



THE URBAN AUDUBON

**Improving Habitat
for Songbirds at
Jamaica Bay**

**The Extraordinary
Black Skimmer**

**Up on the Roof
(In Brooklyn)**



**NYC AUDUBON
MISSION & VISION**

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.

THE URBAN AUDUBON

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Printing & Mailing Kase Printing, Inc.
Design Whitehouse & Company
Art Director Christina Rubin
Publisher NYC Audubon

THE URBAN AUDUBON is published four times per year (spring, summer, fall, and winter) by New York City Audubon Society, Inc.

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Harry Maas



Spring is arriving, and for me, spring means the beginning of the birding year. Millions of birds return from their wintering grounds and pass through New York City or stay to breed here—and our wintering birds head north to begin their breeding season.

Spring is also the beginning of the new fiscal year for NYC Audubon (coincidentally... I think). It is a good time to reflect on who we are, where we are, and where we are going. And as my fifth and final year as president comes to an end in June, it seems a good time for me to reflect as well.

My first tour of duty for NYC Audubon was serving on the board in the 1980s, the early years of our organization. We had no paid staff, very limited funds, and relied on the board and a few volunteers. Our work was primarily reactive advocacy involving policies or practices we felt were detrimental to birds. We offered a small number of bird walks.

Now, during my second time around, the changes and progress I've seen are profound and amazing: a proactive, engaged board, a growing and professional staff, seasonal interns, an enthusiastic and large cast of citywide volunteers, a science team that is nationally respected, and a host of corporate, foundation, and individual sponsors and supporters that allow NYC Audubon to do all it can for the benefit of birds and their habitats.

Current programs and activities are listed in this issue of *The Urban Audubon* and in *The eGret* monthly newsletter, and can also be viewed at www.nycaudubon.org. Our work runs the gamut from science-based advocacy and programs such as Project Safe Flight to bird walks in all of the City's major parks and open spaces. And our reach is citywide, as we have an ongoing presence in all five boroughs..

Where do we go from here? The board faces this question currently as we prepare our Strategic Plan for 2017 and beyond. The challenges confronting birds and their habitat in this city (and, unfortunately, worldwide) are numerous, diverse, and daunting—and we aim to continue to grow and expand our programs in order to meet these challenges head on. To do so, we need your support, support you have provided since our inception. We also welcome ideas, opinions, or suggestions from every one of you as to what else we should be doing and how we can improve what we already do. Please do not hesitate to contact me or anyone on the staff. Your thoughts would be helpful and appreciated.

In the meantime, get out there and enjoy spring migration. Hundreds of species of birds migrate through New York City each year and stop over to rest and feed. If you have never spent a sunny day with southerly winds in a city park in April and May, now is the time to do so.

Happy birding.

SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NYC Audubon is seeking suggestions for nominations to its board of directors for three-year terms beginning in June 2016. Please submit your suggestions to Alexander Ewing, chair of the nominating committee, at nominations@nycaudubon.org. Elections will be held online beginning in May and in-person at our annual meeting on Wednesday, June 8. For a final list of nominees, nominee biographies, and details about the election, visit www.nycaudubon.org/election2016 after May 1.

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Cover Photograph:

American Redstart ©Lloyd Spitalnik

Small Banner Photographs:

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THE EXTRAORDINARY BLACK SKIMMER: BANDING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Ellen Azorin

If you don't live near the seashore, you may not know about the beautiful black skimmer—and the very unusual way nature has equipped it to catch its food, unlike all other American birds. Its large red-and-black bill is knife-thin, the lower half protruding beyond the upper. It flies low over the water on long, black-and-white wings, skimming the surface with its lower mandible and clamping down on any small fish it encounters.

In the New York City area, we're fortunate to host two locations where black skimmers nest: one in Breezy Point on Jamaica Bay in Queens, the other on Nickerson Beach in Hempstead, Long Island. (A third colony may be starting on the Arverne beaches in the Rockaways, and nesting also occurs in several locations further east on Long Island.)

This remarkable bird is considered a "high priority species of greatest conservation need," according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. So these nearby locations offer a rare opportunity to study and better understand the birds' ecology and behavior. This is being accomplished, starting this spring, via a banding project conducted cooperatively by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, NYC Audubon, and the Town of Hempstead Department of Conservation and Waterways. Our own Susan Elbin, director of conservation and science, is one of the certified master banders involved in this project.

©Lloyd Scharnik



The banding itself is a delicate process and occurs just before the chicks fledge. Since the young birds are still flightless, the banding team is able to slowly herd them into a large, temporary corral installed on the edge of their nesting colony. The corral fence is just two feet high, allowing the chicks to see and hear the adults nearby. One at a time, each chick is carefully picked up and held securely by one person, while another attaches an aluminum band with a unique identifying code issued by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service to one of its legs. If the chick is large enough, a second band—brightly colored for easy spotting from a distance—is placed on the opposite leg. Once the chick is banded, it is released to rejoin its parents.

The hope is that by banding a large number of chicks from colonies in both New York and New Jersey, the research team will be able to answer many questions about the population size, distribution, local movement, and full life-cycle habitat needs of black skimmers—here in New York City and along the eastern seaboard. With better understanding, wildlife managers will be able to achieve significant conservation goals for this vulnerable beach-nesting species.

And if you haven't done so already, perhaps you will be lucky enough one day to observe the magnificent black skimmer as it streaks across coastal waters' surface, snapping up prey in its beak and soaring aloft on outstretched wings.

VOLUNTEER!



Work in NYC Audubon's friendly office or in the field and make a difference for the City's wildlife. There are many ways to help. If interested in any of the projects listed below, please contact us at volunteer@nycaudubon.org or 212-691-7483 x304. For information on spring volunteer events such as beach clean-ups and tree plantings, visit us at www.nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events.

OFFICE HELP

Help with mailings, filing, and general office work. Computer skills and birding knowledge are not required. If you do have computer and/or Excel skills, however, we

can always use help with conservation and education projects.

INJURED BIRD TRIAGE

During spring and fall migration, our office is deluged with reports of injured and/or baby birds. Help us by answering the phone, assessing what help is needed, and if appropriate, arranging transport to a rehabilitator.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Become a citizen scientist and help conduct conservation research; read below about the various ways to get involved.

Bird Transporters: We often receive calls from individuals who have

found injured birds but are unable to transport them to a rehabilitator. We need caring volunteers to transport these birds to licensed wildlife rehabilitators in the area. A training session will be held at the Wild Bird Fund Center Wednesday, March 16, 6-7pm.

Project Safe Flight: Spring is here, and migrants confront many hazards as they migrate through New York City. Volunteers are needed to monitor designated buildings for bird collisions, rescue injured birds, and record any casualties. Orientations will be held Monday, March 21, and Thursday, March 24, 6-7pm.

Shorebird Monitoring: Count shorebirds in Jamaica Bay, an important stopover for migratory shorebirds. Strong shorebird identification skills preferred. An orientation will be held Thursday, March 31, 6-7pm.

Horseshoe Crab Monitoring: Count horseshoe crabs, an important food source for migratory shorebirds in Jamaica Bay. Orientations will be held Thursdays, April 14 and 21, 6-7pm.

Harbor Herons Foraging Study: Observe herons and egrets as they forage in New York City waterways. An orientation will be held Monday, May 2, 6-7pm.



This year we join our partners in bird conservation in celebrating the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty. Signed by the United States and Great Britain (acting on behalf of Canada) on August 16, 1916, this treaty was a groundbreaking step in the protection of birds that migrate across national borders. Two years later, the treaty was codified in federal law as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), the first of several treaties enacted to conserve migratory birds. (The MBTA is focused specifically on birds and is not to be confused with the Endangered Species Act, signed in 1973 as a U.S. environmental law to uphold the terms of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora [CITES].) If these important treaties had not been signed, who knows what the bird population would be in the U.S. today?

As we go to print, the 116th Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) has come and gone. The weather leading up to our local counts could be described as “balmy.” No polar vortex, no blizzards, just warm temperatures and the occasional bit of rain. Would this weather affect our CBC results? Had birds moved south, or would they still be here? We saw plenty of American robins, but that was no surprise. The record high for robins in our region was in 2013, during the 114th count. Overall sightings were consistent with counts in recent years, despite the unseasonable weather, and we tallied 4,264 individuals representing 55 species. Although we didn’t find any truly unusual species in Central Park, we observed some amazing birds: a Wilson’s warbler in the north end, an orange-crowned warbler near the Met, and a great horned owl that had been in the park for several weeks. Prospect Park held the record for rare sightings this year, with a persistent male painted bunting on the grass-covered roof of the skating rink and a black-headed gull on Prospect Lake.

