



# THE URBAN AUDUBON

## **NYC Grasslands Case Study: Floyd Bennett Field** **11th Annual Jamaica Bay Shorebird Festival**



**NYC AUDUBON  
MISSION & VISION**

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

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

**THE URBAN AUDUBON**

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# BIRD'S EYE VIEW

*Kathryn Heintz*



**B**irds that flock together seem to understand that there is strength in numbers, and power in collective efforts. NYC Audubon has its own faithful flock, and from my perch, it is a thrill to see us all flying together. Thousands of members and wild-bird enthusiasts are turning out for our walks, classes, trips, lectures, festivals, and volunteer events. We are adding new programs in an effort to meet the demand. Hundreds are also responding to our fundraising appeals. This show of support makes a huge difference and encourages us every day. Some 542 friends and members contributed a collective \$154,039 in the first three months of the calendar year, the closing quarter of our fiscal year. That is strength in numbers flocking together.

And our flock is growing. Spring migration 2016 carries NYC Audubon into its 38th year as an urban conservation organization. With strengthening numbers, we embark upon this new cycle with confidence. We are buoyed by the collective efforts of our board and advisory council, volunteers who share with us their vision and leadership. But this year is unusual. June 2016 will bring us a new president as Harry Maas's term concludes. 2016 will also see a number of remarkable members rotate from the board to the advisory council. Among them are two past presidents, Marcia Fowle and Oakes Ames; a vice president, Rick Andrias; a secretary, Marcy Boyle; and a preeminent bird-conservation scientist, Andrew Farnsworth. These six super-volunteers have collectively contributed more than 72 years of board service. Our election in June at the NYC Audubon Annual Meeting (see page 14) welcomes a new slate of officers and directors who will strive to fill their shoes, adding to our flock's collective wisdom.

What lies ahead for wild birds in New York City? Continue to flock with us this summer and help shape their future. I invite you to find inspiration in these pages, to learn about the challenges urban birds face, and to see what NYC Audubon is doing to strengthen their numbers. Then join us for a walk in the park, a cruise around the harbor, and celebrations of terns and shorebirds. See you there!

## REMEMBER THE BIRDS

Make sure that New York City remains a haven for the birds and wildlife you love. A bequest is a generous and straightforward way to safeguard birds and their habitat in New York City's five boroughs. It can be expressed as, "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 23rd Street, Suite 1523, New York, NY 10010." To learn more, contact Director of Development Kellye Rosenheim at [krosenheim@nycaudubon.org](mailto:krosenheim@nycaudubon.org) or 646-502-9611.

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Susan Elbin, Steve Nanz, and Don Riepe

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# CONSERVATION NOTES

*In orbe excogita, in urbe age!*

**N**YC Audubon focuses its conservation and science activities within the five boroughs of New York City, but the outcomes of that work support bird conservation on a regional, national, and global scale. In English: we think globally and act locally. In this issue, Conservation Notes illustrates how we apply this framework to NYC Audubon's two main conservation programs: Waterbirds of New York Harbor and Project Safe Flight.

A review of major global conservation issues for all bird species reveals many grave concerns: global climate change, severe storms, sea-level rise, habitat degradation, built structures as barriers, invasive species, and hunting. Best practices and approaches used by large nonprofit organizations like National Audubon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and American Bird Conservancy (to name just a few) include counting and mapping individual birds; monitoring populations; applying new technology; engaging citizen scientists; and sharing lessons learned. These larger issues and general approaches mirror our work here at NYC Audubon.

## WATERBIRDS OF NEW YORK HARBOR

Global and local conservation issues for waterbirds are similar. Declining numbers of long-legged wading birds nesting in colonies along the northeast coast parallel the Harbor Herons' nesting dynamics in the New York Harbor. The loss of nesting sites for colonies here in the Harbor and an impoverished food supply affect waterbirds on every scale. Regional declines are highest for Leach's storm-petrel, black-crowned night-heron, arctic tern, and royal tern. NYC Audubon's annual waterbird nest surveys, under the leadership of Communications Manager Tod Winston, allow us to track long-term population trends in New York Harbor. The overall breeding population is doing relatively well, but black-crowned night-herons are in decline. In recent years we've lost two important nesting sites: Canarsie Pol in Jamaica Bay and Goose Island in Long Island Sound. Both islands were subject to human disturbance and predators. Nesting birds have not returned



*Black-Crowned Night-Heron*

to either island since their abrupt departures in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

Local movements of waterbirds can tell us about the quality of available food resources. Former Development Assistant Joe O'Sullivan continues to manage our citizen-science foraging surveys. In 2015 we partnered with New Jersey Audubon and Lenoir-Rhyne University scientists to employ a new transmitter technology in order to follow two adult male great egrets (Edward and Clarence) from their nesting activities on Hoffman Island to their wintering grounds in South Carolina. We are seeking a grant that will allow us to statistically analyze these local trend data.

In addition to the overall conservation issues confronting all birds, beach-nesting and migratory shorebirds face a similar global and local subset of threats: habitat loss from coastal development, human disturbance, predation, hunting, and declining food resources. Supported by a grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to the Manomet Center for Conservation Science, Field Biologist Emilio Tobón continues our work with American oystercatchers for the sixth season, monitoring nesting success and impacts from human disturbance, and following re-sightings of color-banded birds. Of the 54 birds we banded in New York City, 18 have been re-sighted. Of those birds, 13 spent recent winters in Florida. The remaining 5 were distributed along coastal Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia. We are applying the lessons learned to a new project being conducted by the New York State Department of Envi-

ronmental Conservation's Jason Smith, who is coordinating a color-coding system for different states that band black skimmer chicks.

Conservation Biologist Debra Kriensky leads our local work with migratory shorebirds, asking the question: are the birds finding what they need in Jamaica Bay? Shorebird surveys and horseshoe crab monitoring give us an indication of habitat use, but this coming year Debra wants to learn more. Two shorebird "blitzes" are planned for May and September during which expert shorebirders will traverse the city and count all the shorebirds they can find in one day. We will also join a larger, global partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and New Jersey Audubon as we use a new technology, nanotagging, to track the migration of semipalmated sandpipers banded in Jamaica Bay as they pass by stationary VHF data loggers in the eastern U.S. and across northern Canada.

## PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

In addition to the same threats faced by migratory shorebirds such as lack of quality stopover habitat and invasive species, migratory landbirds also encounter collisions with buildings and glass. The Leon Levy Foundation is generously supporting our work in this area. Glass testing continues as we partner with American Bird Conservancy, New Jersey Audubon, and the Wildlife Conservation Society to test different glass products for detection by birds. A new partnership with New York University's Center for Urban Science and Progress is helping us unleash the power of "big data" to analyze correlations between artificial light and bird collisions. Meanwhile out on the streets, NYC Audubon volunteers continue searching for dead or injured birds during migration. Last year our citizen scientists found 88 birds along their survey routes. At first glance, this seems to be a low number. But we know from research that most injured or dead birds are not found

In 2015 we launched D-Bird, a web-based interactive site for dead bird reports. Darren Klein, the architect of D-Bird, has been able to tweak the program and has rolled it out for use by three other Audubon chapters. Our three-

Susan Elbin



## VOLUNTEER!



year plan is to scale D-Bird up across the entire Audubon network.

Also important to migratory landbirds is availability of quality stopover habitat. We are monitoring avian response to the replacement of invasive species with native plants, a Nature Conservancy project at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Green roofs are another potential source of bird habitat, as we have observed at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center. We continue to work with the Javits Center as it adds new habitat dimensions to its green roof. And we are working closely with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to bring together all the New York City biologists working on green roofs, so that we can share our lessons learned. A new project funded by the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund to create a green roof in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, will become part of that network.

Birds come from far and wide to spend time in New York City. Here at NYC Audubon we are following their example: we are thinking globally and acting locally.

