \$4 at [larkfinefoods.com](https://larkfinefoods.com))

Sure, we all love a chocolate chip cookie, but doesn't a salted rosemary shortbread or a Mexican chocolate cha-cha sound even more tantalizing? This women-owned company also features holiday-themed cookies in December.



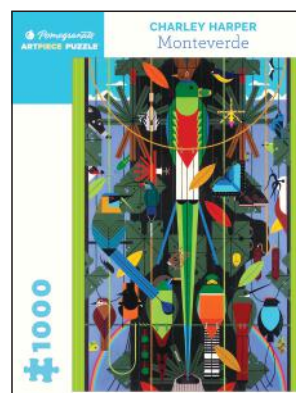
**Great Blue Heron Tote**  
(\$160 at [seabags.com](https://seabags.com))

Start schlepping sustainably with this handsome tote made in Maine from recycled sails. This ample bag will keep all your birding paraphernalia handy.



**Bottle of Wine and Birdhouse Wine Crate**  
(from \$30 at [saarloosandsons.com](https://saarloosandsons.com))

Choose your wine type from Saarloos and Sons vineyard, and it will be shipped to you in a NYC Audubon-branded wine crate that doubles as a birdhouse!



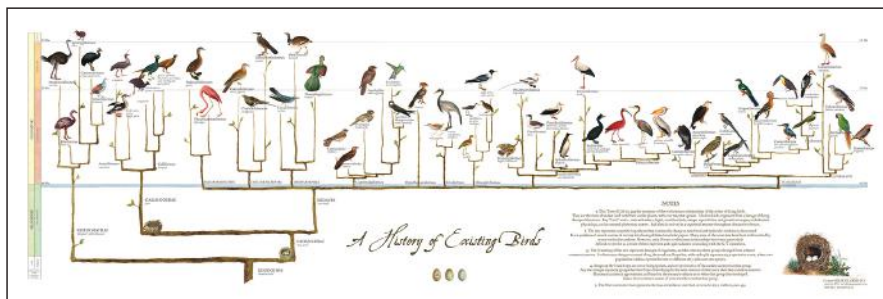
**Charlie Harper: Monteverde Jigsaw Puzzle**  
(\$19.95 at [pomegranate.com](https://pomegranate.com))

Perhaps like many of us, you got interested in puzzles during quarantine. Gorgeous enough to hang on your wall, this puzzle features the dazzling birds of the Costa Rican cloud forest. At 1,000 pieces, it's the perfect activity for the whole family.



**Cranes Face Mask**  
(\$22.50 at [omplanet.co](https://omplanet.co) (Note: ".co" is correct.))

Showcase your favorite hobby with this reusable mask, which features an adjustable nose clip and ear loops, plus two replaceable filters.



**History of Existing Birds Poster** (\$15 at [fairhopegraphics.com](https://fairhopegraphics.com))

Art that educates! This 12x35" poster displays the family tree of the bird world, with an accompanying booklet detailing birds' evolution since the time of their dinosaurian relatives.



## BIRDY BOOKS: KIDS EDITION!

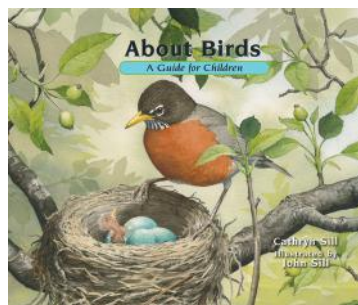
It's never too early to get children excited about birds and the outdoors, and books are a wonderful way to build those connections. NYC Audubon hopes you'll encourage your little ones to curl up with these books, which foster a love and appreciation of our natural world. As a mother of two, I can attest that many of the books are big hits in our household.

### BABIES AND TODDLERS

*Baby's First Book of Birds and Colors*

Phyllis Limbacher Tildes

This book's beautiful (and accurate) water-color illustrations introduce your baby to the birds they may see in their backyard.



*About Birds: A Guide for Children*

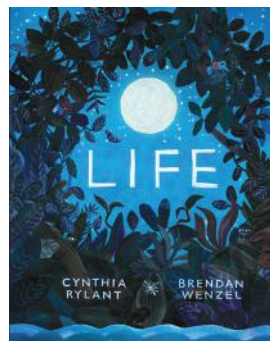
Cathryn Sill, John Sill

A simple primer covering 15 birds, with details on each species in the back.

