



NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON ANNUAL REPORT 2013



OUR MISSION

The mission of New York City Audubon is to protect wild birds and their habitat in the five boroughs of New York City, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers. We are an independent nonprofit with 10,000 members, donors, and volunteers whose dedication and support make our research, advocacy and education work possible. NYC Audubon is affiliated with the National Audubon Society, and provides local services to its members. NYC Audubon is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law. NYC Audubon meets all of the Better Business Bureau's Standards of Charity Accountability.

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*left NYC Audubon during the year

PHOTOGRAPHY

- 2: Mitch Waxman
- 3: NYC Audubon; inset: Joaquin Cotten/Rocking the Boat
- 4: Both photos: NYC Audubon
- 5: Laura Meyers
- 6: Both photos: Debra Kriensky
- 7: Don Riepe
- 8: NYC Audubon; inset: Steve Nanz
- 9: Steve Nanz
- 10: Both photos: Mitch Waxman
- 11: Mitch Waxman
- 12: NYC Audubon; inset: Joaquin Cotten/Rocking the Boat
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NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON

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YOUR INCREDIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS

As a grassroots organization, New York City Audubon's effectiveness depends on the time and support contributed by our 10,000 members, many hundreds of donors, and nearly 800 volunteers.

This past year, volunteers for New York City Audubon planted Spartina grass to restore Jamaica Bay wetlands, cleared invasive species and planted native trees and shrubs in parks, collected trash from beaches, encouraged beachgoers to sign a pledge to protect nesting shorebirds, and helped with essential office tasks.

Teams of our citizen scientists—both out in the field counting birds and in the office entering data—are doing the heavy lifting required to develop a scientific understanding of bird life in New York City, something that no other organization or government agency is doing.

Your financial contributions fuel research, restoration, education, and advocacy programs to protect the City's birds and habitats. Grants from foundation and government agency partners make possible a variety of critical projects, from Project Safe Flight to research on nesting American oystercatchers.

The stories in this report illustrate the difference your gift of time and dollars is making. In this era of climate change, your support is all the more essential to keep New York City sustainable for birds and people. We count on you to stay involved. Please contribute using the enclosed envelope, and find out how you can help at www.nyc Audubon.org.

With thanks,

Harry Maas
President

OUR MISSION IN A POST-SANDY NEW YORK

A Sustainable City for Birds and People

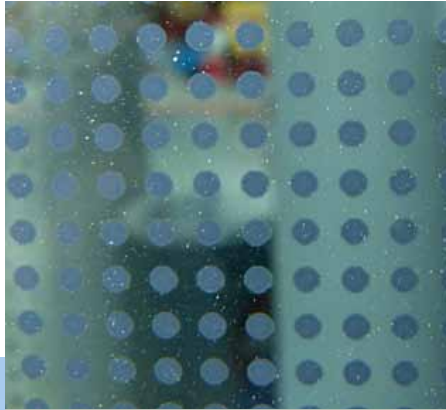


As the City's chief advocate for birds, New York City Audubon has been working to safeguard their habitat since its founding more than 30 years ago. Our mission has taken on increased urgency since Hurricane Sandy. The storm's devastation was a wake-up call to New Yorkers about the impacts of global warming—and the importance of natural ecosystems in minimizing harm to coastal communities. Wetlands and natural shorelines buffer storm surges, while woodlands cool and filter the air. The same places we seek to protect because of their importance for birds are essential to the future livability of our City for people.

In the aftermath of Sandy, we mobilized to ensure that the government's response harnesses and enhances natural ecosystems and protects wildlife and habitat. NYC Audubon's research data, which fill a gap in government agency monitoring of the City's bird populations, are needed to guide restoration efforts. For example, in 2012 we began testing the eggs of waterbirds nesting in New York Harbor for mercury and organic contamination. The results are a baseline for assessing the impact of oil and chemicals spilled during Sandy. This research will provide scientific guidance for reducing harbor contaminants and protecting birds nesting in the harbor.

