



# 2023

## ANNUAL REPORT



CONSERVATION | ADVOCACY | ENGAGEMENT

## A Message from Our Leadership

Dear Friends of NYC Audubon,

The Ovenbird, featured on this report's cover, is known for its oven-shaped nest, echoing song, and chicken-like strut. One of over 350 bird species that visit New York City's parks while migrating along the Atlantic Flyway, the Ovenbird is also, sadly, a frequent victim of very preventable accidents: window collisions. The bird on the cover, found by a Project Safe Flight volunteer last fall, later died from its injuries.

NYC Audubon works to prevent these unnecessary collision deaths, which according to our research, total up to a quarter million a year in the City alone. Since our founding in 1979, generations of dedicated conservationists have built a winning formula to fight such battles: through conservation science, engagement of our bird-loving community, and strategic partnerships, we fuel grassroots advocacy and create long-lasting, meaningful change.

We've made great strides in recent years—passing landmark bird-friendly design and artificial light laws, growing partnerships to retrofit bird-killing buildings across the City, and creating new

bird habitats with an expanding network of green roofs—but there is much more to do.

As an established leader in bird conservation in New York City and across the nation, NYC Audubon is poised to have far greater impact. But to address the monumental scale of the threats we face—the populations of over half of North American bird species are declining—we *must grow*. We will do so only by welcoming all New Yorkers into our conservation community, engaging communities not traditionally involved in birding, and enlisting the City's 8.5 million residents to fight for the birds we love.

*Will you help us grow?* Your support will help protect the Ovenbird and many other species that depend on the City's habitats year-round. The birds need you. Read about our progress in these pages and visit [nycaudubon.org](https://nycaudubon.org) to learn more.

*Help us create  
long-lasting,  
meaningful  
change*



Karen Benfield  
Board President



Jessica G. Wilson  
Executive Director

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The NYC Audubon staff, photographed here at the 2023 Fall Roost, continues to grow to meet the needs of New York City's birds.

### STAFF

*Executive Director:* Jessica G. Wilson

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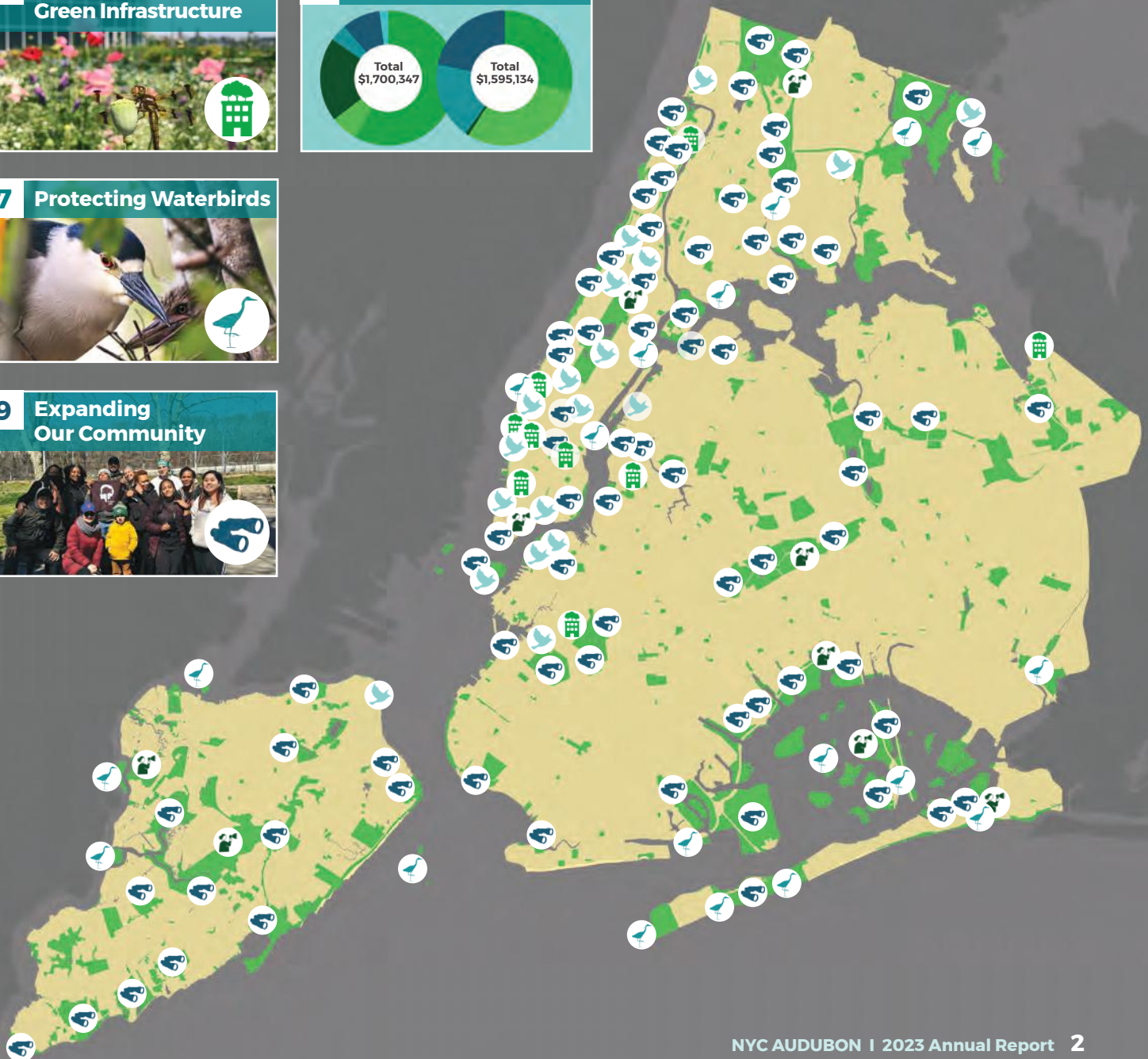
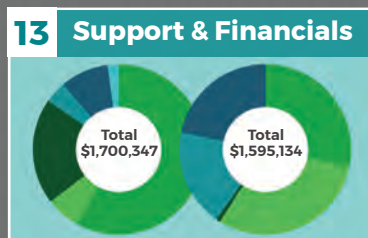