**W**ork in NYC Audubon's friendly office or in the field and make a difference for the City's wildlife. There are many ways to help. If interested in any of the projects listed below, contact us at 212-691-7483 x304 or [volunteer@nycaudubon.org](mailto:volunteer@nycaudubon.org).

### OFFICE PROJECTS

Help with mailings, filing, and general office work. Computer skills and birding knowledge are helpful but not required.

### THE URBAN AUDUBON

Join the newsletter committee and contribute your writing skills to four seasonal issues. Meetings are bi-monthly in the early evening.

### PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

**Begins Thursday, September 1**

During spring and fall, migrant birds confront many hazards as they pass through New York City. Volunteers are needed to

monitor buildings weekly for bird collisions, rescue injured birds, and record any casualties. Orientations will be held Tuesday, August 16, and Monday, August 22, 6-7pm.

### TRIBUTE IN LIGHT MONITORING

**Sunday, September 11, beginning at 8pm  
With National September 11 Memorial & Museum**

Each year a tireless group of volunteers monitors the Tribute in Light to ensure that migrating birds do not become entrapped in the light beams. A training session will be held Thursday, September 1, 6-7pm.

### BIRD TRANSPORTERS

We often receive calls from concerned individuals who have found injured birds but are unable to transport them to a rehabilitator. We need caring volunteers to transport these birds to licensed wildlife rehabilitators in the area. A training

session will be held Wednesday, September 7, 6-7pm at the Wild Bird Fund.

### INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEAN-UP

**Saturday, September 17, 10am-2pm**

**With American Littoral Society, National Park Service, and Sadhana**

Join us at North Channel Bridge to take part in a multi-state effort to improve coastline habitat. The North Channel Bridge area, used by species like the American oystercatcher, is also a stone's throw away from the Harbor Heron Islands and the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Help us clear the beach and raise awareness of the importance of coastal areas to birdlife.

Please check [www.nyc.audubon.org/volunteer-events](http://www.nyc.audubon.org/volunteer-events) in the coming months for more details and registration.

## "IT'S YOUR TERN" FESTIVAL SATURDAY, JULY 16, 10AM-4PM (Rain Date Sunday, July 17, Noon-4pm)

**C**ome celebrate Governors Island's treasures: common terns and oysters! Common terns, listed as a threatened species in New York State, have nested for several years on three decommissioned piers on Governors Island's waterfront. The colony has expanded over time and benefited recently from the introduction of oyster shells as a nesting material. This year, the Tern Festival will be held from 10am to 4pm as part of Waterfront Alliance's City of Water Day. Free activities at this year's festival will include bird walks and talks with Gabriel Willow and Annie Barry, displays, and hands-on activities for the whole family. Get to the festival either by taking a ferry to Governors Island or with NYC Audubon on the City of Water Day ecocruise (see page 9 to learn more). For more information and directions to the Tern Festival, visit [www.nycaudubon.org/tern-festival](http://www.nycaudubon.org/tern-festival). No limit. Free



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# NEW YORK CITY GRASSLANDS CASE STUDY:

©MARRY\*



**I**n 1979, my wife Jean Bourque wrote and submitted to the Superintendent of Gateway National Recreation Area a proposal to reinstate the Floyd Bennett Field management practice of regular mowing. Why? We, the regular birders at this decommissioned airfield on Jamaica Bay in Brooklyn, realized that this grassland habitat—which supported grasshopper sparrows, savannah sparrows, eastern meadowlarks, American kestrels, and short-eared owls—was slowly changing. For lack of mowing, shrubs and trees were beginning to sprout among the grasses. If allowed to progress, the grassland birds would have to find other places to forage and nest.

Later that same year, as Jean and I wondered aloud about the apparent lack of interest in her grassland management proposal, Sheila Rosenberg, wife of NYC Audubon

board member Lew Rosenberg, overheard us and suggested we take the proposal to the NYC Audubon Conservation Committee. Al Appleton, chair of the committee, jumped in with both feet and ran with it—though it turned out to be a marathon. In 1985, the National Park Service and NYC Audubon began a grassland restoration and management project for 140 of Floyd Bennett Field's 1,500 acres. Gateway left the clearing of the Floyd Bennett Field grasslands to NYC Audubon volunteers, offering to mow once a year after we had cleared the 140 acres of trees and shrubs.

It took four years, working from October to March, on our knees cutting brush and trees down to two inches—a height that would accommodate the mower. What kept us going was the company of short-eared owls watching our progress.

Once completed, Jean monitored the grassland birds for more than 20 years, keeping her detailed field notes in a journal. Despite NYC Audubon's best efforts, the regional decline of meadowlarks, grasshopper sparrows, and savannah sparrows was reflected in their disappearance from Floyd Bennett Field. Grasslands were becoming scarce in the Northeast.

Lessons learned from this project at Floyd Bennett Field include the value of persistence, the value of teamwork, and proof that one person can make a difference. Fast forward to 2016: Grassland habitat is still scarce in the Northeast. In February a group of dedicated biologists, managers, and naturalists was convened by NYC Audubon and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to identify those remaining



## GRASSHOPPER SPARROW (*AMMODRAMUS SAVANNARUM*)

Don Riepe

A small, nondescript bird, the grasshopper sparrow was named for its high-pitched, insect-like call, as well as its fondness for a diet of grasshoppers and other insects. Hard to identify and often overlooked as it scurries among patches of grass, this ground-nesting species prefers large tracts of open grasslands. It breeds across the eastern U.S. and Great Plains, wintering in the southern U.S. and Central America. Many birders are likely to classify the grasshopper sparrow as an “LBJ” (Little Brown Job) and move on to larger and showier grassland species such as meadowlarks and bobolinks—all of which have experienced steep population declines in New York State. Like these species, the grasshopper sparrow has been disappearing from New York City and Nassau County, most likely because of human development, increased pesticide use, grassland habitat fragmentation, and mowing during the breeding season.



© David Speiser

grassland habitats in New York City and to implement best management practices to maintain them. Much of today’s grasslands are on Staten Island: Freshkills Park, Mount Loretto, and Brookfield Avenue Landfill. Brooklyn hosts the Penn and Fountain Avenue Landfills, and Pelham Bay Park Landfill provides grassland habitat for birds and other important pollinators in the Bronx.

Just last spring, over 30 male grasshopper sparrows were reported singing atop one of Freshkills Park’s grassy mounds. If these and other emerging urban grasslands are adequately managed, there is renewed hope for grassland birds nesting again in New York City.

See page 17 to learn about an opportunity to visit Freshkills Park, and sidebar to read a species profile of the grasshopper sparrow.

Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn was once a stronghold for the grasshopper sparrow. In 1992, twelve breeding males were seen there. But only three years later, the last breeding pair was documented by Ron and Jean Bourque. JFK Airport, on the eastern side of Jamaica Bay, was also a well-documented breeding area for the sparrow, as well as for a small population of upland sandpipers. Neither species has been seen there since 2000.

According to the most recent New York State Breeding Bird Atlas, the number of breeding blocks where the grasshopper sparrow was found declined 42 percent between 1980 and 2005. It is currently listed as a Species of Special Concern in New York State. As more farmland and open fields succumbed to forested land or are developed as housing and shopping malls, this little sparrow—along with other grassland species including short-eared owl, northern bobwhite, American kestrel, and northern harrier—will continue to decline. However, new grassland habitat is being created where City landfills once stood, and that ecological transformation may bring about a resurgence of the grasshopper sparrow in New York City: a breeding colony has recently established itself in Staten Island’s new Freshkills Park. (To learn more about grassland birds and their habitat in the City, see opposite.)



