

THE NEWSLETTER OF NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON

WINTER 2013-2014 / VOLUME XXXIV NO. 4



# THE URBAN AUDUBON



**The Great Backyard Bird Count  
Citizen Science with eBird**

**The Northern Cardinal**

**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**

**Editors** Lauren Klingsberg & Marcia T. Fowle

**Managing Editor** Tod Winston

**Newsletter Committee** Lucienne Bloch, Ned Boyajian, Suzanne Charlé, Andrew Harmon, Catherine Heller, Mary Jane Kaplan, Abby McBride, Don Riepe, Carol Peace Robins, Matthew Rymkiewicz

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**G**ateway National Recreation Area is a 26,000-acre national park that stretches across parts of the New York City boroughs of Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, as well as Monmouth County, New Jersey. Gateway includes numerous habitats critical to an incredibly diverse array of birds and other wildlife, including federally and state-listed species. The jewel in the crown of Gateway is Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, the heart of a **globally significant Important Bird Area**.

You, as members of the NYC Audubon community, know that Jamaica Bay is one of the East Coast's most important places for birds. NYC Audubon began working to protect the bay's crucial habitat long before Hurricane Sandy's destruction made worldwide headlines. Yet despite the hurricane's devastating damage, the National Park Service has made little progress towards restoration of the refuge, including the West Pond. (The West Pond was breached by Sandy, thus connecting the formerly freshwater West Pond with the salt water of Jamaica Bay.) NYC Audubon has proposed a restoration plan for the pond, with clear goals to provide habitat for critically threatened species in the bay.

In addition to the recent hurricane damage, Jamaica Bay faces another urgent threat just one year after Sandy: irreversible impact from irresponsible development of recreational activities in the area. The difference between hurricane damage and environmentally harmful policy, of course, is that, with your help, bad policy can be prevented.

As we go to press, the National Park Service is in the final stages of creating a new General Management Plan that will determine the fate of Gateway for the next two decades. We encouraged our membership to comment on the original Draft Plan, released over a year ago, which outlined three different management alternatives. NYC Audubon is both surprised and concerned that despite the many comments submitted, the Park Service selected *Alternative B: Discovering Gateway*, which favors recreational activities, although they had identified *Alternative C: Experiencing Preserved Places* as the environmentally preferable alternative. As acknowledged in the Draft Management Plan, many of the planned infrastructural developments and changes in land use associated with Alternative B would be likely to degrade the condition of bird and other wildlife habitats and natural resources throughout Gateway, and will ultimately diminish the potential for enjoyment of these resources by future generations.

**There is no time to lose.** We are expecting a decision on the General Management Plan by the end of December, determining the future of the refuge and other Gateway areas. In the coming weeks, we will be hard at work meeting with local political leaders in order to bring pressure to bear on the Park Service to safeguard the natural resources under its protection. NYC Audubon's continued work to preserve Jamaica Bay—and natural habitats throughout the five boroughs—is possible only because of your continued passion, concern, and generosity. Please renew your support with a year-end donation in the enclosed envelope, or at [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org). Never before has it been so important to work together to protect New York City's wild places for our birds and other wildlife.



## NYC AUDUBON

71 West 23rd Street  
Suite 1523  
New York, NY 10010  
Tel: 212-691-7483  
Fax: 646-606-3301  
[www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org)

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## IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS AND PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

There are few moments in conservation when you can witness immediate and measurable effects of your actions; September 11, 2013, was one of those moments. Working in partnership with the Municipal Art Society, NYC Audubon citizen science volunteers counted and observed migratory birds circling in the *Tribute in Light* memorial. As a result, the lights were dimmed four times during the course of the night. We were anticipating a moderate migration night, but the weather changed right before midnight. Thousands of birds were attracted into the beams, flying lower and lower. At one point we could identify warblers without the aid of binoculars. The wave of migrants started at midnight and lasted through 2:30am, followed by a second pulse between 3 and 4am. Night flight calls emitted by migrating birds were loud and clear. With the help of Board Member Andrew Farnsworth, we will compare the number of calls and diversity of species before and after the lights were dimmed.

Project Safe Flight monitoring was in full gear this fall, funded generously by the Leon Levy Foundation, the North American Bird Conservation Act, and TogetherGreen. We concentrated on monitoring the Javits Center, buildings around Bryant Park, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Javits Center glass facade has been retrofitted with bird-friendly glass and steel panels (see fall 2013 issue of *The Urban Audubon*).

## JAMAICA BAY

Conservation activities this fall in Jamaica Bay focused on the aftermath of Plumb Beach renourishment actions and Gateway National Recreation Area's Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP). Preliminary results for horseshoe crab spawning show that activity was low on the restored western part of Plumb Beach as compared to the extant



*Horseshoe Crab Being Measured*

eastern portion. But in total crab spawning on the beach was the highest we have seen to date. In 2013, we counted 1,800 crabs in our sample versus 1,300 in 2012.

One year ago, we submitted comments on the first draft of the GMP, which presented three alternative plans. This summer, we were disappointed to find that the newly released revised draft was based on *Alternative B: Discovering Gateway*, which emphasizes visitation and recreation, rather than *Alternative C: Experiencing Preserved Places*, which emphasizes natural resource protection. Via an official response letter, submitted comments, coordination of a regional action letter, and leadership of a coalition of like-minded conservation organizations in requesting an extension of the comment period, we demanded that the National Park Service rescind its decision to support Plan B in favor of Plan C.

One part of the GMP addresses restoration at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge West Pond. NYC Audubon is working closely with other biologists who have knowledge of the habitat and avifauna there, to propose closing the breach at the pond and making it once again a freshwater resource.

Also this fall, two of thirteen great egrets tagged this summer as fledglings were seen in September after leaving the breeding colony. One bird was spotted in the NJ Meadowlands, the other in Saratoga, NY.