# NYC AUDUBON ACROSS THE CITY

NYC Audubon champions nature in the City's five boroughs through a combination of engaging programs and innovative conservation campaigns. We protect the over 350 species of birds that depend on the City's coastlines, wetlands, forests, and grasslands.



*Find each section of our report at the page numbers at left—and see where we work in each program area, below.*





# MAKING THE CITY SAFER FOR MIGRATING BIRDS

**WE WORK TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF BIRDS THAT DIE IN COLLISIONS WITH GLASS**

NYC Audubon's **Project Safe Flight** uses **grassroots research to fuel bird-friendly partnerships and legislative change.**

In recent years, we've marshalled our 25 years of window-collision data to win passage of the City's landmark **bird-friendly building design legislation** and **Lights Out laws.**

- In 2023 we partnered with over 20 New York City buildings to install bird-friendly glass treatments that have already saved thousands of birds' lives.
- We expanded our collision-monitoring: a record 181 volunteers monitored 47 buildings in all five boroughs.
- Our redesigned, crowd-sourced database of bird collisions, [dBird.org](https://dbird.org), is now used by 90 organizations across the globe — providing data to support bird-friendly policies at a regional and even global scale.

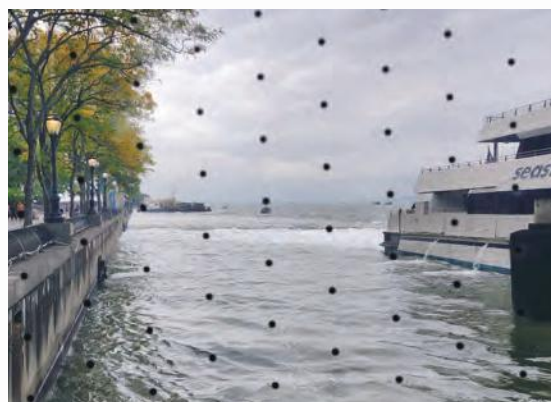
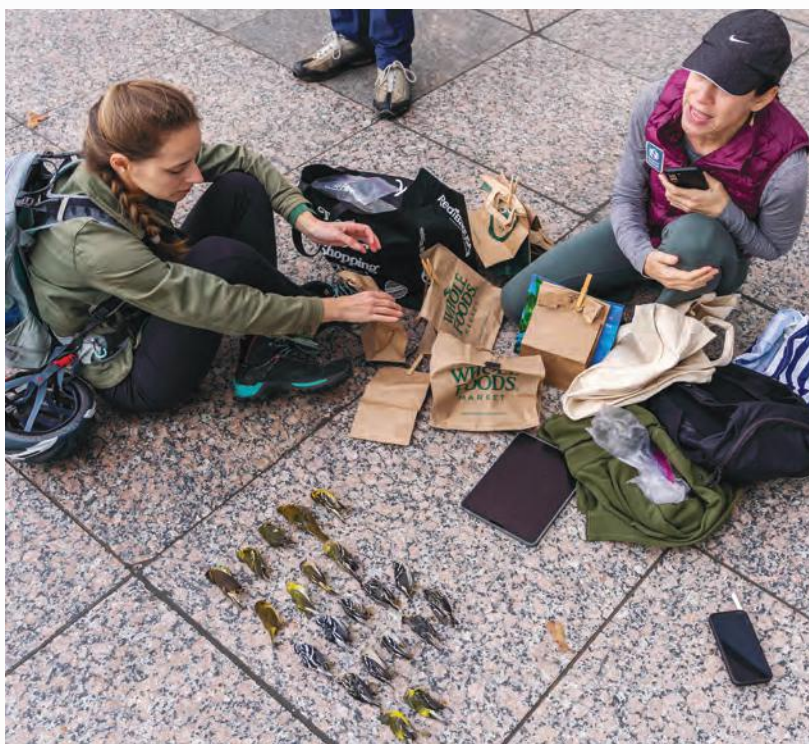


