



## THE URBAN AUDUBON

# NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF CONSERVATION

Summer  
Volume XXXII, No. 3

### NYC AUDUBON NEWSLETTER

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10 ROBINS IN NYC

**THE URBAN AUDUBON**  
Starting with this issue, *The Urban Audubon* will be published four times a year: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. In each issue three months of Events and Adventures will be listed. The web site [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org) will also list current Events and Adventures.

**CHANGE TO BY-LAWS**  
NYC Audubon's Board of Directors proposes changes to the chapter by-laws. Check the web site [www.nycaudubon.org/bylaws](http://www.nycaudubon.org/bylaws), to review these changes. They will be voted on at the Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 8. See page 10 for details.

## DAVID BRAGDON, NEW YORK CITY'S NEW SUSTAINABILITY PLANNER

*Suzanne Charlé*

Last August, David Bragdon boarded a train at Portland's (Oregon) Romanesque Union Station, bound for Penn Station, New York. He had just left his post as president of Metro Council, the area's regional government, and was on his way to head up Mayor Bloomberg's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability.

Praise from environmentalists preceded Bragdon's arrival: "He's a real proponent for parks, bike trails and open space—he set out to create the best park system in the world," said Meryl Redisch, executive director of the Audubon Society of Portland. With a coalition of nonprofits, businesses, and grassroots activists, he worked on a \$227 million bond measure for the acquisition of 2,500 acres for water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreation. "Some properties were highly sought after by developers," said Redisch.

After setting up offices in downtown Manhattan, Bragdon spent much of his time on PlaNYC

2.0, a blueprint for the city's sustainable future.

The plan, released on April 22—Earth Day—has a significantly different outlook than the 2007 version. "The first PlanNYC was very anthro-centric," Bragdon noted. "The new iteration of the plan recognizes the value of natural areas—nature for the sake of nature." Four years ago, the focus was on human benefits. "We're expanding that to recognize that we share the space with other species." Or, as Bragdon told an audience at NYU, in addition to asking how to fit one million new people in the city, "the plan will ask how many alewife herrings do we want coming back to the Bronx River?"



*David Bragdon*

...continued on page 4



*Four Sparrow Marsh, Brooklyn, NY*

## NYC AUDUBON MISSION & VISION

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

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

### THE URBAN AUDUBON

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

**Newsletter Committee** Lucienne Bloch, Ned Boyajian, Suzanne Charlé, Catherine Heller, Melissa Husby, Peter Joost, Mary Jane Kaplan, Abby McBride, Don Riepe, Carol Peace Robins, Matthew Rymkiewicz, Tod Winston

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**Small Photographs** Susan Elbin, Steve Nanz, and Don Riepe



## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

*Glenn Phillips*



This spring has been a very busy one here at NYC Audubon. With your support, we've been addressing eight critical environmental issues that affect birds and their habitat in New York City. Even in a city with a mayor committed to his environmental legacy and a park's commissioner who understands the value of natural places in the city, it is critical to have an organization like NYC Audubon collecting independent data on the value of our natural areas and advocating for their protection. None of this work is possible without the financial support of our members and the tireless efforts of our volunteers.

In Jamaica Bay, we have been following six issues: the development of the Four Sparrow Marsh Retail Complex, the creation of Gateway National Recreation Area's new General Management Plan, the Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel's recommendations for revitalizing Floyd Bennett Field, the Army Corps of Engineer's beach replenishment at Plumb Beach, a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to expand bird hazard control at JFK Airport, and the Regional Plan Association's proposal to expand JFK Airport. In Staten Island, NYC Audubon has been following the Spectra Energy Gas Pipeline and the proposed New York Container Terminal expansion, both of which threaten Arlington Cove Marsh.

With your help, NYC Audubon has already been able to reduce the impacts of some of these projects. Spectra Energy's Gas pipeline, originally slated to bisect Old Place Creek Marsh and run through Arlington Cove Marsh on Staten Island, has been realigned to reduce its impact on both marshes, which provide important foraging habitat for herons and egrets nesting in the harbor. The Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel's recommendations also take into account NYC Audubon's opinions, and will protect the grasslands at the center of the field, which are important nesting sites and stopover habitat for declining grassland birds.

This summer, we revive our "Armchair Activist" program. With just a few clicks of your mouse, you can send emails to influence decisions that effect birds in New York City. Visit [www.nycaudubon.org/takeaction/](http://www.nycaudubon.org/takeaction/) to join our Armchair Activist list.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT 2011

The Nominating Committee Chairperson David Speiser with Andrew Farnsworth, Marcia T. Fowle, and Peter Shen present the following:

Candidate to move from the Board of Directors to serve a two-year term as President: Harrison Maas.

Candidate to move from the Board of Directors to serve a two-year term as Vice President of Conservation: Don Riepe.

Candidate to move from the Board of Directors to serve a two-year term as Treasurer: Jared Keyes.

Candidates to continue for a second two-year term on the Board of Directors: Marcia T. Fowle, Robert J. Kintis, Peter Shen, and Dorothy Peteet.

New candidates to serve two-year terms on the Board of Directors: Brenda Torres-Barreto, former executive director of Santa Clara Valley (CA) Audubon and current sustainability manager at Green Light District, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and Lawrence M. Levine, senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council specializing in water quality issues.

This slate of candidates will be voted on at the Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 8, 2011, at 6pm at The Arsenal, Central Park, 64th and Fifth Avenue.

Oakes Ames becomes Immediate Past President.