## WESTERN LONG ISLAND SOUND AND THE NARROWS

Our stormwater project at the Justice Avenue traffic circle in Queens is now moving into its second year. Construction at the site was delayed because of a design change and the need for a new permit. This fall we moved forward with our pre-construction monitoring work. Biologist Nim Lee is analyzing data from terrestrial invertebrate sampling. She will compare abundance and diversity of arthropods, pre- and post-construction. Botanist Marielle Anzelone is working with us on construction and native plant compliance issues.

We were awarded a second grant from the Eppley Foundation for Research to continue our work with herring gulls as bioindicators of harbor health. In order to assess run-off pollution after Hurricane Sandy, we are comparing concentrations of heavy metals and petroleum-related contaminants from pre- and post-Sandy herring gull eggs. Analysis is underway.

## STATEN ISLAND

Our research on migratory land birds and predators of Prall's Island, conducted with the use of mist-netting to catch and band migrant songbirds and "camera traps" to detect predators, has been completed. Now we wait for newly planted trees and shrubs to grow and for wading birds, which have not bred on the island since 2005, to return and nest. In the meantime, we hope to build nesting platforms on the island and attract new "settlers" with egret decoys and sounds of a productive colony. This method has been successfully employed by National Audubon's Project Puffin scientists, who reestablished a thriving puffin colony on Maine's Eastern Egg Rock.

And now... it's time to plan for the Christmas Bird Count and the Great Backyard Bird Count. (See page 7 for details.)

# eBIRD TAKES LISTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Gabriel Willow

Many birders share a concern about declines in certain bird populations or species, or even overall declines of whole groups of migratory warblers or shorebirds. But most of their observations and concerns were, until recently, simply anecdotal evidence, stories shared, without the scope and data analysis to determine anything certain about population trends, shifts in species distributions, or the timing of migratory patterns.

But now there are emerging technologies and tools that can make use of birders' observations; citizen science has grown tremendously in recent years, and is of interest to many of the avian inclined, from laypersons to scientists. While non-professional birders have contributed greatly to our knowledge of bird populations and distributions for over a century, particularly through the

annual Christmas Bird Count and the Great Backyard Bird Count, this trend has been particularly enabled and accelerated by a decade-old project and website called eBird.

[eBird.org](http://eBird.org) is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. In the words of the website itself, eBird is "a real-time, online checklist program, [which] has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. eBird provides rich data sources for basic information on bird abundance and distribution at a variety of spatial and temporal scales."

In effect, eBird takes listing to the next level, into the realm of big data. No longer will checklists be simply paper lists stuck in the back of field guides. Now they can be compiled, collated, combined with thousands of other birders' sightings, and submitted to scientific scrutiny. To account for observers who misidentify

birds, eBird uses filters to flag unlikely species for a region or season, and local volunteers contact the submitter about a flagged sighting to obtain supporting notes or photographs. This quality control results in a rigorous, robust database, and one that is growing rapidly. The website now receives over 3 million observations per month.

There are even smart-phone apps that allow one to submit observations from the field, using the phone's built-in GPS for location data, such as the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's BirdLog or WildLab Bird (which I helped design).

Through eBird, observers can contribute to citizen science, and bring more meaning to their hobby. While simply getting outside and watching birds is great, adding to the body of knowledge and potentially aiding in the conservation of declining species, or understanding shifts in distribution and migratory patterns is even better.

## 2013-2014 LECTURE SERIES

All lectures are free and open to the public and are held at The Arsenal, Central Park, 5th Avenue at 64th Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. This series has been made possible by the support of Claude and Lucienne Bloch and Patagonia.

### CONSERVING GRASSLAND BIRDS ON MILITARY LANDS

By Nellie Tspoura

Wednesday, January 8, 2014, 6pm

In the Northeast, once extensive grassland habitats have been lost, fragmented, or degraded. Lands managed through state or federal landowner incentive programs and large grasslands associated with airports have become increasingly important for the conservation of declining grassland birds. Nellie Tspoura, senior research scientist and director of citizen science at New Jersey Audubon, will discuss her chapter's work with both landowner programs and airports, and share some of the research and lessons learned.

### THE HORSESHOE CRAB: REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

By Mark Botton

Tuesday, February 18, 2014, 6pm

Mark L. Botton is professor of biology in the Department of Natural Sciences at Fordham University and co-chairman of the IUCN Horseshoe Crab Specialist Group. Horseshoe crab eggs are a crucial food source for migratory shorebirds. Valued in the biomedical industry and often used as fishing bait, horseshoe crabs are also being impacted by global climate change and beach erosion. This talk will review the many important roles of horseshoe crabs and discuss conservation efforts in the US and Southeast Asia.

### TAKE WING AND FLY HERE: AN EVENING IN CONVERSATION WITH PRIYANKA KUMAR AND JANE ALEXANDER

By Priyanka Kumar and Jane Alexander

Wednesday, March 26, 2014, 6pm

To celebrate the publication of Priyanka Kumar's new novel, *Take Wing and Fly Here*, please join us for an evening of conversation between the author and Jane Alexander, Oscar-nominated actress, conservationist, and board member of the National Audubon Society. They will discuss themes in the book including land conservation and the portrayal of birds in art.

### CONSERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE AND ANNUAL MEETING

By Susan Elbin

Wednesday, June 18, 2014, 6pm

## TRIP LEADER PROFILE: DAVID PERRY

Carol Peace Robins

If you've enjoyed NYC Audubon's Sunday family birding walks, then you know David Perry. He's the friendly fellow who leads most of these outings, dispensing knowledge and binoculars, along with the how-to's of handling them with awkward little fingers.

Weekdays, David is a technical trainer for the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, instructing parks employees on the Parks database and handheld devices. If a tree limb looks precarious or a restroom lacks supplies, the handhelds allow for immediate notification.