*Forest Baby*

Laurie Elmquist, Shantala Robinson

Take a walk with this mother and child as they explore the woods on a hike.



*Life*

Cynthia Rylant, Brendan Wenzel

This gorgeous book combines captivating spreads of animals and habitats around the world with a message of perseverance and hope.

### PRESCHOOLERS AND EARLY READERS

*Crow Not Crow*

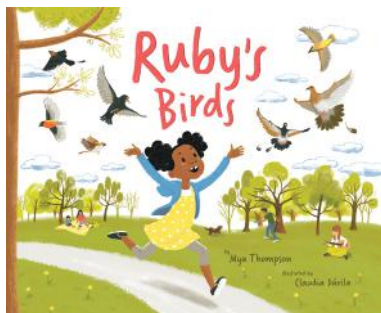
Jane Yolen and Adam Stemple,  
Elizabeth Dulemba

A young girl learns to bird with her father by distinguishing a bird she knows from a bird she doesn't!

*The Hike*

Alison Farrell

Though the wildlife featured in this book is native to the West Coast, kids can learn about a lot of flora and fauna as they follow a trio of girls on a hike.



*Ruby's Birds*

Mya Thompson, Claudia Dávila

Ruby discovers the magical world of birds in Central Park.

*Over and Under the Pond*

Kate Messner, Christopher Silas Neal

A mother and son row on a mountain pond and discover the creatures that inhabit this ecosystem.



*Snow Birds*

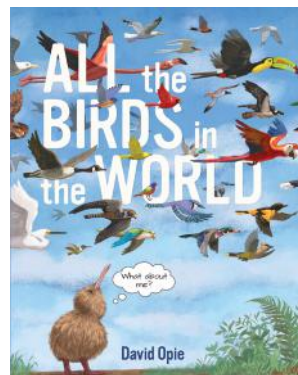
Kirsten Hall, Jenni Desmond

This charmingly illustrated and written picture book introduces the reader to birds that survive and thrive in the snowiest of places. (NYC Audubon helped with the book and is mentioned on the back cover.)

*National Parks of the U.S.A.*

Kate Siber, Chris Turnham

Young readers will delight in learning about our country's parks and the habitats found in each one.



*All the Birds in the World*

David Opie

In this beautiful and educational book, a Kiwi chick, worried about how he fits in with the other birds, learns about how diverse and wild his bird family truly is.

### ELEMENTARY-GRADE AND UP READERS

*Curiositree: Natural World: A Visual Compendium of Wonders from Nature*

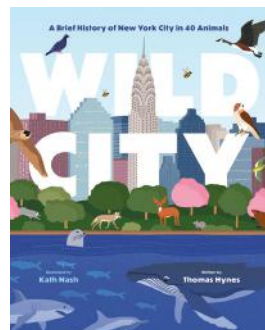
Amanda Wood and Mike Jolley, Owen Davey

This introduction to our planet covers many topics including migration and feathers, accompanied by lovely illustrations. Bonus: the jacket folds out into a poster.

*The Magic and Mystery of Trees*

Jen Green, Claire McElfratrick

Learn all about the "wood wide web" and the incredible ways trees communicate, protect, and grow with one another.



*Wild City: A Brief History of New York City in 40 Animals*

Thomas Hynes, Kath Nash

Check out animal tales both strange and surprising while remembering that we share our city with all manner of wild creatures. Featuring Pizza Rat! ■

# RARE ROOST ALERT!

## NYC AUDUBON'S 16TH ANNUAL FALL ROOST GOES VIRTUAL

By Hillarie O'Toole

**B**y now, I trust many of us would agree that *Zoom fatigue* is real—so this past October 14, it was beyond refreshing to attend a virtual event that left me feeling rejuvenated and invigorated. The Fall Roost committee co-chairs and NYC Audubon staff expertly navigated the challenges of engaging an online audience through an event filled with creative content, seamless transitions, and excellent video production. The 16th annual Roost, aptly titled “Urban Birding in Focus,” brought to light the many ways that birding brings hope and healing to our community.

