

# THE URBAN AUDUBON

**NESTING BIRDS OF NEW YORK CITY  
THAT NEED OUR HELP**

**MEET OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF  
CONSERVATION AND SCIENCE,  
DUSTIN PARTRIDGE, PHD**

**WIND POWER  
ON THE HORIZON**

**SAVE THE DATE:  
THE 2022 FALL ROOST**



## MISSION

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

## VISION

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

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## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

By Jessica Wilson



As I write in mid-April, millions of migrating birds are winging their way north from their tropical wintering grounds. And birders across New York City are eager to greet them: few birding experiences can top a big migration day here, when our parks brim with singing warblers, vireos, tanagers, and orioles. Here at NYC Audubon, we're looking forward to seeing many of you at birding events across the five boroughs, from our members-only tours and free, drop-in bird walks to special programs designed to engage new and diverse audiences with birds and conservation.

The richness of the City's birding comes at a great cost, however: for our visiting migrants, our landscape of glass, steel, and cement can be hazardous territory. The theme of this May's World Migratory Bird Day, "The Impact of Light Pollution on Migratory Birds," recognizes this danger to birds at a global level. NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight research estimates that in New York City alone, reflective glass and artificial light pollution contribute to hundreds of thousands of bird deaths each year.

However, there's hope, as our decades of work have started to stem this deadly tide. By marshaling our 25 years of research data and our corps of passionate advocacy volunteers, NYC Audubon and a coalition of like-minded groups saw Local Law 15 enacted in 2020, requiring that all new and significantly altered buildings in the City employ bird-friendly design, which will save the lives of millions of birds.

We've worked to make existing hazardous buildings more bird-friendly, as well. After Project Safe Flight volunteers sounded the alarm about collisions in the World Trade Center area in spring 2021, NYC Audubon collaborated with the American Bird Conservancy and the Port Authority to have dangerous glass railings retrofitted. Our guidance and technical assistance have also supported bird-friendly retrofits at sites including the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge, and the Queens Museum.

We're also focusing on the problem of artificial lighting. Nighttime lights attract migrating birds to inhospitable locations in the City, where they are likely to collide with glass. We have made some significant progress: in January, NYC Audubon's testimony before the City Council supported the enactment of Lights Out bills 271 and 273, which reduce both indoor and outdoor lighting in publicly owned buildings during peak migration times.

These laws are great steps forward—but they're not sufficient. We must now push for Lights Out legislation covering privately owned buildings at both the City and State levels, and work with property managers and government officials for effective implementation.

Spring migration has now wound down, and many migrants have flown on to their northern breeding grounds. Some have stayed to nest right here in New York City, however—you'll see they are featured throughout this issue—and in just a few months, they'll be ready to migrate south once more. We hope you'll join us in working to make the next migration through our city a safer one for the birds you love. Join our Avian Advocates corps (see page 9), participate in our Conservation Program Update and Annual Meeting (see page 11), and consider a gift to support our work (see page 15). We need your help to make the City a healthy place for both birds and people.



The American Redstart, a frequent collision victim in the City during migration, also stays to breed: this colorful warbler nests in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island.

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12 Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, and Dunlin feed on horseshoe crab eggs in Jamaica Bay © Don Riepe

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Gray Catbird on Staten Island © Dave Ostapiuk

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# NESTING BIRDS OF NEW YORK CITY THAT NEED OUR HELP

Though New York City is famous for the fantastic diversity of migrating birds that pass through in spring and fall, many species stay to nest here. These include beach-nesting birds, which compete with human beachgoers for limited space; up to 10 species of Harbor Herons that breed on protected islands; birds of prey that are vulnerable to rodenticide poisoning; and several land birds that are among the most frequent victims of collisions with glass windows in the City. We've featured many of these species throughout this issue. Visit [nycaudubon.org/our-work](https://nycaudubon.org/our-work) to learn about NYC Audubon's efforts to protect these birds via the Share the Shore campaign, Harbor Herons Nesting Survey, Rodenticides and Birds of Prey brochure, and Project Safe Flight.



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## NEW YORK CITY'S NESTING BIRDS

1. Black Skimmers often abandon nesting attempts on beaches in the Rockaways, Queens, when disturbed by people. Skimmers frequently nest in proximity to Common Terns (see photo on page 3).
2. These ferocious-looking Black-crowned Night-Heron nestlings, photographed on South Brother Island, are in fact quite vulnerable. This species has been declining in our region, for reasons we hope to better understand through analysis of our 35-year Harbor Herons Nesting Survey data set.
3. Song Sparrow fledglings like this one can be found in all five boroughs of New York City during breeding season. This species is also a frequent victim of collisions with windows during migration.
4. The Common Yellowthroat, here a male carrying food for its chicks, nests in all five boroughs. It is the most common collision victim among warblers in the City.

5. Piping Plovers, listed as Endangered in New York State, nest on beaches of the Rockaways in Queens. "Exclosure" fencing is used to protect them from foot traffic and predators.
6. Red-tailed Hawks like this nestling in Manhattan's East Village die every year from ingesting prey tainted with rat poison. Integrated Pest Management techniques can provide safer solutions.
7. Wood Thrushes sing their ethereal song in all five boroughs. They are often parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds, and nest most successfully in large, unfragmented forests.
8. The American Woodcock (here probing for worms) has a hard time navigating the City during migration; many hit windows. Woodcocks perform courtship flights in our wildest parks, but feral cats and human disturbance may prevent them from breeding.
9. NYC Audubon monitors nesting American Oystercatchers on beaches in the Rockaways, Queens. See page 6 to learn more. ■

## VOLUNTEER!

**M**ake a difference for the City's birds and other wildlife. There are many ways to help. Learn more about volunteer opportunities with our conservation and education programs at [nycaudubon.org/volunteer](https://nycaudubon.org/volunteer). Orientations and events will also be announced via The eGret eNewsletter (sign up at [nycaudubon.org/egret](https://nycaudubon.org/egret)).

## PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT Begins Thursday, September 1

Contribute to Project Safe Flight by monitoring designated buildings for collisions. This opportunity requires a time commitment of about one hour, one morning a week, from September through early November. Orientations will be held in August; check [nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events](https://nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events) in mid-July for details. ■

## CONSERVATION NOTES

NYC Audubon conservation staff and volunteers have fanned out across the City this spring—monitoring buildings for injured birds, surveying wading birds on the Harbor Heron Islands, studying and tagging shorebirds and horseshoe crabs, conducting green roof research, and censusing marsh restoration areas. Read updates on this spring’s conservation work below.

### PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT Collision Monitoring and dBird

In Spring 2022, the Project Safe Flight collision monitoring program benefited from the highest volunteer participation in its 25-year history. Our 48 volunteers, coordinated by Katherine Chen, are focusing on monitoring 15 high-collision buildings. All these buildings are at some phase of our retrofit consulting process:

- high-risk buildings for which we are collecting data to convince management to put collision deterrent in place,
- buildings for which we are actively working with management to determine the best retrofit, or
- buildings where deterrents have been installed and we are collecting data to determine effectiveness.

### Lights Out and Bird-Friendly Buildings

Following passage of New York City Lights Out legislation restricting artificial nighttime lighting at publicly owned buildings last December (see the spring 2022 *Urban Audubon*), our staff also continue to work closely with other organizations to pass Lights Out legislation for privately owned buildings in the City, as well as comprehensive legislation at the State level.

—Kaitlyn Parkins



Three Great Egret chicks are added to the Harbor Herons Nesting Survey tally on South Brother Island, in the East River.

### WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR Harbor Herons

This year marks 40 years of NYC Audubon’s Harbor Herons Nesting Surveys of the islands of New York Harbor. I am pleased to be planning this year’s project as the new survey leader, taking over from Tod Winston after his eight years in the role. During this May’s “full survey,” conducted every three years, we will visit all the current and former colonies observed since our first survey in 1982. Our team will survey over 20 islands, documenting nesting wading birds, cormorants, gulls, terns, waterfowl, and shorebirds.

We are also moving forward with publication of a descriptive paper on the Harbor Herons Nesting Survey project, spearheaded by Conservation Scientist Emerita Susan Elbin, PhD. The conservation team recently met with all past survey leaders to discuss the study’s history and the paper’s content. Field Biologist Emilio Tobón and I will be focused on data analysis in the coming months, while Tod Winston will be contributing to the study methods.

—Shannon Curley, PhD

### American Oystercatchers

American Oystercatchers are back at Breezy Point! As we continue surveying the population this spring with the help of field technician Emilia Heaton, we hope to band more adults and chicks at Breezy Point Tip, Jacob Riis Park, and Fort Tilden. Continued banding allows identification of individual birds over time, which is necessary in order to obtain information like productivity of individual pairs, changes in territory, and overall long-term productivity. We will also continue to study the influence of human activity on oystercatcher productivity, along with behavioral variables such as the birds’ mobility, reaction to human approach, and changes in behavior across the seasons. We hope to determine the causes of nest failure and chick mortality, such as climate-related events, predator activity, and human disturbance. In order to do that, we plan to install camera traps at several sites in our study area to monitor activity around the nests.

—Emilio Tobón

### Semipalmated Sandpipers

This spring we continue to study the movements of migratory shorebirds in and around Jamaica Bay, a project generously funded by the Disney Conservation Fund. Our science team will work to place 30 new nanotags—tiny radio-tracking devices—on Semipalmated Sandpipers. In addition to tracking birds during their northward migration, we hope to receive some data this fall as the birds pass through Jamaica Bay on their way south. One of our previously tagged birds was detected in French Guiana, and we hope to obtain more information about where Jamaica Bay birds spend the non-breeding season.

—Kaitlyn Parkins



© David Speiser

Threatened Red Knots nourish themselves on horseshoe crab eggs during their long migration, which can span 9,000 miles.

### Horseshoe Crab Monitoring

On 12 nights this May and June, our volunteers will monitor and tag spawning Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs, whose eggs are an important food source for migrating shorebirds such as the federally Threatened *Rufa* subspecies of Red Knot. Since 2009, NYC Audubon’s corps of community scientists has monitored several spawning beaches in Jamaica Bay, gathering data on horseshoe crab numbers. Coordinated this year by Ann Seligman, this work is part of a state-wide project led by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County in partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, created to inform horseshoe crab conservation and management plans.