# EVENTS AND ADVENTURES

- **NYC Audubon Events**
- **Partnership Events**

- **VAN CORTLANDT BIRD WALKS, THE BRONX**

**Saturdays, June 4 -July 30, 8-9:30am**  
**Guides: NYC Audubon, Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy**  
**With the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy**

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

- **THE BREEDING BIRDS OF DOODLETOWN ROAD, ROCKLAND COUNTY, NY**  
**Thursday, June 2, 8am-4pm**  
**Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC**

A great variety of warblers and other songbirds, including species at risk, breed at Doodletown Road in

Bear Mountain State Park. Hooded, cerulean, and golden-winged warblers may be seen, as well as indigo buntings, wild turkeys, and much more. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$122 (85)

- **BREEDING BIRDS OF JAMAICA BAY**

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

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is home to nesting cedar waxwings, brown thrashers, white-eyed vireos, tree swallows, yellow warblers, American redstarts, osprey, willet, and seven species of wading birds. We'll walk the refuge trails and observe these species and many more on their breeding grounds. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$88 (62)

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

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

Meet on the northwest corner of 102nd Street and the FDR Drive. We'll walk across the foot bridge to Randall's Island, an under-explored

location in the East River that hosts restored freshwater wetlands and salt marsh. We'll look for spring migrants (both waterbirds and land birds) as we explore the results of recent restoration efforts. Limited to 20. \$40 (28)

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

**Sunday, June 5, 10am-1pm**  
**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

**With Green-Wood Cemetery**

Meet at the cemetery entrance at 5th Avenue and 25th Street, Park Slope, Brooklyn. Green-Wood Cemetery is rich in both history and wildlife. It is also the highest point in Brooklyn, affording marvelous views. We will explore its environs in search of spring migrants and its most unique avian residents: the huge flocks of brilliant green monk parakeets that nest there. Native to South America, these charming immigrants are surprisingly hardy and flourish even in our harsh winters. Limited to 15. \$46 (32)

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

**Wednesdays, June 8-August 17**  
**7-9pm (Brother Islands; Hoffman and Swinburne Islands)**  
**6:30-9:30pm (Jamaica Bay)**  
**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

**With New York Water Taxi**

Meet at South Street Seaport Pier 16 to visit the fascinating Brother islands, the large egret and cormorant colonies on Hoffman and Swinburne islands, or the great expanses of Jamaica Bay. Whichever your destination, you'll experience the wonders of New York Harbor at sunset and see some of the 3,000 wading birds that nest here—including glossy ibis, little blue and tricolored herons, great and snowy egrets, and black- and yellow-crowned night-herons. To choose a cruise and register, contact New York Water Taxi at 212-742-1969 or [www.nywatertaxi.com/tours/audubon](http://www.nywatertaxi.com/tours/audubon). Limited to 90. Price varies by destination. NYC Audubon members eligible for a special discount. Call 212-691-7483 x304 to learn more

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

**Saturday, June 11, 7:30am-12:30pm**  
**Guides: Tod Winston and NJ Meadowlands Docent**

**With NJ Meadowlands Commission**

Explore the Meadowlands' Mill Creek Marsh, a 225-acre restored wetland off the Hackensack River. We'll take a relaxing pontoon boat ride in search of egrets, night-herons, belted kingfishers, and marsh wrens—along with nesting osprey and peregrine falcons. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$101 (71)

- **PROSPECT PARK LATE SPRING BIRD WALK**

**Saturday, June 11, 8-11am**  
**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

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

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

**Sundays, June 12, July 10, August 14, September 11, 9:30-11:30am**  
**Guide: Gabriel Willow**  
**With Wave Hill**

Meet at the Perkins Visitor Center. Naturalist Gabriel Willow contributes his extensive knowledge of bird species and their behaviors on these captivating walks. Wave Hill's garden setting overlooking the Hudson River flyway provides the perfect habitat for resident and migrating birds. Walks run rain or shine. Ages 10 and up welcome with an adult. For more information, visit <https://www.wavehill.org/events/spring-birding-10/>. NYC Audubon members enjoy two-for-one admission

© Laura Meyers



*Tree Swallows*





*Indigo Bunting*

© David Speiser

● **THE SUMMERING BIRDS OF INWOOD HILL PARK, MANHATTAN**

**Saturday, June 18, 8:30-11am**

**Guide: Annie Barry**

Meet at the entrance to Inwood Hill Park at the corner of Isham Street and Seaman Avenue. Join Annie Barry for a hike through a mature forest in search of Baltimore and orchard orioles, eastern towhees, wood thrushes, warbling vireos, and other summer residents—and then search the shores of the Inwood Hill Park saltmarshes for herons and ducks. Some hilly walking required. Limited to 15. \$36 (25)

● **BREEDING BIRDS OF THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS, NY**  
**Sunday, June 19, 8am-5pm (Father's Day Edition!)**

**Saturday, June 25, 8am-5pm**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

Join Gabriel Willow on a day-long trip to some of the most exciting and beautiful birding locations in the Hudson Valley: Doodletown Road, Constitution Marsh, and Indian Brook Farm. We'll look for uncommon breeding warbler specialties at Doodletown, such as cerulean, hooded, blue-winged, golden-winged, and worm-eating. We will then head to the Constitution Marsh Audubon Sanctuary, home to breeding wood ducks, bald eagles, least bitterns, and marsh wrens. After

a picnic lunch by the banks of Indian Brook, we will explore the extensive grasslands and highbush blueberry stands of Indian Brook Farm in search of breeding field and savannah sparrows, bobolinks, and indigo buntings. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$129 (90)

● **BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES, AND TERRAPINS AT JAMAICA BAY**

**Saturday, June 25, 10am-1pm**

**Guide: Don Riepe**

**With the American Littoral Society**

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for a slide program and hike around the ponds and gardens to look for nesting birds and other wildlife. To learn more and register, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or [donriepen@gmail.com](mailto:donriepen@gmail.com). No limit. Free

● **FRESHKILLS PARK DISCOVERY DAYS, STATEN ISLAND**

**Sundays, June 26 and September 18, 11am-4pm**

**Guides: NYC Audubon, NYC Parks With New York City Department of Parks & Recreation**

**See page 17 for details**

● **EARLY FALL SHOREBIRD MIGRATION AT JAMAICA BAY**

**Saturday, July 9, 10am-1pm**

**Guide: Don Riepe**

**With American Littoral Society**

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for a slide program and hike around the ponds to look for the first shorebirds migrating south. To learn more and register, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or [donriepen@gmail.com](mailto:donriepen@gmail.com). No limit. Free

● **PROSPECT PARK SUMMER BIRD WALK**

**Saturday, July 9, 8-10:30am**

**Saturday, August 27, 8-10:30am**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

Meet under the arch in Grand Army Plaza. Join Gabriel Willow for a leisurely walk to get to know the summer bird residents of "Brooklyn's backyard," beautiful

Prospect Park. Although birding in the summertime in the City can be a bit slow, Prospect Park has a wide variety of habitats that attracts a number of breeding bird species. We will explore the park's meadows, forests, and waterways in search of nesting waterfowl, green herons, barn swallows, yellow warblers, Baltimore orioles, and more. Limited to 15. \$33 (23) per walk

● **BREEDING BIRDS OF NICKERSON BEACH AND MARINE NATURE STUDY AREA, LI**

**Friday, July 15, 6:30am-1pm**

**Guide: Tod Winston**

Join Tod Winston in exploring two popular birding spots that are a little hard to get to for car-less New Yorkers. Departing early to beat the heat, we'll first seek out breeding common and least terns, American oystercatchers, piping plovers, and black skimmers at Nickerson Beach. Then we'll walk the boardwalks of the nearby Marine Nature Study Area in search of nesting saltmarsh and seaside sparrows, as well as osprey, herons, egrets, and shorebirds. Limited to 12. \$90 (63)

● **CITY OF WATER DAY ECOCRUISE**

**Saturday, July 16, Time TBA**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

**With Waterfront Alliance**

Boat launch location TBA. As part of Waterfront Alliance's City of Water Day, join naturalist Gabriel Willow for a free guided ecocruise to Hoffman and Swinburne Islands. Disembark on Governors Island and enjoy many of the other City of Water Day activities, including NYC Audubon's own It's Your Tern Festival (learn more on page 5). Visit the City of Water Day website in June to learn more and register for the free boat tour to Hoffman and Swinburne Islands: <http://waterfrontalliance.org/what-we-do/city-of-water-day>. Registration required. Limited to 150. Free