## THE BIRDS WE PROTECT

This young male Common Yellowthroat, injured in a collision with glass in lower Manhattan, is held securely by a collision monitor before transport to a rehabilitator. During spring and fall migration, many birds of this tiny, energetic warbler species pass through New York City, and they are among the most frequent collision victims. The Common Yellowthroat is just one of 125 bird species that our volunteer monitors and [dBird.org](https://dbird.org) contributors have documented dying from window collisions over the past 25 years.

Background photo: Up to a quarter million birds die each year in collisions with glass in New York City.





## VICTORIES FOR BIRDS THROUGH SCIENCE

NYC Audubon's volunteer monitors (left) collect collision victims in lower Manhattan. We use the data collected by our volunteers to advocate for bird-friendly solutions.

At the Brookfield Place Ferry Terminal, for example, we documented many collisions in recent years. We worked with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to retrofit the dangerous glass with a bird-friendly treatment (above) that allows birds to see the glass and avoid collisions. We also worked this year on bird-safe alterations at Circa Central Park, Green-Wood Cemetery, Columbia University, Governors Island, and many more sites across the City.

## IN 2023

**47** buildings monitored for collisions, in all five boroughs

**20** ongoing partnerships to make buildings bird-safe

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- We're developing a standardized collision-monitoring protocol to support bird-friendly change nationwide.
- Through study of the lightscape of lower Manhattan and thermal analysis of birds affected by the annual Tribute in Light, we're supporting expanded Lights Out initiatives.
- We'll continue collaborating on bird-friendly solutions to make high-collision buildings safer for birds.

LEARN MORE at [nycaudubon.org/project-safe-flight](https://nycaudubon.org/project-safe-flight)





# PROVIDING HABITAT WITH GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

**IN A CITY OF CONCRETE AND ASPHALT, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPLIES BOTH HABITAT AND HEALTH BENEFITS**

Through **research and collaborative partnerships**, we study and champion **innovative urban green spaces** that provide habitat for birds, promote urban biodiversity, and support better stormwater management.



## THE JAVITS ROOF: FROM BLACKTOP TO BIRD HAVEN

Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Brown Creeper, and Savannah Sparrow were among 15 new species observed this year on the Javits Center green roof network. The current total of 65 visiting species, including grassland, forest, and wetland birds, is a testament to the rich habitat that the Javits Center roof's food forest, farm, and pollinator garden provide for migrating birds.

- We're learning about birds' use of urban habitat through **expanded wildlife monitoring at nearly 50 sites including the Javits Center** (pictured below), Madison Square Park, and Sherman Creek, in Manhattan; the Bronx River; and Big Rock Wetlands in Queens.
- In 2023 we began a collaboration with a large corporation in Manhattan, allowing us to **study urban green space at a much greater scale**, and to advise a future leader in green infrastructure in NYC.
- As a pioneer in the field, we **shared our expertise with partners and fellow researchers** through over two dozen talks and lectures.

Background photo: Director of Conservation and Science **Dustin Partridge, PhD**, explains NYC Audubon's scientific research at the Javits Center green roof complex to a group of NYC Audubon members.