In all of our research—as well as our advocacy, restoration, and outreach efforts—we are guided by a strategy that focuses on places and activities that have the greatest impact on priority bird species. This report highlights stories from our major program areas: Jamaica Bay, Staten Island, and Western Long Island Sound, as well as Project Safe Flight, our initiative to make the cityscape safer for birds. It also features our education and outreach, which increases the impact of all of our programs through broadening the engagement of New Yorkers with birds and conservation.

Reducing Bird Collisions with Innovative Solutions



When the Javits Center was due for a renovation, NYC Audubon worked with the architect and site owner to make it safer for birds. The retrofit included the use of fritted glass with a pattern of tiny dots that reduces reflections of trees and sky.

THIS YEAR, NYC AUDUBON:

- Helped develop Lights Out/bird collisions as a keystone of the National Audubon Society's new Bird-Friendly Communities program.
- Conducted our 15th year of citizen science bird collision monitoring, with more frequent coverage of high-collision areas in Manhattan.
- Gathered data on bird migration routes for a zoning guidance map by recording night flight calls from the roofs of four buildings.
- Evaluated the effectiveness of bird-friendly solutions at two Manhattan buildings.
- Renewed the commitment by 92 City buildings to turn off lights at night during migration.
- Monitored the September 11 'Tribute in Light' for the eighth year.



NYC Audubon Priority Species: Black-Throated Blue Warbler

This long-distance traveler is a species of conservation concern in New York State. While migrating between its Caribbean wintering grounds and the deep northern forests where it breeds, it spends a significant amount of time in the City, where it finds refuge in parks and gardens. But glass-walled buildings and windows are a threat: the black-throated blue warbler is one of over 100 bird species found dead or injured by our Project Safe Flight collision monitors.

PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT



For the past seven years, volunteers for NYC Audubon’s Project Safe Flight consistently found dead or injured birds on their morning patrols of the Jacob Javits Center. The convention center on the far West Side was particularly hazardous because of its highly reflective glass-curtain walls

and its location along the Hudson River, which is a migration route for birds. Birds do not perceive glass as a barrier, particularly if it reflects trees and sky. Research indicates that 90,000 birds a year are killed or injured this way in New York City alone.

Since 1996, NYC Audubon has taken a leading role in raising awareness about the impact of collisions with glass on bird populations. Our research helps us to identify the buildings and design features most dangerous to birds and to suggest options for retrofitting. When the Javits Center was slated for a renovation, we worked with project architect FXFowle and the site’s owner, the Empire State Development Corporation, to reduce collisions.

The architects replaced glass with stainless steel plates in nearly a third of the exterior surfaces, and elsewhere used new glass panes that incorporate a pattern of tiny ceramic dots. In addition to reducing the reflections of trees, shrubs, and sky,

this fritted glass also lessened solar glare and cut the building’s energy use by more than 25 percent. After the exterior was completed, our volunteer monitors documented a 90 percent reduction in birds injured or killed. “NYC Audubon has had a huge impact,” said Bruce S. Fowle, senior partner at FXFowle. “The bird-friendly retrofit wouldn’t have happened without them.”

The first major New York City building to be retrofitted to reduce bird collisions, the Javits Center sets an important precedent. Publicizing its bird-friendly aspects “should help create awareness to show that it can be done in a fairly conventional all-glass building,” said Fowle.

With Project Safe Flight, which receives major support from the Leon Levy Foundation, NYC Audubon has been a leader in bringing attention to the glass-collision threat and in finding solutions. We are field-testing glass products and gathering data for a map of bird migration routes to guide City zoning regulations. And the federal government has started to pay attention: The US Fish and Wildlife Service recently established a scientific team, which includes Director of Conservation and Science Dr. Susan Elbin, to standardize collision data, develop protocols for testing bird-friendly materials, and fill gaps in our knowledge about bird collisions.

Monitoring Horseshoe Crabs to Keep Shorebirds Coming



NYC Audubon's citizen science teams count and tag horseshoe crabs that come ashore in Jamaica Bay in the spring, laying eggs that fuel shorebird migration along the East Coast. Our data contributes to an effort to keep healthy horseshoe crab populations in the region. Right: the Coben family monitoring horseshoe crabs at Plumb Beach.