—Kaitlyn Parkins

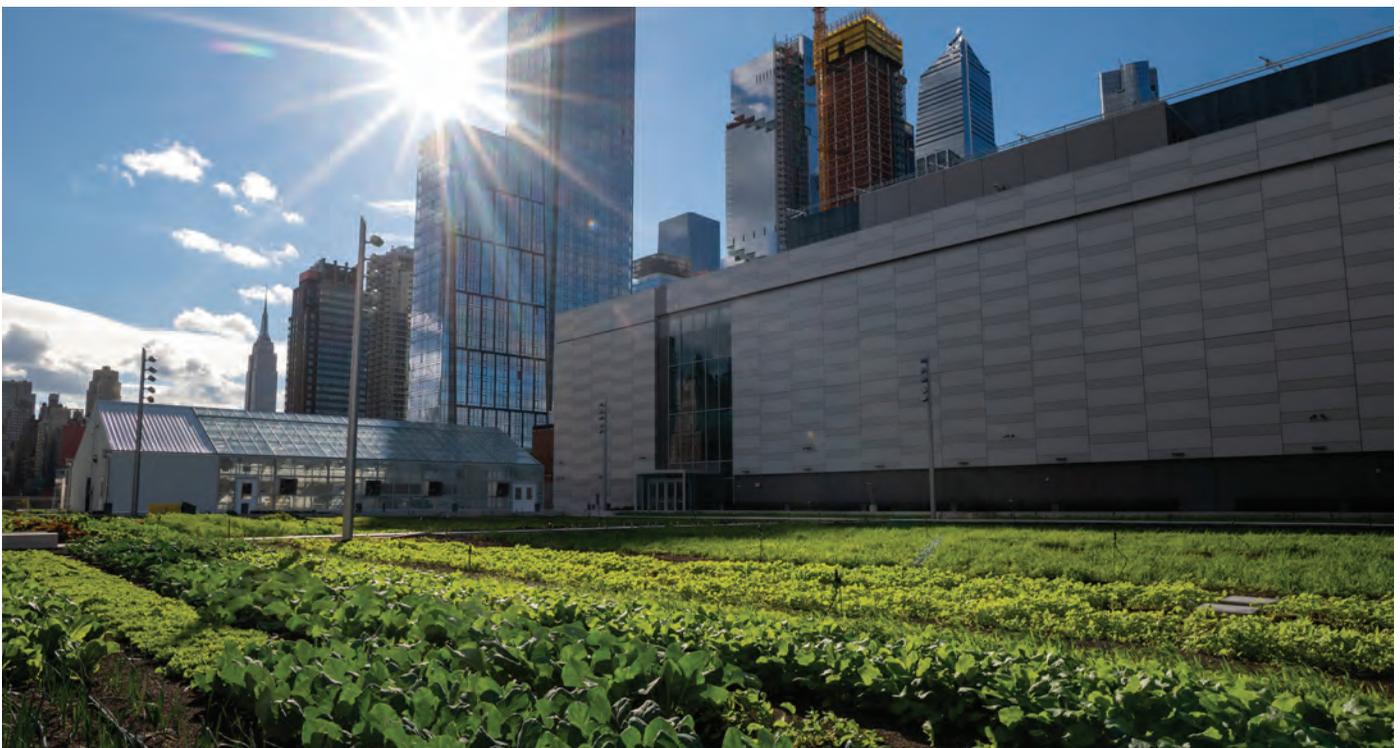
## HABITAT, GREEN ROOFS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### Green Roofs

Our biodiversity monitoring on the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center’s new expansion green roof, which includes an apple orchard, food farm, shade garden, and native plantings, is well under way. We are focusing on several research objectives this year. First, in order to better understand how plant heterogeneity influences wildlife colonization, we will document the ecology of the expansion roof at this early successional stage and compare it to our data from the early years of the original green roof (completed in 2014 and planted with low-growing sedum). Next, we intend to compare birds’ use of native plantings to their use of actively farmed areas on the green roof. Finally, we are studying how the additional acreage and plant diversity of the new expansion roof influences wildlife use of the original green roof. Stay tuned for updates from what is sure to be an exciting year.

Additionally, at the original Javits Center green roof, two new technicians, Wesley Craig and Allison Starks, are working hard in our Herring Gull Conservation and Management program. Last year’s efforts demonstrated that setting aside a portion of the roof as a conservation zone can successfully promote nesting on the roof while reducing gull impacts to sensitive areas. This year we have added a new conservation zone while also testing new abatement measures in the exclusion zones, such as raptor kites and coyote decoys. This project highlights NYC Audubon’s role in promoting bird conservation and science while working in unique habitats designed for human use.

—Dustin Partridge, PhD



© Jacob K. Javits Convention Center

Further research on the Javits Center green roof will explore birds’ use of farmed portions compared to native planting areas.



### Coastal Habitat

This spring we began a partnership with a coalition of local groups including Save the Sound and the Douglas Manor Environmental Association on an upcoming restoration of marsh habitat in Udall's Cove of Little Neck Bay in Queens. The "Big Rock Wetland Restoration Project" will restore eroding shoreline along Memorial Field in Udall's Cove using living shoreline habitat protection methods, including installation of 600 linear feet of oyster castles and restoration of one acre of tidal wetland habitat. NYC Audubon will monitor bird activity at the site over the next two years, pre- and post-restoration, to gauge impact of the restoration and provide ecological information for public education efforts.

—Tod Winston ■



© Tod Winston

The community abutting the Big Rock Wetland Restoration area has agreed to allow the edge of a sports field to be restored to natural habitat.

# MEET OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION AND SCIENCE

By Dustin Partridge, PhD

We are happy to announce that Dustin Partridge, PhD, who has managed NYC Audubon's green roof research over the past decade, recently became our new director of conservation and science. Read more about Dr. Partridge on our website at [nycaudubon.org/our-staff](https://nycaudubon.org/our-staff).

Starting when I was about three years old, "Want to talk about birds and nocturnal animals?" was the first thing I would ask anyone I encountered. And to be honest, not much has changed since then! Although now I'm more likely to start conversations about ecological community formation, protecting rare birds, and engaging all New Yorkers in conservation, the drive is still the same. I love the natural world around us and I look forward to sharing this lifelong passion as the new director of conservation and science at NYC Audubon.

I have wanted to work in conservation from a young age, but never expected to be doing it in an urban setting. However, after spending some time traveling and working in remote areas as a young professional, my interest in urban ecology was sparked at a saltwater wetland in Queens, across the street from Alley Pond Park. As part of my work as a scientist at a consulting and engineering firm, I was involved in restoration of the site, which had been used as a dumping ground in the early 1900s, and since then had become dominated by invasive *Phragmites australis*.

Despite the marsh's degraded state, I was blown away by its biodiversity—Black Skimmers, Monarchs, long-legged wading birds, Painted and Snapping Turtles, leafcutter bees. I started thinking critically about the ecological dynamics of urban green spaces—and how to protect, enhance, and create more of them. This interest led me to Fordham University for my biology doctorate researching wildlife use of green infrastructure, and eventually, to NYC Audubon.

I have been with NYC Audubon in various roles since 2014, starting with a then "pilot" study monitoring biodiversity at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center's original green roof. Over time that pilot study has grown into one of the major pillars of NYC Audubon's conservation efforts: Green Infrastructure. As the new director of conservation and science, I have a unique opportunity to



© NYC Audubon

Dr. Partridge on the Javits Center green roof.