Looking forward to the field season, we will be undertaking some new projects under the umbrella of our two main programmatic



Male Painted Bunting, a Rare Visitor to Brooklyn’s Prospect Park this Winter

areas: Waterbirds of New York Harbor and Project Safe Flight. Our cornerstone Waterbirds project, the Harbor Herons Nesting Survey, will continue this May with Tod Winston at the helm. We are excited to be buying a new boat to get our team out to the islands! In December we held our 11th annual Harbor Herons and Waterbirds of the Greater NY/NJ Working Group meeting. Two major knowledge gaps were identified during the meeting: Where do our New York City birds go when they are not here? And how do they use the local landscape when they are here? To help answer these questions, we will be adding extra effort to band more birds, in addition to this year’s long-legged wader surveys, so that we can continue to learn more about the local movement of urban egrets.

In 2016 we will continue to work with Dr. Liz Craig from Cornell University on a common tern study in New York City. In 2015 we were able to tag with geolocators two common terns on Governors Island and are eagerly awaiting the birds’ return. The data collected on their high-tech tags will show us where they spent the year. We will also continue our work with migratory shorebirds and horseshoe crabs, getting involved in a regional project to determine shorebird movement and use of Jamaica Bay. We are currently applying for funding to attach nanotags to shorebirds captured in New York City. A network of VHF towers is being established by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to track migration of these

important species. Beach-nesting shorebird work will continue, and we will be adding black skimmers to this project.

The goal of Project Safe Flight is to make the City safer for migratory birds—exactly what the MBTA supports. Thanks to support from the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, we have made tremendous strides in our quest for bird-friendly design. We will continue our partnership with American Bird Conservancy testing glass treatments for their “bird-friendliness.” And we will add some new sites to our traditional Project Safe Flight monitoring routes. A new focus, supported by the Leon Levy Foundation, is the effect of artificial light on migratory birds. We will be partnering with scientists from New York University’s Center for Urban Science and Progress program in positioning cameras on the roof of One Bryant Park in order to collect a massive dataset describing urban light over Manhattan. Our work on the Javits Center green roof will continue, as we work with building managers and green roof botanists to increase the biotic complexity of the nearly seven-acre sedum roof. Our recent work with green roofs has opened the door to a new project in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. We will be working with partners to monitor a new green roof, the Newtown Creek Wildflower Roof and Community Space, which will be installed at 520 Kingsland Avenue. See page 16 to learn more about this project.

One more new activity this spring: we have been asked by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to help them put together a meeting on grasslands and grassland birds in New York City. NYC Audubon roots are deep in grassland birds and their habitat. Early studies at Floyd Bennett Field led to identification of the historic airport as an important grassland habitat for species such as savannah and grasshopper sparrows. Stay tuned for updates.

Our conservation science team is currently busy wrapping up year-end reports and writing grants for the spring. We are anticipating the start of the field season with excitement.

IMPROVING HABITAT FOR SONGBIRDS AT JAMAICA BAY

The wetlands and maritime forests around Jamaica Bay are sanctuaries for a diversity of native wildlife and critical stopover points for thousands of migratory birds. These green spaces also help New York City residents and visitors experience nature. Jamaica Bay's coastal habitat is threatened by invasive species and sea-level

rise, which compromise its value for wildlife, resilience, and accessibility to the public. To address this, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Jamaica Bay–Rockaway Parks Conservancy have forged a public-private partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) to guide ecological restoration efforts in the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens.

In early 2014, TNC and NPS began

conversations about the need for ecological restoration in the maritime forests of the Refuge to enhance songbird habitat. TNC began a plant inventory in the fall of 2014 to delineate the existing quality and condition of 14 acres of habitat north of the Visitor Center in an area known as the North and South Gardens. The most common species, collectively comprising about 70 percent of the site, are invasive vines such as Oriental bittersweet and Japanese honeysuckle, as well as invasive shrubs like autumn olive and Tatarian honeysuckle. Although these vines and shrubs produce ample quantities of berries that birds use for food, they pose threats to the local biodiversity and long-term resilience of the site.

Here's why: First, vines crowd the understory and suppress native tree regeneration. The most common trees on the site, willow oak and black cherry, are not germinating or surviving in the understory because they are crowded out by the thick carpet of vines. Over time, the native trees will die of old age and will not be replaced by young native saplings as in a healthy forest. Second, invasive vines and shrubs produce huge quantities of fruit, but the fruits are not as nutritious as those of native bayberry, poison ivy, and eastern redcedar. In addition, many songbirds eat caterpillars—but butterflies and moths prefer to lay their eggs on native trees and shrubs because they coevolved. Finally, the wildlife refuge is a coastal maritime forest that experienced flooding during Hurricane Sandy and will be impacted by future storms. Sea-level rise is projected to increase three feet by 2050 in this area. Currently, the dominant species of vegetation are not salt-tolerant, making them vulnerable to the future impacts of climate change.

TNC believed that a baseline inventory of the existing habitat quality in the wildlife refuge would not be complete without songbird surveys. In early 2015, TNC coordinated with NYC Audubon to monitor migratory and breeding birds in eight locations throughout the North and South



Surveys Taken in Nine Different Locations in Jamaica Bay Refuge Recorded 75 Species of Birds

WILDLIFE REFUGE

Lauren Alleman, Project Manager, The Nature Conservancy

Gardens, and one location at Big John's Pond (on the other side of Cross Bay Boulevard near the East Pond). Since May 2015, NYC Audubon has documented 75 different bird species utilizing the site, including breeding American redstarts (see species profile on page 13) and cedar waxwings. (See article below to learn more about the songbird surveys.)

The restoration project is now under way. Invasive plant removal began in early December 2015 and will continue in phases for the next two years. NPS has hired contractors that will use a combination of mechanical and chemical control methods, in accordance with their regional invasive plant control guidelines. After invasive plants are removed, the team will plant approximately 30,000 native trees and shrubs across the 14 acres, relying on volunteers to help with the



The NPS' Hanem Abouelezz Surveys a Future Restoration Area

planting. This is an ambitious undertaking, and the project team invites all interested parties to take part. Keeping the invasive species at bay won't be easy, and the team

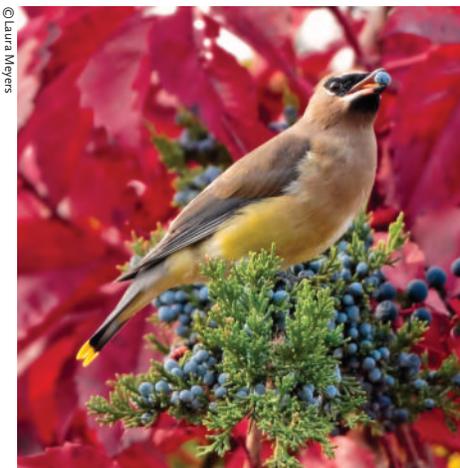
hopes to find volunteer support for long-term maintenance. To learn more about volunteer opportunities with the project, visit www.nature.org/nyevents.

SONGBIRD SURVEY AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

Tod Winston

Last summer, Debra Kriensky, Susan Elbin, and I were constantly itchy. Such was the price we paid for spending our early mornings counting birds at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge—and wading through a sea of poison ivy to do so. Fortunately, the benefits outweighed the costs: in all we completed eight baseline (pre-restoration) songbird “point counts” in the North and South Garden areas of the Refuge. Between May and November 2015, we tallied 75 species total, including “fly-over” species. On each count date, a pair of us arrived at the Refuge at dawn and hiked to the nine survey points, randomly selected to coincide with sites of planned habitat restoration. We listened and observed (but mostly listened) during a period of 10 minutes at each point, recording all birds we heard within a 50-meter radius.

Not surprisingly, gray catbirds were the most common species recorded: catbirds definitely rule from the “catbird seat”



Cedar Waxwing Feeding on Native Eastern Redcedar

at the Refuge! Other common breeding species included yellow warbler, northern cardinal, eastern towhee, house wren, and brown-headed cowbird—with smaller but consistent numbers of white-eyed vireo and Carolina wren. We counted fewer brown

thrashers and sparrows than expected during the nesting season, leading us to wonder if they are present but simply harder to detect. We found American redstarts at a majority of points, implying that a number of pairs may be nesting. Cedar waxwings were observed in flocks into late June, indicating breeding, while both willow and great-crested flycatcher were heard in mid-June. Highlights during spring migration included rose-breasted grosbeak, yellow-billed cuckoo, and chestnut-sided warbler, while in the fall a merlin and a sharp-shinned hawk flew over as we tallied chip notes of yellow-rumped warblers and white-throated sparrows.