NYC Audubon Priority Species: American Oystercatcher

This large and easily recognizable shorebird breeds and stops during migration along the East Coast, including beaches at Breezy Point, Jamaica Bay, and elsewhere in the City. Extensive development of beach and marsh habitat has led to a worrisome decline of the species' population, which a broad consortium of government agencies, university scientists, and nonprofits, including NYC Audubon, is working to reverse. As part of the research to guide this conservation effort, we are monitoring nesting oystercatchers in Jamaica Bay.

JAMAICA BAY PROGRAM



Every year in May or June, Alan and Julie Cohen and their daughters Chloe, 9, and Phoebe, 12, make the trek to Plumb Beach to watch the horseshoe crabs spawn. The Cohens, who live in Brooklyn's Sheepshead Bay, want their daughters to know about their natural surroundings, said Alan. "It's easy

to forget we sit by an estuary, with marshes and geological glacial remains, along a path of marine and bird migration."

This year, the family joined our research team monitoring the crabs, whose eggs are the primary food source for shorebirds migrating to northern nesting grounds. "My job was drilling the holes in the shell. My dad put in the tags, which had specific numbers. My mother measured, and my sister recorded the information," said Phoebe. "I actually got to see the eggs while the crabs were laying them." The data, compiled in a state database, guides government agencies in preventing the overfishing of horseshoe crabs, which could affect shorebird numbers.

Jamaica Bay's remaining tidal marshes, beaches, and natural uplands provide habitat for some 300 species of birds, and also buffer storm surges. Our citizen science research—which also includes shorebird monitoring—is key to protecting the

bay. It provides data for natural resource managers and inspires participants to become stewards of the bay. Debra Kriensky, a NYC Audubon intern researching the crab-shorebird connection for her masters' degree at Columbia University, helped oversee the volunteers. She said, "You see the crabs, you see the birds, and you see how it all fits together."

THIS YEAR, NYC AUDUBON:

- Enlisted 70 volunteers to monitor horseshoe crabs at three sites around Jamaica Bay.
- Removed 2,000 pounds of trash from Plumb Beach, an important habitat for horseshoe crabs and migrating shorebirds, with the help of 50 volunteers.
- Monitored the effects of sand replenishment at Plumb Beach on horseshoe crab populations.
- Began developing a proposal for the restoration of the ponds at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge after Hurricane Sandy.

Restoring an Island Refuge for Birds



The restoration of Prall's Island as habitat for wading birds by the New York City parks department was set back by Hurricane Sandy. In the meantime, NYC Audubon's research for the project found that the island is an important stopover for migratory birds such as the yellow-rumped warbler (above).





NYC Audubon Priority Species: Salt Marsh Sparrow

This coastal sparrow nests and feeds in tidal wetlands—a habitat that has all but disappeared from New York City and is increasingly threatened by sea-level rise. One of the places it can still be found is Saw Mill Creek Marsh, the largest expanse of salt marsh along Staten Island’s west shore. NYC Audubon supports a project to monitor City populations of this bellwether species for climate change and advocates to prevent threats to its habitat.

STATEN ISLAND PROGRAM



To get out to Prall’s Island, an 88-acre scrap of land in the heavily industrialized Arthur Kill between New Jersey and Staten Island, Director of Conservation and Science Dr. Susan Elbin and Field Assistant Dave Manry motor an inflatable boat from the New Jersey side. Prall’s was

the first place herons returned to nest in New York Harbor in the 1970s after a century’s absence; this discovery launched our 27-year program to monitor herons, egrets, ibis, and other waterbirds in the harbor.

Wading birds left Prall’s in 2005, and subsequently many trees were removed to prevent the spread of the Asian long-horned beetle. Invasive plants took over. “Even if the wading birds wanted to come back, there would be no habitat,” said Manry. He and Elbin are using a technique called constant effort mist-netting to identify bird species, as well as setting camera traps to find predators, in a project with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to restore the island’s habitat.

The restoration was set back by Hurricane Sandy, which washed salt water over the island and left mounds of trash. “Prall’s has been drastically changed, but nature is very resilient,” said Manry.

THIS YEAR, NYC AUDUBON:

- Identified and counted migratory landbirds on Prall’s Island for the first time since the 1980s.
- Conducted predator studies on Prall’s Island using camera traps.
- Led field trips to Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve to introduce underserved communities to bird conservation areas, as part of the “Audubon in the Parks” program through a Toyota TogetherGreen grant.
- Continued monitoring chimney swift towers at Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve.
- Conducted the 27th year of Harbor Herons monitoring on five islands off Staten Island.