While we could not safely gather for a fancy evening on the town, the opportunity to congregate in a digital space brought us together in surprising ways. More than 200 folks, many with families huddled together before their computer screens, tuned in from near and far—some taking advantage of the rare opportunity to get dressed up during COVID times, others enjoying the

rare opportunity to attend a gala in more comfortable attire. All convened with the common goal of raising support and awareness for NYC Audubon's programs, including a new virtual after-school initiative based on our Feathered Friends program. With entry-level tickets starting at just \$50, this virtual event opened the door to 87 first-time Roost attendees.

VIP perks included a pre-party cocktail hour and access to a ticket-buyers-only silent auction. There was a festive vibe in the “cocktail rooms” as guests arrived and welcomed familiar faces through the chat feature. These breakout rooms also allowed guests to mingle with people they might not have had the opportunity to meet, had the event been held in person.

This year's silent auction was in two parts. The public portion allowed everyone the chance to bid on prizes well before the day of the Roost, while the private auction took place during the Roost itself. Both were filled with beautiful artworks, fine wines and spirits, and unique craft beer

offerings. Some of the hottest options included intimate, yet safely socially distant, in-person birding opportunities with some of NYC Audubon's top birding guides. Other popular items included American Oystercatcher totes by Sea Bags made exclusively for NYC Audubon, and the award-winning, delightfully bird-focused board game *Wingspan*. Also in the offering:

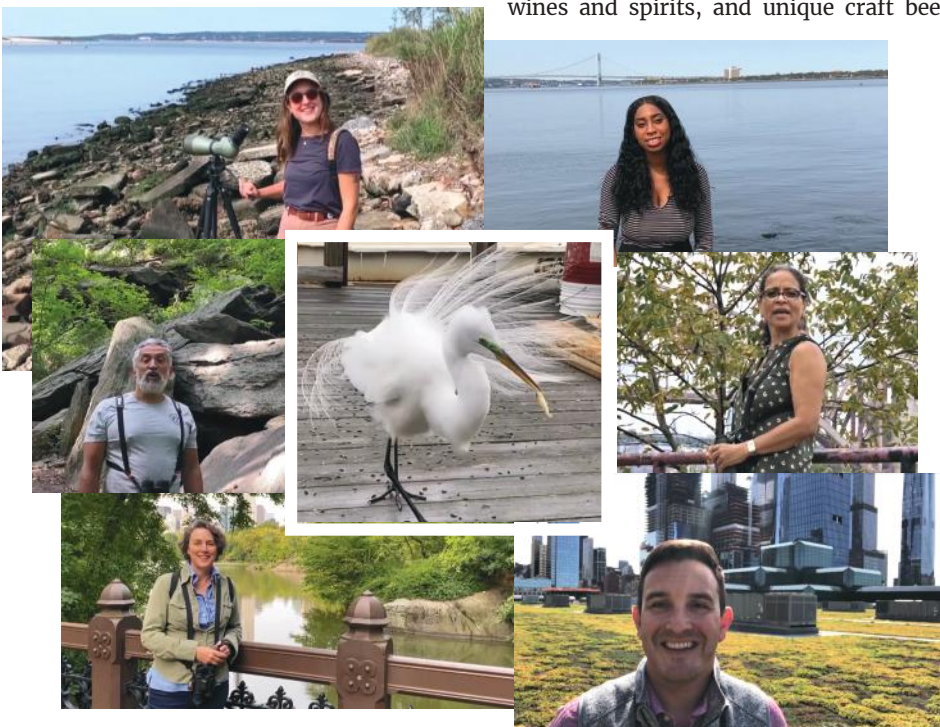


fun Charlie Harper bird puzzles and finely crafted face masks, including one with our new logo (see page 23).



**Alas, the oystercatcher tote and NYC Audubon face mask were made just for the Roost—but other popular Fall Roost auction items are still available for sale; see page 16.**

As the main event opened, staff, volunteers, and board members welcomed us from parks in all five boroughs, followed by a beautiful montage of bird photographs. The next segment featured a NYC Audubon first, a music video. A casting call had gone out mid-September, and on a beautiful fall morning dozens of NYC Audubon members and volunteers had shown up to create a heartwarming film, set to music, about the pure joy of birdwatching. Juxtaposed with the deep conflicts our nation is experiencing, it brought new meaning to NYC Audubon's mission to share the love, the wonder, the spectacle of birds. By the end, it had me exclaiming “I’m not crying, you’re crying!” as my husband walked into the room and asked why I was sniffling during the Fall Roost. I am certain I am not the only viewer who shed a tear of joy knowing the healing that a deep connection to nature can bring. (You can watch the video at [youtube.com/watch?v=cxvY8rj4Lqo](https://youtube.com/watch?v=cxvY8rj4Lqo), but beware: it's only available through December 30.)