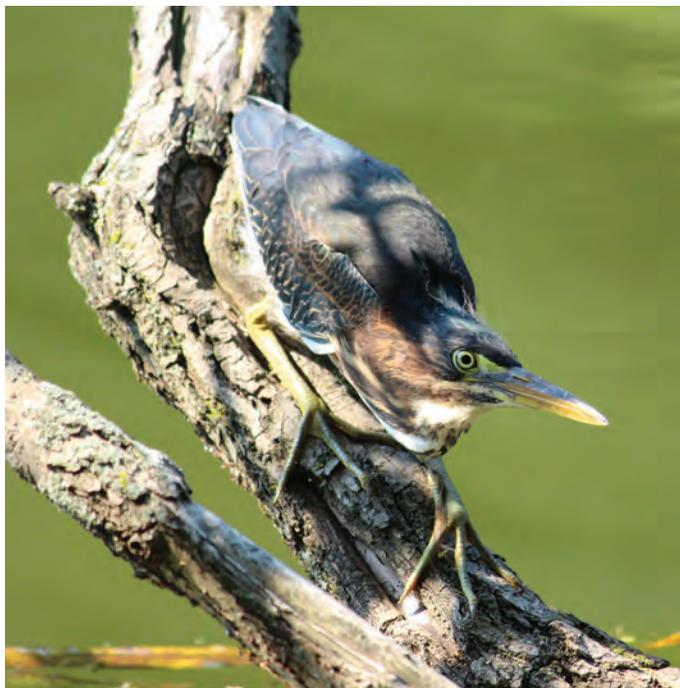
join this incredible team of scientists, educators, and advocates in a new role, but with my own institutional knowledge. I am excited to further build the organization's scientific research programming to support our important work: making New York City a safer place for birds, and protecting the critically important bird habitats that make the City unique. ■



We hope that you all are safe and well. Below are updates on advocacy efforts, along with ways to advocate right now for New York City's birds.

## FRESHWATER WETLANDS REFORMS INCLUDED IN NEW YORK STATE 2022-23 BUDGET

We are excited to share that Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature have included critical reforms to the **New York State Freshwater Wetlands Act** regulatory program in the State's 2022-23 Executive Budget, passed this past April. These reforms will allow the Department of Environmental Conservation to



© Dave Orstephuk

This young Green Heron on Staten Island depends on the City's freshwater wetlands. These imperiled habitats will be better protected thanks to reforms to the Freshwater Wetlands Act passed this past April.

protect over one million additional acres of critical freshwater wetlands across the state. Thank you to everyone who reached out to their state representatives and advocated for these reforms. This big step forward will protect clean water, buffer communities against sea-level rise, and protect millions of birds that call wetlands their home. Learn more on the Audubon New York website at [bit.ly/3KgE6mh](https://bit.ly/3KgE6mh).

## THE BIRDS AND BEES PROTECTION ACT

We are pleased to report that an updated version of the **Birds and Bees Protection Act**, a bill that would ban harmful and unnecessary use of neonicotinoid pesticides ("neonics") statewide, was voted favorably out of the New York State Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee and now sits in the Codes Committee. We have been partnering with Audubon New York and the Natural Resources Defense Council to support this bill, which would greatly reduce usage of neonics, a widely used class of neurotoxic insecticides that has been found to be a contributing factor to the 30 percent decline in North American birds seen in the past 50 years.

## URGE CONGRESS TO SUPPORT THE BIRD-SAFE BUILDINGS ACT

Thanks to your support, in 2019 New York City enacted landmark bird-friendly buildings legislation that will help reduce bird collisions with glass in the City. Now, we continue our efforts to pass bird-safe buildings laws across the nation by asking you to advocate for the **Bird-Safe Buildings Act**. This bill, reintroduced into the U.S. Congress last year, would direct federal buildings to incorporate bird-friendly design and materials. Please urge your members of Congress to cosponsor and support this common-sense legislation, which would significantly reduce collisions across the country, saving millions of birds' lives.

To get current updates and find out how to contribute to all the bird-friendly advocacy efforts above, and to sign up to be an Avian Advocate, please visit [nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates](https://nycaudubon.org/avian-advocates). ■

# STATEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY



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

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

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

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

# WIND POWER ON THE HORIZON

By Suzanne Charlé

The past year has taught us the importance of alternate forms of energy. Recent United Nations reports (see [un.org/en/climatechange/reports](https://un.org/en/climatechange/reports)) stress how critical it is that we switch to sustainable energy sources to stem the climate crisis. And the recent Ukraine conflict has underscored the perils of depending on oil to fuel the world's economies.

In the U.S., the Biden administration has put much of its focus on offshore wind energy. In the New York City area, 480,000 acres in the New York Bight (the roughly triangular area of ocean between Long Island and New Jersey) were auctioned in

February to six companies for \$4.37 billion—the largest offshore energy-lease sale ever.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity, with New York State setting incredible goals for renewable energy,” said Dr. Shilo Felton, National Audubon Society’s field manager for the Clean Energy Initiative. Slowing global warming, she says, is important to us—and to the birds: “According to the Audubon’s Climate Report, 389 bird species are likely to lose range or become extinct because of climate change.”