● **"IT'S YOUR TERN" FESTIVAL**

**Saturday, July 16, 10am-4pm**

**With Waterfront Alliance, Governors Island Alliance, National Park Service, New York Harbor School, Earth Matter NY**

**See page 5 for details**

● **TWILIGHT BAT WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK**

**Tuesdays, July 19-August 16,**

**7:45-9:15pm**

**Guide: Paul Keim**

Meet at 103rd Street and Central Park West. Explore the mysteries of Central Park at twilight as we seek these fascinating and misunderstood flying mammals—and learn about their great importance to our environment. We'll see local bat species in flight as they hunt and dive for insects, and hear them with an echolocator. Other nocturnal creatures like crickets and katydids may be seen as well. Bring bug spray and a flashlight. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Recommended for ages 5 and up. \$26 (18)

● **BIRDING GEMS OF STATEN ISLAND: FRESHKILLS PARK**

**Sunday, July 24, 8am-3pm**

**Guides: Cliff Hagen, Tod Winston**

Meet at the Staten Island Ferry and start your trip with a journey across the Upper Bay. This is a special opportunity to visit Freshkills Park, currently in transition from what was once the world's largest landfill into an expansive park. Currently closed to the general public, the park is home to rolling grasslands, tidal marshes, successional woodlands, and a freshwater pond system, which host an array of breeding birds, butterflies, mammals, frogs, and turtles. Grasshopper sparrows, osprey, yellow warblers, and blue grosbeaks nest alongside wrens, blackbirds, orioles, and shorebirds. Wading birds feed on the mudflats at low tide while hawks and vultures soar above. On calm, sunny days, one can expect to find nearly two dozens species of butterflies here. Transport by passenger van on S.I. included. Limited to 12. \$68 (47)

● **CROTON POINT PARK, NY**

**Saturday, July 30, 8:20am-3pm**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

Travel in comfort aboard Metro North to visit Croton Point Park, a beautiful 500-acre park on a peninsula on the Hudson River,

...continued on page 10

# OVERNIGHT TRIPS

©Ulford Sparhawk



*Yellow-Throated Warbler*

- **MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND**

Friday, June 3-Sunday, June 5

Guides: Mike Bottini, Mickey

Cohen, Don Riepe

With American Littoral Society

Join us for our 20th year at the luxurious Montauk Manor and enjoy indoor/outdoor heated pools, jacuzzi, and spacious suites. Registration price includes five meals, five guided field trips, two evening slide programs, an evening star watch, and free pickup at the LIRR station in Montauk. For information and reservations, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). \$395 (\$130 single supplement)

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

Saturday, June 11, 9am-Sunday,

June 12, 6pm

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy

Warblers LLC

THIS TRIP IS SOLD OUT

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

Saturday, June 18, 9am-Sunday,

June 19, 6pm

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy

THIS TRIP IS SOLD OUT

- **BOREAL BIRDING IN THE ADIRONDACKS, NY**

Friday, July 1, 8am-Monday, July

4, 8pm

Guides: Gabriel Willow, Joan

Collins

THIS TRIP IS SOLD OUT

- **CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH WEEKEND, MA**

Thursday, August 11-Sunday,

August 14

Guide: Don Riepe

With American Littoral Society

Visit scenic Gloucester, Massachusetts, and enjoy a whale watching boat tour, an evening cruise on the Essex River, easy canoeing on the quiet Ipswich River, a guided hike along a scenic shoreline, and a lobster dinner. For information and reservations, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 40. \$425 (double occupancy)

- **CAPE MAY FALL MIGRATION, NJ**

Saturday, September 24, 9am-

Sunday, September 25, 7pm

Guide: Joe Giunta

Cape May, NJ, is one of the best birding venues in the United States, especially during fall migration. Visit the Cape May hawk watch on two days, once late

in the day and then early to get a good variety of hawks. Also visit birding hotspots such as Higbee Beach, Jake's Landing, Cape May Meadows, and Nummy Island. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$330 (\$50 single supplement)

- **CAPE MAY FALL MIGRATION, NJ**

Saturday, October 1, 9am-Sunday, October 2, 7pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Cape May, NJ, is the East's capital of birding, and is particularly bird-rich in the fall. On good fall migration days, the area's forests and marshes are swarming with warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other songbirds, and of course the hawk watch is legendary as well. We'll visit Cape May Point, Higbee Beach, Cape May Meadows, and more in search of songbirds, raptors, wading birds, ducks, and terns. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$330 (\$50 single supplement)

- **CHINCOTEAGUE REFUGE/ ASSATEAGUE ISLAND: BIRDS AND PONIES**

Thursday, November 10, 9am-

Sunday, November 13, 6pm

Guide: Don Riepe

With American Littoral Society

A great natural history weekend on the Virginia coast. See wild ponies, snow geese, bald eagles, migrating hawks, waterfowl, and shorebirds. Includes three nights' lodging at the luxurious Refuge Inn (heated pool, jacuzzi, sauna, exercise room, and observation deck), breakfast, a Safari bus tour of the back dunes area, guided hikes, evening programs, and an "all you can eat" oyster and seafood dinner. Contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com) for more information and to register. \$395 (\$180 single supplement)

# EVENTS

about one hour north of the City. The park is rich in natural and human history: it has the oldest Native American oyster shell middens in the Northeast, revealing that it was inhabited as long as 7,000 years ago; today, the park has a wonderful mix of forest, wetlands, and grassland. The grasslands are home to hard-to-find breeding birds such as indigo buntings, grasshopper sparrows, bobolinks, and eastern meadowlarks. Great horned owls, willow flycatchers, and orchard orioles breed in nearby woodlands. Bring lunch for a picnic in one of the river-side pavilions. Limited to 20. Round-trip Metro North fare (\$20.50) not included in trip price. \$53 (37)

- **SHOREBIRD IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP**

Thursday, August 4, 6:30-8:30pm

(class)

Saturday, August 6, 10am-2pm (trip)

Instructor: Joe Giunta, Happy

Warblers LLC

Shorebirds are one of the most challenging groups of birds to identify, yet beautiful and fascinating once they can be distinguished. Learn to identify plovers and sandpipers (including "peeps") by learning behavior, field marks, and calls. Then take a field trip to Jamaica Bay to practice your new skills. Limited to 12. \$65 (45)

- **SHOREBIRD WALK IN JAMAICA BAY, QUEENS**

Saturday, August 13, 9:30am-2pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. We'll search the mudflats and ponds for breeding herons and egrets, Forster's and common terns, clapper rails, and American oystercatchers, as well as migratory plovers and sandpipers that will already be headed south. Limited to 15. \$40 (28)

- **11TH ANNUAL JAMAICA BAY SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL**

Saturday, August 20, 7:30am-5pm

With Gateway National Recreation

Area and American Littoral Society

See page 13 for details



# AND ADVENTURES (CONTINUED)

©Lloyd Spratnik



*American Avocet*

## ● FALL MIGRATION BIRD WALK

**Sunday, August 28, 10am-1pm**

**Guide: Don Riepe**

**With American Littoral Society**

Days are getting shorter—and birds are heading south. Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for a hike around the east and west ponds and gardens to look for warblers, tanagers, shorebirds, and many other species. To learn more and register, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or [donriepe@gmail.com](mailto:donriepe@gmail.com). No limit. Free

## ● MORNING FALL MIGRATION WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK

**Wednesday Series: September 7–October 26**

**Thursday Series: September 8–October 27**

**(All Walks 7:30-10:30am)**

**Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC**

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street. Birders of all levels can enjoy this fun and educational series of eight walks, observing the diverse and ever-changing waves of migrants that stop over Central Park during fall migration. Limited to 15. \$180 (126)