NYC Audubon staff, board, and colleagues greeted the Fall Roost attendees from varied habitats across the City. Clockwise from top left: Molly Adams and Aurora Crooks from Calvert Vaux Park in Brooklyn; Kellie Quiñones from Astoria Park in Queens; Dustin Partridge from the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center green roof; Kellye Rosenheim from Central Park; Emilio Tobón from Inwood Hill Park in northern Manhattan... and Edgar the Great Egret from Jamaica Bay, Queens.





© Lark Song Media/Karen Benfield

**The Fall Roost music video moved many with its depiction of birders of all ages and backgrounds coming together during the pandemic to share their love of birds.**

The following segment was nothing short of mind-blowing. I always knew that actor, comedian, and GRAMMY-award winning musician Steve Martin was a special human being, a true renaissance man. These beliefs were reinforced by the introduction given by longtime local birder Al Levantin, who was portrayed by Martin in the 2011 film *The Big Year*. When he'd learned Martin was to play him in the movie, Al professed he'd been "deeply flattered." When Al visited the set during filming, Martin asked him first off "how I pronounced my name. He wanted to get it right. The details matter to him."

After being introduced to the Roost audience, Martin acknowledged that in spite of his numerous interests, he is no birder, but his wife is—and he has long been lovingly amused by her obsession with the

"rare bird alert" hotline. We were then treated to a performance of his "Rare Bird Alert," originally composed for bluegrass band, and newly orchestrated by Carol Jantsch for the world-class Philadelphia Orchestra. Subtitles highlighted moments of humor interspersed with the orchestral instruments' boisterous, melodic interpretations of bird calls, as a cellist tapped out the drumming of a "Four-stringed Woodpecker, *Knocke on woodion*," and the oboist squeaked out the "Double-reeded Canary, *Noiseum obnoxius*." It was awe-inspiring to see a virtual musical collaboration of this caliber take place during this time when we do not have access to concert halls.

Another highlight of the evening occurred when Roost participants had the chance to demonstrate their support of initiatives that bring the joy of birding to all New Yorkers. NYC Audubon Board Member Chris Cooper has long worked to make birding more inclusive through his Feathered Friends after-school birding club, which will now take place in the digital world for New York City students thanks to the Fall Roost's virtual "paddle raise." As an introduction to the fund drive, an excerpt was shown from a recent NOVA/PBS production in which Cooper shares the joys and challenges of #BirdingWhileBlack, and eloquently states, "The birds belong to all of us!" (You can view the excerpt at [youtube.com/watch?v=Z-RQYQU6zMc&t](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Z-RQYQU6zMc&t).) Testimonials from self-proclaimed "bird nerds" as young as 10 described the benefits of being out in nature and the



© Danny Clinch

**Is that a Purple Martin? Steve Martin made a special guest appearance at the Roost this year.**

mindfulness of observation. It was thrilling to see the numbers climb in real time as viewers texted in their donations, which exceeded \$27,000, surpassing the \$15,000 goal and meeting a match challenge offered by the Robert Wilson Foundation and Mike and Mary Tannen. In the Roost chat, Cooper cheered, "\$16,970 and rising?!!! THIS. IS. AWESOME." And awesome it is.

To top off the evening, guests were invited to a lively round of trivia hosted by Senior Conservation Biologist Kaitlyn Parkins through the *Kahoot* app. Participants got to show off their witty "bird nerd" humor through aliases that included: BKBirber, jailbird15, and notabirdnerd, just to name just a few. Those quickest to answer and with the widest-ranging knowledge of birds and bird cultural references were rewarded. The competition was intense, but all in good fun, with the top three winners (MeowKing, BKLYN, and Paul Tweet) scoring prizes from Lark Fine Foods.