Peter Rhoades Mott and Mary Jane Kaplan will join the Advisory Council.

# CONSERVATION NOTES



May 2011 marks the start of NYC Audubon's third year studying migrating shorebirds in Jamaica Bay with the assistance of citizen scientists. This research has resulted in solid baseline population data for both shorebirds and horseshoe crabs, whose eggs provide a major source of food for the migrants.

Thanks to generous grants from TogetherGreen, Disney Conservation Fund, The Bodman Foundation, the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc., and the Brooklyn Community Foundation, we

have engaged hundreds of New Yorkers in cleaning beaches, from local school students to members of the power boating and deaf communities. New among the citizen scientists this spring will be communities of faith around the bay.

During the past two years, scores of NYC Audubon volunteers counted horseshoe crabs nesting on Plumb Beach, Brooklyn, and learned that this site is the most productive area for crabs in all of Long Island. ("See Saving Plumb Beach" on page 5.) Our data are now being used to inform beach replenishment activities by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

So far NYC Audubon has engaged more than 500 students and adults in the stewardship of Jamaica Bay, cleaning debris from five beaches vital to migratory shorebirds, thus freeing up space for horseshoe crabs to spawn and for migrants to forage. Our educational outreach program serves as a model for all of our conservation efforts. It is presented in three-parts: a classroom session introducing students to the importance of migratory shorebirds to the ecology of the bay; a visit to the bay both to clean a beach crucial to the birds and to conduct monitoring; and a follow-up classroom session to cover lessons learned. Pre- and post-testing show us that this hands-on learning system truly works.

The season culminates with the annual Jamaica Bay Shorebird Festival, this year on Saturday, August 27 (see page 5 for detailed information).

It's not too late to volunteer to help—sign up now!



*Volunteers Measure a Horseshoe Crab at Plumb Beach*

©John Rowden

## VOLUNTEER!



Work in our friendly office or in the field and make a difference for New York City's wildlife!

### OFFICE HELPERS

Answer inquiries about wildlife, our field trips, classes, events, and conservation work. Help with mailings, filing, and general office work. Computer skills and birding knowledge are not required.

**Computer Wiz:** Help keep NYC Audubon's website up-to-date!

Prior web development experience required.

**Social Media:** Tweet! Help us get the word out in social media sites.

### HANDS-ON HELPING BIRDS

**Citizen Science Volunteers:** Become a citizen scientist and help conduct conservation research.

• **Observe herons and egrets in our Harbor Herons Foraging Study** as these wading birds search for food in the city's waterways.

• **Count shorebirds and horseshoe crabs, or clean beaches in our National Areas Initiative in Jamaica Bay,** an important stopover for migratory birds.

**Project Safe Flight:** Thousands of songbirds migrate through the city. Volunteers are needed to monitor designated buildings for bird collisions. Learn how to collect data and handle injured birds.

**Bird Transporters:** Transport injured birds to licensed wildlife rehabilitators in the area.



### VOLUNTEER DAYS

Join NYC Audubon in support of MillionTreesNYC Forest Restoration Workdays in June. Volunteers will identify and remove invasive plants such as mugwort, porcelainberry, and other invasives that threaten brand new trees planted by the MillionTreesNYC initiative.

*Saturday, June 4, 10am-1pm:  
Ferry Point Park, Bronx*  
*Saturday, June 18, 10am-1pm:  
Canarsie Park, Brooklyn*

The fate of the city's wetlands is a case in point. In 2009 the City Council passed a law requiring the city to create a comprehensive wetlands protection strategy. Late in 2010, New York City Parks Department's Natural Resources Group sponsored a wetlands workshop. Sixty professionals, including NYC Audubon's Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin, issued a paper on their findings. Many of their suggestions have been incorporated in the new version of PlaNYC including initiatives to protect wetlands within the city's boundaries by filling gaps in federal, state, and local laws (particularly small and fragmented freshwater wetlands that are currently unprotected); addressing threats facing coastal wetlands; and setting performance standards for wetlands restoration.

"We're not just receptive to the comprehensive wetlands plan—we're embracing it," said Bragdon, who grew up in a New York suburb and remembers "walking on Welfare Island (when it was still called that) as a kid," and riding one of the last ferries from Manhattan to Hoboken back in the mid-1960s. "The city's an archipelago—one big riparian zone. There's a lot of water and we have to protect it."

Bragdon explained that the new version of PlaNYC had to address economic realities of the city and the nation. Recognizing economic restraints, his office is actively working with city, state, and federal officials (including Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar), as well as private stakeholders on how best "to manage our natural assets."

## StarrTrips

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY,  
AND SATURDAY MORNINGS IN  
CENTRAL PARK

SPRING WALKS: Monday, May 2-  
Wednesday, June 1

SUMMER & FALL WALKS: Monday,  
August 22-Saturday, October 29

Mondays and Wednesdays: Meet at 7:30am sharp at 81st & Central Park West (SE corner)  
Tuesdays: Meet at 9am sharp at 103rd & Central Park West (parkside).

Saturdays: Meet at 7:30am sharp at 103rd & Central Park West (parkside).

Join Starr Saphir for bird-watching in Central Park. All Starr Trips are non-smoking. No registration necessary. For more information, call Starr at 917-306-3808. \$8 (\$4 for full time students)

## TROUBLE IN THE AIR: BIRD HAZARD REDUCTION AT JFK

Ned Boyajian



Snow Geese at JFK

Who can forget the searing image of Flight 1549 drifting down the Hudson, passengers and crew waiting for rescue on the aircraft's wings? Canada geese brought the plane down, the public soon learned—highlighting the very serious dangers of bird strikes at airports.