## ● FALL WARBLERS

**Friday, September 9, 6:30-8:30pm (class); Sunday, September 11, 8-11am (trip)**

**Instructor: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC**

Identifying “confusing fall warblers” can be tricky, even for the experts. Come study some of the most puzzling species that stop through our area during fall migration with expert Joe Giunta, and then enjoy a second session in the classroom of Central Park. Limited to 12. \$65 (45)

## ● INTRO TO BIRDING: BIRD WALK IN CENTRAL PARK

**Saturday, September 10, 8-10:30am**

**Guide: Tod Winston**

Meet at the entrance to Central Park at Central Park West and 72nd Street. Are you curious about “birding” but don’t have much (or any) experience? Come on a relaxed walk through Strawberry Fields and the Ramble to go over birding basics and see warblers, tanagers, sparrows, waterbirds, and more. Binoculars available. Limited to 15. \$36 (25)

## ● EVENING FALL MIGRATION WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK

**Monday Series: September 12–October 10; 5-6:30pm**

**Tuesday Series: September 13–October 11; 5-6:30pm**

**Wednesday Series: September 14–October 12; 5-6:30pm**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street. Witness the spectacle of autumn migration as songbirds follow the Atlantic Flyway to their tropical wintering grounds. Look for tanagers, warblers, and other neotropical migrants in the wilds of Central Park. Choose from our Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday evening series. Limited to 15. \$125 (87)

## ● JAMAICA BAY SUNSET ECOLOGY CRUISE

**Saturday, September 17, 4-7pm**

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

Meet at Pier 4 in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. Enjoy a narrated cruise aboard the “Golden Sunshine.” See migrating hawks, herons, ibis, and many other species and learn about the history, ecology and wildlife of this great urban preserve. Wine, cheese, fruit, and snacks included. To register, contact Don Riepe at 718-474-0896 or [donriepe@gmail.com](mailto:donriepe@gmail.com). Limited to 140. \$55

## ● HOOK MOUNTAIN HAWK WATCH, NY

**Sunday, September 18, 9am-4pm**

**Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC**

Part of the Palisades Interstate Park system, Hook Mountain has commanding views of all nearby mountains ridges and the Hudson River. From this inland hawk watch spot we expect to see many species of migrating raptors, including broad-winged and red-shouldered hawks, bald eagles, accipiters, and falcons. Note: this trip requires a 35-minute hike up and down the mountainside. Bring lunch to enjoy atop the mountain as you watch the hawks fly overhead. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$99 (69)

## ● BIRD WALK IN THE NORTH WOODS

**Friday, September 23, 8-10am**

**Guide: Tod Winston**

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

## ● EARLY MEMBER REGISTRATION FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

More fall and early winter events will be posted at [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org) and available for registration for Contributing NYC Audubon members starting on Monday, August 8. (Registration will open to all on Monday, August 22.)

● **TO REGISTER FOR ALL NYC AUDUBON EVENTS and for more information, visit [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org) or call Darren Klein at 212-691-7483 x304 unless otherwise specified.**

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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

# A FRESHWATER POND RETURNS TO THE JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

Harrison Maas

A significant victory for birders, wildlife enthusiasts, and proponents of the health of Jamaica Bay's ecosystem has been won. The National Park Service (NPS) has selected their preferred "Alternative B: Repair the Breach and Improve Habitat Conditions" for restoration of the West Pond in the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.

In 2012 Hurricane Sandy breached the West Pond, connecting it to the open bay and transforming it into a saltwater lagoon subject to the changing tides. Much of the original vegetation surrounding the pond was destroyed. Once a breeding area for freshwater bird species, a wintering haven for many waterfowl, and a stopover spot and feeding area for migrant shorebirds, the West Pond became relatively devoid of birdlife. (Even before Hurricane Sandy, the West Pond had become increasingly saline, and freshwater species previously breeding there had already declined or disappeared.) Since the breach occurred, NYC Audubon and the Birders Coalition for Gateway, among others, have been advocating to restore the Pond to its original freshwater status.

Several years ago following the destruction by Sandy, NPS announced it would consider restoration alternatives for the West Pond. This allowed NYC Audubon, the Coalition, and other interested parties to renew their call to restore the pond to freshwater status. All concerned parties attended meetings, commented on NPS proposals, communicated with Gateway National Recreation Area (Gateway) and NPS personnel, and arranged for political and media pressure during the planning process.

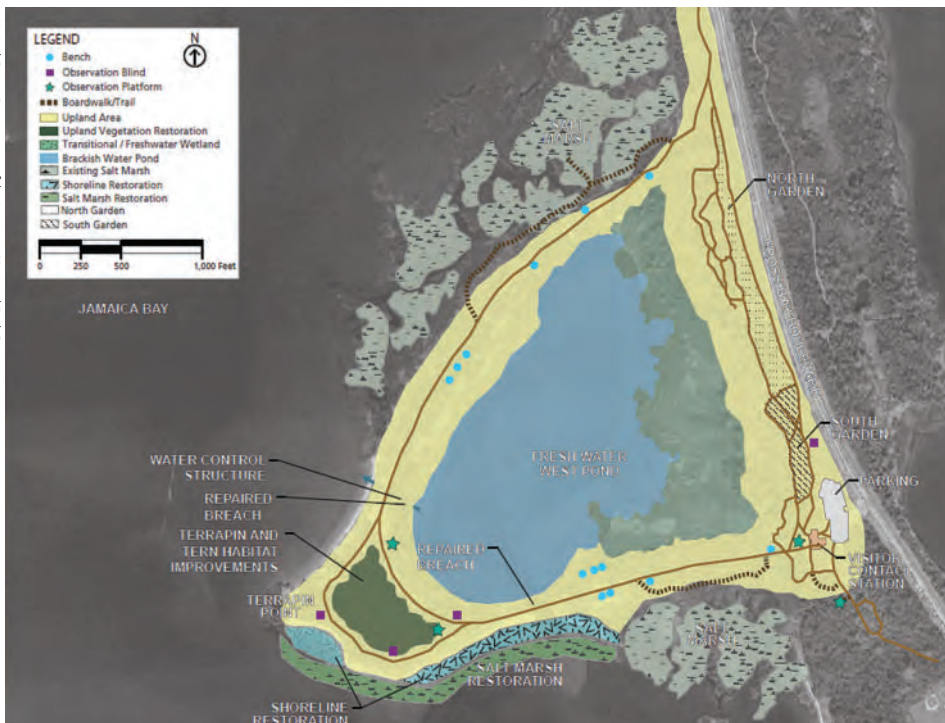
The resulting restoration plan fills the breach and provides for the installation of a freshwater source. A new water control structure will control water levels, meaning that not only will the West Pond be freshwater again, but the means for keeping it so will be provided. Freshwater vegetation will also be planted. Future plans call for improved trails and viewing blinds. It is expected that birds will return.

The adoption of the final NPS plan required the combined efforts of NYC Audubon, the Birders Coalition for Gateway, and other groups and individuals, along with the willingness of NPS and Gateway to work with all concerned to restore the West Pond to its original ecological health. Thanks go to

NYC Audubon's staff for the great work done to achieve this result, in particular to Executive Director Kathryn Heintz for her leadership, Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin for her scientific input, and Program and Advocacy Manager Darren Klein for his knowledgeable and tireless involvement.



*The Breach of the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge West Pond*



*The National Park Service Preferred Alternative Plan*



# 11TH ANNUAL JAMAICA BAY SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE



## SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, 7:30AM-5PM

**D**uring the past 40 years, over 40 species of shorebirds (including rare and accidental vagrants) have been recorded at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge's East and West Ponds from mid-July through October, with the greatest diversity and abundance usually occurring in August. We invite you to attend our eleventh annual celebration at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, August 20.

Free bus transportation from Manhattan to Jamaica Bay is

available for NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up. Meet at 71 West 23rd Street at 6:30am. Contact the office at 212-691-7483 x306 to reserve a seat. For more information, contact NYC Audubon at 212-691-7483 x306, American Littoral Society at 718-474-0896, or Don Riepe at [donriepe@gmail.com](mailto:donriepe@gmail.com).