We look forward to our first spring survey this March. As the restoration work progresses, we expect that bird diversity will decrease at first, as small new plants take hold, and then increase as the plantings become better established. We hope to conduct ongoing post-restoration point counts in order to assess the long-term success of this project.

EVENTS AND ADVENTURES

- NYC Audubon Events
- Partnership Events

- **SPRING BIRDING AT WAVE HILL, THE BRONX**

Sundays March 13, April 10, May 8, and June 12, 9:30-11:30am
Guide: Gabriel Willow
With Wave Hill

Meet at the Perkins Visitor Center. Naturalist Gabriel Willow contributes his extensive knowledge of bird species and their behaviors on these captivating walks. Wave Hill's garden setting overlooking the Hudson River flyway provides the perfect habitat for resident and migrating birds. Advance registration is recommended, either online at www.wavehill.org, at the Perkins Visitor Center, or by calling 718-549-3200 x251. (Walks run rain or shine; in case of severe weather call the number above for updates.) Ages 10 and up welcome with an adult. NYC Audubon members enjoy two-for-one admission (see www.wavehill.org for more information)

- **FILM SCREENING: SAVING JAMAICA BAY**

Thursday, March 17, 8pm

Join us for the world premiere of this important new film. See page 20 for details.

- **VAN TRIP TO THE EARLY SPRING BIRD WALK AT JAMAICA BAY**

Saturday, March 26, 9am-3pm

Hop in our van and take a ride out to Jamaica Bay for the Early Spring Bird Walk; see description below. Bring lunch. Limited to 12. \$53 (37)

- **EARLY SPRING BIRD WALK AT JAMAICA BAY**

Saturday, March 26, 10am-1pm

Guides: Don Riepe, Tod Winston
With American Littoral Society and Gateway NRA

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for a slide program and walk to look for eastern phoebes, American oystercatchers, osprey, and other early migrants. Learn about the

©David Speliser



American Woodcock

history, ecology, and management of this 13,000-acre urban preserve. For reservations, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or donriep@gmail.com. No limit. Free

- **THE SKY-DANCE OF THE WOODCOCK**

Saturdays, March 26 and April 2; 5-9:30pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

The American woodcock is a remarkable bird. It is in the sandpiper family but lives in woodlands, often far from beaches. The male performs an incredible crepuscular aerial display soon after the snow melts in the northern U.S. Let's go look for it (and bats and owls and other critters, too) at Floyd Bennett Field. Bring a headlamp or flashlight and a snack for a post-woodcock picnic. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$90 (63) per trip

- **BEGINNING BIRDING**

Classes: Wednesdays, March 30–April 13, 6:30-8:30pm

Trips: Saturday, April 9, 8am-2pm
and Saturday, April 16, 8-10:30am
Instructor: Tod Winston

Learn the keys to identifying the spectacular variety of birds that migrate northwards through New York City every spring. Even if you've never picked up a pair of binoculars, you'll soon be identifying warblers, thrushes, waterbirds, and more—

both by sight and by ear. Three fun and educational in-class sessions, paired with field trips to Jamaica Bay and Central Park (van transport to Jamaica Bay included). Limited to 12. \$179 (125)

- **BIRDING BY EAR IN CENTRAL PARK**

Tuesdays, April 5–May 10, 7:30-10:30am

Guide: Tod Winston

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street or Central Park West and 103rd Street (alternating weeks). Join Tod Winston for this six-week exploration of all of the chips, tweets, trills, and warbles we hear as we wander Strawberry Fields, the Ramble, and the North Woods. Though we won't pass up any non-singing birds we come across, this series is intended specifically for those who'd like to identify birds by sound alone. Take as a warm-up to our May Introduction to Bird Song class, or by itself. Limited to 12. \$150 (105)

- **QUEENS BOTANICAL GARDEN BIRD WALKS**

Saturdays April 9, May 7, June 4, and Sundays April 24 and May 22; 9-10am

Guide: NYC Audubon
With Queens Botanical Garden

We are happy to announce a new series of spring migration bird walks in partnership with Queens

Botanical Garden. Register for one date or the whole series of five free walks. Explore the Garden in search of migrant songbirds and learn about the valuable resources that the Garden offers birds and other wildlife. Binoculars available. Limited to 25. Appropriate for all ages. To register, email info@queensbotanical.org or visit www.queensbotanical.org/calendar. Free with Garden admission

- **BIRDING TOURS OF BRYANT PARK**

Mondays, April 11–May 16, 8-9am

Thursdays, April 14–May 19, 5-6pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

With Bryant Park Corporation

Meet at the Birding Tour sign at the 42nd Street and 6th Avenue entrance to the park. Discover the surprising variety of birds that stop in Bryant Park during migration. No registration necessary. No limit. Free

- **SPRING MIGRATION IN PELHAM BAY PARK, THE BRONX**

Saturday, April 16, 9am-4pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Explore the lovely coves and rocky outcroppings of the City's largest park, Pelham Bay Park, seeking out migrating songbirds, late wintering birds, ducks, and a breeding pair of great horned owls. This park's rich and diverse habitat makes it an urban gem and a great home for wildlife. Past rarities include a northern goshawk and a purple sandpiper. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$90 (63)

- **SPRING BIRD MIGRATION AT JAMAICA BAY**

Saturday, April 16, 10am-1pm

Guide: Don Riepe

With American Littoral Society and Gateway NRA

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for a slide program and hike around the gardens and ponds. Learn about the mystery of bird migration and look for warblers, thrushes, ibis, and other recent arrivals. For reservations, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or donriep@gmail.com. No limit. Free



● **BIRDING GEMS OF STATEN ISLAND: SPRING HIKE IN THE GREENBELT**

Sunday, April 17, 9:30am-3pm
Guide: Gabriel Willow
With NYC Parks and the Greenbelt Conservancy

Meet at the Manhattan terminal of the Staten Island Ferry and begin your tour on water as we cross the Upper Bay. Explore trails within the 3,000-acre Staten Island Greenbelt and visit High Rock Park, Walker Pond, and the Pouch Camp property: 143 acres of unspoiled woods and wetlands. Look for spring migrants and learn about the Greenbelt's ecology. Trip involves approximately 3.5 miles of hiking. Transportation on Staten Island included. Limited to 19. \$43 (30)

● **EVENING SPRING MIGRATION WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK**

Monday Series: April 18–May 16
Tuesday Series: April 19–May 17
Wednesday Series: April 20–May 18
(All Walks 5:30-7pm)
Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet at 72nd Street and Central Park West for this five-week series of walks. Witness the spectacle of spring migration as songbirds follow the Atlantic Flyway northwards. Look for orioles, tanagers, warblers, vireos, and other migrants in the wilds of Central Park, and learn about the finer points of their identification and ecology. Limited to 15. \$122 (85) per series

● **CAMERA CLUB**

Wednesdays, April 20 and June 1; 6:30-8:30pm
Instructors: David Speiser, Lloyd Spitalnik

Meet at the NYC Audubon office, 71 West 23rd Street (please note that our venue has changed). Whether you're a beginner or more advanced photographer, our photography club is the place to discuss diverse photography-related topics, hone your skills, and learn about the great photography opportunities available in the New York City area. Professional bird and nature photographers David Speiser and Lloyd Spitalnik will share their expertise and help you improve your work. Registration required. No limit. \$14.50 (\$10) per meeting

● **BIRDS AND PLANTS: NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN IN SPRINGTIME, THE BRONX**

Saturday, April 23, 10am-1pm
Saturday, May 14, 11am-2pm
Guide: Gabriel Willow
 Meet by the ticket booth just inside the Garden's Mosholu Gate on Southern Boulevard. The New York Botanical Garden is home to a large tract of East Coast old-growth forest. During the peak of spring migration, the beautiful gardens come alive with migrating songbirds. Limited to 15. Entrance fee to NYBG not included. \$39 (27) per walk

● **THE BIRDS OF WOODLAWN CEMETERY, THE BRONX**

Sunday, April 24, 8-10:30am
Guides: Tod Winston, Joseph McManus, Susan Olsen
With The Friends of Woodlawn
 Meet at the Jerome Avenue entrance of Woodlawn Cemetery. Join us for a morning bird walk and tour of beautiful Woodlawn Cemetery: Tod Winston and Joseph McManus will look for spring migrants and year-round residents on the expansive, wooded cemetery grounds, while Woodlawn's Susan Olsen will share fascinating stories about the cemetery's history and the interesting mixture of individuals interred there. Limited to 15. \$35 (24)