In January 2011, nearly 17 years after the initial Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed for controlling laughing gulls at JFK, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and cooperating agencies issued the Supplement

to the Environmental Impact Statement Gull Hazard Reduction Program: John F. Kennedy International Airport that proposes six alternatives, including the status quo (shooting birds at the airport) for bird-hazard management at JFK. Elements of the proposed plans include controlling more species of large-bodied birds by extending the radius to five miles from the airport—comprising all of Jamaica Bay—for control of gulls, mute swans, double-crested cormorants, blackbirds, crows, pigeons, and European starlings. Canada goose control is being proposed for a seven-mile radius from the airport. As required by law, the EIS document provides an assessment of the possible positive or negative impacts that each alternative may incur.

"The study makes a number of assumptions about bird habits and local populations based on information from other areas of the country, including the Great Lakes, says NYC Audubon Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin. "The truth is, more studies, more local data within the regional context, are needed, and needed urgently."

Elbin continues, "Information is especially needed about double-crested cormorants; since 2006 we have been banding them on the islands in New York harbor. None of these banded birds has been observed at JFK. Cormorant flightline studies need to be carried out to determine where the JFK cormorants are coming from."

NYC Audubon Executive Director Glenn Phillips adds, "If there were some chance that the recommendations would significantly increase air travel safety, we would not argue with them, but that does not appear to be the case. Many of the recommendations will likely have a negative impact on the area's wild birds. We need to understand better the implications of the proposed steps before any are put into place."

NYC Audubon has been working cooperatively with the scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and has presented comments that reflect these concerns. We now await the determination on whether additional studies will be performed before the Supplement to the EIS is put into action.

# SAVING PLUMB BEACH

Carol Peace Robins

Plumb Beach is a sliver of sand, a narrow Caribbean-style beach minus the palm trees. Less than a mile long, it's adjacent to Sheepshead Bay and is part of Gateway National Recreation Area. A vulnerable segment of the beach is smack up against a bicycle path that itself is smack up against the eastbound lanes of the Belt Parkway. If the beach disappears, so eventually will the bikes and cars. Not to mention the windsurfers, beach lovers, horseshoe crabs, shorebirds, and birders.

The central portion of Plumb Beach is indeed disappearing. Storm damage has eroded so much of the sand that at high tide there is no beach at all in some places. The tide has crumbled the bike path and come within ten feet of the parkway while also seeping underneath it.

NYC Audubon has been collecting data on nesting horseshoe crabs at Plumb Beach for the past three years. Their eggs, deposited in the sand each spring, provide an important source of nourishment for migrating shorebirds. For some, like the sanderling and semipalmated plover, the beach is an annual rest stop on their long journey from South America to breeding grounds in the Arctic.

So there's a lot riding on the well-being of Plumb Beach.

At present, sandbags strategically placed on the beach are helping to control further erosion, and the bike path has been repaired. Obviously, these are temporary solutions.

Recently the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presented its alternative long-term solutions for public discussion. The most comprehensive of these has the potential to alleviate the problems for years to come.

The plan has three components. One is beach fill, spreading sand dredged from Rockaway Inlet Channel and Ambrose Channel to reinforce the beach. Another is constructing two groins or jetties consisting of large boulders perpendicular to the beach on the eastern and western ends. These will protect the beach and help prevent sand from being redistributed in the adjacent wetlands. The third element is erecting a 200-foot breakwater, a rock wall parallel to the beach, a short distance offshore at the point of the worst erosion. This will reduce the power of incoming waves and provide added flood protection.

Work on this project could start in fall/winter of 2011. Combined with annual monitoring and maintenance, these measures will help protect the ecosystem of Plumb Beach, which will in turn bolster the bike path, which in its turn will buffer the Belt Parkway. It's a win-win-win solution for all—from nesting horseshoe crabs and hungry shorebirds to joggers and cyclists to daily commuters.



*Students from IS227 Clean Plumb Beach as Part of International Coastal Cleanup Day*

## 6th Annual Shorebird Festival at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

**JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE  
VISITOR CENTER  
(GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA)  
SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 7am-5pm**  
A partnership program between NYC Audubon and Gateway National Recreation Area

Each fall, many thousands of shorebirds pass through NYC on their way to southern destinations. Join NYC Audubon\* at the 6th annual Jamaica Bay Shorebird Festival during peak fall migration. Learn about behavior, biology, and how to identify shorebirds in the field from experts.

**7-9:30am**  
Birdwalk to the East and West Ponds to catch the early morning high tide

**9:30-10am**  
Coffee and donuts

**10-11am**  
Digital slide presentation on "Wildlife of Jamaica Bay: Update on Issues, Research, and Management" (Don Riepe)

**11am-noon**  
Shorebird photography (Lloyd Spitalnik)

**Noon-1pm**  
Lunch (bring your own or buy locally)

**1-3pm**  
Shorebird identification hike to East and West Ponds

**3-4:30pm**  
Shorebirds of North America (Kevin Karlson)

The program is free but donations are requested. Reservations are required. Bring water, lunch, and binoculars and wear sensible shoes. For more information and reservations, contact Don Riepe at 718-318-9344 or donriep@gmail.com.