David's love of nature began indoors in Brooklyn, reading *Ranger Rick* as a child. The puffin issue was his favorite, as were puffins themselves, although he didn't set eyes on one for 20 years. All his early bird knowledge came from books; he even learned bird sounds from written descriptions. Then came the "ah hah" moment: His mother dropped 12-year-old David off for an all-day walk around Jamaica Bay with Elliott Kutner of the South Shore Audubon Society. To this day, David says he has never seen so many birds—100 species!—nor Jamaica Bay more beautiful than on that transformative hike. To top it off, the book-taught boy

identified the call of a hidden scarlet tanager to which Elliot promptly led the group.

While earning his masters in Environmental Conservation Education from NYU Steinhardt, David began interning for NYC Audubon. He has studied harbor herons in Marine Park, worked for Project Safe Flight, and more recently, helped kids clean up a horseshoe crab spawning beach.

As for David's other side(s), consider these intriguing facts:

He's a licensed massage trainer, has studied animation and still loves drawing comic strips, was once a serious cellist, and has taught English in Vietnam. He even has perfect pitch.

David and his wife Jenny live in Park Slope, where she practices her own special talent: Take her to a restaurant and she'll go home and re-create the best dishes. Not a bad combination!



David Perry

©One Leaf Photo/Khoa Nguyen

## THE NORTHERN CARDINAL (*CARDINALIS CARDINALIS*)

Don Riepe

I always am heartened when I hear the first song of the cardinal in late February or early March, as it's a sign that days are getting longer and spring is not far away. The brilliant red color of the male along with the more subtle but equally beautiful plumage of the female make it stand out among backyard birds. The juvenile birds are similar in plumage to the adult female but are generally browner all over with a duller bill color. As this medium-sized bird nests in shrub thickets and dense tangles in urban and suburban areas and regularly visits bird feeders, the cardinal is perhaps the best known and loved bird in the Eastern and Southern US; in fact it is listed as the state bird for seven states: Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and North Carolina. Many professional sports teams have adopted the cardinal as a mascot,



Male Northern Cardinal

most notably the Saint Louis Cardinals baseball team. Despite the fact that it is non-migratory, during the last century

the cardinal has been extending its range northward into Canada and southward into Mexico. Some of the northward expansion may be due to the growing number of people feeding birds in winter when deep snow and very cold weather can decimate bird populations. Also, cardinals mate for life and a pair may produce two or three broods each year, especially in warmer, southern states. Limiting factors include habitat loss, stray cats, hawks, owls, and other predators as well as diseases such as West Nile virus and avian malaria. To attract cardinals as well as chickadees and other seed-eaters to your backyard, plant a shrub thicket or tangle of vines in a corner of the yard and put out a feeder with black-oil sunflower seeds. There's nothing more beautiful than seeing a cardinal sitting in a snow-covered shrub in winter.

# MAKE YOUR FAMILY'S BIRDING SUPERPOWERS COUNT

Ned Boyajian

Most birders have secret superpowers: piercing powers of observation, almost bionic hearing, and many others. The wonderful thing about these powers is that anyone can attain them, with a little practice; no radioactive spider is needed. And, your powers grow greater and greater the more they are used. Two annual events let you use them to the maximum while harnessing them to do Good in the world: the Christmas Bird Count and the Great Backyard Bird Count. Participants make important citizen-science contributions to ornithologists' understanding of bird populations—and have fun along the way.

The **Christmas Bird Count** is an integral part of the holiday season for NYC area hero-birders. It is also an important asset for scientists tracking range changes over time. For details about this year's Count, the 114th, please see the information listed above.

All are welcome to participate in the Christmas Count but it is not, perhaps, the

## THE 2013 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—ALL BOROUGHS

Brooklyn	Saturday, 12/14	Mary Eyster	maryjoeyster@gmail.com
Staten Island	Saturday, 12/14	Ed Johnson	cicadaman1@aol.com
Manhattan	Sunday, 12/15	Susan Elbin	christmasbirdcount@nycaudubon.org
Queens	Sunday, 12/15	Corey Finger	here471@yahoo.com
The Bronx	Sunday, 12/22	Michael Bochnik	bochnikm@cs.com

mission for everyone. The Count involves tromping around in the (usually) cold air, rain (or snow) or shine, for a number of hours, in the hopes of sighting an interesting bird.

The 2014 **Great Backyard Bird Count** will run from Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17. As their website states: "The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Everyone is welcome—from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and

easy—and it helps the birds."

Just create an account on the GBBC website, count the birds you see for at least fifteen minutes on one or more Count days (you can count longer, of course!), and report what you see on the website.

For information on how to participate, visit [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc). Want to encourage your kids to hone their birding superpowers? Go to [www.birdsource.org/gbbc/kids](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/kids).

Whichever mission is right for you and your family, take part this season; you'll help birds in need and enjoy some super fun.

Up, up, and away!

## VOLUNTEER!

Make a difference for New York City's wildlife by volunteering with NYC Audubon. To learn about the many ways to help, register for our general orientation on Wednesday, March 12, 6:30-7:30pm, or for any of the projects listed below, by contacting the office at [volunteer@nycaudubon.org](mailto: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](http://www.nycaudubon.org/volunteer-events).

**OFFICE VOLUNTEERS:** Help answer inquiries about wild-

life and about our field trips, classes, events, and conservation work. Also help with mailings, research, data entry, photocopying, and filing. Word-processing skills and knowledge of birds are helpful, but not required. This is a great opportunity to learn the ins and outs of a small nonprofit.

### CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS:

If you are interested in contributing to NYC Audubon's conservation and science work, there are a variety of projects to choose from. **Project Safe Flight** volunteers monitor city buildings to help us learn what effect they have on migratory birds; data collected sup-

port our work to make migration safer. **Jamaica Bay** program volunteers monitor migratory shorebirds and horseshoe crabs so that we may better understand how their populations are changing and how we can work to conserve them. **Harbor Herons Great Egret Foraging Study** volunteers collect data on foraging long-legged waders around the New York Harbor to help us understand how these birds use our wetlands. All of these programs can use your help in the spring, summer, and fall.

**BIRD TRANSPORTERS:** We often receive phone calls from con-

cerned citizens who have found injured birds, but are unable to transport them to medical facilities. We need caring and compassionate volunteers to transport injured birds to licensed wildlife rehabilitators and veterinarians.

### PRESS AND PROMOTION:

Do you have a background in event promotion or advertising, and want to support bird conservation? We are looking for someone familiar with the ins and outs of press releases and event promotion who can help spread the word about our trips, classes, and other events.



# EVENTS AND ADVENTURES

- NYC Audubon Events
- Partnership Events

Hummingbird by Vik Muniz. Courtesy of the artist and Stikeman Jenkins & Co.



## ● TWEET! EXHIBITION AND BIRD CALL WORKSHOPS

Exhibition Open through Sunday, January 26, 2014

Bird Call Workshops

Sunday, December 15, 2013, 12-3pm

Saturday, January 11, 2014, 12-3pm

Thursday, January 23, 2014, 3-6pm

Instructors: Gabriel Willow, Cliff Hagen, NYC Audubon staff

With Children's Museum of the Arts

NYC Audubon is pleased to be partnering with Children's Museum of the Arts, offering Bird Call Workshops in conjunction with the museum's bird art exhibit, Tweet. During the workshop, participants

will discover how and why birds sing, learn to imitate bird calls and songs, and have the opportunity to create their very own bird song recording, which will be featured on the museum's blog. Please visit [www.cmany.org/tweet](http://www.cmany.org/tweet) for more information. Limit of 6 children per session. Free with admission to Children's Museum of the Arts

## ● CAMERA CLUB

Wednesdays, December 4, February 5, March 5, 6:30-8:30pm  
Instructors: David Speiser, Lloyd Spitalnik

Meet at the National Audubon Office, 225 Varick Street. Whether you're a beginner or a more advanced photographer, our camera 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. \$8 per meeting

## ● VAN CORTLANDT BIRD WALKS, THE BRONX

Saturday, December 7, 8-9:30am  
Guide: NYC Audubon or Urban Park

## Rangers (first Saturdays) With the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy and NYC Department of Parks & Recreation

Please note: December 7 will be the final Van Cortlandt bird walk this year; walks will resume in April 2014

Meet at Van Cortlandt Nature Center. Influential birders such as Roger Tory Peterson and Allan D. Cruickshank learned their craft on Van Cortlandt Park's ecologically diverse grounds, and these walks celebrate the tradition set by them. Participants will look for resident and migrant species and discuss a wide range of avian topics. For more information, please call 718-548-0912. No registration necessary. No limit. Free

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, ALL BOROUGHES

Put the Christmas Bird Count on your calendars! Please see p.7 for dates and contact information.

## ● WINTER BIRDS & SURVIVAL

Saturday, December 21, 10am-1pm  
Guide: Don Riepe  
With Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for an easy hike around the West Pond, gardens, and upland woods. Learn how plants and animals adapt to winter, and look for waterfowl, owls, and wintering birds. To register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or [donriepe@gmail.com](mailto:donriepe@gmail.com). Limited to 25. Free

## ● NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACHWALK, BREEZY POINT, QUEENS

Wednesday, January 1, 11am-1pm  
Guides: Mickey Cohen, Don Riepe  
With Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at Building #1 in Fort Tilden, Breezy Point, Queens. Keep up the 30-year tradition by joining us for a brisk hike along the beach at Fort Tilden to celebrate the New Year. At noon, hike up to the hawk watch

for a great view of the ocean and New York Harbor. Afterwards, visit the Rockaway Artist's Alliance for coffee, cake, and free champagne. No reservation necessary. For more information, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or [donriepe@gmail.com](mailto:donriepe@gmail.com). No limit. Free

## ● WINTER SEALS AND WATERBIRDS OF NY HARBOR

Sundays, January 5–March 9, 2-4pm  
Guide: Gabriel Willow  
With New York Water Taxi

Meet at South Street Seaport's Pier 17 and come aboard NY Water Taxi's eco-friendly vessel for a winter adventure in New York Harbor. Look for harbor seals on the rocky shores of Governor's Island and the more remote Hoffman and Swinburne Islands. Learn about the surprisingly diverse winter birds of New York City, including ducks, geese, loons, and sandpipers, many of which migrate south from the Arctic. See the Statue of Liberty and pass under the Verrazano Bridge. Limited to 90. To register, contact New York Water Taxi at 212-742-1969 or [www.nywatertaxi.com](http://www.nywatertaxi.com). \$35 for adults; \$25 for children under 12 (no member discount)

## ● PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP: WINTER WATERFOWL OF LONG BEACH ISLAND/ BARNEGAT LIGHT, NJ

Sunday, January 12, 6:30am-3pm  
Instructor: David Speiser

The Barnegat jetty is one of the best locations in the United States to photograph wintering birds, including harlequin ducks, purple sandpipers, scoters, long-tailed ducks, and possibly Ipswich savannah sparrows or short-eared owls. For photographers at an intermediate level or above, this small-group workshop will focus on exposure, cold-weather photography, and composition. DSLR, 200-400mm or greater. Trip includes walking over a mile on uneven or icy trails. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 8. \$165

© David Speiser



Harlequin Duck





● **WINTER BIRDING ALONG THE HUDSON: WAVE HILL**  
**Sundays, January 12 and February 9;**  
**9:30-11:30am**  
**Guide: Gabriel Willow**  
**With Wave Hill**