## IN 2023

**2 million** square feet of green roofs monitored

**20,000** birds using green infrastructure recorded

## STUDYING WILDLIFE ACROSS THE CITY'S GREEN SPACES

NYC Audubon **Senior Manager of Green Infrastructure Myles Davis** (above left) bands a Herring Gull chick on the Javits Center green roof. A new addition to our staff this year, Myles has focused on launching a new large-scale corporate green roof monitoring project and managing our expanded team of wildlife monitors across the City. Armed with a recent Masters degree in conservation biology from Columbia University, Myles's past management experience and research using trail cameras in the City's wild spaces are important assets to our conservation team.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- We'll keep growing our partnerships to boost urban biodiversity and make green spaces richer for birds.
- We'll advocate for more equitable distribution of green roofs in the City's five boroughs.
- By expanding our database of urban green spaces, we'll improve our understanding of these new habitats.

LEARN MORE at [nycaudubon.org/green-infrastructure](https://nycaudubon.org/green-infrastructure)





# PROTECTING WATERBIRDS

**NEW YORK CITY IS HOME TO SOME OF THE LARGEST NESTING WADING BIRD AND SHOREBIRD COLONIES IN THE NORTHEAST**

NYC Audubon **monitors and protects waterbirds**—including beach-nesting American Oystercatchers, migrating Semipalmated Sandpipers, and the **breeding wading birds that serve as bioindicators of the health of New York Harbor.**

- Our **40-year Harbor Herons Nesting Survey** data set fuels advocacy to **protect declining species** like Black-crowned Night-Heron and Glossy Ibis.
- Low-impact **camera monitoring of beach-nesting birds** is helping us understand the threats they face and how to best protect them.
- Through **banding American Oystercatchers and Herring Gulls**, we are studying where our birds go outside breeding season—and their impact on populations throughout the western hemisphere.



## WATERBIRDS IN TROUBLE

According to our research, the City's breeding wading bird population has declined over the past 20 years—a drop caused primarily by a fall in numbers of Black-crowned Night-Heron (above) and Glossy Ibis. Possible causes of these declines include mammalian predators, human disturbance, pollution, and climate change. We seek to better understand these trends, while working to reverse them through public education, advocacy, and collaboration with government agencies.

Background photo: Great and Snowy Egrets, Glossy Ibis, and Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls circle their nesting island in Jamaica Bay. These low-lying islands are vulnerable to flooding and to visitation by both people and predators.





## “CAMERA TRAPS” CAPTURE DANGERS TO BEACH-NESTERS

NYC Audubon's new camera traps, discreet digital cameras focused on nesting American Oystercatchers on the beaches of Queens, have revealed dangers that may be lowering the birds' breeding productivity.

Monitored nests have been disturbed by mammalian predators including raccoons (pictured), opossums, and domestic cats, as well as by people and their dogs entering nesting areas. This evidence allows us to protect these vulnerable birds through targeted public education and our ongoing collaboration with the National Park Service.

## IN 2023

**19** Harbor Heron  
Islands surveyed

**184,708** camera trap  
images taken of nesting  
American Oystercatchers

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- We'll publish a comprehensive analysis of 40 years of Harbor Herons survey data, documenting declines, and advocate for greater wading bird protections.
- To stop oystercatcher nest loss, a full analysis of our camera-trap images using AI technology will identify the causes and guide nest site protection measures.
- Our new *State of the Harbor Herons* report will engage the public and city officials in waterbird conservation.

LEARN MORE at [nycaudubon.org/birds-of-ny-harbor](https://nycaudubon.org/birds-of-ny-harbor)





# EXPANDING OUR COMMUNITY

## THE CITY'S BIRDS NEED ALL OF US

By **sharing the beauty and wonder of birds** with New Yorkers across the five boroughs, we are growing NYC Audubon's activist community and working to **better engage the great diversity of New York City**.

- A diverse group of naturalists led **over 400 guided bird outings across the City, 80% of them free**, enabling us to reach underserved groups with a particular focus on communities of color and beginning birders.
- A new pilot program, **NYCHA in Nature**, engaged **residents of NYC public housing** with nature and birds.
- Our new Spanish-English bird guide, ***Las Aves de la Ciudad de Nueva York***, was distributed to Spanish-speaking bird-lovers and their families at bilingual birding outings and events all over the City.



### BIRDS, ART, AND FAMILY FUN ON GOVERNORS ISLAND

Our Governors Island Nature Center engaged over 3,300 visitors in 2023 with weekly bird outings, an artist-in-residence program, conservation workshops, a display of bird-friendly glass options, and our popular "H-OWL-oween" costume contest. Above, Public Programs Manager Roslyn Rivas points out great birding spots around the City to an Island visitor.