While the trees are growing back, our research is finding that the island is a stopover for migrating landbirds, such as yellow-rumped warblers and white-throated sparrows. Once the restoration is complete, we will pilot a social attraction project that uses recorded sounds and decoys to induce wading birds to return to breed, and advise on protecting nests from predators.

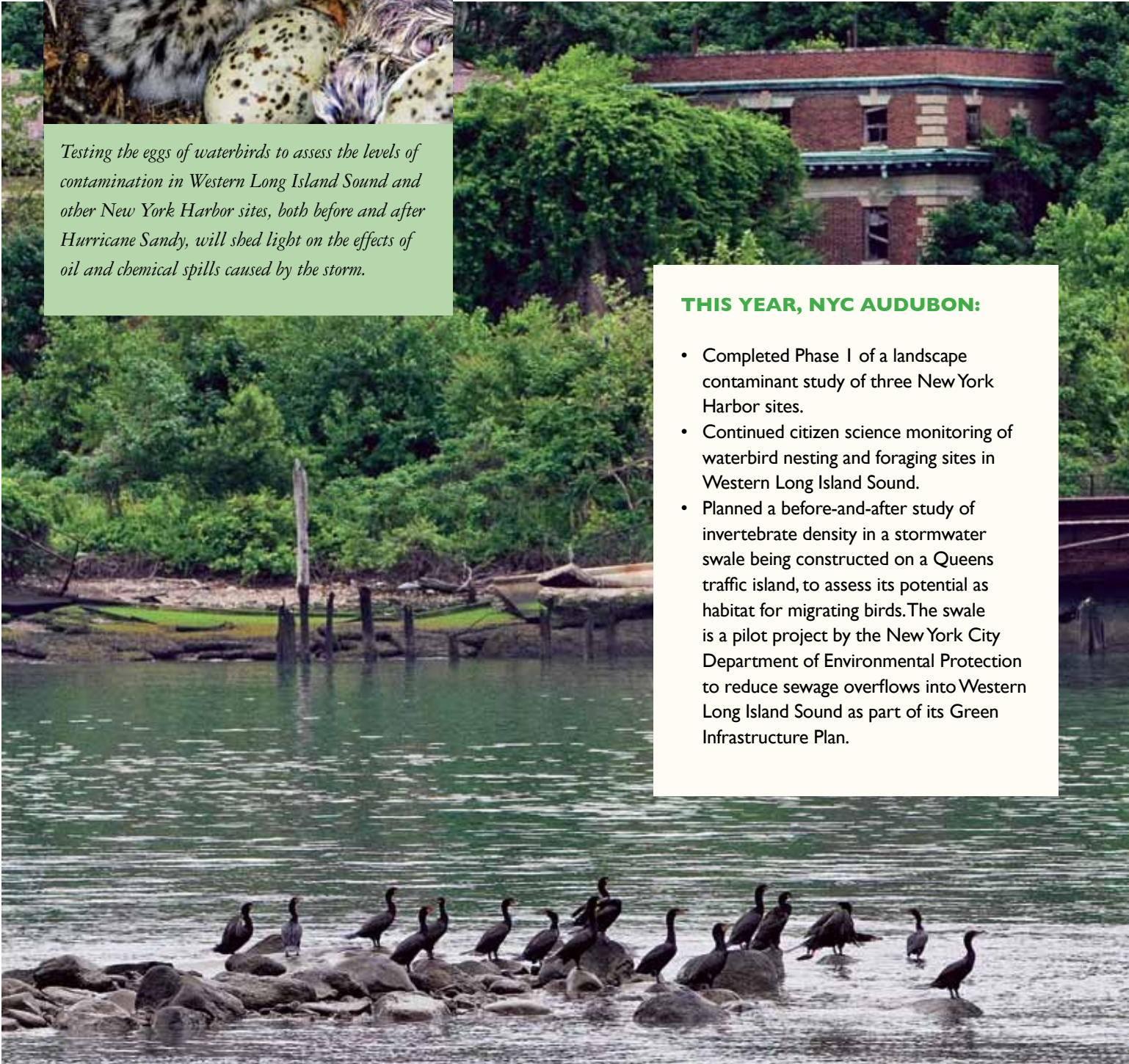
Tracking Harbor Toxins with Avian Detectors



Testing the eggs of waterbirds to assess the levels of contamination in Western Long Island Sound and other New York Harbor sites, both before and after Hurricane Sandy, will shed light on the effects of oil and chemical spills caused by the storm.