This virtual Fall Roost absolutely hit the ball out of the park—and sets a high bar for future in-person events to retain such inclusivity and joy. What a time to be a part of the NYC Audubon family! Special thanks to Fall Roost Committee Co-Chairs Karen Benfield, MaryJane Boland, Marcia T. Fowle, Catherine Schragis Heller, Tatiana Kaletsch, and Jenny Maritz. ■



© Lark Song Media/Karen Benfield

**Tam Gavenas, an enthusiastic 13-year-old birder from Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen, was featured in the Fall Roost music video in the Central Park Ramble—and was a lot of fun to have in our birding group. Tam's mother recalls what a "big deal" it was when Tam was old enough to become a NYC Audubon KIDS member; he received a membership certificate wrapped up as a gift for his eighth birthday.**

# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE FALL ROOST

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Catherine Schragis Heller  
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## WELCOME TO THE ROOST

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Dan Zucker

**And thanks to the 66  
people who supported us  
by buying \$50 tickets to  
the show.**

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THE AFTER-SCHOOL BIRDING PROGRAM

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Tatiana Kaletsch  
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#### SPECIAL THANKS

Karen Benfield

#### Video Production

Producer: Lark Song

Media/Karen Benfield

Directors of Photography:

Liam Marshall and

Karen Benfield

Editor: Liam Marshall

Additional video footage:

Jeff Kimball, Don Riepe,

Cathy Weiner,

D. Bruce Yolton

WGBH/Nova: "Joys and  
 Challenges of Birding  
 While Black"

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 Brittenham LLP

Al Levantin

Steve Martin & The  
 Philadelphia Orchestra  
 ©2020

#### After-School Birding Club Video Participants

Chris Cooper, John Dean,  
 Tam Gavenas, Tim Healy,  
 Thu Lan Perales-Nguyen,  
 Elias Markee-Ratner

#### Music Video Stars

MaryJane Boland, Victoria  
 Booth, Chris Cooper,  
 John Dean, Steven Dean,  
 Tam Gavenas, Kathryn  
 Heintz, Janice Laneve,  
 Alice McInerney, Raymond  
 Mendez, Thu Lan Perales-  
 Nguyen, Daniel Picard,  
 Kellie Quiñones, Neil  
 Runyon, David Spawn,  
 Virginia Stotz, Celeste  
 Torello, Cathy Weiner,  
 Tod Winston, Bibi Yasseen

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Ryan F. Mandelbaum,  
 Laura Meyers, François  
 Portmann, Don Riepe,  
 David Speiser, Lloyd  
 Spitalnik, Tom Stephenson,  
 Gabriel Willow, D. Bruce  
 Yolton, Ryan Zucker

#### Stock Music

Sasha\_Grey/Pond5

#### Graphic Design

StudioKat/Kat Nemeck

#### Silent Auction

GiveSmart

#### Zoom Production

WMC Creative

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



© Lark Song Media/Karen Benfield

The 2020 Fall Roost raised funds to support a virtual expansion of NYC Audubon's Feathered Friends after-school program in New York City.

## NYC AUDUBON, REFRESHED

By Andrew Maas

**N**YC Audubon has a fresh new look! To mark our 40th anniversary, we've reinvigorated our logo and style to better reflect all the habitat we protect and create in New York City. Our founding members began by opposing a destructive "restoration" plan of the Central Park Ramble in 1979—and in the ensuing four decades, we've worked to protect open land around Jamaica Bay, grassland habitat in Brooklyn's Floyd Bennett Field, and the wild Harbor Heron islands. Today we're spurring the creation of green roofs in all five boroughs and studying their importance as habitat. NYC Audubon is dedicated to making the City greener and more welcoming to birds and all wildlife.

Created by the talented team at Reitdesign, our refreshed logo offers a view into a greener New York City, highlighting the City's grassy and forested areas and incredible shoreline, with the now ubiquitous American Kestrel soaring above. We hope our new look encourages all New Yorkers across the five boroughs to join us in exploring and conserving these precious and critical habitats. We look forward to unveiling a completely redesigned website that will match our new look and improve visitors' experience in early 2021. Be on the lookout for announcements online in *The eGret* and on social media [@nycaudubon](https://twitter.com/nycaudubon).



## EVENTS & ADVENTURES



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

priority. Updates regarding virtual events such as classes and workshops will be announced through *The eGret* eNewsletter and posted to our website as they become available.

To view “virtual birding” programs and other suggestions for staying involved with birding and bird conservation efforts during this time, visit [nycadubon.org/virtual-birding](https://nycadubon.org/virtual-birding).

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

NYC Audubon’s guides and staff look forward to seeing and birding with you all again, as soon as it is safe again for all concerned.