Background photo: Young Conservationist Council Member Efua Peterson leads a NYCHA in Nature outing along Manhattan's East Side waterfront.



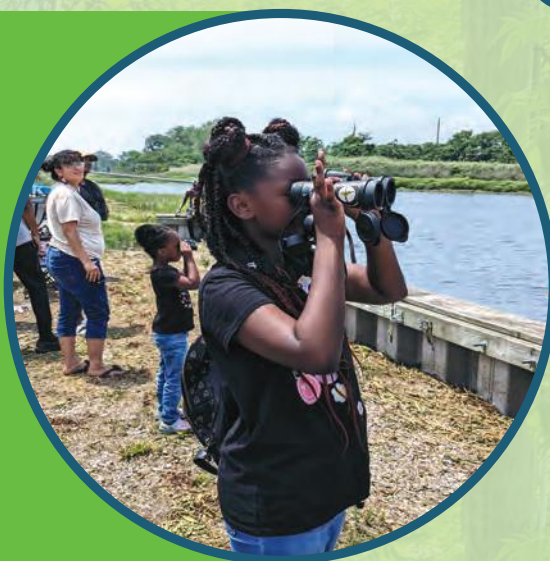


## CHOOSING A NEW NAME FOR BIRD CONSERVATION IN NEW YORK CITY

In March 2023, following a rigorous assessment process, NYC Audubon's board of directors voted to change our name by dropping "Audubon," and to identify a new name that better reflects our organizational values and mission. We continue that work and plan to announce a new name in spring 2024.

For more than four decades, NYC Audubon has worked to create a more sustainable city for wildlife and people. We believe that a new name is a critical step in continuing that mission, and in welcoming all New Yorkers into our conservation community.

Learn more about this decision at [nycaudubon.org/audubon-name](https://nycaudubon.org/audubon-name).



## IN 2023

**13,000** people reached at outings, festivals, and lectures

**326** free bird outings

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- In year two of our NYCHA in Nature partnership with public housing residents, we'll expand to new places and engage more New Yorkers in birds and nature.
- We'll offer more multilingual bird outings, in both Spanish and Mandarin, and publish a Spanish-language version of our popular *Birding by Subway* brochure.

LEARN MORE at [nycaudubon.org/events-birding](https://nycaudubon.org/events-birding)

Background photo: A bilingual bird outing in Brooklyn Bridge Park. Inset at top: Young birders get to know the birds in their neighborhood in the Rockaways, Queens, at a NYCHA in Nature outing this past summer.





# ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

**OUR LONG-TERM RESEARCH AND PASSIONATE COMMUNITY  
DRIVE CHANGE THAT HELPS BIRDS**

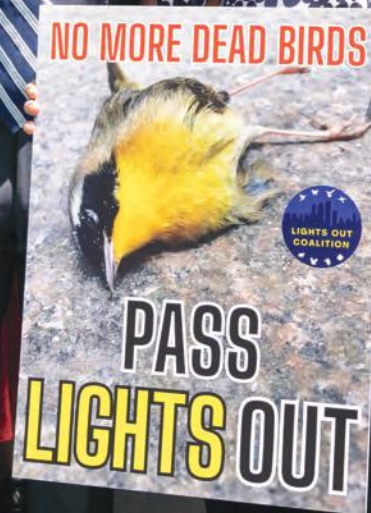
**By marrying decades of science data with the activism of tens of thousands of New Yorkers, we achieve significant conservation impacts.**

- **Legislation to limit artificial lights at night** in commercial buildings, Lights Out Intro 1039, **now has 21 co-sponsors in City Council** (at press time), thanks to a concerted media campaign, mobilized activists, and collaboration with the Lights Out Coalition.
- **We've spoken out on dozens of bird-friendly causes in the City** this year, including advocating against unwise harbor planning, reckless development in Staten Island marshes, and toxic pesticides and rodenticides—while supporting improved management in Jamaica Bay and native plantings in the Bronx.



## GROWING OUR ACTIVIST NETWORK

Our talented advocacy and engagement staff enabled more frequent, impactful contact with our activist corps than ever before. Our social media reach grew 18% in 2023, allowing us to mobilize our grassroots community more quickly and effectively.



NYC Audubon Executive Director Jessica Wilson (second from right) and Board Vice President Christian Cooper (second from left) advocated for passage of Lights Out Intro 1039 in May 2023, in collaboration with New York City Council Member Erik Bottcher (center) and leaders of the Lights Out Coalition.