Audubon, its affiliates, and other conservation organizations are working with government agencies and industry

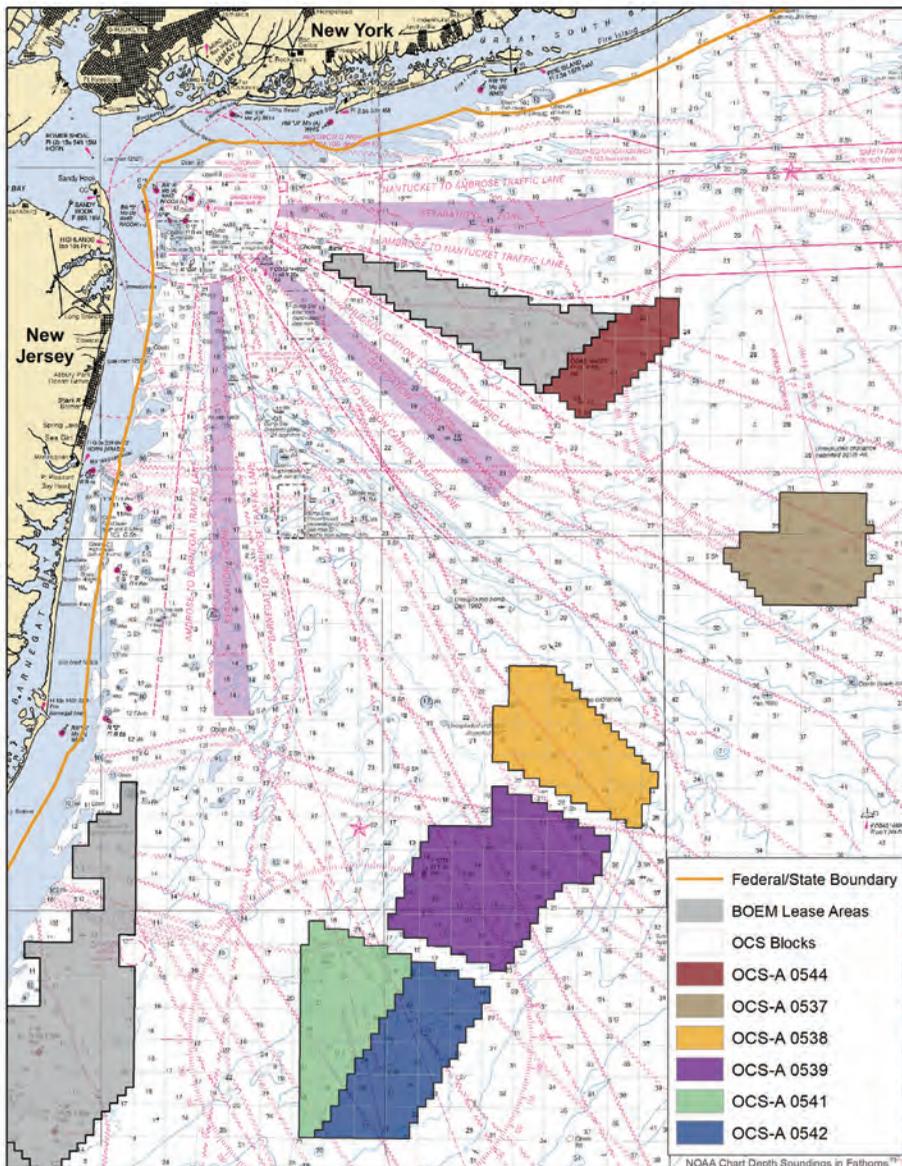
players to determine best practices for offshore wind projects—best practices that should be mandated at the federal level. “We can’t afford to have this stalled again,” Felton said. “We don’t know exactly how birds will respond to offshore turbines until they’re built, but we do have insights from Europe and also from U.S. land turbines.” A 2015 study estimated that in the U.S., 234,000 birds died from collisions with “monopole” wind turbines, pictured on page 3, the type in the proposed projects. (In comparison, the same study estimated that 599 million birds died in collisions with building windows.)

“The offshore wind industry is 20 years old in Europe,” noted Joel Merriman, director of American Bird Conservancy’s Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign. Efforts in the U.S. were set back when the Trump administration blocked the nation’s first offshore project. Now that new possibilities have opened up under President Biden, more risk assessment research is needed.

To minimize impacts on birds, Merriman says, “siting is everything. We need to know where the birds are and where they aren’t, and what displacement there is. We have to set the bar high now, with stringent standards based on good data, good science examining impacts.”

This research has to be done now. There are plans for thousands of offshore wind turbines in U.S. waters; only seven are yet in operation, none as large as those proposed for our area. Building and siting of turbines for the leases sold in the New York Bight will not occur for perhaps five years, Felton explained. We must take the opportunity now to understand and reduce the impacts of wind energy on wildlife.

In comments to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) last year, cosigned by NYC Audubon and other organizations, the National Audubon Society urged BOEM, the energy companies, and the states involved to fund detailed studies now, before construction starts, of the interactions of offshore wind and the natural ecosystem. New York and New Jersey are the first states to require energy companies to commit a portion of their proceeds to survey, monitor, and



Recently auctioned wind power lease areas span a large portion of the New York Bight.

respond to impacts on wildlife. (New York's latest solicitation for clean energy projects includes up to 2,500 megawatts of offshore wind and requires developers to contribute at least \$10,000 per megawatt for regional monitoring of fisheries and other wildlife.)

To carry out this monitoring both pre- and post-construction, Felton said, leases must include Motus towers (radiotelemetry receivers) that track bird movement. "We recommend that BOEM's current avian survey guidelines for developers be updated to extend monitoring to 20 kilometers beyond lease footprints. European studies have shown that certain species can be displaced from habitats within 20 kilometers. Currently, most companies primarily survey area only within their lease footprint."

Bird species of particular concern are Piping Plovers, Red Knots, and Roseate Terns—all of which are federally threatened or endangered. Also to be studied are shorebirds that travel short distances, hopping from Long Island or southern Massachusetts to New Jersey and Maryland; marine birds with high collision and displacement vulnerability; nocturnal migrants; and other species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and



© Ann Paoluccio/Audubon Photography Awards

The Roseate Tern is occasionally seen at New York City beaches. Listed as Endangered in New York State, this elegant species breeds at the eastern tip of Long Island and forages in the New York Bight.

the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, like the Northern Gannet.

High-resolution surveys of the project areas will help us better understand potential impacts on nature and take actions to protect bird populations from displacement. In addition to placing turbines in low-impact areas for birds, measures that minimize bird deaths must be implemented on all turbines. Mitigation in the form of off-site conservation measures must also

be required, to bolster affected bird populations. And existing laws that protect wildlife, including the Endangered Species Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, must be strictly enforced.

