



look around

New York City

PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

If you think one person can't start something big, think again. Just take Rebekah Creshkoff and Project Safe Flight (PSF for short). Rebekah knew that birds—which migrate at night to avoid predators—navigate by the constellations and moon. But when they fly over New York City, the lights on the ground below look like a new galaxy. That can be confusing for birds—especially when clouds block out the real night sky.

Migrating birds can also be blinded by the city's bright lights.

Often, they swarm around skyscrapers like moths at a light until they're exhausted. Then the birds need to take refuge in small parks, street trees, planters or rooftop gardens where they can rest and forage for food and water. But the city's windows are like a million mirrors. Glass windows are dangerous to birds because they reflect trees and sky. Birds can be hurt or killed when they try to fly to a tree that's really just a reflection in the glass.



White-throated sparrows are the birds most commonly killed or injured after hitting skyscrapers.

In 1997, Rebekah started going out before 6:00 am every morning during spring and fall migration to **LOOK FOR** birds that had been trapped among the skyscrapers in downtown Manhattan. That year, she

found 413 birds on 144 days.

Today, Project Safe Flight has over 25 volunteers and is an official program of New York City Audubon. These dedicated folks get up before dawn during migration and **LOOK AROUND** the streets for their winged friends. PSF volunteers rescue stunned (but living) birds and release them in large parks like Central, Prospect or Inwood Hill Parks

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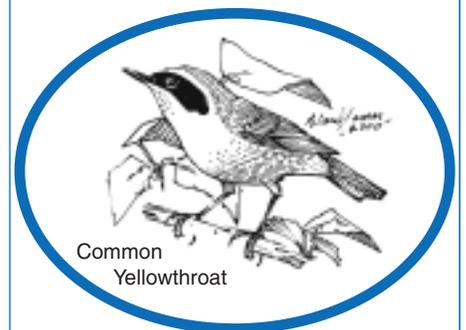
Dark-eyed Junco



American Woodcock



Yellow Warbler



Common Yellowthroat

To learn more about Project Safe Flight, visit our website at www.nycaudubon.org.



Interview with Rebekah Creshkoff

What inspired you to go out and start looking for birds so early in the morning?

Because I knew there was a problem with birds being disoriented by light and colliding with windows. I love watching birds, so it was natural for me to work to save what I love.

How did you get other people involved?

I wrote articles about the project for New York City Audubon's newsletter, and other people wanted to help.

What are the major obstacles facing PSF today?

The famous New York City skyline. It's a real American icon, and that makes people very reluctant to turn off the lights at night.

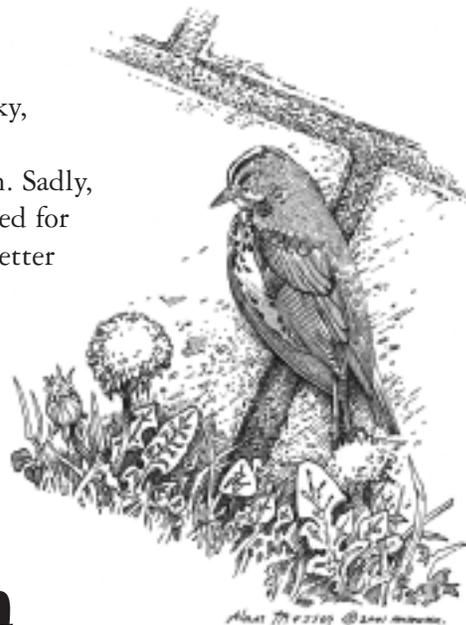
What would you like to see PSF achieve in the near and distant future?

I'd like us to train building-management staff in how to rescue dazed or injured birds. I'd like to see buildings turn off their decorative lights during spring and fall migration. And PSF is also working to influence the designs of the new buildings going up at the World Trade Center site. We can help the birds by using patterned glass that birds can recognize as a solid barrier. **-CW**

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where they are safe from windows and heavy traffic. Birds that are not so lucky, because they are hurt, are taken to a rehabilitator who will try to heal them. Sadly, birds that are killed can only be counted for the scientists who are trying hard to better understand this problem. **-CW**

An ovenbird killed by hitting a window.