Meet at the Perkins Visitor Center. The Hudson River valley hosts an impressive diversity of bird species, even in winter. Come explore the beautiful gardens and woodlands of Wave Hill and observe the hardy birds that spend the winter here. Advanced registration is recommended, online at [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org), by calling 718-549-3200 x305, or at the Perkins Visitor Center. (Walks run rain or shine; in case of severe weather call the number above at x245 for updates.) Ages 10 and up welcome with an adult. NYC Audubon members enjoy two-for-one admission

● **SNOW BIRDS OF FLOYD BENNETT FIELD AND FORT TILDEN, QUEENS**  
**Saturday, January 18, 10:30am-4pm**  
**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

Winter brings many rare birds to the City that can't be found here at any other time. Perhaps most exciting are the "snow birds" of the Arctic tundra that can occasionally be found in tundra-like habitats further south, such as snow buntings and snowy owls. Look for these and other winter visitors such as horned larks, tree sparrows, and rough-legged hawks, as well as wintering ducks, grebes, and loons. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$75

● **CAMERA CLUB**  
**Wednesday, February 5, 6:30-8:30pm**  
 See the December 4 listing for details.

● **PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP: CENTRAL PARK FEEDERS AND RESERVOIR**  
**Sunday, February 9, 9-11am**  
**Instructors: David Speiser, Lloyd Spitalnik**  
 Meet at the Central Park Boathouse. Learn how to photograph songbirds

© Lloyd Spitalnik



*Snow Buntings*

and ducks with NYC Audubon Camera Club leader David Speiser (Lloyd Spitalnik will join if we are able to add a second section). We'll photograph American goldfinches, brown creepers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, and more at the Ramble feeders. Then we'll be off to the Reservoir to look for waterfowl including northern shovellers, ruddy ducks, and hooded mergansers. This workshop, for beginners and up, will focus on camera basics, proper exposure, and more. Please visit [www.nycaudubon.org/photography-club](http://www.nycaudubon.org/photography-club) for more details. Limited to 8 per instructor. \$45

● **SOARING RAPTORS: EAGLES AND OWLS OF THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY, NY**  
**Sunday, February 9, noon-7pm**  
**Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC**

You don't have to travel to Alaska to see our country's emblem, the bald eagle. Thanks to one of the most successful reintroduction programs on record, many eagles now soar over the nearby Hudson Valley. Travel with us to see this spectacular raptor, and possibly spot the secretive short-eared owl. Bring lunch. Transport by private coach included. Limited to 35. \$75

● **THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT, ALL BOROUGHS**  
**Friday, February 14 through**  
**Monday, February 17**  
 See page 7 for more information.

● **LATE WINTER BIRDWALK AT JAMAICA BAY**  
**Sunday, February 16, 10am-1pm**  
**Guide: Don Riepe**  
**With Gateway National Recreation Area**

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. Visit the East and West Ponds to look for rafts of wintering ducks in breeding plumage, raptors such as northern harriers, sharp-shinned hawks, and long-eared owls, as well as early spring migrants. To register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 25. Free

● **WINTER AT JONES BEACH, LI**  
**Tuesday, February 25, 8am-4pm**  
**Guides: Peter Mott, Tod Winston**  
 Several bird species that nest in the far north spend the winter at Jones Beach, where they prosper in a habitat similar to their summer homes. We will start at Point Lookout and work eastward as far as Robert Moses State Park in hopes of finding an interesting variety of avian guests. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 11. \$50

● **WINTER BIRDS OF BARNEGAT, NJ**  
**Tuesday, March 4, 9am-4pm**  
**Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC**  
 Explore Barnegat Inlet's expansive beach to view the winter birds that gather where land, bay, and sea

meet. Search for harlequin ducks, horned larks, Lapland longspurs, snow buntings, and snowy and short-eared owls. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 11. \$80

● **CAMERA CLUB**  
**Wednesday, March 5, 6:30-8:30pm**  
 See the December 4 listing for details.

● **WINTER BIRDS OF SANDY HOOK, NJ**  
**Saturday, March 8, 10am-5pm**  
**Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC**

Sandy Hook, a spectacular barrier island at the northernmost point of the NJ coast, hosts a variety of species including Arctic-bound migrants and harbor seals that lie on the beach to warm up in the sun. Other possible sightings: loons, sea ducks, snow buntings, and horned larks. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 11. \$65

● **TO REGISTER FOR ALL NYC AUDUBON EVENTS and for more information, visit [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org) or call 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 10% discount on most local trips and classes. See membership form on page 15.
- 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 15.

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

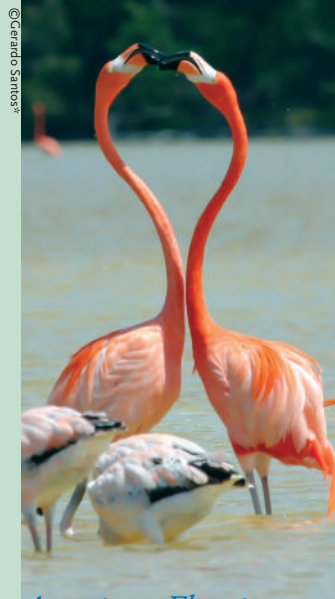
**MONTAUK WINTER WEEKEND: SEALS, SEA BIRDS, AND SANDY BEACHES, LONG ISLAND, NY**  
Friday, January 10–Sunday, January 12, 2014

**Guides: Mike Bottini, Mickey Cohen, Don Riepe**  
With American Littoral Society

Visit Montauk's vast dunes, beaches, and woods during peak sea bird season and hike the beautiful "Walking Dunes," Hither Woods, Oyster Pond, and the "seal haul-out" site. Includes double-occupancy lodging at the luxurious Manor House, most meals, guided hikes, evening programs, a star watch, and free pickup at the LIRR station in Montauk. To register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 60. \$385 (\$125 single supplement)