To learn more from the National Audubon Society about birds and wind power, visit [audubon.org/cleanenergy](https://audubon.org/cleanenergy). To read more about wind power leases in the New York Bight, visit [bit.ly/3EVMHd0](https://bit.ly/3EVMHd0). ■

## NEWS & NOTES

### CONSERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE AND ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 8, 6pm

A Virtual Gathering with NYC Audubon, Free and Open to the Public

NYC Audubon conducts scientific research in New York City to understand how birds are using our urban environment and how this environment affects them, via signature conservation programs such as Project Safe Flight, Waterbirds of NY Harbor, and Green Roof Monitoring programs. Whether you're a NYC Audubon member or just curious to learn more about our work, please join us virtually to hear about our accomplishments over the past year and our goals for the year ahead.

Our board election and annual meeting will precede the presentation. Registration required. Limited to 500. Free and open to the public. Learn more and register at [nycaudubon.org/lectures](https://nycaudubon.org/lectures).



© Matthew Coody

Director of Development Matthew Coody

### STAFF NEWS

This spring, we've been very happy to welcome several new staff members: Dustin Partridge, PhD, a long-time member of our science team who has led our green roofs and infrastructure monitoring work since 2014, has become our new director of conservation and science. Learn more about Dr. Partridge on page 8.

We are also pleased to welcome Matthew Coody as our new director of development.

Matthew brings over a decade of fundraising experience in the heritage, culture, and open space spheres, serving most recently as director of external affairs at the Historic House Trust of New York City, a public-private partnership with NYC Parks. Read more about Matthew at [nycaudubon.org/our-staff](https://nycaudubon.org/our-staff).

Kaitlyn Parkins, who most recently served as NYC Audubon's interim director of conservation and science, has stepped down from that post but will continue on staff in the role of science consultant.

We've also recently said goodbye to several valued staff members: Community Science Program Manager Aurora Crooks, Associate Director of Education and Public Programs Danielle Sherman, and Senior Development Associate Leo Wexler-Mann. We thank Aurora, Danielle, and Leo for their service to NYC Audubon and wish them well in their future endeavors. ■

# EVENTS & ADVENTURES



## SUMMER TRIPS & CLASSES

Check [nycaudubon.org/local-trips-and-classes](https://nycaudubon.org/local-trips-and-classes) to learn about Trips & Classes offered this summer. We also hope you'll get out and bird at one of the fun and educational summertime events below.



© simplehill/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

**"The Hills" of Governors Island offer striking views of the City—and nesting territory for Yellow Warblers and Tree Swallows.**

Take the ferry to Governors Island and visit NYC Audubon's seasonal environmental center at Nolan Park House 17. Talk birds with us out on the porch of the house on Saturdays this summer, from noon to 4:30pm (though we may be out for a bird walk from 2 to 3:30; see below).

### GOVERNORS ISLAND BIRD WALKS

**Saturdays, May 7 through Summer 2022, 2-3:30pm**

**Note: walks will not be offered on Saturday, June 4**

**Guide: Annie Barry**

Meet in front of Nolan Park House 17 and get to know the birds of Governors Island. Whether you're an expert birder or a beginner, these tours will help you discover all of the bird life the island has to offer. Binoculars are available to borrow, and families are welcome. No RSVP required, but capacity is limited to 15. Free. Check [nycaudubon.org/gov-island](https://nycaudubon.org/gov-island) for more information.



© Tracy Pennoyer

**Atlantic Horseshoe Crabs spawn in Jamaica Bay.**

### SIXTH ANNUAL JAMAICA BAY HORSESHOE CRAB FESTIVAL

**Saturday, June 4, 11am-2pm**

**With the American Littoral Society, Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, National Park Service**

Meet at 11am at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge to celebrate the Atlantic Horseshoe Crab! During the full and new moons of May and June, female horseshoe crabs come ashore in Jamaica Bay to lay eggs—a crucial food source for migrating shorebirds. During this festival you'll see experts handle live horseshoe crabs and learn about their important ecological and medicinal values. For more information, contact [don@littoralsociety.org](mailto:don@littoralsociety.org).

## SIGN UP FOR THE EGRET

Stay updated on NYC Audubon's events and activities! Sign up for The eGret eNewsletter at [nycaudubon.org/egret](https://nycaudubon.org/egret) and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (@nycaudubon).



### MAY 29-JUNE 4 IS #BLACKBIRDERSWEEK

Sunday, May 29 to Saturday, June 4 is Black Birders Week 2022, organized by The BlackAFinSTEM Collective—a collective that seeks to support, uplift, and amplify Black Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics professionals in natural resources and the environment through professional development, career connection, and community engagement. Learn more at [blackafinstem.com/bbw2022schedule/events](https://blackafinstem.com/bbw2022schedule/events).



© Don Reipe

**Black-bellied Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones stop by Jamaica Bay.**

### 17TH ANNUAL SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL AT JAMAICA BAY

**Saturday, August 13, 9am-1pm**

**With American Littoral Society, Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, and Gateway National Recreation Area**

August is the perfect time to explore the diversity of New York City's shorebirds. Meet at 9am at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for a hike to the East Pond with shorebird experts. For more information, contact [don@littoralsociety.org](mailto:don@littoralsociety.org).



© Steve Nantz

**Northern Gannets and other pelagic birds feed in the waters off Cape Ann, MA.**

### CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH WEEKEND

**Thursday, August 4-Sunday, August 7**

**Offered by the American Littoral Society**

Enjoy an extended weekend in scenic Gloucester, MA. Includes three nights' lodging, a half-day whale watch tour, an evening cruise on the Essex River, easy canoeing on the Ipswich River, a hike along the shore at Halibut Point, plus a lobster dinner. \$595/person. Transportation by van \$150 extra. Single supplement \$150. For more information, contact [don@littoralsociety.org](mailto:don@littoralsociety.org).