Expert Opinion

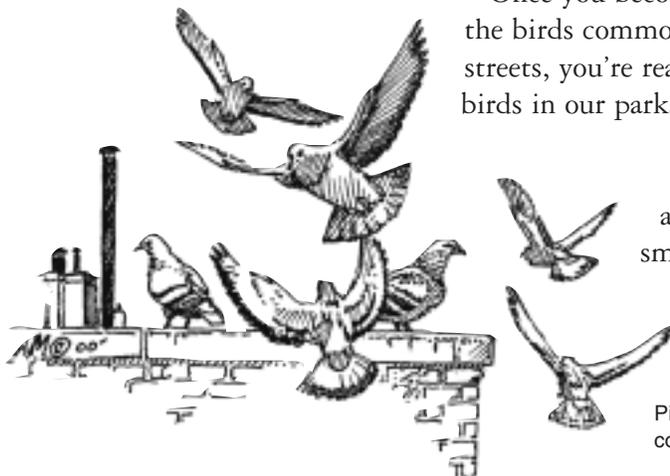
Did you know that there are more than 200 species of birds commonly seen in New York City?

Many people are surprised to learn that New York City's bird life includes much more than pigeons. Although pigeons are, by far, the most abundant species, by **LOOKING AROUND** you'll spot the house sparrow and starling, which are commonly found along tree-lined streets of the City. With a little more patience, you may be able to spot a blue jay, American robin or a cardinal.

How can I get started looking at birds?

Birding is one of the fastest growing hobbies in North America. One of the reasons it is so popular is because it is relatively inexpensive and it doesn't take much equipment to get started.

Once you become good at identifying the birds commonly seen along the city streets, you're ready to **LOOK FOR** the birds in our parks. Compared to a dense forest, it's easier to spot birds in a park because it's small and there are fewer places for the birds to be. A



Pigeons are NYC's most common birds.

The starling was originally introduced to NYC's Central Park from England.



birder finds it easy to see birds along paved paths or well-worn trails. There is no need to trample through underbrush to get a glimpse.

Fortunately for us New Yorkers, some of the best places to view birds are easy to get to.

Central Park is ideal for this. A good place to start would be at the Dairy, which is just west of Central Park Zoo. You can pick up a checklist of the birds commonly seen in the Park. You can also buy a beginner's field guide. This will help you identify the birds you do see. Each time you see a new species of bird, you can check it on your list and join millions of birders in a life-long scavenger hunt.

One of the top birding spots in the Park is the Ramble. To get to the Ramble travel north from the Dairy to the Boathouse. From the Boathouse walk around Rowboat Lake. Keep walking until you see a series of trails in a wooded area. This is the Ramble.