● **100 YEARS OF THE MBTA: SPRING MIGRANTS OF CENTRAL PARK**

Tuesday, April 26, 7:30-9:30am
Guides: Kellye Rosenheim, John-Paul Catusco
With Central Park Conservancy
 Meet at the Loeb Boathouse. Join Kellye Rosenheim and the Central Park Conservancy's John-Paul Catusco for a morning walk celebrating the centennial anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. We'll explore the Ramble and surrounding areas looking for spring migrants. Limited to 15. \$29 (20)

● **MORNING SPRING MIGRATION WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK**

Wednesday Series: April 27–May 25
Thursday Series: April 28–May 26
(All Walks 7:30-10:30am)
Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC
 Meet at 72nd Street and Central Park West. This five-week series of walks will observe the waves of birds passing through Central Park during spring migration. Limited to 15. \$143 (100) per series

● **BIRDING BASICS FOR FAMILIES: THE RAMBLE, CENTRAL PARK**

Saturdays, April 30–May 28, 10-11am
Guides: NYC Audubon, Conservancy Discovery Guides
Offered by the Central Park Conservancy
 Meet at Belvedere Castle (inside the Park, mid-Park just north of the 79th Street transverse). Experience

Central Park's rich bird habitat and migration hot spots with Conservancy Discovery Guides and NYC Audubon. Witness firsthand how the Conservancy's work has made the Park a sanctuary for birds. Binoculars available. Ages 5 and up. Maximum of three children per parent or guardian. For weather cancellation updates and pre-registration information, call 212-772-0288. Limited to 20. Free (pre-registration is recommended, as space is limited)

● **BIRDING BASICS FOR FAMILIES: NORTH WOODS, CENTRAL PARK**

Sundays, May 1–May 29, 10-11am
Guides: NYC Audubon, Conservancy Discovery Guides
Offered by the Central Park Conservancy
 Meet at the Dana Discovery Center (inside the Park at 110th Street between Fifth and Lenox Avenues). Experience Central Park's rich bird habitat and migration hot spot with Conservancy Discovery Guides and NYC Audubon. Witness firsthand how the Conservancy's work has made the Park a sanctuary for birds. Binoculars available. Ages 5 and up. Maximum of three children per parent or guardian. For weather cancellation updates and pre-registration information, call 212-772-0288. Limited to 20. Free (pre-registration is recommended, as space is limited)

● **BIRDING GEMS OF STATEN ISLAND: SPRING MIGRATION AT FRESHKILLS PARK**

Sunday, May 1, 8am-3pm
Guides: Cliff Hagen, Tod Winston
With NYC Parks
 Meet at the Staten Island Ferry and start your trip with a journey across the Upper Bay. From wetlands to woodlands to rich, rolling grasslands, Freshkills Park offers a diverse collection of habitats and wildlife. On any given spring day, over 100 species of birds and a variety of butterflies can be seen here. Join local naturalist Cliff Hagen and the NYC Parks Department on



Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher

© Ellen Michaels

...continued on page 10

EVENTS AND ADVENTURES (CONTINUED)

this special opportunity to explore the secret places of the City's latest, greatest park. Transport by passenger van on S.I. included. Limited to 12. \$68 (47)

● SPRING WARBLERS

Class: Friday, May 6, 6:30-8:30pm

Trip: Sunday, May 8, 8-11am

Instructor: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

First learn to identify the 30-plus species of warblers that migrate through our area each spring, using field marks and other techniques.

Then go out in the field and reinforce what you've learned. Field trip to Central Park. Limited to 15. \$72 (50)

● STERLING FOREST WARBLERS, ORANGE COUNTY, NY

Saturday, May 7, 7am-3pm

Guides: Don Riepe, Tod Winston

Explore the woodland and pond habitat of the 20,000-acre Sterling Forest preserve during peak spring migration. Look for nesting warblers (including golden-winged, cerulean, hooded, prairie, and blue-winged) as

well as spring wildflowers, reptiles, and amphibians. Visit the rustic visitor center. Trip involves a 4-mile hike and some rocky terrain. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$115 (80)

● VAN CORTLANDT BIRD WALKS, THE BRONX

Saturdays, May 7–July 30, 8-9:30am

Guides: NYC Audubon, Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy With the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy

Meet at Van Cortlandt Nature Center. The history of birding and

Van Cortlandt Park are inseparable. Influential birders such as Roger Tory Peterson and Allan D. Cruickshank got their starts on Van Cortlandt's ecologically diverse grounds. These walks celebrate the tradition set forth by these great ornithologists. Participants will look for various species of residents and migrants and discuss a wide range of avian topics. For more information, call 212-691-7483. No registration necessary. No limit. Free

● PEAK MIGRATION DAY AT ALLEY POND PARK AND JAMAICA BAY

Tuesday, May 10, 8am-4pm

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Join Joe Giunta for this tour of the crown jewels of Queens: Alley Pond Park and Jamaica Bay. First visit Alley Pond's wooded grounds and kettle ponds to search for warblers and vireos, then hike the trails of Jamaica Bay to see migrant shorebirds, waterfowl, and more. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$115 (80)

● A WALK IN THE NORTH WOODS

Wednesday, May 11, 7:30-10:30am

Guide: Tod Winston

Meet at 103rd Street and Central Park West, parkside. Explore the peaceful North Woods and Loch at the height of spring songbird migration. We'll look (and listen) for warblers, vireos, tanagers, grosbeaks, and more. Limited to 15. \$36 (25)

● INTRODUCTION TO BIRDSONG

Class: Friday, May 13, 6:30-8:30pm

Trip: Sunday, May 15, 8am-Noon

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Do you ever wonder who is singing? Learn to identify the large variety of migrant and resident birds in New York City. Joe Giunta will first introduce you to the subtleties of birdsong identification in the classroom, followed by a field trip in Central Park to bird by eye and ear. Limited to 12. \$72 (50)

NYC AUDUBON MEMBERS-ONLY EVENTS

Join us for a free NYC Audubon member event this spring. Please note: Member events are free for Contributing NYC Audubon members as detailed below. As these events are popular and fill quickly, please limit your registration to one free member event per month.

● "WOODCOCKTAILS" AT JAMAICA BAY

Thursday, April 14, 3-9:30pm

Join Don Riepe to witness the spectacular flight of the woodcock, as well as enjoy a few "woodcocktails" on us. After a leisurely check of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge's West Pond and gardens, we will adjourn to the woodcock courting grounds to look for male woodcocks executing their dramatic flight displays. Call Kellye Rosenheim at 212-691-7483 x306 to register. Bring dinner; transport by passenger van, snacks, and drinks provided. Limited to 11. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon members only at the Family and Supporter levels and up

● HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JOHN JAMES AUDUBON!

Tuesday, April 26, 3:30-5pm

Meet at the gates to Trinity Cemetery, on 155th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam. Born on April 26,

1785 on Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), Audubon roamed widely during his eventful life. Not many know that he wound up in Trinity Cemetery near his New York City home at Minniesland. Join Kellye Rosenheim for some afternoon birdwatching and a tour of this historic graveyard with Trinity Cemetery's Daniel Levatino, as well as a look at some nearby Audubon bird murals with National Audubon's Mark Jannot. Call Kellye Rosenheim at 212-691-7483 x306 to register. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up

● CENTRAL PARK WITH TOM STEPHENSON

Wednesday, April 27, 7:30-9am

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street to seek out early spring migrants with Tom Stephenson, author of *The Warbler Guide*. Call Kellye Rosenheim at 212-691-7483 x306 to register. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up

● KIDS SPRING WALK IN CENTRAL PARK

Saturday, April 30, 3-4:30pm

Meet at 72nd Street and Central Park West. Calling all NYC Audubon KIDS Members! Join Tod Winston, Nancy Ward, and

Kellye Rosenheim to search for spring migrants in Strawberry Fields and the Ramble. At least one parent or legal guardian must be present at all times and you must register in advance. Please let us know if you need a pair of binoculars. To reserve a spot, email us at KIDS@nycaudubon.org. No limit. Free for NYC Audubon KIDS Members and one adult companion

● CENTRAL PARK WITH HARRY MAAS

Monday, May 2, 7-8:30am

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street. Join Harry Maas, president of NYC Audubon, when migration is in full swing! Call Kellye Rosenheim at 212-691-7483 x306 to register. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up

● CENTRAL PARK WITH KELLYE ROSENHEIM

Friday, May 6, 3:30-5:30pm

Meet at the Loeb Boathouse to look for songbirds at the height of migration with Kellye Rosenheim. Call Kellye at 212-691-7483 x306 to register. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up.