**HOW BIRDS EVOLVE: WHAT SCIENCE REVEALS ABOUT THEIR ORIGIN, LIVES & DIVERSITY**

By Douglas J. Futuyma

Princeton University Press, October 2021

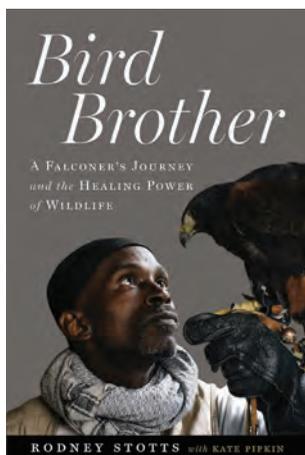
**D**ouglas Futuyma, a distinguished professor emeritus of evolutionary biology at Long Island’s Stony Brook University, is known to many readers of *The Urban Audubon* as an enthusiastic fellow birder of New York City’s

parks. At the beginning of his new book, he explains that much of what is known about evolution has come from the study of birds—and in fact, that Darwin wrote about birds in 11 of the 14 chapters of *The Origin of Species*. While some birders only want to see birds and add species to their lists, he writes, others are interested in the “Why?” of birds: the reasons they act and look as they do. It is in response to that question that Futuyma has created this compact but substantial exploration of what is known about bird evolution and how it came to be known.

New technologies, especially DNA analysis, have greatly increased the amount and sophistication of research being done on the evolution of birds’ physical characteristics and behavior. Googling “bird evolution,” the author says, yields references to over 73,000 scientific publications. The book is not an in-depth treatise on the ancient descent of birds from feathered dinosaurs. An early chapter gives a summary of the theory of evolution, but after that, the book is about the basics of post-Archaeopteryx

evolution: variations within populations, adaptations, sexual preferences, life histories, behavior, speciation, and a final chapter on the likelihood that bird species can evolve their way out of extinction in the face of climate change and other threats.

While the intended reader is the nonscientist—and Futuyma takes care to define terms and include explanatory drawings, as well as charming illustrations of birds—those who haven’t thought much about evolution since high-school biology class may not find it the easiest of reading. However, the author’s passion for his subject is contagious and bound to hold your attention. For example, after explaining the persistence of two different color morphs in White-throated Sparrows, he says, “I think it is so cool that a familiar bird can be the nexus of evolutionary biology, behavioral biology, brain science, and genomics, working together to explain observations by curious naturalists.” How can that not add to the pleasure of anyone watching those sparrows in Central Park?! —MJJK



**BIRD BROTHER: A FALCONER’S JOURNEY AND THE HEALING POWER OF WILDLIFE**

By Rodney Stotts with Kate Pipkin  
Island Press, February 2022

**T**he journey of Rodney Stotts, one of the nation’s premier Black falconers and licensed raptor specialists, has been told across articles, YouTube videos, book

chapters, and documentaries. Now, Stotts is sharing his story and plans for the future in *Bird Brother*, a gripping memoir that will leave readers looking to the sky.

Stotts opens his memoir in the middle of a drug deal, in his home city of Washington, D.C. While measuring out cocaine, a young Stotts notices a Red-tailed Hawk devouring its prey in a tree right outside his window, overlooking the trash-filled lot next door. He doesn’t know the species at the time, but the bird’s formidable talons, patterned feathers, and striking eyes awaken a childlike fascination in him, before his attention is pulled back to finishing the deal. This fascination—and joy—come back into Stotts’s life after he takes a job working with the Earth Conservation Corps to clean the Anacostia River in Washington, DC, and ultimately reintroduce Bald Eagles to the area.

That job, which starts out primarily as a way for Stotts to establish a history of pay stubs to secure housing, ends up igniting a

passion and fierce dedication to raptors and their power to inspire future generations. Stotts goes on to become a master falconer and to develop his own raptor education program and sanctuary. And his passion is now being carried on in the next generation, as Rodney’s son, a D.C. firefighter, trains to become a falconer.

A powerful Black voice in the predominantly white canon of nature writing, Stotts unapologetically tackles the challenges he and other Black children in impoverished communities face, and the complexities of being a Black naturalist. His journey from a difficult childhood is a testament to the power that a connection to nature holds to transform lives.

After finishing this moving memoir, you’ll want to look up videos of Stotts and his birds (Red-tailed Hawks, Harris’s Hawks, and a Eurasian Eagle-Owl named Mr. Hoots). His book is filled with hope, love, and the importance of second chances—for injured birds and humans alike. —IJG ■

## PARTNER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Conservation and outreach are not possible without working partnerships. NYC Audubon collaborates with government agencies and other nonprofit and community organizations to reach broader audiences and achieve common conservation goals. We are grateful to the organizations below for recent partnerships supporting our work.

American Bird Conservancy  
American Institute of Architects New York  
American Littoral Society  
American Museum of Natural History  
Audubon Connecticut  
Audubon New York  
Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania  
Audubon Urban Collaborative Network  
The Battery Conservancy  
Birds & Beans Coffee  
Bird-Safe Buildings Alliance  
Brooklyn Bird Club  
Bryant Park Corporation  
Central Park Conservancy  
College of Staten Island  
Columbia University  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Drexel University  
Earth Matter NY  
Ennead Architects  
Feather Friendly  
Feminist Bird Club  
Fordham University  
Frank J. Guarini Center on Environmental, Energy, and Land Use Law  
Freshkills Park Alliance  
The Friends of Governors Island  
FXCollaborative  
Green Roof Researchers Alliance  
Green Roofs for Healthy Cities  
Greenbelt Native Plant Center  
Hackensack Riverkeeper  
Harbor Estuary Program  
The Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
Jamaica Bay-Rockaways Parks Conservancy  
Kingsland Wildflowers at Broadway Stages  
Latino Outdoors NYC  
Lights Out Coalition  
The Linnaean Society of New York  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences  
Michael Ahern Production Services  
National Audubon Society  
National Park Service, Gateway National Recreation Area  
National September 11 Memorial & Museum  
Natural Areas Conservancy  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
The Nature Conservancy  
New Jersey Audubon  
The New School  
New York Aquarium  
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation  
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, Natural Resources Group  
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, Wildlife Unit  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
New York University Wallerstein Collaborative for Urban Environmental Education and Sustainability