### WINTER 2020-2021 LECTURE SERIES

We are excited to bring you lectures for the 2020-2021 season in a new, virtual format. For information about our latest offerings, please be sure to check [nycadubon.org/lectures](https://nycadubon.org/lectures). All lectures are free and open to the public. This series has been made possible by the support of Claude and Lucienne Bloch.

### NYC AUDUBON MEMBERS-ONLY EVENTS

We miss you! In-person member events are still postponed because of the pandemic. More virtual outings with some of your favorite guides are in the planning stages. Look for announcements by email, in *The eGret*, and at [nycadubon.org](https://nycadubon.org).

## NEWS & NOTES



### NYC AUDUBON RECEIVES FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION

This fall, NYC Audubon was awarded a grant from the Disney Conservation Fund for shorebird research, conservation, education, and Share the Shore outreach in Jamaica Bay. The fund supports local efforts around the world aimed at saving wildlife, inspiring action, and protecting the planet, with more than \$100 million distributed to nonprofit organizations since 1995. We are honored to receive this grant to help protect shorebirds like the American Oystercatcher and Semipalmated Sandpiper and engage the Jamaica Bay community in wildlife conservation.

Through a Five Star and Urban Waters grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NYC Audubon will work with five community partners to restore and enhance wildlife habitat in Jamaica Bay and Coney Island and engage New Yorkers in community science wildlife monitoring and environmental stewardship. Partners are the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, American Littoral Society, Sadhana, Brooklyn Marine STEM Education Alliance, Partnership for Parks, and the National Park Service.

### SHIRLEY CHISHOLM STATE PARK OPENS NEW CENTER

Brooklyn’s newest bird habitat, Shirley Chisholm State Park, recently opened a new Environmental Education Center on its Fountain Avenue (eastern) side. This year, NY Breeding Bird Atlas III volunteers found nesting Blue Grosbeaks in the park, a rare species for New York City. (See page 12.) Learn more about Shirley Chisholm State Park at [parks.ny.gov/parks/200](https://parks.ny.gov/parks/200).

### BIRDING BY SUBWAY BROCHURE UPDATED

We’ve updated and expanded our *Birding by Subway* brochure to include hotspots such as Brooklyn’s Marine Park Preserve. If you’re a member or supporter of NYC Audubon and receive *The Urban Audubon* in the mail, you’ll receive a copy of *Birding by Subway* in time for spring migration.

### NYC AUDUBON BIENNIAL REPORT

NYC Audubon’s 2019-2020 Biennial Report is on its way. Digital publication is planned for January and will be announced in *The eGret*.

### THE eGRET COMES TWICE A MONTH

*The eGret* eNewsletter now arrives in your inbox twice a month in order to deliver more timely news in a shorter format. (To only receive one *eGret* email at the beginning of the month, update your email preferences through *The eGret* and select “Do Not Send Mid-month *eGret* Updates.”)



Audubon Mural artwork by ESPY. Photo © Ami Chler

This new Fox Sparrow mural at Upper Manhattan’s Wheels School is a nod to the school’s science teacher, Dr. Jared Fox.

### NEW AUDUBON MURALS ARISE IN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

Two new Audubon Murals were recently created at the Wheels School in Manhattan’s Washington Heights, spearheaded by the school’s science teacher, Dr. Jared Fox. Dr. Fox is working with his students on a long-term project of creating a green corridor on 182nd Street towards Highbridge Park. We hope to report on the project in an upcoming *Urban Audubon*.

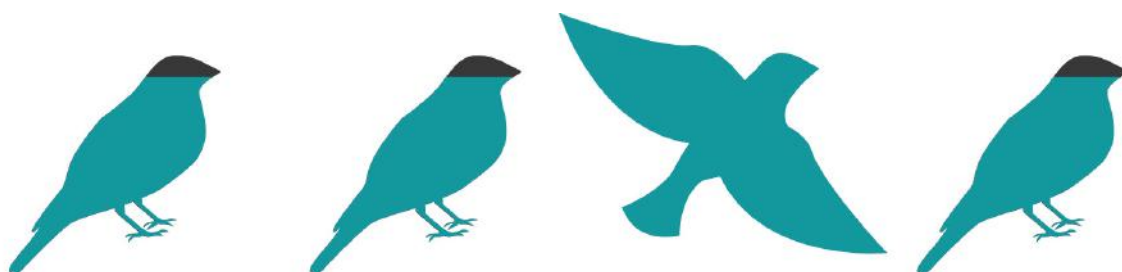
### A FOND FAREWELL TO CONTROLLER DAVID CAVILL