### \*MEMBERS-ONLY

Bus transportation is available from Manhattan to Jamaica Bay. Meet at 71 West 23 at 6:30am. Limited to 30. Free for contributing members at the Student/Senior level and up. Contact Emily Loffredo at 212-691-7483 to reserve a seat.

# EVENTS AND ADVENTURES

- NYC Audubon Events
- Partnership Events

## ● STERLING FOREST WARBLERS, NY

Sunday, May 1, 8am-5pm

Guides: Don Riepe, Andrew Baksh

Explore the woodland and pond habitat of the 20,000-acre Sterling Forest preserve during peak spring migration. Look for nesting warblers (including golden-winged, cerulean, hooded, prairie, and blue-winged) as well as spring wildflowers, reptiles, and amphibians. Visit the rustic visitor center. Bring lunch, water, and binoculars. Transport by van or carpool. Limited to 16. \$65

## ● BIKING & BIRDING: PROSPECT PARK AND GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY, BROOKLYN

Sunday, May 1, 9am-1pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

With Prospect Park Audubon Center

Meet at the Grand Army Plaza Arch. May is Bike Month. To celebrate, get back on your bike! Tour Prospect Park, an Important Bird Area, and Green-Wood Cemetery, home to nesting parrots. A gentle ride of moderate distance with some hills. Bring binoculars, water, and your bicycle. Limited to 15. Prospect Park Alliance members, call NYC Audubon at 212-691-7483 to receive a member discount. \$30

## ● BIRDING TOURS OF BRYANT PARK, MANHATTAN

Mondays, May 2-30, 8-9am

Thursdays, May 5-June 2, 5-6pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow or Glenn Phillips

With Bryant Park Corporation

Meet at the Birding Tour sign at the 42nd Street and 6th Ave. entrance to the park. Discover the birds that call Bryant Park home, as well as those that may stop by during migration. No limit. Free

## ● EVENING SPRING MIGRATION WALKS IN PROSPECT PARK, BROOKLYN

Wednesdays, May 4 and June 1, 5:30-7pm

Guides: Gabriel Willow (5/4), Glenn Phillips (6/1)

Meet at the Grand Army Plaza Arch. Experience the spectacle and wonder of spring migration in beautiful Prospect Park. Site of Brooklyn's only lake and its last stand of native forest, this park is home to hundreds of species of migratory waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds (nearly 250 species have been seen here). Limited to 15. \$45

## ● SPRING WARBLERS

Class: Thursday, May 5, 6:30-8:30pm

Trip: Sunday, May 8, 8-11am

Instructor: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

First learn to identify the 30-plus species of warblers that migrate through our area each spring, using field marks and other techniques. Then go out in the field and reinforce what you've learned! Field trip to Central Park. Limited to 15. \$45

## ● VAN CORTLANDT BIRD WALKS, THE BRONX

Saturdays, May 7-August 27, 8-9:30am

Guides: Andrew Baksh or Urban Park Rangers (first Saturday of the month)

With the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy and NYC Department of Parks & Recreation

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

## ● SPRING MIGRATION BIRDWALK AT JAMAICA BAY

Saturday, May 7, 9am-12pm

Guide: Don Riepe

With Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at the the Jamaica Bay NWR Visitor Center for a hike around the gardens and ponds to look for warblers, scarlet tanagers and other spring migrants. To register, contact Don Riepe at 718-318-9344 or donriep@gmail.com. Limit 25. Free

## ● PEREGRINES OF LOWER MANHATTAN

Saturday, May 7, 10am-1pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet just east of City Hall Park in Printing House Square. The peregrine falcon is a bird of myth and legend, the world's fastest flyer. Incredibly, New York City now boasts the world's highest densities of this formerly endangered species: roughly 15 pairs nest here. We'll visit some of the falcon's favorite haunts, and may glimpse parents feeding their chicks. Limited to 15. \$25

## ● BIRDING ALONG THE HUDSON

Sundays, 9:30-11:30am

May 8-Wave Hill

May 22-Riverdale Park

June 12-Wave Hill

June 26-Fort Tryon

July 10-Wave Hill

July 24-Inwood Hill Park

August 14-Wave Hill

August 28-Fort Washington

Guide: Gabriel Willow

With Wave Hill

Meeting points vary; details will be provided upon registration. Explore the Hudson River's avian ecology starting at the tip of Manhattan and migrating north. Ideal for ages 10 and up. Registration required: online at [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org), by calling 718.549.3200 x305, or at the Perkins Visitor Center. All necessary information, including meeting location details, will be included in your registration confirmation email from Wave Hill. Severe weather cancels (for weather-related updates, call 718.549.3200 x245 by 8am the day of the walk). Limited to 20. \$10 for Wave Hill or NYC Audubon members/\$18 for non-members (members of other host organizations also enjoy member prices when walks take place at their location)

## ● MEMBERS-ONLY

May Member Walk in Central Park

Thursday, May 12, 7:30-9:30 am

Meet at the Central Park Boathouse to join NYC Audubon Board Member Jared Keyes and special guest, ornithologist Bridget Stutchbury, PhD, author of *The Private Lives of Birds*, for a members-only spring migration walk in Central Park. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon Members at the Student/Senior level and up. Please call Emily Loffredo at 212-691-7483 to register.