New York University Stern Center for Sustainable Business  
SWIM Coalition  
Newtown Creek Alliance  
NYC Plover Project  
NYC Queer Birders  
Outdoor Afro  
Patagonia  
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey  
Prendergast Laurel Architects  
Public School 41, Greenwich Village School  
PS 344, Ampark Neighborhood School  
Queens Botanical Garden  
Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus  
Save the Sound  
Seattle Audubon  
The Trust for Governors Island  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Urban Bird Treaty Program  
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance  
Wild Bird Fund  
Wildlife Conservation Society

### NYC Audubon thanks the following foundations, corporations, and governmental agencies for their financial support:

Altman Foundation  
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Bird Collective  
Broadway Stages  
The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation  
Con Edison  
Disney Conservation Fund

The Durst Organization  
FAO Schwarz Family Foundation  
The Ferriday Fund  
Ford Foundation  
FXCollaborative  
Green Relief & Recovery Fund (via Van Cortlandt Park Alliance)  
Hallingby Family Foundation  
The Harry & Rose Zaifert Foundation  
Hudson River Foundation  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
Jim & Birte Falconer (via Seattle Audubon)  
Kimball Foundation  
Lark Fine Foods  
Leaves of Grass Fund  
The Leon Levy Foundation  
Lily Auchincloss Foundation  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences  
The Marta Heflin Foundation  
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Robert I. Goldman Foundation  
Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
The Walt Disney Company Foundation  
Wood Thrush Fund



© Tim Timmins/Audubon Photography Awards

### REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Vulnerable beach-nesting birds like the Black Skimmer need protectors to ensure they continue to have safe spaces to nest. Make sure that New York City remains a haven for the birds and wildlife you love. A bequest to NYC Audubon is a generous and straightforward way to safeguard birds and their habitat in New York City's five boroughs for the future.

A bequest can be expressed in a Will as simply as, "I bequeath [a sum of money, a percentage of my estate, or an IRA, life insurance policy, or investment/bank account] to New York City Audubon Society, 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523, New York, NY 10010." Consult with your attorney to determine what is best for your particular situation.

Visit [nycadubon.org/leave-a-legacy](https://nycadubon.org/leave-a-legacy) or contact Director of Development Matthew Coody at 646.502.9611 or [mcoody@nycadubon.org](mailto:mcoody@nycadubon.org) to learn more.

# HELP US CREATE A SAFER CITY FOR BIRDS

**A**las—the glories of spring migration have now passed. But the joys of summer in New York City are upon us! For bird lovers, adventures are still to be had in parks across the five boroughs: Songbirds and raptors are nesting in our woodlands; the Harbor Herons are foraging in our ponds and marshes, carrying food back to their island colonies; and terns, skimmers, and shorebirds can be seen feeding their young on our beaches. The astounding diversity of the City’s birdlife is just waiting to be discovered.

Nesting in one of the world’s densest cities is not simple, however, and every breeding bird species faces its own set of unique challenges. Parents must find undisturbed nesting sites, and safe food for their nestlings. And before long, both parents and fledged young must navigate their way through the City on their way south—joined by millions more migrating birds traveling along the Atlantic Flyway.

NYC Audubon is dedicated to making New York City safer for breeding and migrating birds alike, through conservation research, grassroots advocacy, and fun and educational programs that connect New Yorkers across the City to the beauty of the birds around them. **The only way we can accomplish this work is through your financial support. Please join in our fight by donating at [nycaudubon.org/donate](https://nycaudubon.org/donate).**

## BECOME A YOUNG CONSERVATIONIST

Calling all young nature-lovers, ages 18-35! For \$25 per year, a Young Conservationist membership will contribute to NYC Audubon’s conservation work, and get you (or a young person you know) connected to the Young Conservationists Council and its schedule of birdy activities: Flappy Hours, lectures, bioblitzes, trivia nights, and more. See the membership form below at the right or join online at [nycaudubon.org/join-our-flock](https://nycaudubon.org/join-our-flock).

The Young Conservationists Council, formed in early 2020, is a group of young New Yorkers who are committed to sharing the wonders of the City’s diverse ecosystem with the next generation of New Yorkers, and who are dedicated to protecting and conserving its natural habitats.

## GIVE MONTHLY

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

## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN KESTREL CIRCLE

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

## GIVE A MATCHING GIFT

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

## REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Please consider remembering the birds in your estate plan; see page 14.

To learn more, contact Director of Development Matthew Coody at 646.502.9611 or [mcoody@nycaudubon.org](mailto:mcoody@nycaudubon.org).



© Paul Testier/Shutterstock

The Gray Catbird, pictured on this issue’s cover and here with nestlings, breeds in all five boroughs of New York City. It is also a long-distance migrant, traveling south as far as Colombia to spend the winter. Among the most frequent victims of window collisions in the City, catbirds will benefit from comprehensive Lights Out and bird-safe building legislation.

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Contributing members are essential to our conservation and outreach work.**

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

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 \$500
- Advocate \$250
- Supporter \$100
- Family \$75
- Friend \$25
- Dual Friend \$50
- Young Conservationist(18-35) \$25
- Student/Senior(65+) \$15
- Dual Senior \$30

I’d like to ADD a gift for NYC Audubon’s community outreach and education work:

- \$50 purchases a pair of quality binoculars
- \$150 underwrites a free bird walk

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Enclosed is my check payable to NYC Audubon

Charge my credit card:  VISA  MC  AMEX  DISC

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

Mail this form with your payment to:  
 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.  
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# Save the Date

Tuesday, September 20, 2022

Javits Center Rooftop Pavilion

## NYC Audubon Fall Roost

Honoring the Javits Center

and its sustainability partnership with NYC Audubon

*Proceeds support NYC Audubon's work in conservation, engagement, and advocacy.*