● **BIRDING GEMS OF QUEENS: FOREST HILLS GARDENS AND FOREST PARK**

Saturday, May 14, 8am-Noon
Guide: Tod Winston

Meet near the 71 Ave E/F subway station—specific location to be announced. Join Tod Winston as we tour the lovely green neighborhood of Forest Hills Gardens—often rich with songbirds—on our way to Forest Park. There we'll hike through the park's native woodland habitat in search of tanagers, orioles, and warblers, and visit the famous "water hole," popular with thirsty migrants and eager birders alike. Limited to 15. \$36 (25)

● **NESTING PEREGRINES AND RED-TAILS OF THE UPPER WEST SIDE**

Sunday, May 15, 1-4pm
Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet in front of Riverside Church. Many New Yorkers are astonished to discover that their city of steel and glass is home to a diverse population of large birds of prey: The City boasts the world's highest densities of the peregrine falcon, the world's fastest flyer, and a growing population of red-tailed hawks (several pairs of which have reached celebrity status). We'll visit a nesting site of a pair of each of these fascinating species, and may glimpse parents feeding their chicks. Limited to 15. \$39 (27)

● **SPRING MIGRANTS AT INWOOD HILL PARK, MANHATTAN**

Saturday, May 21, 8:30-11am
Guide: Annie Barry

Meet at the entrance to Inwood Hill Park at the corner of Isham Street and Seaman Avenue. Join Annie Barry for a hike through a mature forest in search of kinglets, warblers, flycatchers, sparrows, Baltimore orioles, and other migrants and residents. We'll then head to the shores of recently restored Muscota Marsh, the last natural saltmarsh in Manhattan, to search for herons and ducks. Some hilly walking required. Limited to 15. \$36 (25)

©Francois Portmann



Belted Kingfisher

● **JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISE**

Saturday, May 21, 5-8pm
With American Littoral Society and Gateway NRA

Meet at Pier 4 in Sheepshead Bay to board the "Golden Sunshine." Learn about the Bay and its history, management, and ecology. See egrets, herons, ibis, terns, laughing gulls, osprey, peregrine falcons, and shorebirds. Includes wine and cheese, fruit, drinks, and snacks. For information and reservations, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or donriep@gmail.com. Limited to 140. \$55

● **HORSESHOE CRABS AND RED KNOTS**

Sunday, May 22, 9am-Noon
Guides: Mickey Cohen, Don Riepe
With American Littoral Society and Gateway NRA

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and carpool to a nearby site in Broad Channel to see the annual spring mating ritual of the ancient horseshoe crab. Look for endangered red knots, ruddy turnstones, and other shorebirds feeding on the eggs. Children welcome. For reservations, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or donriep@gmail.com. No limit. Free

● **BIRDING GEMS OF STATEN ISLAND: CLOVE LAKES PARK**

Sunday, May 29, 8am-Noon
Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet at the Manhattan terminal of the Staten Island Ferry and journey to the "Forgotten Borough" to discover some of the beautiful

forests and incredible birding spots of Clove Lakes Park. Look for ducks and seabirds in New York Harbor on our way across on the ferry ride and then catch a bus to the Park. Numerous warblers, vireos, tanagers, and other migratory songbirds can be seen here, as well as nesting eastern screech-owls and great blue herons. We'll even see one of the largest and oldest trees in New York City. Limited to 15. Bus fare (\$2.75 each way; please bring your MetroCard or exact change) not included in registration price. \$43 (30)

● **THE BREEDING BIRDS OF DOODLETOWN ROAD, ROCKLAND COUNTY, NY**

Thursday, June 2, 8am-4pm
Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC
 A great variety of warblers and other songbirds, including species at risk, breed at Doodletown Road in Bear Mountain State Park. Hooded, cerulean, and golden-winged warblers may be seen, as well as indigo buntings, wild turkeys, and much more. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$122 (85)

● **BREEDING BIRDS OF JAMAICA BAY**

Saturday, June 4, 7:30am-1:30pm
Guide: Tod Winston

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is home to nesting cedar waxwings, brown thrashers, white-eyed vireos, tree swallows, yellow warblers, American redstarts, osprey, willet, and seven species of wading birds

including tricolored heron. We'll walk the refuge trails and seek out these species and many more. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$88 (62)

● **SPRING MIGRATION ON RANDALL'S ISLAND**

Saturday, June 4, 9am-2pm
Guides: Gabriel Willow, Randall's Island Park Alliance Staff
With Randall's Island Park Alliance, Inc.

Meet on the northwest corner of 102nd Street and the FDR Drive. We'll walk across the foot bridge to Randall's Island, an under-explored location in the East River that hosts restored freshwater wetlands and salt marsh. We'll look for spring migrants (both waterbirds and land birds) as we explore the results of recent restoration efforts. Limited to 20. \$40 (28)

● **THE PARAKEETS OF GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY, BROOKLYN**

Sunday, June 5, 10am-1pm
Guide: Gabriel Willow
With Green-Wood Cemetery

Meet at the cemetery entrance at 5th Avenue and 25th Street, Park Slope, Brooklyn. Explore Green-Wood Cemetery in search of spring migrants and its most surprising avian residents: the huge flocks of brilliant green monk parakeets that nest there. Native to South America, these charming immigrants flourish even in our harsh winters. Limited to 15. \$46 (32)

● **SUNSET ECOCRUISES TO THE HARBOR HERON ISLANDS**

Wednesdays, June 8–August 17
7-9pm (Brother Islands; Hoffman and Swinburne Islands)
6:30-9:30pm (Jamaica Bay)
Guide: Gabriel Willow
With New York Water Taxi

Meet at South Street Seaport Pier 16 and set sail in search of glossy ibis, little blue and tricolored herons, great and snowy egrets, and black-and yellow-crowned night-herons: all these spectacular wading birds nest here in New York Harbor. Visit

...continued on page 12

EVENTS AND ADVENTURES (CONTINUED)

the fascinating Brother Islands, the large egret and cormorant colonies on Hoffman and Swinburne Islands, or the great expanses of Jamaica Bay. Whichever your destination, you'll experience the wonders of New York Harbor at sunset and see some of the 3,000 herons, egrets, and ibis nesting here. To choose a cruise and register, contact New York Water Taxi at 212-742-1969 or www.nywatertaxi.com/tours/audubon. Limited to 90. Price varies by destination

- **EXPLORE THE MEADOWLANDS BY PONTOON BOAT, SECAUCUS, NJ**

Saturday, June 11, 7:30am-12:30pm
Guides: Tod Winston and NJ Meadowlands Doцент With NJ Meadowlands Commission

Explore the Meadowlands' Mill Creek Marsh, a 225-acre restored wetland off the Hackensack River. We'll take a relaxing pontoon boat ride through this vast salt marsh habitat for close-up views of egrets, night-herons, belted kingfishers, and marsh wrens—along with nesting osprey, red-tailed hawks,

©Ellen Michaels



Prairie Warbler

and peregrine falcons. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$101 (71)

- **PROSPECT PARK BIRD WALK**
Saturday, June 11, 8-11am
Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet under the arch in Grand Army Plaza. Join Gabriel Willow for a leisurely walk to see late spring migrants and breeding residents of "Brooklyn's Backyard." Beautiful Prospect Park's wide variety of habitats attracts a large number of migrants and breeding bird species—significantly more than Central Park, in fact. We will explore the park's meadows, forests, and waterways in search of waterfowl, warblers, tanagers, and more. Limited to 15. \$36 (25)

- **BREEDING BIRDS OF THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS, MANHATTAN**

Saturday, June 25, 8am-5pm
Guide: Gabriel Willow

Join Gabriel Willow on a day-long trip to some of the most exciting and beautiful birding locations in the Hudson Valley: Doodletown Road, Constitution Marsh, and Indian Brook Farm. We'll look for uncommon breeding warbler specialties at Doodletown, such as cerulean, hooded, blue-winged, golden-winged, and worm-eating warblers. We will then head to the Constitution Marsh Audubon Sanctuary, home to breeding wood ducks, bald eagles, least bitterns, and marsh wrens. After a picnic lunch, we'll drive to Indian Brook Farm in search of breeding field and savannah sparrows, bobolinks, and indigo buntings. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$129 (90)

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

- **CAPE MAY SPRING MIGRATION WEEKEND, NJ**

Saturday, April 30, 9am–Sunday, May 1, 7pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Welcome the spring in lovely Cape May, NJ, the East's capital of birding. On good spring migration days, the area's forests and marshes are swarming with warblers in breeding plumage. We'll visit Cape May Point, Higbee Beach, Cape May Meadows, and more in search of returning songbirds, shorebirds, wading birds, and terns—as well as lingering winter visitors such as sea ducks and gannets. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$330 (\$30 single supplement)