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White-eyed vireo

Vocabulary

Navigate

To locate one's position and direction

Constellation

A collection of stars that forms a picture in the sky

Avid

To do something frequently and with enthusiasm

Rehabilitator

A person licensed to care for injured animals

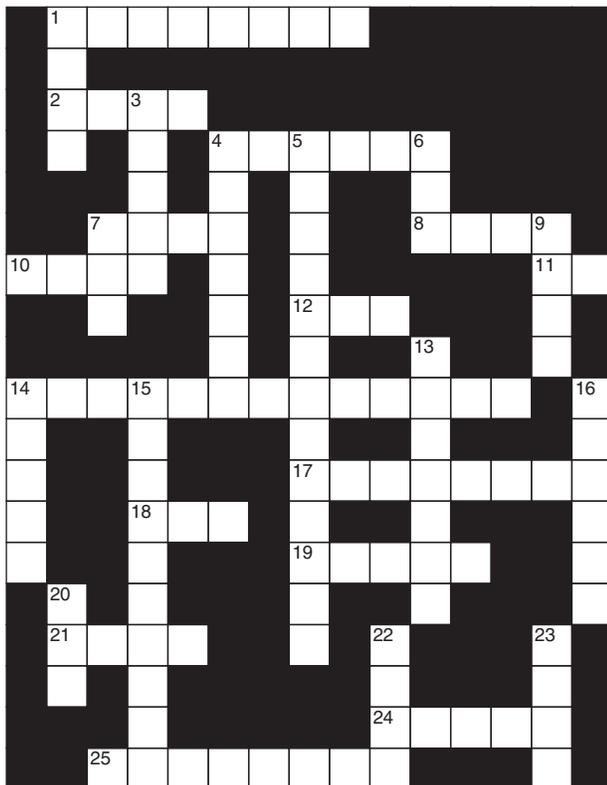
Migrate

To travel from one location to another

Forage

To hunt or search for food

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- An animal with a long snout that eats ants
- Back _____
- A vocabulary word that means: To hunt or search for food
- The top layer of an apple
- Mamma's gonna buy you a Billy _____
- Using your senses to touch
- Strong as an _____
- The only flying mammal
- A vocabulary word that means: A group of stars that makes a picture in the sky
- Cry a _____
- A fish that looks like a snake
- The _____ fairy puts money under some children's pillows when they lose one of these
- A vocabulary word that means: Doing something enthusiastically
- Most birds migrate at _____
- A bird commonly seen on NYC streets that originally came from Europe and is called a European _____

DOWN

- A mountain range in Europe
- A relative of the horse with 1 or 2 humps
- While birding in the park in October, enjoy the fall _____
- A vocabulary word that means: A person licensed to care for injured animals
- Baby birds hatch from an _____
- _____ pod
- A bumpy frog relative
- A vocabulary word that means: What many birds do each spring and fall
- The first building on the Project Safe Flight route
- Project _____
- A bird of prey with sharp talons and a hooked beak
- A large animal living in Tibet and Central Asia, that looks like a walking shag carpet
- _____ -pong
- Go fly a _____

-DT

Why was it brought here? The answer will be posted on the NYC Audubon website.

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Why is Central Park such a hot spot for birds?

Imagine you're traveling from New York to California. Now, imagine you've been traveling along the highway for six hours, and haven't seen anywhere to stop. You're tired, hungry and thirsty. Then, off in the distance, you see a fast food restaurant! When you get inside, boy, is it crowded! Everyone else traveling on that highway has the same needs as you do, to rest and to eat.

Birds migrating between their summer and winter grounds during spring and fall have a similar experience. When they spot a patch of greenery in the middle of a city of concrete, many take a break and refuel.

Because it is one of the few places to stop for a meal in the area, most birds stop in Central Park before continuing on their journey. And during the spring and fall, boy, is it crowded with birds as well as birders! **-DT**

* Children who live on a small island near Iceland rescue baby puffins confused by the lights of their town.

* Read about their actions in the book *Nights of the Pufflings* by Bruce McMillan, Houghton Mifflin/Walter Lorraine Books, reprint edition, 1997.

* Call NYC Audubon to find out how you and a grownup can help rescue birds.

Look It Up

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is looking for city dwellers to study the birds that live in cities. For more information visit www.urbanbirds.org.

Marcia T. Fowle and Paul Kerlinger, *The New York City Audubon Society Guide to Finding Birds in the Metropolitan Area*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2001.



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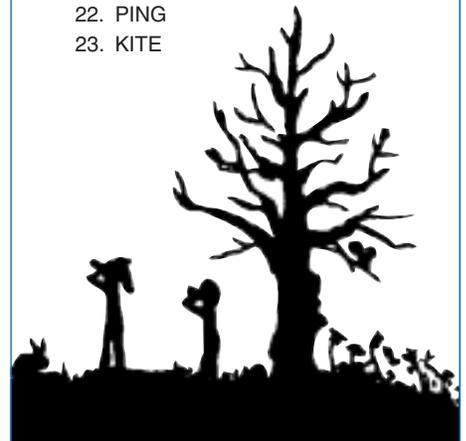
CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS

ACROSS

- AARDVARK (or ANTEATER)
- PACK
- FORAGE
- PEEL
- GOAT
- FEEL
- OX
- BAT
- CONSTELLATION
- TEARDROP
- EEL
- TOOTH
- AVID
- NIGHT
- STARLING

DOWN

- ALPS
- CAMEL
- FOLIAGE
- REHABILITATOR
- EGG
- PEA
- TOAD
- MIGRATION
- CHASE
- SAFEFLIGHT
- RAPTOR
- YAK
- PING
- KITE



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