The Shorebird Festival is a NYC Audubon partnership program with American Littoral Society and Gateway National Recreation Area.

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>7:30am</b>   | Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for registration and continental breakfast (coffee, donuts, juice, etc.) |
| <b>8am</b>      | Hike to the East Pond to view shorebirds during the high tide (Kevin Karlson, Lloyd Spitalnik, Tom Burke, et al.)               |
| <b>10am*</b>    | Family activity with a National Park Service Ranger   |
| <b>10:15am</b>  | Welcome from the National Park Service (Gateway Superintendent Jennifer Nersesian)  |
| <b>10:30am</b>  | Overview of Jamaica Bay conservation issues and wildlife (Don Riepe)  |
| <b>11am</b>     | NYC Audubon shorebird research (Susan Elbin, Debra Kriensky)  |
| <b>11:30am</b>  | Shorebird photography (Lloyd Spitalnik)   |
| <b>Noon</b>     | Lunch (bring lunch or drive to deli located in nearby Broad Channel)  |
| <b>1pm</b>      | Hikes to East and West Ponds or other sites to be selected (all leaders)  |
| <b>2pm*</b>     | Family activity with a National Park Service Ranger   |
| <b>3:30pm</b>   | Birding by impression (Kevin and Dale Karlson)  |
| <b>4:30-5pm</b> | Discussion and wrap-up  |

\*Family activities are intended for children and will run concurrently with principal festival events.

# WORKING TOGETHER TO CONSERVE NEW YORK CITY'S AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS

Catherine Heller

The American oystercatcher's neon orange bill may be a bit too long to be stylish, but it's perfect for feeding on clams, mussels, and oysters. And with over 500 miles of shoreline rich in such shellfish, New York City is an excellent place to observe, monitor, and band this brown-backed, black-headed, white-bellied shorebird. NYC Audubon is part of the American Oystercatcher Working Group (AMOWG), which focuses on the study and conservation of the species throughout its Atlantic and Gulf Coast range.

©Lloyd Spratlanik



and dispersal of American oystercatchers across their range. Collected data show that the birds exhibit a high fidelity to both their northern breeding grounds and their southern wintering destinations. Over the past five winters, New York City's birds, identified by yellow or orange bands, have been spotted in various southern locales: thirteen in Florida, two in Georgia, two in South Carolina, and one in Virginia. Each spring, NYC Audubon has watched "our birds" come back to breed in Queens.

Oystercatchers nest at two locations here in the City (Breezy Point and Arverne Beach, Queens), and NYC Audubon cooperates with partners at the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, Urban Park Rangers, and the National Park Service to monitor their populations. NYC Audubon's research team, led by Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin, studies oystercatchers breeding at Breezy Point—and Field Biologist Emilio Tobón has been on the beach the past five summers, checking nests twice a week from early May till late August.

In the spring and summer of 2015, Tobón counted 43 nesting oystercatcher pairs. Eggs hatched in 28 of these nests, resulting in 57 chicks—of which 37 survived to fledge. To the layman this survival rate might seem low, but Elbin reports that because adult oystercatchers breed for many years, a productivity rate of 0.86 is in fact adequate to sustain our local oystercatcher population.

Through a central database of banded birds maintained by Audubon North Carolina, AMOWG has learned much about the movement

Regionally, American oystercatcher numbers are declining; human activity, introduced predators, and habitat loss are among the main culprits. At nesting areas in Breezy Point, swimmers, sunbathers, joggers, bikers, fishermen, and occasionally beach clean-up machinery have had a negative impact on the birds. To protect nesting pairs from human disturbance, informational signs and symbolic fencing are typically erected around nesting areas. NYC Audubon's "Be a Good Egg" program asks beachgoers to sign a pledge to stay out of marked areas where birds are nesting and keep their dogs leashed and away from those areas as well. (Visit [www.goodeggnjny.org](http://www.goodeggnjny.org) to learn more.) Increased banding to identify individual birds, monitoring productivity of breeding pairs, and tracking the birds in their seasonal habitats are also important conservation tools.

New York City is not often thought of as a beach community—but to American oystercatchers and other shorebirds, its beaches offer critical nesting habitat. In cooperation with many partners, NYC Audubon is working to protect these beaches and learn more about the birds that depend on them.

## ANNUAL MEETING AND FINAL SPRING LECTURE

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

### NYC AUDUBON ANNUAL MEETING AND FINAL SPRING LECTURE:

#### *LISTENING TO A CONTINENT SING*

Lecture by Donald Kroodsma

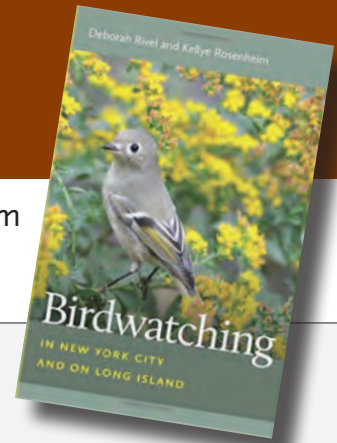
Monday, June 13, 6:30pm

(Please note that no lecture will take place on Wednesday, June 8, as previously scheduled.)  
Central Park Arsenal

Join NYC Audubon for a brief annual meeting and board election, followed by a lecture by birdsong expert Donald Kroodsma. Author of *The Singing Life of Birds*, Kroodsma will discuss his new book, *Listening to a Continent Sing: Birdsong by Bicycle from the Atlantic to the Pacific*, which narrates a ten-week, ten-state bicycle journey undertaken by the author and his son. Lingering and "listening to our continent sing" on remote country roads and over vast and spectacular terrain, from dawn to dusk and sometimes through the night, the author also comments on the history of a young nation and the geology of an ancient landscape. (Read our review of *Listening to a Continent Sing* on page 16.) Light refreshments will be served.



# BOOK EXCERPT: *BIRDWATCHING IN NEW YORK CITY AND ON LONG ISLAND*



By Deborah Rivel and Kellye Rosenheim  
UPNE, 2016



In their new book *Birdwatching in New York City and on Long Island*, authors Deborah Rivel and Kellye Rosenheim describe more than 170 parks and preserves, providing the latest information on the seasonal status and distribution of more than 400 species. With 39 maps and over 50 photographs, this full-color guide includes all information essential to planning your next local birding expedition. Features include the best times to go, the best birding locations in each park, clear directions, plus other practical tips such as whether a scope is needed, food and restroom availability, and other things to do for the non-birders in your group.



## CONFERENCE HOUSE PARK

Named for a seventeenth-century manor house where an unsuccessful peace conference took place during the Revolutionary War, Conference House is part of a 265-acre park whose lengthy expanse on open water and sweeping views of Raritan Bay make it a great spot in winter for waterfowl. The rest of the year this highly recommended spot brings in songbirds (especially sparrows), shorebirds, and birds that use wetlands.

## VIEWING SPOTS

Enter the park on Satterlee Street and look for the historic manor house on your right. In spring and fall, you will want to visit the ancient oak tree just past the house and check the tangles in the woodlands behind the tree for migrants. You may find Indigo Buntings and Bluebirds as well. Take your pick of paths through the woods, or head toward the beach, where in winter you can set your scope and look for loons and ducks in Raritan Bay. Keep an eye out for the red South Pole, a good orientation landmark that notes the southernmost point in New York State.

At the beach, Northern Gannets may be seen. Scan the shoreline for Bald Eagles that sometimes perch here.

After walking on the beach, go inland at the South Pole toward the woodlands in summer and during migration. Follow the trail to the attractive wetlands area in the east and look for Red-winged Blackbirds and waders. This part of Conference House Park is also home to muskrats. If you walk around the wetlands, the path will eventually take you back to the parking lot.