- **PUFFINS, WARBLERS, AND LOBSTER BOATS: THE ENCHANTING COAST OF MAINE**
Saturday, May 21–Saturday, May 28
Guide: Gabriel Willow

Join Maine native Gabriel Willow in exploring the Maine coast, home to Atlantic puffins, shorebirds, warblers, and other migratory songbirds. Stay in charming

Camden and on the lovely and remote Monhegan Island, a birder's paradise where seeing 25 to 30 warbler species in a day is not uncommon. Includes double occupancy lodging, some meals, museum entrance and local transportation fees, a lobster dinner, and van transportation in Maine (airfare not included). Limited to 10. \$1,950 (\$595 single supplement)

- **MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND**
Friday, June 3–Sunday, June 5

Guides: Mike Bottini, Mickey Cohen, Don Riepe

With American Littoral Society
Join us for our 20th year at the luxurious Montauk Manor and enjoy indoor/outdoor heated pools, jacuzzi, and spacious suites. Registration price includes five meals, guided field trips, evening slide programs, an evening star watch, and free pickup at the LIRR station in Montauk. For information and reservations, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or donriep@gmail.com. No limit. \$395 (\$130 single supplement)

- **BASHAKILL, SHAWANGUNK NWR, AND DOODLETOWN, NY**

Saturday, June 11, 9am–Sunday, June 12, 6pm

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Look for breeding eastern meadowlarks, American bitterns, cerulean warblers, and more at these three great birding areas. An overnight stay will facilitate being in the right spot at the right time. Bring lunch for the first day. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$290 (\$55 single supplement)

- **BASHAKILL, NEVERSINK, AND STERLING FOREST, NY**

Saturday, June 18, 9am–Sunday, June 19, 6pm

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Look for breeding American bitterns, cerulean, hooded, and golden-winged warblers, and more at these three great birding areas. An overnight stay will facilitate being in the right spot at the right time. Bring lunch for the first day. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$290 (\$55 single supplement)

EARLY MEMBER REGISTRATION FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

Mid-summer to early fall events will be posted at www.nycaudubon.org and available for registration for contributing NYC Audubon members starting on Monday, May 9. (Registration will open to all on Monday, May 23.)

AMERICAN REDSTART (*SETOPHAGA RUTICILLA*)

Don Riepe

● TO REGISTER FOR ALL NYC AUDUBON EVENTS and for more information, visit www.nycaudubon.org or call Darren Klein at 212-691-7483 x304 unless otherwise specified.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Classes meet at 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523.
- Contributing Members (Student/Senior level and up) receive a 30% discount on most local trips and classes (on discounted events, the discounted price appears in parentheses after the nonmember price). See membership form on page 19.
- For all coach and van trips, the meeting location is in front of 71 West 23rd Street in Manhattan unless otherwise specified.
- We depart promptly at the stated start time.
- For all overnight trips, membership in NYC Audubon at the Student/Senior level and up is required. See membership form on page 19.

TAKE A PICTURE FOR D-BIRD

Attention citizen scientists! NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight needs your help. If you find a dead or injured bird in the City (especially if you think it has hit a building), please visit www.d-bird.org on your smartphone or computer and report it to us. D-Bird has recently been upgraded and can now accept photos. If you are unsure of the species or just want to help provide accurate documentation, photos can be attached from both mobile and desktop devices. Your efforts will help us make the City a safer place for birds.

To see an interactive map of D-Bird results, visit www.nycaudubon.org/project-safe-flight#D-Bird.

©David Spenser



A common migrant and occasional or rare nester in a few New York City parks, the American redstart is easily identified in both spring and fall, as it doesn't change to drab—and confusing—fall colors as many other warbler species do. Redstarts keep their coloration year-round and are also sexually dimorphic: the adult male is black with bright orange patches on the wings and tail (see cover), while both the female and immature males are a drab gray with yellow wing and tail markings (see photo above). The American redstart is conspicuous compared to other warblers as it is usually very active, constantly flitting around trees and bushes, flicking its wings and spreading its tail. Because of this colorful display, it is sometimes referred to as the “butterfly of the bird world.” In Central America and northern parts of South America where the bird spends its winters, it is called “candelita,” which roughly translates as “little flame” or “little torch.”

American redstarts generally prefer early successional deciduous forests with shrubby edges for breeding. For the past 15 years, at least one pair has nested in the North Garden area of the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. On its Latin American wintering grounds, the species inhabits both natural forests and shade-grown coffee plantations, both rich in insects. (The redstart's wing- and tail-flashing display is actually thought to flush insect prey as the birds forage.) In the tropics, redstarts can also be found feeding on flies around outhouses and garbage piles, lending them yet another, less flattering, nickname: the “latrine bird.”

Like many other neotropical migrants, American redstarts are declining in number owing to habitat loss in both their breeding and wintering ranges. Nest parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds may also be a factor, as fragmentation of woodlands from development creates more edge areas that allow cowbirds easy access to warbler nests. Man-made development along redstart migratory pathways also increases hazards, especially to young birds. Thankfully, the “sport” of birding has become a popular pastime in America, and this helps Audubon organizations like NYC Audubon gain political support for protecting habitats for birds and other wildlife.

Read more about nesting American redstarts at Jamaica Bay on pages 6-7. And join us on a field trip this spring to see many species of colorful warblers and other migrants as they pass through the New York City area during April and May; see pages 8-13.

BIRDING NEW YORK CITY'S CEMETERIES (PART ONE OF A TWO-PART SERIES)

Mary Jane Kaplan

Especially during migration, cemeteries attract birds for the same reason as do large city parks: they offer substantial greenery amid landscapes that are otherwise devoid of promising feeding areas. This is true not just in urban agglomerations but in rural areas as well: if the choice for a tired songbird is to spend the day in a well-treed cemetery or a plowed field, most will choose the trees.

All of New York City's boroughs offer good opportunities for cemetery birding, with large, well-maintained cemeteries, some created by well-known landscape designers. These beautiful, park-like spaces provide a welcome respite from the city's bustle—and sometimes a surprising diversity of birds. An added advantage: the quiet atmosphere makes it relatively easy to hear the birds sing.

For several years, NYC Audubon has offered field trips to the Bronx's 400-acre Woodlawn Cemetery co-led by Tod Winston, communications manager and research associate at NYC Audubon, and Joe McManus, a long-time resident of the Bronx, frequent birder at the cemetery, and guide of NYC Audubon's Van Cortlandt Bird Walks. Usually accompanying the group is Susan Olsen, director of historical services for the cemetery; in between bird sightings, she calls the group's attention to permanent celebrity residents, special monuments, and noteworthy trees—and has an intriguing anecdote to go with each one. (Although not a birder when NYC Audubon first began the field trips, she has since taken Tod Winston's class on beginning birding—she found the number of species to be “overwhelming”—and no doubt will soon be pointing out birds as well.)

Over the past couple of years, the number of species seen on the two-hour walks has averaged around 34. The most recent tour, in September 2015, produced a great blue heron, a great egret, and a flock of wood ducks on Woodlawn Lake; five species

of woodpecker; and a merlin, a frequent visitor to the cemetery. Previous sightings have included belted kingfishers, red-breasted nuthatches, an orchard oriole, and groups of wild turkeys (which nest on the cemetery grounds).

Woodlawn, founded in 1863, welcomes groups with various interests—mushrooms, trees, stargazing—but other birding groups are requested to tie in with NYC Audubon, since their tour leaders already know and follow the rules. See page 9 for details on our spring walk at Woodlawn.

A very different sort of cemetery is Trinity Uptown, formally known as the Trinity Church Cemetery and Mausoleum, sloping steeply down to the Hudson River in Washington Heights. It was established in 1842 to accommodate the overflow from the graveyard at Trinity Church on Wall Street. Its major interest for birders has been the 16-foot-high grave marker of John James Audubon, who died in 1851 and whose last residence was just north of the cemetery. (This April 26, Audubon's birthday, Kellye Rosenheim and representa-

tives from both Trinity Uptown and National Audubon will lead a NYC Audubon member walk at the cemetery; see page 10.)

At 23 acres, Trinity cannot compare to Woodlawn as a birding venue, and while the director, Daniel Levatino, has on occasion noticed individual birders on the grounds, eBird has no postings from the cemetery. Nevertheless, as the accompanying photo shows, the landscape does attract predators, and its proximity to the Hudson River means that bald eagles must pass from time to time. Nearby Fort Washington and Highbridge Parks also provide good birding opportunities.

If you visit the Trinity Church Cemetery and Mausoleum, be sure to also take in the large murals of birds painted by local artists found on the eastern and northern boundaries of the cemetery—one on Amsterdam Avenue and another on 155th Street. They too constitute an appropriate memorial to Audubon.