**YUCATÁN, MEXICO**  
Saturday, February 15–Monday, February 24, 2014  
Pre-Trip Workshop: Wednesday January 22, 2014, 6–8pm  
Guides: Gabriel Willow, Local Guides

Visit the magical land of the Maya: the Yucatan Peninsula of Southern Mexico. Explore ancient Mayan ruins; swim in the Caribbean and explore coral reefs; and of course, see the amazing bird life of the region—from parrots and toucans to flamingos and trogons,



*American Flamingos*

along with many of our wintering neotropical migrants. Includes one pre-trip workshop, lodging, local transportation, most meals, and all park fees. A full tour description and day-by-day itinerary is available online at [www.nycaudubon.org/overnight-trips](http://www.nycaudubon.org/overnight-trips). Please contact Adriana Palmer at [apalmer@nycaudubon.org](mailto:apalmer@nycaudubon.org) or 212-691-7483 x304 to learn more and register. Limited to 12. \$2,295 (\$450 single supplement)

**COSTA RICA: MONTEVERDE AND CAÑO NEGRO**  
Saturday, March 8–Saturday, March 15, 2014  
Pre-Trip Workshops: Thursdays, February 20 and 27, 6:30–8:30pm  
Guides: Glenn Phillips, Richard Garrigues

Our 2014 Costa Rica expedition will visit its most famous birding destination: Monteverde. Home to resplendent quetzals, black guans, emerald toucanets, and many more cloud forest species, Monteverde has a well-deserved reputation. Other highlights include the Celeste Mountain Lodge, known for its fine French cuisine as well as for rarities such as the tody motmot and yellow-eared toucanet; and Caño Negro, where Nicaraguan grackles,

lesser yellow-headed vultures, and even jabiru are possible. Includes two pre-trip workshops, lodging, local transportation, most meals, and all park fees. A full tour description and day-by-day itinerary is available online at [www.nycaudubon.org/overnight-trips](http://www.nycaudubon.org/overnight-trips). Please contact Adriana Palmer at [apalmer@nycaudubon.org](mailto:apalmer@nycaudubon.org) or 212-691-7483 x304 to learn more and register. Limited to 12. \$1,995 (\$300 single room supplement)

**COSTA RICA FAMILY EXPEDITION**  
Saturday, March 15–Saturday, March 22, 2014  
Pre-Trip Workshop: Sunday, February 16, 10am–noon  
Guide: Glenn Phillips

Explore the rain and cloud forests of Costa Rica with Executive Director Glenn Phillips and his family. Perfect for families with children aged 5 and up, this relaxed natural history expedition will explore the lush Pacific lowlands near the beachside town of Jaco. Highlights include a boat ride through a mangrove swamp full of crocodiles and an exciting aerial tram ride through the rainforest canopy—but there will also be plenty of time to relax by the pool or play on the beach. Before heading home, we will visit the renowned cloud forest reserve of Monteverde to look for spectacular resplendent quetzals. Includes one pre-trip workshop, lodging, local transportation, most meals, and all park fees. A full tour description and day-by-day itinerary is available online at [www.nycaudubon.org/familyexpeditions](http://www.nycaudubon.org/familyexpeditions). Please contact Adriana Palmer at [apalmer@nycaudubon.org](mailto:apalmer@nycaudubon.org) or 212-691-7483 x304 to learn more and register. \$4,237 per family (2 adults and 2 children under 12; other packages are available)

## NYC AUDUBON GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE LONG-TERM SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING TRAVEL DESTINATIONS

Please mention NYC Audubon the next time you visit.

### CANOPY TOWER LODGE, PANAMA

Panama's premier ecolodge recently opened its newest resort, Canopy Camp Darien, at a location featuring nesting harpy eagles.

[www.canopytower.com](http://www.canopytower.com)

### EL REFUGIO DE INTAG CLOUD FOREST LODGE, ECUADOR

Located at 6,000 feet in the mountains of northwestern Ecuador, El Refugio is a premiere destination for birders, famous for its proximity to a cock-of-the-rock lek.

[www.elrefugiocloudforest.com](http://www.elrefugiocloudforest.com)

### EMERSON RESORT & SPA, HUDSON VALLEY

Located in the shadow of Slide Mountain, the original discovery site of the Bicknell's thrush, Emerson Resort offers Catskill elegance for birders and non-birders alike. [www.emersonresort.com](http://www.emersonresort.com)

### HACIENDA CUSÍN, ECUADOR

One of the finest resorts in the Ecuadorian high country, Hacienda Cusín boasts elegant service in proximity to many good highland birding destinations. [www.haciendacusin.com](http://www.haciendacusin.com)

### QUISISANA RESORT, MAINE

A full-service resort, offering easy access to the White Mountains by day, delicious meals and opera, Broadway musicals, and chamber music by night. [www.quisisanaresort.com](http://www.quisisanaresort.com)

### RANCHO NATURALISTA, COSTA RICA

One of the best places to see the snowcap, an endemic hummingbird, Rancho Naturalista boasts delicious meals and beautifully maintained trails throughout its private forest reserve.

[www.ranchonaturalista.net](http://www.ranchonaturalista.net)

### SAVEGRE HOTEL, NATURAL RESORT, & SPA, COSTA RICA

Located at 7,000 feet in the Cerro de la Muerte, Savegre is known for its unique highland birds, including the magnificent resplendent quetzal.

[www.savegre.com](http://www.savegre.com)

### STRAWBERRY HILL RESORT & SPA, JAMAICA

One of Jamaica's most elegant resorts, Island Outpost's Strawberry Hill is famous for its luxurious rooms and fine Jamaican cuisine. Many of Jamaica's 28 endemic species can be found here or in nearby Hardwar Gap.