THIS YEAR, NYC AUDUBON:

- Completed Phase I of a landscape contaminant study of three New York Harbor sites.
- Continued citizen science monitoring of waterbird nesting and foraging sites in Western Long Island Sound.
- Planned a before-and-after study of invertebrate density in a stormwater swale being constructed on a Queens traffic island, to assess its potential as habitat for migrating birds. The swale is a pilot project by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection to reduce sewage overflows into Western Long Island Sound as part of its Green Infrastructure Plan.





NYC Audubon Priority Species: Black-Crowned Night-Heron

Active at dusk and after dark, this medium-sized wader lives around rivers, lakes, and a variety of wetland habitats, both salt and freshwater. Eighty percent of the breeding black-crowned night-herons in New York State are found in New York City, where they nest on islands around the harbor. It is one of the 12 colony-nesting waterbird species that NYC Audubon has monitored for nearly 30 years.

WESTERN LONG ISLAND SOUND PROGRAM



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ill Rock and South Brother Island are two uninhabited islands in the East River, part of Western Long Island Sound. With trees and shrubs for nesting and the necessary isolation from humans and predators, these islands have the right conditions for herons, gulls, cormorants, and other waterbirds to build nests and raise young. NYC Audubon has long conducted surveys of nesting birds on the East River islands, but in the spring of 2012 Director of Conservation and Science Dr. Susan Elbin and a field technician visited the islands for a different type of research.

Moving quietly so as not to disturb the nesting birds, they first measured the eggs in a clutch. Then they took the smallest egg, typically the least likely to survive. The carefully identified eggs were sent to be tested for levels of mercury and organic contaminants.

The research is part of a larger study to assess contamination in New York Harbor. Funded by grants from The Eppley Foundation for Research and The Bay and Paul Foundations, the study included sites in Jamaica Bay and the outer harbor. The levels of toxic chemicals in birds' eggs can inform us about the contaminant landscape of the places birds forage. "Waterbirds are excellent bio-indicators of the ecosystem's health," said Elbin. "They are top-level consumers in the food chain,

ubiquitous in the area, and easy to work with."

The waterbirds on the East River islands depend on fish in nearby waters for the majority of their diet. Contaminants in Western Long Island Sound, which has a long history of industrial and sewage discharges, could be affecting the birds. Mercury, for example, is known to affect their immune system and reproductive ability, cause neurological damage, and disrupt endocrine function. Elbin hypothesizes that this, as well as habitat disturbance, may have something to do with the birds' abandonment of nearby North Brother Island, once one of the biggest East River colonies.

Elbin was particularly interested in Western Long Island Sound because data on pollution is especially lacking there. Her interest was substantiated when the results showed that the East River samples had the highest level of contamination of all three areas tested. The research, which is continuing, will also shed light on the impacts of Hurricane Sandy, which caused thousands of oil and chemical spills. Comparing the levels of petroleum-based contaminants in eggs gathered before and after the storm will provide scientific guidance for reducing pollution and protecting birds in the harbor.

Inspiring a Diverse New Generation of Conservationists



Young people gain an appreciation of the City's environment through NYC Audubon programs such as an after-school program with Rocking the Boat to monitor birds on the Bronx River, and volunteer events like beach clean-ups at Plumb Beach (below).





EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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Almost completely surrounded by water, New York City's five boroughs contain vibrant marshlands and lush forests. Yet too many young people are not exposed to nature that may be right down the street. John Rowden, NYC Audubon's former Associate Director of Citizen Science and Outreach, wanted to change that. With a fellowship from National Audubon and Toyota's TogetherGreen program, he established the first intensive bird monitoring on the Bronx River. His monitoring team? South Bronx high school students.