## KEY SPECIES BY SEASON

*Spring* Eastern Phoebe, kinglets; warblers including Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Palm, American Redstart, and Black-and-white; Eastern Towhee, Indigo Bunting, Bluebird.

*Summer* Red-winged Blackbird, Baltimore Oriole; waders include Great Egret.

*Fall* Sparrows, such as Savannah, White-throated, Chipping, and Eastern Towhee; Cedar Waxwing; Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers; returning warblers, Osprey.

*Winter* Waterfowl including large numbers of Brant, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-throated and Common Loon; good numbers Horned Grebe, Northern Gannet, occasionally Bald Eagle; Black-capped Chickadee.

## HABITAT

Woodlands, beach, and wetlands.

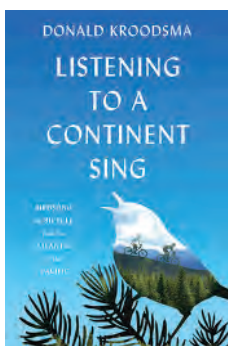
## BEST TIME TO GO

Year-round, but winter, fall, and spring, in that order, are best.

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *LISTENING TO A CONTINENT SING: BIRDSONG BY BICYCLE FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC*

By Donald Kroodsma  
Princeton University Press,  
2016



Ever dream of shedding your routines and heading for the open road towards adventures unseen and unheard? Through *Listening to a Continent Sing*, author Donald Kroodsma shares the joys and discoveries of such a journey as he and his 24-year-old son bike from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Choosing to travel from east to west, with the morning sun at their backs, from May through July, Kroodsma immerses himself in a symphony of birdsong following the TransAmerica Trail bicycle route.

Kroodsma, professor emeritus of ornithology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is to birdsong what a sommelier is to fine wine. With ears as finely tuned as a musician able to recognize a symphony by the first few notes, he identifies a variety of bird species and their many song variations. He also provides QR codes, which allow the reader to listen to recordings and samples on a camera-equipped cell phone. (Additional background information and photos can be found on the book website, <http://listeningtoacontinentsing.com>). Mnemonic transcriptions are provided, but nothing compares to losing oneself in the accompanying soundscape.

In addition to serving as a thorough auditory field guide, Kroodsma's book treats readers to a heartwarming tale of a father-son journey, complete with close encounters with kind strangers whose colloquial dialects and cultures mirror the land on which they live (as do the songs of the birds!). Illustrations peppered throughout the book call to mind a simpler time when an honest journey and good companions were all that mattered. Sharing his own reflections on self-discovery, Kroodsma offers the reader the question that weighs heavily upon him as he crosses the continent: what comes next?

*Listening to a Continent Sing* is a feast for the senses and will no doubt inspire many to listen more deeply and more intently on the next walk or bike ride. —HO

**Mark Your Calendar:** Donald Kroodsma will be lecturing at the Central Park Arsenal on Monday, June 13, at 6:30pm. See page 14 for more information.

## Planning a Journey? Here's a Birdsong-Inspired Playlist!

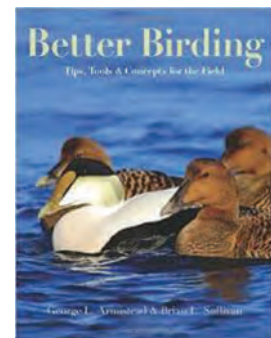
In addition to keeping your ears tuned when you are outdoors, below is a list of music inspired by birdsong for your daily commute or summer travels. It is by no means comprehensive, but as Kroodsma highlighted the many dialects of birds influenced by regions and cultures, so this list includes multiple genres to explore:

- 20th Century Classical: *Le Merle Noir* by Olivier Messiaen captures the song of the blackbird.
- Bluegrass: "Birdsong" by The Wailin' Jennys captures the essence of summer birdsong and freedom in the lyrics.
- Brazilian Jazz: "O Pato" by João Gilberto. Swans, geese, and ducks are "quoted" in this light-hearted samba.
- Jazz: "Strange Meadowlark" by Dave Brubeck. This piece was likely inspired by the meadowlarks Brubeck would have heard during his youth on the West Coast.
- Folk: "The Littlest Birds" by The Be Good

Tanyas. It is said the smallest birds sing the prettiest songs! (This is subjective, but songbirds do sing the more complicated tunes, as we learn in Kroodsma's book.)

Do you have additional suggestions? Please share them at [www.facebook.com/nycaudubon](http://www.facebook.com/nycaudubon). —HO

*BETTER BIRDING:  
TIPS, TOOLS, AND  
CONCEPTS FOR THE FIELD*  
By George L. Armistead and  
Brian L. Sullivan  
Princeton University Press,  
2015



This beautiful book, *Better Birding: Tips, Tools, and Concepts for the Field*, is not aimed at beginners. But that doesn't mean enthusiasts of all levels won't learn from it. The stunning photos make it irresistible to page through while picking up knowledge along the way. Ornithologists George Armistead of the American Birding Association and Drexel University and Brian Sullivan of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology cover everything from plumage patterns to foraging through illustrative photos and explanatory text that reveal the techniques of expert birders.

The authors advocate "wide-angle birding": seeing the big picture and a particular bird in context. Ask yourself what the environment is like. Pay attention to what the bird is doing. And use the handy acronym GISS, which stands for general impression, size, and shape—all essential



by Hillarie O'Toole and Carol Peace Robins

## FRESHKILLS PARK DISCOVERY DAYS, STATEN ISLAND

considerations to identification. To help with this approach, the book organizes birds into groups of like species, such as curlews and godwits, white herons, and accipiters. Multiple photos illustrate visual distinctions within each group, as well as variations at different stages of life, while the text describes habitat, behavior, range and distribution, and more. So if, for example, you're an amateur who can't tell a raven from a crow, it will help you to know that the common raven is larger and lives in remote areas, while the American crow prefers open or urban habitats. (New York City birders should know to take this advice with a grain of salt, however, given the City's growing population of nesting common ravens!)

Throughout, the text discusses more sophisticated aspects of birding, including breeding strategies, molting, natural history, taxonomy, bird systematics, and finding and recognizing rare species. Along with tips on using online tools that track birds in your area and others that play recorded birdsong, *Better Birding* is an indispensable—and outstanding—tool in itself. —CPR

### CELEBRATE JAMAICA BAY ON WORLD OCEANS DAY

Think globally and act locally with NYC Audubon and the Wildlife Conservation Society in commemorating World Oceans Day on Wednesday, June 8. Join us for a special screening of the new, award-winning documentary film *Saving Jamaica Bay*, which celebrates this critical bird sanctuary and the devoted advocates working to protect the Bay's future.

\$20 admission includes refreshments as well a performance by the New York Aquarium's famous sea lions. Doors open at 6:30pm; screening begins at 8pm. Learn more at [www.savingjamaicabay.com](http://www.savingjamaicabay.com).

©City of New York, NYC Parks, Freshkills Park



## SUNDAYS, JUNE 26 AND SEPTEMBER 18, 11AM-4PM

**GUIDES: NYC AUDUBON, NYC PARKS WITH  
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION**

At 2,200 acres, Freshkills Park is almost three times the size of Central Park and the largest park to be developed in New York City in over 100 years. It also has a significant history as the site of the former Fresh Kills Landfill, which was the largest landfill in the world before closing in 2001. Since then, the landfill has been covered with layers of soil and infrastructure, and the site has become a place for wildlife, recreation, science, education, and art. As the park is built in phases, free tours and events provide special access for learning and exploration opportunities. During free-admission Discovery Days on June 26 and September 18, eight miles of trails and paths will offer views of the park's hills, creeks, and wildlife.