[www.islandoutpost.com/strawberry-hill](http://www.islandoutpost.com/strawberry-hill)



*Green Honeycreeper*

# TEST FLIGHTS AT THE BRONX ZOO: THE SEQUEL

Carol Peace Robins

When last you heard, the flight tunnel at the Bronx Zoo was being assembled to test bird-safe window glass options. It has now been up and running all summer and fall. Actually, it's researchers Will and Kaitlyn who have been up and running. Here's how it all works.

The tunnel is inside a vented shipping container located near the World of Birds exhibition. At the far end of the tunnel, bathed in artificial daylight, are two windows side by side. On this occasion, one is plain glass, the other plexiglass. Both have images of sky and clouds behind them, but the plexiglass also has thin horizontal stripes across it. The near end of the tunnel is covered by what looks like a magician's black curtain, featuring a small pocket with a hole in it. More about that later.

Meanwhile, off in the nearby woods, eight mist nets—so called because they're nearly invisible—have been installed, attached to trees, ready to gently immobilize migrant birds that fly into them. The nets function only when there are monitors on duty; at other times they're rolled up neatly into a thin rope, incapable of harming birds. Each morning at daybreak, monitors Will Haffey and Kaitlyn Parkins, both graduate students at Fordham, unroll the nets. Every thirty minutes during their shift, they inspect them for avian arrivals.

One September day, after a slow period with no customers, Kaitlyn spotted a mostly gray-olive little bird with yellow highlights, just as she was closing up shop: a female American Redstart. She placed it in a small bag, made for just this purpose, and delivered it to Will back at the tunnel.

Will set his camera on a shelf above the black curtain to video what came next. After taking the bird out of the bag, he banded it. Then, speaking into the camera, he noted the species, gender, age, and band number. He placed the bird in the curtain pocket and off it flew toward the windows, hopefully to make the right selection. (There is a mist net in front of the glass to prevent crashes, and an exit door that is opened immediately after a bird's tunnel flight to allow it to fly free.)

During the fall, the birds tested were mostly warblers, vireos, thrushes, and catbirds. As for the people involved, they're all

© Andrew Boyle



*Female American Redstart*

certified, according to NYC Audubon's Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin, with permits for bird banding, permits for buying mist nets, and permits to run birds in the tunnel.

No one can yet say what the results will show. Will has observed that "the birds do appear to avoid the black stripes pretty well, but only time and more birds will tell us if this is a fluke or if the birds are actually avoiding it." He says that the tunnel will be operating for at least another year, joining one other in the United States, in the ongoing search for bird-safe glass that prevents collisions resulting in an estimated 600 million bird deaths a year in this country alone.

## REMEMBER NYC AUDUBON

A bequest is a thoughtful and straightforward way to protect birds and bird habitat in the five boroughs. It can be expressed "I bequeath [a sum of money or a percentage of my estate] to New York City Audubon Society, Inc. a not-for-profit organization with offices at 71 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 1523, New York, NY 10010, for its general purposes." Consult your attorney and give Executive Director Glenn Phillips a call at 212-691-7483 x303.

# FALL ROOST

At the 9th annual Fall Roost at the Lake Room of the Central Park Boathouse, NYC Audubon honored five tireless servants to the cause of conservation and to the protection of the City's feathered visitors and inhabitants. Beyond their many accomplishments, it is their spirit and ability to make a lasting impact that distinguishes them all.

**Oakes Ames** served on the boards of Audubon New York, National Audubon, and as the immediate past president of NYC Audubon.

**Dr. Claude Bloch**, birder extraordinaire, is a NYC Audubon advisory council member and benefactor to countless Audubon chapters and environmental groups across the northeast and beyond.

The indefatigable **Rita McMahon** and **Karen Heidgerd** co-founded The Wild Bird Fund, New York City's first wildlife rehabilitation and education center, which opened its new facility on the Upper West Side in 2012.

The late **Starr Saphir**, beloved mentor to countless birders in Central Park, was featured prominently in the 2012 documentary, "Birders: The Central Park Effect." She was paid tribute in a touching short by Jeffrey Kimball, the film's director.

While the physical setting for the Fall Roost was in the heart of Central Park, the backdrop was post-Hurricane Sandy Jamaica Bay.

Executive Director Glenn Phillips and Board President Harry Maas spoke at length of the work NYC Audubon is spearheading

to restore Jamaica Bay and to ensure that the National Park Service focuses on the preservation of its wildlife, habitat, and natural resources, as the future of this birding jewel lies in the balance. An excerpt from "Jamaica Bay Lives," a documentary-in-progress by Dan Hendrick, brought into bold relief the precarious present and the importance of sound decision-making and energetic advocacy.

As the evening drew to a close, the honorees were cheered, and the flurry of silent auction bids ceased, you felt there was no better place to be if you are concerned about the fate of birds and birding in New York City, for there was no shortage of inspiration, energy, and determination.



Honorees Oakes Ames and Rita McMahon; Peter Gelfan

## FALL ROOST ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Honoree Claude Bloch with daughter Justine and wife Lucienne



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John and Ryan Zucker peruse the Silent Auction

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**SPECIAL THANKS to**  
Action Letter, Inc.  
The Central Park Boathouse

Kristen Bannister (graphic design)  
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Deborah Jones (auction posters, centerpieces, and giftbags)  
Jeffrey Kimball (Starr Saphir video)  
Jeffrey Kollbrunner (photography)  
SmartSource Rentals (audiovisual)  
  
**EVENT VOLUNTEERS**  
Karen Asakawa  
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Deborah Zerden

# News & Notes

## NYC AUDUBON REPORTS ON RESEARCH AT THE NEW YORK BIRDERS CONFERENCE

In early November, NYC Audubon sponsored the New York Birders Conference and 66th annual meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association (a.k.a. Federation of New York State Bird Clubs), hosted by the Queens Bird Club. Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin presented a paper on NYC Audubon's work with harbor herons and other waterbirds. Our 2013 summer interns also contributed to the program: Debra Kriensky gave a talk on our shorebird and horseshoe crab research, while Kaitlyn Parkins presented a poster on Project Safe Flight.