Canada Warbler



● **EXPLORE THE BRONX RIVER BY ROWBOAT**

**Saturday, May 14, 1-3pm**  
**Guide: Chrissy Word**  
**With Rocking the Boat**

Launch from Hunts Point Riverside Park and explore the Bronx River aboard a hand-built wooden boat, led by experienced rowers. The Bronx River is the city's only true river and hosts an abundance of wildlife, including herons and egrets, osprey, and belted kingfishers. Visit restoration sites and learn about the Bronx River eco-system, as well as its social and cultural history. Rowing optional! Limited to 20. \$35 for adults, \$25 for ages 18 and under

● **EXPLORE ROOSEVELT ISLAND**  
**Sunday, May 15, 9am-noon**  
**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

Meet at the Roosevelt Island Tramway Station, Manhattan side, located at 59th Street and 2nd Avenue. Discover one of the lesser-known islands of the archipelago that is New York City. Once known as Blackwell's Island for the family that farmed it, and later known as Welfare Island for the many city hospitals and institutions found there. We will visit architectural remnants of these eras and search for birds from this prime location in the center of the East River. We may see gulls, cormorants, and herons that nest on smaller islands nearby. Limited to 20. \$20

● **VAN CORTLANDT PARK BIRD-A-THON, THE BRONX**  
**Saturday, May 21, 6am-7pm**  
**Rain Date: Sunday, May 22**  
**With the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy and NYC Department of Parks & Recreation**

Meet at Van Cortlandt Park for a great day of birding and support the park at the same time, whether you're a birding beginner or a pro! Come any time between 6am and 7pm to participate in Van Cortlandt Park's first bird-a-thon. Count the number of bird species you spot

and get supporters to chip in for each species you find! Experts will be on hand to help with identification. For more information and to learn about pledge collection, visit [www.vcpark.org](http://www.vcpark.org) or call 718-430-1890. Bring binoculars. No limit. Free

● **PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP: SALT MARSH SPARROWS, WADERS, AND MORE AT MARINE NATURE STUDY AREA, LI**  
**Saturday, May 21, 8am-noon**  
**Instructor: David Speiser**

Meet in the parking lot of the Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside, NY. Focus on breeding species such as saltmarsh sparrow, osprey, yellow-crowned night heron, and other waders and shorebirds. Carpooling may be arranged for those without private transportation. Limited to 8. \$70

● **BIRDS AND PLANTS: NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN IN SPRINGTIME, THE BRONX**  
**Saturday, May 21, 10am-1pm**  
**Guides: Gabriel Willow, NYBG Docent**  
**With New York Botanical Garden**

Enter through the Mosholu gate and meet at the Reflecting Pool near the Visitor Center. The NY Botanical Garden is home to a large tract of East Coast old-growth forest. During the peak of spring migration, the beautiful gardens come alive with migrating songbirds. Limited to 15. \$25

● **RED KNOTS AND HORSESHOE CRABS AT PLUMB BEACH, BROOKLYN**  
**Saturday, May 21, 11am-2pm**  
**Guide: Don Riepe**  
**With Gateway National Recreation Area**

Meet at Plumb Beach Brooklyn to see the annual mating ritual of the prehistoric horseshoe crab, along with red knots, sanderlings, and ruddy turnstones. Hike along the beach and marshland edges to see fiddler crabs, egrets, and

other wildlife. Bring lunch and binoculars. To register, contact Don Riepe at 718-318-9344 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 25. Free

● **HAWK WATCH IN ASTORIA PARK, QUEENS**  
**Sunday, May 22, 11am-12:30pm**  
**Guide: Urban Park Rangers**  
**With NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, Urban Park Rangers**

Meet at the parking lot at Hoyt Avenue and 19th Street in Astoria. A pair of red-tailed hawks has nested in Astoria Park for years. Observe these residents and learn about their nesting and foraging habits. Registration necessary through NYC Audubon. Limited to 30. Free

● **JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISE, QUEENS**

**Saturdays, May 28 and June 18, 4-7pm**  
**Guides: Don Riepe, Mickey Cohen**  
**With American Littoral Society**  
 Meet at Pier 2 in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. Enjoy a three-hour narrated cruise aboard the 100-foot boat "Golden Sunshine." Visit backwater marshes near JFK Airport, and learn about the 13,000-acre Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. See nesting peregrine falcons, ospreys, egrets, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Includes refreshments. To register, contact Don Riepe at 718-318-9344 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 140. \$45

● **TWILIGHT BAT WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK, MANHATTAN**  
**Tuesdays, May 31-June 28, 7:45-9:15pm**  
**Guide: Paul Keim**

Meet at 103rd Street and Central Park West. Explore Central Park at twilight, looking for bats and other nocturnal creatures. Watch these animals in flight as they hunt for insects using echolocation. Bring bug spray and a flashlight. Limited to 16. \$25 per walk

● **THE BREEDING BIRDS OF DOODLETOWN ROAD, ROCKLAND COUNTY, NY**  
**Wednesday, June 1, 6:30-8:30pm (class)**

**Friday, June 3, 9am-4pm (trip)**  
**Instructor: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC**

A variety of birds, including species at risk, breed at Doodletown Road in Bear Mountain State Park. Learn to identify them and enjoy a trip to this unique birding area. Bring lunch, water, and binoculars on the trip to Doodletown Road. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$90

● **MEMBERS-ONLY**  
**June Member Walk in Prospect Park**

**Saturday, June 4, 7:30-9:30am**  
**Guide: Peter Joost**

Meet at the entrance to Prospect Park across from Grand Army Plaza, and join NYC Audubon Board Member Peter Joost as he leads you through Prospect Park, Brooklyn searching for breeding bird species and possible late spring migrants. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon Members at the Student/Senior level and up. Please call Emily Loffredo at 212-691-7483 to register.