Red-tailed Hawk at Trinity Church Cemetery

FRESHKILLS RECYCLED AND REBORN

Cliff Hagen

Everyone who birds Freshkills Park, on Staten Island's western shore, arrives at the park with the same wide-eyed, slack-jawed expression. Two thousand two hundred acres of rolling grassy hills and meandering tidal creeks belie the discarded history hidden right beneath the surface: Fresh Kills Landfill, once the largest of its kind in the world. (The landfill ceased regular operations in 2001; construction of the park began in 2008 and will continue through 2036.)

On a warm, bright Sunday morning in early October, a group of NYC Audubon birders enjoyed five hours' wandering about the new park, much of which is not yet open to the public. Freshkills' grasslands, deciduous woodlands, freshwater ponds, and tidal creeks are all tied together by a system of hard-surface roadbeds and dirt roads. At the park's four corners lie four grass-covered mounds, each approximately 100 feet high, offering gorgeous views of the New York City skyline, the Staten Island Greenbelt, and, on a clear day, the Kittatinny Range of New Jersey, which runs a crisp line north and south along the western horizon.

Our first stop was the Freshkills Park Visitor Center, which provides a useful orientation. Floor-to-ceiling aerial photos and maps adorn the walls. A glass display case offers a cross-section of the landfill's rubbish, protective barriers, soils, and vegetative layers, a visual depiction of the process of containing and capping New York City's past. Other displays include local artifacts and a detailed history of the area, providing some context for this park's unusual habitat.

Once the group stepped outside the Visitor Center, the birding began. Virginia creeper has spent decades climbing the fences around the Center's parking lot, and in its tangles we heard a golden-crowned kinglet busying itself among a full show of autumn colors. The Center is situated alongside the Freshkill, the main branch of the tidal creek for which the park is named. Skeletal structures of past industry lie in the creek's shallow water, and perched upon this framework we found the three usual species of gulls and



Freshkills Park, with the Bayonne Bridge and Manhattan Skyline in the Distance; a Landfill Gas Wellhead Is Visible in the Foreground

double-crested cormorants, while an unusually quiet belted kingfisher stood guard nearby on a vacant osprey nest. Further on, a pond of runoff and rainwater was speckled with mallards, gadwall, an American coot, and nearly a dozen northern pintail.

After lunch, a long walk along a gravel road brought us to an area offering a marvelous vista of the confluence of the Freshkill and vehicles racing along nearby Richmond Avenue. Three great blue herons, several great egrets, and one snowy stalked the shallows of the creek as it meandered beneath the flow of traffic. Overhead, turkey vultures graced the sky, sometimes alone, sometimes in groups of eight, twelve, or twenty. And on two occasions bald eagles made a brief show for us. Other raptors made appearances as well, including red-tailed hawks, northern

harriers, sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, American kestrels, and a merlin.

At our final stop atop one of the park's tall mounds, song and savannah sparrows mingled among the grasses and lingering blooms of goldenrod, along with late-flying butterflies: pearl crescents, sulfurs, cabbage whites, monarchs, two black swallowtails, and two American ladies. Grasshopper sparrows, which bred here this past spring in good numbers, alas eluded us. But we weren't to be disappointed: last, deep in the grasses of the north mound, an eastern meadowlark sprang up and gave us a good look as it beat a retreat across the open skies above New York City's colorful fall landscape.

Visit www.freshkillspark.org to learn more about the park's creation. For details on our spring trip to Freshkills, see page 9.

UP ON THE ROOF (IN BROOKLYN)

Suzanne Charlé

In the not-too-distant future, NYC Audubon will collaborate with four partners in the the construction, management, and public programming of a 21,711-square-foot wildflower garden atop a renovated warehouse at 520 Kingsland Avenue in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

A grant of \$971,782 was announced in late December by the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund (GCEF), a joint program of the New York State Attorney General's Office and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to improve the environment in and around Newtown Creek. (GCEF was established in 2011 with funds from a \$19.5-million settlement with ExxonMobil over oil and related environmental contamination at its Greenpoint facility and in the surrounding community.) In all, GCEF has funded 46 projects, including McGolrick Park's native plant garden, another NYC Audubon project completed last year.

Competition for the final round of grants was stiff: in mid-2015 NYC Audubon submitted its proposal, and after several rounds of voting by the community, the Newtown Creek Wildflower Roof and Community Space was among several large-scale projects given the green light.

Brooklyn-based Alive Structures will design and install the bird-friendly green roof using native plant species. Broadway Stages, which owns this building and several other conversions where films and TV shows including "The Good Wife" are shot, is a pioneer in the greening of New York City rooftops. The City's first rooftop farm

is atop Broadway Stages' Eagle Street Studio building, and solar photovoltaic systems power seven of its sound stages.

"The site is about as industrial as you can get," Kellye Rosenheim, NYC Audubon director of development, notes: "On one side there's a construction debris-pulverizing site, on another a water-treatment plant." The green roof meadow will reduce the flow of runoff water into Newtown Creek, capturing 33,000 gallons of rainwater during a one-inch storm.

Susan Elbin, NYC Audubon director of conservation and science, will be in charge of monitoring the birds, insects, and bats that will be attracted to the green space. Herring gulls, double-crested cormorants, and American kestrels have already been spotted nearby. "Black-crowned night-herons loaf there, along the shoreline," she notes, adding that six bird boxes will also be installed. "We hope that tree swallows will nest in them. We could follow their progress during the breeding season—which would be a really exciting experience to bring to the local community."

Other species will enjoy the garden, also: The roof will serve as a space for classes and lectures provided by the project partners, including Newtown Creek Alliance and Trout in the Classroom. The Fortune Society will coordinate job-training programs. In all, Elbin says, the project will take three years: "Think of all the rooftops in New York City. This is a tremendous opportunity for NYC Audubon to become a leader in managing such spaces for wildlife."



Design Rendering of the Newtown Creek Wildflower Roof and Community Space

BIRDCGENIE™
BACKYARD EAST SOFTWARE
 Created by Tom Stephenson,
 Stephen Travis Pope, and
 Scott Whittle
 Princeton University Press,
 2016



BirdGenie

For many people, identifying birds by their song is more difficult than by their physical appearance. But what if you could record a bird and identify it instantly? BirdGenie™ does just that—and it is the most exciting technology for birders since binoculars.

NYC Audubon board member Tom Stephenson, along with Stephen Travis Pope and Scott Whittle, has developed an app that just may revolutionize bird watching. Available since February 2016 for the one-time bargain download fee of \$2.99, BirdGenie allows anyone to record birdsong on a smart phone and identify it. An Internet connection is not necessary; the ID is made by means of the downloaded BirdGenie library. The app even starts recording the sound 1.5 seconds before it's tapped, so the start of a song won't be missed. Tap again at the end of the song and the identification appears almost instantly, along with the probability that the match is correct. A picture of the bird in 3-D also appears (familiar to those who have used Tom Stephenson's Warbler Guide app), which means you can adjust the picture to see the bird from all angles.

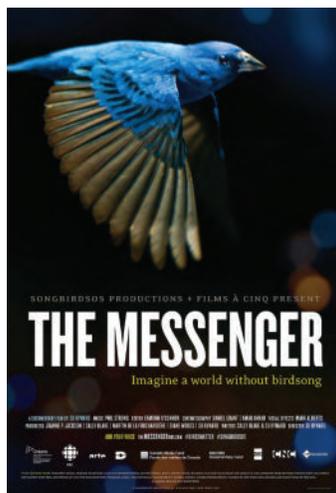
At present there are Eastern and Western versions of BirdGenie, each covering 65 of the

most common species of land birds in its area. More species will be added in the future.

The BirdGenie app also allows the user to share recordings with the BirdGenie website. If the site cannot identify a bird, experts associated with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology will assist. When a birder shares a recording, BirdGenie becomes an important scientific tool to identify variations in song within the same species from different geographic areas. Does an eastern meadowlark sound the same in New York as it does in northern Florida? A library of song variation across the United States will be built, with the help of BirdGenie's citizen-scientist users.

BirdGenie is simple to use and will be of most benefit to the novice backyard birder. We applaud the use of modern technology to aid people in their study of the natural world. Learn more at www.birdgenie.com. -CH

THE MESSENGER
 Directed by Su Rynard
 SongbirdSOS Productions and
 Films à Cinq,
 2015



Warning! Canadian director Su Rynard's film *The Messenger* is stunning, surprising, lush, enlightening—and frightening. It stars many of the world's declining songbird species, as

well as the scientists who are passionately trying to reverse the trend.