Activities include:

- Guided bird walks with NYC Audubon
- Hiking and running on a five-kilometer course
- Free shuttle buses into the park and to the top of a hill offering panoramic views of New York City
- Bike-riding on five miles of paved routes, including a three-mile loop along meadows and wetland ponds (visitors of all ages can borrow bicycles at the park or bring their own).
- Educational tours and displays covering a variety of topics, including sustainability, ecology, landfill infrastructure, and design.
- Kayaking tours (available with pre-registration)

For more information, visit <http://freshkillspark.org/programs>.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## PARTNERSHIPS

Conservation is 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. Recent partnerships have included the following organizations:

Alive Structures  
American Bird Conservancy  
American Birding Association  
American Littoral Society  
American Museum of Natural History  
Audubon New York  
Bird Studies Canada - Motus Wildlife Tracking System  
Broadway Stages  
Bronx River Alliance  
Brooklyn Bird Club  
Brooklyn Generation School  
Bryant Park Corporation  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
Central Park Conservancy  
City University of New York  
Hunter College  
Macaulay Honors College  
Queens College  
Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve  
Columbia University  
Columbia University Environmental Biology Society  
Con Edison  
Conserve Wildlife  
Constitution Marsh - Audubon Center and Sanctuary  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Cornell University  
Earth Matter NY  
Ennead Architects  
The Event Office  
Film Presence  
Fordham University  
Friends University  
Freshkills Park Alliance  
FXFOWLE  
Governors Island Alliance  
Great South Bay Audubon Society  
Greenbelt Conservancy  
Greenbelt Native Plant Center  
Green-Wood Cemetery  
Grounded Truth  
Harbor Estuary Program  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary  
The Horticultural Society of New York  
Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
Jamaica Bay Birders' Coalition  
Jamaica Bay Ecowatchers  
Jamaica Bay Institute  
Kingsborough Community College  
Lenoir-Rhyne University  
Linnaean Society  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences  
Massachusetts Audubon Society  
McGorrick Park Farmers Market  
McGorrick Park Neighborhood Alliance  
Michael Ahern Production Services Inc  
Moynihan Station Development Corporation  
National Audubon Society  
National Park Service  
Gateway National Recreation Area  
Governors Island National Monument  
National September 11 Memorial & Museum  
Natural Areas Conservancy  
The Nature Conservancy  
New Jersey Audubon Society  
New Jersey Meadowlands Commission  
New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority  
The New School  
The New York Botanical Garden  
New York City Department of Correction  
New York City Department of Environmental Protection  
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation  
Arts & Antiquities  
Central Park Arsenal  
Natural Resources Group  
Urban Parks Rangers  
New York City Economic Development Corporation  
New York City Soil & Water Conservation District  
New York Harbor School  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
New York State Office of General Services Real Property Management Group  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
New York State Ornithological Association  
New York University Center for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP)  
New York University Wallerstein Collaborative for Urban Environmental Education  
New York Water Taxi  
The North Shore Waterfront Conservancy of Staten Island  
NYC H2O  
Ocean Conservancy  
Open Space Alliance for North Brooklyn  
The Ornithological Council  
Pace University  
Patagonia  
Port Authority of NY and NJ  
Prendergast Laurel Architects  
Prospect Park Audubon Center  
Protectors of Pine Oak Woods  
Queens Botanical Garden  
Queens County Bird Club  
Randall's Island Park Alliance  
The Raptor Trust  
Rockaway Waterfront Alliance  
Rocking the Boat  
SCAPE Studio  
Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay  
South Shore Audubon Society  
Staten Island Museum  
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Toyota TogetherGreen  
The Trust for Governor's Island  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Geological Service  
U.S. Green Building Council of New York  
U.S.D.A. APHIS/Wildlife Services  
Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy  
Wagner College  
The Waterbird Society  
Waterfront Alliance  
Wave Hill  
Wild Bird Fund  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
Woodlawn Conservancy  
YMCA of Greater New York

## NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS, CORPORATIONS, AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES FOR THEIR SUPPORT:

The Achelis Foundation  
American Bird Conservancy  
ARNOLD GLAS  
Aviator Sports & Events  
Borah, Goldstein, Altschuler, Nahins & Goidel, PC  
Broadway Stages  
Central Park Conservancy  
Con Edison  
The Dobson Foundation  
Fiduciary Trust Company International  
First Cornerstone Foundation  
FXFowle  
Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund  
Hudson River Foundation  
Investors Bank Foundation  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
Kimball Foundation  
The Samuel J. and Ethel LeFrak Charitable Foundation  
Leon Levy Foundation  
Lily Auchincloss Foundation  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences  
Marta Heflin Foundation  
McKenna Long & Aldridge  
Morton Williams Supermarkets  
National Audubon Society  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
National Grid USA  
The Nature Conservancy  
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act  
NRG  
Office of the Queens Borough President  
Patagonia  
The Port Authority of NY & NJ  
Princeton Public Affairs  
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Riker Danzig Scherer Hyland Perretti, LLP  
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Tiger Baron Foundation  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
The Williams Companies  
Winning Strategies-Washington, LLC  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Vital Projects Fund



## NEWS & NOTES

### TESTIMONY ON PESTICIDES AND RODENTICIDES

This past February, NYC Audubon testified before the New York City Council at the invitation of Council Member Helen Rosenthal against the use of herbicides, pesticides, and rodenticides in City Parks. Rodenticide continues to be a frequent cause of death of our urban raptors. Please learn what you can do to help at [www.nycaudubon.org/issues-of-concern/protecting-raptors](http://www.nycaudubon.org/issues-of-concern/protecting-raptors).

### ADVOCATING FOR BIRD-FRIENDLY USE OF CITY GREEN SPACE

In January, NYC Audubon Executive Director Kathryn Heintz joined an advisory committee for the East Park, a portion of Staten Island's Freshkills Park that is not yet open to the public. (Learn about the new park at <http://freshkillspark.org/mission>— and see pages 9 and 17 of this issue for several ways to visit the park this summer.) In April, Heintz attended a community meeting regarding future recreational use and development of the Ridgewood Reservoir in Highland Park, on the border of Brooklyn and Queens. Together with the Brooklyn and Queens County Bird Clubs, NYC Audubon will continue to advocate for bird-friendly planning and preservation of wild-bird habitat in both of these important new urban green spaces.

### NEW RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE BIRD COLLISIONS

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has published *Reducing Bird Collisions with Buildings and Building Glass Best Practices*, available at [www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/management/reducingbirdcollisionswithbuildings.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/management/reducingbirdcollisionswithbuildings.pdf).

### STAFF

Many thanks to Joe O'Sullivan for his contributions to our organization as a development assistant. We wish him well in his future endeavors.

## SUPPORT NYC AUDUBON'S MISSION

### THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO PROTECT NEW YORK CITY'S WILD BIRDS

In addition to becoming a member or making a one-time donation, there are several ways to play a larger role in supporting NYC Audubon's mission to protect wild birds and their habitat in the five boroughs of New York City:

#### 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 \$10 per month. See the membership form below or donate online at [www.nycaudubon.org/donate](http://www.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 below or

donate online at [www.nycaudubon.org/donate](http://www.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.

#### LEAVE A LEGACY

When you designate New York City Audubon as a beneficiary in your will, IRA, life insurance policy, or investment/bank account, your gift will support the conservation of the birds you love for many years to come.

To learn more about any of the above, contact Director of Development Kellye Rosenheim at [krosenheim@nycaudubon.org](mailto:krosenheim@nycaudubon.org) or 646-502-9611.

### MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Contributing members are essential to our conservation and outreach work. As a member of NYC Audubon, you will receive *The Urban Audubon* newsletter and *The eGret* enewsletter; enjoy discounts on field trips and classes; and make a difference in helping to protect the City's wildlife and natural areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

H: \_\_\_\_\_ C: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check payable to NYC Audubon

Charge my credit card:     VISA     MC     AMEX     DSC

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

Mail this form with your payment to:

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## SAVE THE DATE



## THE FALL ROOST

Monday, October 17, 2016

Protecting Birds in New York City for over 30 Years

For more information, please contact Kellye Rosenheim  
at 646-502-9611 or [krosenheim@nycaudubon.org](mailto:krosenheim@nycaudubon.org).