After just over five years of service to NYC Audubon, Controller David Cavill left our organization in November to join the staff of the Academy for Jewish Religion (AJR)—where he was ordained as a rabbi in 2017—as the director of financial aid and operations. AJR is a pluralistic Jewish seminary celebrating its 65th anniversary this year. We extend our sincere gratitude to David, better known to colleagues and friends as “Cavill,” for his dedication to NYC Audubon and his many contributions to our organization’s finances and human resources. Cavill’s kindhearted nature, generous advice, and razor-sharp wit will be missed. NYC Audubon wishes Rabbi Cavill the best in the next phase of his career.



# OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN: WE'RE NEARLY THERE!

It's been a challenging year. In spite of the profound effects of the pandemic, NYC Audubon has never stopped working to make sure that the 350 species of resident, migrating, and breeding birds that depend on our city are protected. We're also making sure that the conservation movement has a future by using this time to expand our community. Our efforts to achieve greater equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility have intensified as our nation reckons with racial injustice. Next up: a virtual After-School Birding Club that will connect kids across the City's five boroughs with each other and with the resources they need to learn about birds and nature. Among the many gifts we appreciate are the fees for cancelled spring trips and classes that were donated back by our members. Thank you for showing your support for the birds and for our work during this difficult period.



**90% achieved**  
**Our Goals:** 10 Gifts of \$40,000

**90% achieved**  
40 Gifts of \$10,000

**135% achieved!**  
40 Gifts of \$5,000

**91% achieved**  
1,000 "ADD \$40" Gifts  
(to be matched 1:1)

You can help. Our 40th Anniversary Campaign will finish on December 31, 2020. We're so close to meeting our goals! We only need \$3,600 more to meet the **1,000 ADD \$40 gift match challenge**. You can make sure that we get there, for the birds and for all New Yorkers. Contribute to our 40th Anniversary Campaign—**be sure to ADD \$40 (or \$400, or \$4,000) when you give or renew your membership**. Or contribute in whatever way that you'd like (see below for options). **Your support is essential. Donate at [nycaudubon.org/donate](https://nycaudubon.org/donate).**

## GIVE MONTHLY

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

## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN KESTREL CIRCLE

Soar above the rest by making a donation of \$2,500 or more. American Kestrel Circle Patrons enjoy special access and exclusive tours once physical distancing restrictions are lifted. See the membership form at right or donate online at [nycaudubon.org/donate](https://nycaudubon.org/donate). Contact us to learn more.

## GIVE A MATCHING GIFT

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

## REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Please consider remembering the birds in your estate plan: see the bottom of page 14.

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

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE** Contributions are essential to our work. Help us reach our goal of \$1,040,000 in individual gifts during our 40th Anniversary year. Count me/us in with my/our support of wild birds in New York City:

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

[ ] **Additionally, I would like to ADD \$40 to my gift above!**  
**"ADD \$40" gifts received before December 31, 2020 will be matched.**

TOTAL AMOUNT: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Enclosed is my check payable to NYC Audubon  
[ ] Charge my credit card: [ ] Visa [ ] MC [ ] Amex [ ] DISC

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form with your payment to:  
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## GIVE A GIFT FOR THE BIRDS



### GIVE A GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

Protect birds and their habitat in New York City  
with a gift membership to NYC Audubon

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

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

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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This holiday season, spread your love of birds along with good cheer. Consider sharing NYC Audubon with your loved ones, at left. See page 16 for a varied selection of bird-inspired gift ideas. (Or give an owl. See below.) Happy Holidays!

### BUBO OWL PENDANT BY JANET MAVEC

All owls are special—but artist Janet Mavec has created this limited-edition pendant just for NYC Audubon, in honor of our 40th anniversary. Named "Bubo" for the Latin name of the Great Horned Owl, *Bubo virginianus*, this highly versatile jewelry will please any nature lover.



Jewelry details:  
18K gold-plated brass  
matte antique finish  
adjustable 28-30"-long chain

If you buy Bubo at [janetmavec.com](http://janetmavec.com), Janet will donate part of the proceeds to NYC Audubon for bird conservation.