● **SUNSET ECO-CRUISES TO HARBOR HERON ISLANDS**  
**Sundays, June 5 through August 14**  
**South Street Sea Port, Pier 17, 7-8:30pm**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**  
**With New York Water Taxi**  
 Meet at South Street Seaport's Pier 17. Experience the wonders of New York's famous harbor at sunset and see some of the three thousand herons, egrets, and ibis nesting on islands around the harbor. To register, contact New York Water Taxi at 212-742-1969 or [www.nywatertaxi.com](http://www.nywatertaxi.com). Limited to 100. \$35 for adults, \$25 for children under 12

...continued on page 8

# EVENTS AND ADVENTURES (CONTINUED)

## ● NATURE SKETCHING WORKSHOPS

**Class: Tuesday, June 7, 6:30-8:30pm**

**Trips: Saturdays, June 11 & 18, 10am-Noon**

**Instructor: Alan Messer**

Learn the basics for drawing birds, plants, and landscapes for nature journals and personal expression. Alan is a well-known wildlife artist and illustrator whose work appears in magazines, books and field guides (see his work at [www.alanmesser.net](http://www.alanmesser.net)). Field trips will take place in Central Park or another NYC site. Drawing materials and supplies provided. Limited to 13. \$125

## ● TRINITY CEMETERY/ AUDUBON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT, MANHATTAN

**Saturday, June 11, 8:30-10:30am**

**Guides: John Rowden, Matthew Spady**

**With the Riviera Centennial Committee**

Meet at 790 Riverside Drive (at 157th St.). As part of a celebration of the 100th anniversary of 790 Riverside Drive, the largest of Audubon Park Historic District's buildings, explore nearby Trinity Cemetery, adjacent to the original site of John James Audubon's home. Look for late spring migrants and learn about the area's history (including a visit to Audubon's tomb). Events also include art shows and more. Visit [www.audubonparkperspectives.com](http://www.audubonparkperspectives.com) for details. Enjoy refreshments before and after the walk at 790 Riverside Drive. No limit. Free

## ● BIKING AND BIRDING: CLOVE LAKES PARK AND SILVER LAKE PARK, STATEN ISLAND

**Saturday, June 11, 9am-1pm**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

Meet at the Staten Island Ferry, Manhattan side. Discover some of Staten Island's best birding spots. Look for ducks and seabirds in New

York Harbor on our way across and then ride to Staten Island's premier "migrant traps," Clove Lakes and Silver Lake parks. Bring binoculars, water, lunch, and your bicycle. Limited to 15. \$30.

## ● HORSESHOE CRABS & TERRAPINS AT JAMAICA BAY

**Saturday, June 18, 10am-1pm**

**Guide: Don Riepe**

**With Gateway National Recreation Area**

Meet at the Jamaica Bay NWR Visitor Center for a hike around the West Pond to look for mating horseshoe crabs and shorebirds. We'll also look for diamondback terrapins coming ashore to lay their eggs. Bring boots and binoculars. To register, contact Don Riepe at (718) 318-9344 or [donriepe@gmail.com](mailto:donriepe@gmail.com). Limited to 25. Free

## ● JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISE

**Saturday, June 18, 4-7pm**

**Guides: Don Riepe, Mickey Cohen**

**With American Littoral Society**

See May 28 listing for details.

## ● THE PARROTS OF GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY, BROOKLYN

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

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

**With Green-Wood Cemetery**

Meet at the cemetery entrance at 5th Ave and 25th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. Green-Wood Cemetery is rich in both history and wildlife. It is also the highest point in Brooklyn, affording marvelous views. Explore its environs in search of spring migrants and the huge flocks of brilliant green monk parakeets that nest there. Limited to 15. \$25

## ● CITY OF WATER DAY

**Saturday, July 16, 12-1:30pm**

**Guide: TBD**

**With Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance**

As part of City of Water Day, a celebration of the waterways and harbors of New York City, NYC



*American Oystercatcher*

Audubon is offering a special eco-cruise past Hoffman and Swinburne Islands exploring the natural history of the area. The tour leaves from Governor's Island. Find more info about City of Water Day and ferries to Governor's Island at [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org). Registration required. Limited to 150. Free

## ● MEMBERS-ONLY:

**July Member Walk in Central Park**

**Tuesday, July 19, 7:30am-9am**

**Guide: Glenn Phillips**

Meet at 81st Street and Central Park West. Join New York City Audubon Executive Director Glenn Phillips in a leisurely search for summer songbirds. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon Members at the Student/Senior level and up. Please call Emily Loffredo at 212-691-7483 to register.

## ● ANNUAL SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL AT JAMAICA BAY

**Saturday, August 27, 7am-5pm**

Please see page 5 for details.