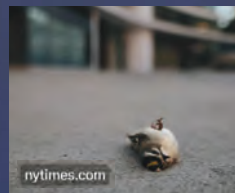




## INCREASING OUR IMPACT

This past August, we welcomed Saman Mahmood (at right, with Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso) as our first director of advocacy and engagement, greatly increasing our ability to effect positive change. A Staten Island resident, Saman's expertise bridging government relations and grassroots campaigns will bolster our efforts to protect urban biodiversity and make the City more sustainable for birds and people.

Saman calls NYC conservation her "passion work": "I'm passionate about making a positive impact on my community through government and building partnerships that bring long-term effects and long-term resilience."



## SPEAKING OUT FOR BIRDS

NYC Audubon's advocacy took many forms this year. Clockwise:

- ◆ **Public Programs Manager Roslyn Rivas** roused the crowd at the March to End Fossil Fuels.
- ◆ **Executive Director Jessica Wilson** spoke on ABC7 Eyewitness News about bird collisions.
- ◆ The work of **Director of Conservation and Science Dustin Partridge, PhD**, was covered in a front-page *New York Times* story on our success retrofitting Circa Central Park.
- ◆ **Advocacy and Engagement Associate Jesse McLaughlin** testified to the City Council on the dangers of rodenticides to the City's hawks and owls.

## IN 2023

**13** city, state, and federal agencies engaged  
**Dozens** of support letters sent and signed

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- We'll advocate for the expansion of NYC's Lights Out legislation to cover all commercial buildings.
- We'll work with the Mayor's Office to develop bird-friendly guidelines for drone shows.
- We'll advocate for improved green roof tax incentives, especially in areas most vulnerable to storms and heat.

**LEARN MORE** at [nycaudubon.org/advocacy](https://nycaudubon.org/advocacy)

Background photo: The City's artificial nighttime lighting is perilous for millions of migrating birds.



# SUPPORT FOR NYC AUDUBON

NYC Audubon's conservation, engagement, and advocacy work is made possible by the generous contributions of many individuals and organizations. We express particular gratitude for leadership support from the Leon Levy Foundation, The New York Community Trust, Sarah K. de Coizart Article TENTH Perpetual Charitable Trust, Hudson River Foundation, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The supporters listed below donated gifts received from January 1 through December 31, 2023. We also thank the thousands of members and donors for their collective gifts under \$500, as well as our many community partners and in-kind donors.

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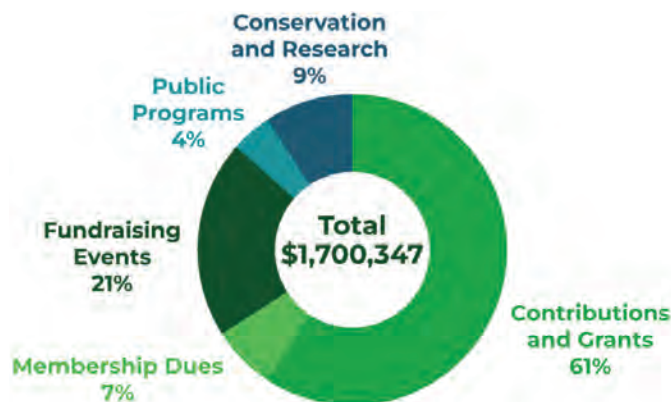
#### BEQUESTS

Estate of Ruth G. Klain

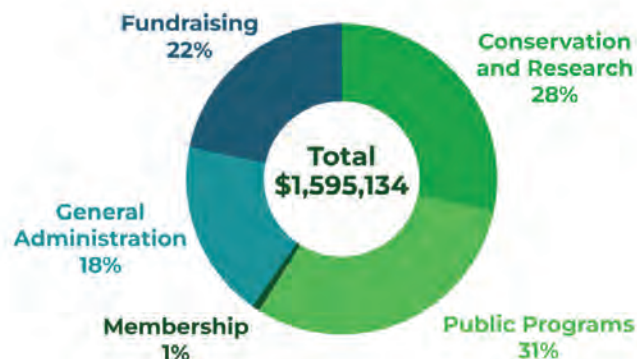
## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

*For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2023*

### REVENUE



### EXPENSES



**LEARN MORE:** View our complete financial statements at [nycaudubon.org/reports-financials](https://nycaudubon.org/reports-financials)

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*The NYC Audubon conservation team sets up “mist nets” to band shorebirds in the Rockaways, Queens.*

***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.***