## NATIONAL AUDUBON CONVENTION

This past July, NYC Audubon participated in Audubon's first National Convention in over a decade. Executive Director Glenn Phillips co-chaired the planning committee for the meeting, which took place in Stevenson, WA, while Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin helped lead a workshop on bird-friendly buildings in conjunction with American Bird Conservancy's Chris Sheppard and others. Through this workshop, the groundwork was laid for National Audubon's Bird-Friendly Communities program, which aims to make cities safer for migratory birds across the US.

## MONITORING GREEN ROOF BIODIVERSITY

NYC Audubon is working with the sustainability team from the Jacob Javits Center to design a monitoring program for the Center's six-acre green roof habitat. The monitoring program, planned for the spring and summer of 2014, will determine a baseline for biodiversity of birds, bats, and arthropods to compare to later studies of this and other green roofs.

# VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

New York City Audubon's conservation and education work would not be possible without the help of hundreds of volunteers who donate thousands of hours each year. If you volunteered during the period from October 2012 to September 2013 and your name is not on this list, please let us know! We strive to keep accurate records for our funders and want to make sure you receive the recognition you deserve.

Humad Ahmed TG	John Burke HH	Kathleen Dreyer PSF	Daryl Hartshorne PSF
Deborah Allen	Louise Burns JB	Alan Drogin CBC	Tom Heimimann HH
CBC, OA	Elly Busby JB	Jacob Drucker CBC	Catherine Schragis
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Michelle Knoemerschuld  
PSF  
James Knox CBC  
Jeff Kollbrunner CON  
David Krauss CBC  
Jeff Krauss HH, JB  
Debra Kriensky HH,  
CBC, JB  
Kimberly Kriger OA  
Joe Kulhanek EO, HH  
Dave Kunstler HH  
Ivan Kuravov CBC  
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Dharshan  
Lakshminarayan JB  
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Deborah Laurel PSF  
Gohan Lavin PSF  
Susan Lavin PSF  
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Jacqueline LeDonne CBC  
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Brandon Lee JB  
Caroline Lee PSF  
Daniel Lee TG  
Nim Lee JB  
Lawrence Levine OA  
Rugan Lewis JB  
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Linda Lin TG  
Megan Litwhiler CBC  
Ben Loehnen CBC  
Heydi Lopes JB  
Michelle Luebke JB  
Margaret Lundin  
FR, OA  
Krauss Lynn HH  
Chris Lyons CBC  
Barbara Lysenko JB  
Xiao Hong Ma TG  
Andrew Maas TG  
Harrison Maas CBC,  
JB, OA  
Maura MacBride EO  
Debra Magadini PSF  
Pamela Manice OA  
Donna Manion CBC  
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Sarah Marks CBC  
Tristan Marsh JB  
Neil Maruca CBC  
Jenny Mastantouno HH  
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Romana Mattia OA  
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Fran McGorty PSF  
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Ellen McKnight PSF  
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Mary Morris TG  
Malcolm Morris CBC,  
TG  
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Erica Mueller CBC  
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Gary Yuen TG  
Kristina Zabierek PSF  
Christopher Zavelo OA  
Fiona Zheng TG  
Joan Zofnass PSF  
John Zucker CBC  
Ryan Zucker CBC

**LEGEND**  
CBC = Christmas Bird Count  
CON = Conservation  
EO = Education and Outreach  
FR = Fall Roost  
HH = Harbor Herons  
JB = Jamaica Bay (includes  
Horseshoe Crab and  
Shorebird Surveys)  
OA = Office Administration  
LA = Look Around  
PSF = Project Safe Flight  
TG = TogetherGreen  
Volunteer Days  
TIL = Tribute in Light  
UA = The Urban Audubon  
WE = Website and  
The eGret eNewsletter

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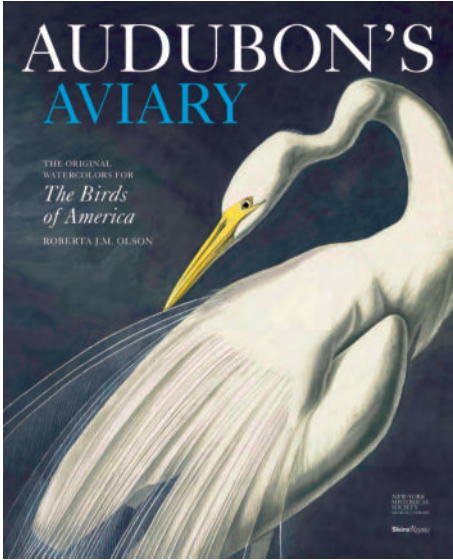


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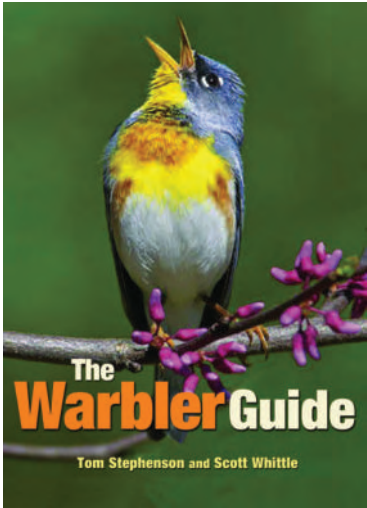
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*Happy Holidays!*