## ● EXPLORE THE MYSTERIES OF THE MEADOWLANDS BY CANOE, SECAUCUS, NJ

**Saturday, July 23, 9am-2pm**

**Guide: Mike Newhouse**

**With NJ Meadowlands Commission**

Explore the Meadowlands' Mill Creek Marsh, a 225-acre restored wetland off the Hackensack River. See this rich tidal ecosystem by canoe and observe the first wave of shorebirds stopping by on their way south. Find resident egrets, night-herons, and belted kingfishers along with blue and fiddler crabs and diamondback terrapins. Then, enjoy a picnic lunch in this wetland across from the NYC skyline. Bring sunscreen, lunch, water, and binoculars. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$65

## ● BIRDING AT WATER LEVEL: KAYAKING & BIRDING ON THE EAST RIVER

**Saturday, August 27, 9:30am-4pm**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

**With LIC Community Boathouse**

Meet at the LIC Community Boathouse to explore the East River by kayak, looking for sea ducks, gulls, herons, and cormorants. See Mill Rock and the Brother Islands for a look at nesting herons and gain a new perspective on the city. This trip requires stamina and strength for several hours kayaking. Picnic lunch at Barretto Point Park. Bring binoculars, water, and lunch—and wear clothes and shoes you don't mind getting wet. Limited to 19. \$35

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

## ● FALL WARBLERS

**Class:** Wednesday, September 7, 6:30-8:30pm

**Trip:** Sunday, September 11, 8-11am

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

Learn to identify the 30-plus species of warblers that visit Central Park during fall migration, and then reinforce what you've learned in the field. Limited to 15. \$40

## ● FALL MIGRATION BIRDWALKS IN CENTRAL PARK

**Wednesdays, September 14, 21, 28, October 5, 12, 19, 7:30-10:30am**

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

Meet at Central Park West and 72nd Street. Observe varying waves of migrants that stop over Central Park during fall migration. Limited to 15. \$110

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

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- **Classes meet at 71 West 23rd St., room 1523.**
- **The individual membership level name has changed. It is now called Friend. See membership form on page 11.**
- **Contributing Members (Student/Senior level and up) receive a 10% discount on most local trips and classes.**
- **For all coach and van trips, the meeting location is in front of 71 West 23rd St. 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.**

## ASSATEAGUE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE / CHINCOTEAGUE WILDLIFE REFUGE WEEKEND, VA Thursday, May 12, 9am-Sunday, May 15, 6pm Guide: Don Riepe.

A great wildlife weekend along the Virginia Coast. Includes three nights at the Refuge Inn, guided hikes, a bus tour of backwater flats, plus an "all-you-can-eat" seafood buffet. See wild ponies, sika deer, bald eagles and many other species of wildlife. Carpooling may be arranged. To register, visit our website or call the office. For more trip details, contact Don Riepe at (718) 318-9344 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 30. \$375

## BIRDING JEWELS OF DELMARVA Saturday, May 21, 9am-Monday, May 23, 6pm Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Observe the multitude of breeding and migrating birds in the Mid-Atlantic region on this weekend trip to Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia with expert guide Joe Giunta. Bring lunch for Saturday, binoculars, and a spotting scope (if you have one). Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$565 double occupancy (\$110 single supplement)

## ROCKY COASTS, PUFFINS, AND LOBSTER BOATS: BIRDING ON THE COAST OF MAINE Saturday, May 28-Saturday, June 4, 2010 Guide: Gabriel Willow

Join Maine native Gabriel Willow in exploring the Maine coast, home to Atlantic puffins, moose, shorebirds, warblers, and other migratory songbirds. Stay in Camden and on the remote Monhegan Island, a birder's paradise where seeing 25-30

warbler species in a day is not uncommon. Includes double occupancy lodging, some meals, and van transportation in Maine (airfare not included). Limited to 12. \$1,500 (\$500 single room supplement)



*Atlantic Puffin*

## MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND, LI Friday, June 3-Sunday, June 5 Guides: Don Riepe, Mickey Cohen, Mike Bottini With American Littoral Society

Spend an extended weekend at the eastern tip of Long Island during peak spring orchid and heather bloom. This trip includes double occupancy accommodations at the luxurious Manor House, five meals, five guided hikes, two evening programs, and a star watch, plus free pickup at the Montauk LIRR station. See nesting pine and prairie warblers, and visit a cranberry bog with flowering orchids and sundews. Easy hiking in woodlands and on the dunes, beach, and bluffs. For more information or to register, contact Don Riepe at 718-318-9344 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 60. \$375 (\$120 single room supplement)

## BASHAKILL, SHAWANGUNK NWR, AND DOODLETOWN, NY Saturday, June 11, 9am - Sunday, June 12, 6pm Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Look for breeding eastern meadowlarks, American bitterns, cerulean warblers, and more at

these three great birding areas. An overnight stay will facilitate being in the right spot at the right time. Bring lunch for the first day, binoculars, and a spotting scope (if you have one). Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$290

## PURPLE MARTIN FESTIVAL, NJ Friday August 12-Sunday, August 14 Guide: Don Riepe With American Littoral Society

Travel to southern New Jersey to observe the spectacle of thousands of purple martins on migration to their wintering grounds. Visit expansive marshes and stately woodlands to view a variety of birds and other wildlife. Explore the scenic Maurice River by canoe or flat-bottom boat as we search the skies for bald eagles and more. Includes transportation and double-occupancy lodging. Please register on our website, [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org). For details, contact Don Riepe at 718-318-9344 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 60. \$295 (\$95 single room supplement)

## CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH, MA Thursday, August 18-Sunday, August 21 Guide: Don Riepe, Mickey Cohen With American Littoral Society

A fun-packed, nature-focused weekend in beautiful Cape Ann, Massachusetts. Includes 3 nights' stay in historic Gloucester, a half-day whale watch boat trip, an evening Essex River Cruise, easy canoeing on Ipswich River, birding at Parker River Wildlife Refuge, and guided hikes, plus a lobster dinner. For more information or to register, contact Don Riepe at 718-318-9344 or [donriep@gmail.com](mailto:donriep@gmail.com). Limited to 40. \$385 (Single room supplement \$140)

# AMERICAN ROBINS IN NEW YORK CITY

Sara Pace

© Abby McBride



To most people, the phrase “city birds” means pigeons and ducks or house sparrows and European starlings. To those in the know, New York City is, however, a rich haven for hundreds of different bird species, including forest-nesting songbirds such as yellow warblers, wood thrushes, rose-breasted grosbeaks, scarlet tanagers, and of course, American robins.