As one biologist notes, the world has lost half its songbirds since the 1960s. Like the canary in the coal mine, songbirds are sending a message that something is wrong. Much of what's threatening them is also threatening all of planet earth: energy production, overdevelopment, harmful agricultural practices, habitat loss, climate change. The fact that humans have caused all of these perils may offer a slight trace of good news. We can, after all, mend our ways.

Striking slow motion footage of indigo buntings and Baltimore orioles accompanies visits to three continents. In New York, we see how the National September 11 Memorial & Museum's annual Tribute in Light is a potential threat to migrating birds. Yet simply turning out the lights periodically (as the Tribute's management does in cooperation with NYC Audubon) alleviates this danger. In Toronto, as in New York, thousands of birds are killed in collisions with reflective high-rise windows. But in buildings with treated glass—bearing marks that birds see and humans don't—deaths are reduced by 80 percent. In Costa Rica, where 80 percent of the forests have vanished since 1945, ornithologists are showing farmers how shade-grown coffee helps both birds (by providing habitat) and farmers (birds eat agricultural pests).

Other scenarios aren't quite so promising. In France, hunters eagerly trap ortolan buntings in order to serve them for dinner. And in the Canadian boreal forest, logging and pipelines destroy valuable habitat.

Then there's this: a 1958 newsreel of Mao Tse-Tung ordering the killing of tree sparrows for eating crops. The sparrows were nearly wiped out. But so too was the subsequent crop, because there were no birds to eat plant-destroying insects—ultimately contributing to a famine that killed 30 million people.

We didn't heed that message. How many more will it take?

To find out where you can see *The Messenger*, visit www.messengerfilm.com. -CPR

A SPECIAL AND ENDURING GIFT *Kathryn Heintz*

Helen Mattin loved nature. Her passion for gardens and plants is wonderfully acknowledged at the Helen Mattin Warm Temperate Pavilion at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. A frequent presence on early New York City Audubon bird walks, Helen was also part of a close-knit cadre of regular office volunteers in our developmental years, often in league with Norman Stotz and a host of avid bird lovers who helped launch the chapter over 30 years ago. When Helen passed away in August 2014, we learned that she had chosen to make a special gift by including New York City Audubon in her will. We are honored and proud to be among an interesting and enlightened group of charitable organizations that were important and meaningful to Helen during her lifetime, and whose work will benefit enormously from her generosity for many years to come.



©estate of Helen Mattin

ASSURE YOUR OWN LEGACY OF PROTECTING BIRDS



©François Portmann

There are many ways to play a significant and lasting role in supporting New York City Audubon's mission to protect wild birds and their habitat in the five boroughs of New York City:

- Include New York City Audubon in your Will or Irrevocable Trust. Specify "New York City Audubon Society, 71 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010" as a beneficiary. You can change your bequest or designation at any time.
- Name "New York City Audubon" as a residual beneficiary, or co-beneficiary, in your Retirement Account, Bank Account, or Insurance Policy. It's very easy! Many times it can be done online. Retirement plans include IRAs, 401(k) plans, profit-sharing plans, Keogh plans, and 403(b) plans.
- Have payments from your Retirement Account made directly to New York City Audubon. You must be 70½ or older. Payments made this way are not included in your gross income. The tax benefits of these options can be very attractive, too. Be sure to speak with your financial advisor about any arrangements you make on behalf of New York City Audubon.

To learn more about ways to plan a gift to New York City Audubon, contact Director of Development Kellye Rosenheim at krosenheim@nycaudubon.org or 646-502-9611.

NEWS & NOTES

NATIONAL MICROBEAD BAN SIGNED INTO LAW

Following widespread efforts to ban the sale of products containing plastic microbeads on a local and state level, this past December President Obama signed the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015. The law will phase out the manufacturing of face wash, toothpaste, and shampoo containing plastic microbeads by July 1, 2017, and the sale of such beauty products by July 1, 2018.

PORT AMBROSE FACILITY DEFEATED

This past November, Governor Cuomo vetoed the proposed Port Ambrose liquefied natural gas facility off the coast of Long Island. This decision followed years of opposition from environmental advocates and elected leaders.

BIRD-FRIENDLY BUILDING DESIGN

Bird-Friendly Building Design, created by the American Bird Conservancy in partnership with NYC Audubon, has recently been updated and can be viewed at www.nycaudubon.org/our-publications/bird-friendly-building-design. This important resource for all people in the building and design industries as well as policy makers is based on NYC Audubon's Bird-Safe Building Guidelines, first published in 2007.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NYC Audubon's conservation work and public outreach programs are made possible by generous contributions from members, friends, corporations, foundations, and government agencies. We'd like to express our gratitude to all those who have sustained us in our work this past season.

AMERICAN KESTREL CIRCLE

Tylee Abbott
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TRIBUTE GIFTS

In honor of...
 Marsilia A. Boyle
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 Franny Geller
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 Kellye Rosenheim
 Andy Sabin
 Susan Vadala
 Tod Winston
 Dora Woodruff
 Alan Wright

MEMORIAL GIFTS

In memory of...
 Mary Birchard
 Lillian I. Langsan
 Christine M. Crichton Mannella

BEQUESTS

The Estate of Helen Ann Mattin
 The Estate of Evelyn Nethercott

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Contributing members are essential to our education and conservation work. Help protect birds and habitat in the five boroughs by joining our flock. As a member of NYC Audubon you will receive *The Urban Audubon* newsletter and *The eGret* newsletter; enjoy discounts on field trips and classes; and make a difference in the City's wildlife and natural areas.

I would like to become a member by making a **recurring** donation in the amount of \$_____ **each month**.

I would like to become a member by making a one-time donation:

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

Additionally, I would like to make a donation to NYC Audubon in the amount of \$_____.

I'm already a member but would like to make a **gift** in the amount of \$_____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: H: _____ C: _____ Email: _____

Enclosed is my check payable to NYC Audubon

Charge my credit card: VISA MC AMEX DSC

CARD # _____ Exp. Date: _____

Mail this form with your payment to:

NYC Audubon • 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523 • New York, NY 10010

Membership in NYC Audubon does not include National Audubon membership or Audubon Magazine. Donations to NYC Audubon are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. NYC Audubon is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



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DATED MATERIAL: Spring 2016 Newsletter

**ANNUAL REPORT
2015
“GOES GREEN”**

NYC Audubon’s
Annual Report 2015 is
now available online at
www.nycaudubon.org/annual-report.

To request a print copy,
please contact the office at
212-691-7483 x303.

WORLD PREMIERE: *SAVING JAMAICA BAY*

Please join NYC Audubon friend and filmmaker Dan Hendrick for the world premiere of this first-ever feature-length film about Jamaica Bay. This important film was made with the support of NYC Audubon, its board members and supporters, and many members of the New York City birding community.

THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 8PM
MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
(36-01 35TH AVENUE, ASTORIA, NY 11106
(close to R subway stop at Steinway Street)
Tickets \$10-12 available online at
www.queensworldfilmfestival.com.

To learn more and see a film trailer, visit www.savingjamaicabay.com.

WINTER/SPRING 2016 LECTURE SERIES AND ANNUAL MEETING

All lectures are free and open to the public. This series has been made possible by the support of Claude and Lucienne Bloch.

**PRIORITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS:
NYC AUDUBON
CONSERVATION UPDATE**
By Susan Elbin, PhD and Conservation Staff
Tuesday, March 15, 6:30pm
Central Park Zoo 4-D Theater

Are the birds of New York City getting what they need here in the five boroughs? NYC Audubon conducts vital monitoring of the City’s wild birds, working with research partners in evaluating how native populations are doing both locally and regionally. Join us as Susan Elbin and her research team provide insights from the work we’ve done over the past year—and

learn how recent findings will guide our programs in the future.

**BIRDS AND CONSERVATION IN ISRAEL
AND BEYOND**
By Dan Alon and Jonathan Meyrav
Wednesday, May 11, 6:30pm
Central Park Zoo 4-D Theater

From the snow-covered northern peak of Mount Hermon to the Red Granite Eilat Mountains on the Red Sea shore, the land of Israel is extremely rich in migratory birdlife. Following on their 2015 lecture, Dan Alon and Jonathan Meyrav of the Israel Ornithological Center will

update us on how they “use” Israel’s birds and migration spectacles as fuel for conservation and education for the next generations—and share striking new visuals in celebration of the birds and wildlife of Israel

**NYC AUDUBON ANNUAL MEETING:
WHAT CAN I DO TO SAVE BIRDS?**
Wednesday, June 8

Includes the annual board election. Location and time to be announced in the May and June issues of *The eGret* newsletter. Please sign up for *The eGret* at www.nycaudubon.org/egret.