NYC Audubon's partner was Rocking the Boat, a local organization that teaches teenagers leadership skills through building and operating wooden boats on the Bronx River. Beginning with the monitoring of long-legged wading birds in 2011, the program expanded to include shorebirds in 2012. Launching boats near Hunts Point, students learned how to collect data, identify birds, use binoculars, and appreciate the importance of protecting birds and their habitats. Students who had no previous interest in ecology quickly took ownership of the monitoring. They became excited to learn bird calls and soon had their own favorite birds.

Hands-on educational initiatives such as the Rocking the Boat partnership make the City's

THIS YEAR, NYC AUDUBON:

- Launched "Be a Good Egg" at New York City beaches. This effort with Audubon New York and New Jersey Audubon enlists beachgoers in protecting nesting and migratory shorebirds.
- Conducted youth educational programs in Jamaica Bay and the South Bronx.
- Held 358 Events and Adventures programs serving 2,624 people of all ages.
- Worked with 14 partner organizations to hold six volunteer restoration, citizen science, and education events with 400 participants through a Toyota TogetherGreen Volunteer Days grant.

natural world accessible to everyone. Through outreach to all demographic groups, ages, and experience levels, NYC Audubon fosters a broader cultural investment in the wildlife and places that depend on us for protection. "There is actually nature in our area," said Rowden. "If we just open our eyes a little bit, or are willing to look at things a little differently, we'll see it."

Supporting New York City Audubon

FISCAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 2013



NYC Audubon's conservation work and education programs are made possible by the generous contributions of members, corporations, foundations, agencies, and friends. We would like to express our gratitude for the leadership support of the Leon Levy Foundation and to all those who have supported our work over the past year.

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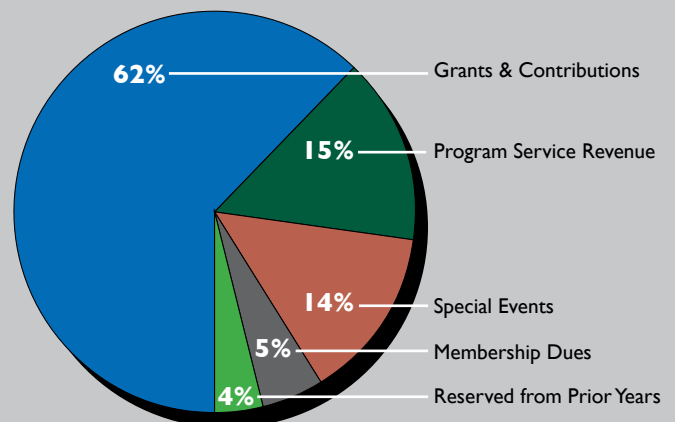
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REVENUES

Grants & Contributions	\$538,363	62%
Program Service Revenue	\$132,885	15%
Special Events	\$120,334	14%
Membership Dues	\$43,277	5%
Reserved from Prior Years	\$32,395	4%
Total Support & Revenue	\$867,254	100%



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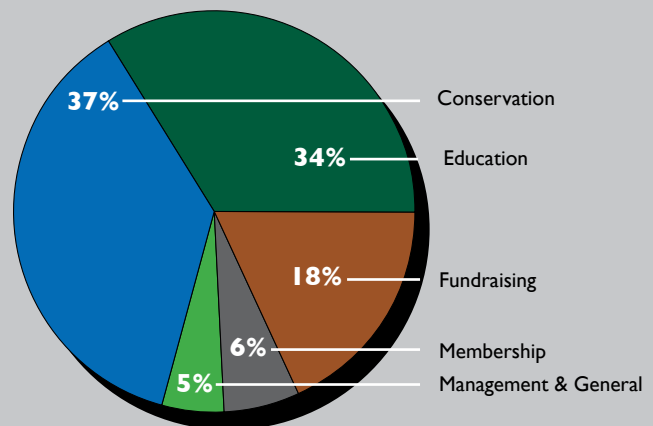
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EXPENSES

Conservation	\$319,716	37%
Education	\$294,575	34%
Fundraising	\$160,185	18%
Membership	\$48,298	6%
Management & General	\$44,480	5%
Total Expenses	\$867,254	100%



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