As a graduate student at Columbia University, I have been studying these forest-nesting songbirds for the last two summers, under the guidance of NYC Audubon’s Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin. To find out how well forest-nesting songbirds are doing in New York City’s parks, I compared nests in the forested areas within Central, Prospect, Van Cortlandt, and Alley Pond parks in the city to Silverlake Preserve and Muttontown Preserve in Westchester County and Nassau County, respectively. Working in plots of about 17 hectares (42 acres) in each park, I scoured each plot for nests of all birds, and followed the nests through the season to see how they fared. I found a lot of American robins.

I also discovered that breeding robins are more plentiful in city forests than in suburban forests. Urban parks averaged 35.25 nests per season, while suburban parks averaged only 3.75 nests per season. Prospect Park’s forest had the most nests (38 in both 2009 and 2010), while Muttontown Preserve had only 5!

When characterized by its forest birds, New York City is a city of American robins. Why do they do better in urban parks? Perhaps it’s due to fewer predators. Perhaps city forests provide more forage and cover per acre than suburban forests. One thing is clear, city forests are definitely valuable breeding grounds for robins.

## 2011 LECTURE SERIES

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

### INVESTIGATING THE PRIVATE LIVES OF BIRDS

By Bridget Stutchbury, PhD  
York University, Toronto

Wednesday, May 11, 2011, 6pm

Ornithologist Bridget Stutchbury, author of *The Private Lives of Birds*, will explain why some birds readily divorce their partners, what fidelity means to birds, and why mothers sometimes desert their babies. She will also talk about what tracking purple martins and wood thrushes has revealed about their amazing migrations. Bird behavior is fascinating in its own right, but is also important for understand-

ing the conservation of birds and how they adapt to our modern world.

### ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE: ALL THAT WATER AND NO PLACE TO LAND

By Mike Burger, PhD

Wednesday, June 8, 2011, 6pm

What is the most dangerous period in a migratory bird’s life? Migration! Flying incredibly long distances and finding sites along the way for food, shelter, and protection from predators can be a life-threatening endeavor. The challenges are especially great where large bodies of water must

be navigated. After making it across the 7,000-square-mile Lake Ontario, migratory birds are often desperate for a rest. Learn how Audubon New York is identifying important stopover sites and will be engaging landowners to protect and manage stopover habitat in the heavily agricultural basin of Lake Ontario.

*After a brief presentation on NYC Audubon’s accomplishments over the past year, the Board election will take place. See slate of nominees on page 2. Also, a vote will be taken on the new by-laws. A reception will follow.*

# News & Notes

## FOUR SPARROW MARSH

The Four Sparrow Retail Complex, a car dealership and big-box retail center, is planned for development on uplands adjacent to the largest surviving saltmarsh on Jamaica Bay's north shore. In February, Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin testified to the NYC Economic Development Corporation that the project will disrupt nesting, foraging, and stopover habitat; present a threat of toxic contamination in run-off from paved surfaces to the saltmarsh; and increase risk of bird collisions with glass in new buildings. Continued attention from NYC Audubon members on this issue is essential.

## CLEAN WATER VICTORY

During storms, clogged sewers produce combined sewer overflows (CSOs), a mix of stormwater and wastewater, which discharge into surrounding waterways. In February, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection finished cleaning 12.2 miles of large sewers in southeast Queens to reduce CSOs. For 30 years, NYC Audubon and partners have been advocating for such measures to preserve and restore Jamaica Bay's critical habitat for more than 300 bird species.

## ELLIS JOINS NATIONAL AUDUBON BOARD

Joseph Ellis, a member of NYC Audubon's Advisory Council for more than a decade and the honoree at the 2009 Fall Roost, has joined the National Audubon Society's Board of Directors. His leadership and unique capacity with both organizations will give him a voice for chapters at the national level.

## BIRD-FRIENDLY BUILDING ACT INTRODUCED IN NYS ASSEMBLY

Assemblymen Englebright and Gottfried have put forth a bill that calls for bird-friendly design for public buildings, following the guidelines enacted by Toronto and Chicago and citing NYC Audubon's *Bird-Safe Building Guidelines*.

## EXPANSION OF JFK AIRPORT

The Regional Plan Association for New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut released a study *Upgrading to World Class: the Future of the New York Region's Airports* in January. The study calls for expansion at JFK Airport that could spell trouble for Jamaica Bay. NYC Audubon is monitoring the situation.

## ELBIN HEADS MAJOR ORNITHOLOGICAL GROUP

Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin has been elected chair of The Ornithological Council, an association of ornithological organizations based in the Americas involved in bird study and conservation.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

New York City Audubon's conservation and education programs are made possible with the generous contributions of members and friends, including the following supporters:

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## JOIN NYC AUDUBON

Members are essential to our education and conservation work. Help protect birds and habitats in the five boroughs by joining our flock. Mail this form with your payment to:

**NYC Audubon**, 71 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Room 1523, New York, NY 10010

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THE FALL ROOST

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

The Central Park Boathouse

Protecting Birds in New York City

DATED MATERIAL: Summer 2011 Newsletter

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