



# NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON NEWSLETTER

# THE URBAN AUDUBON

January-February 2009  
Volume XXX, No. 1

## NYC AUDUBON NEWSLETTER

71 West 23rd Street,  
Room 1523  
New York, NY 10010  
Tel: 212-691-7483  
Fax: 212-924-3870  
www.nycaudubon.org

## 4 NEW ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

## 6-7 EVENTS AND ADVENTURES

## 9 WHALES IN NYC WATERS

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS TO NYC AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NYC Audubon will be holding elections for new officers and members of its Board of Directors at its Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 10, 2009. We are now soliciting nominations for candidates to fill board positions for terms running June 2009-2011. Board members attend monthly meetings, serve on committees, and provide leadership and support in carrying out NYC Audubon's mission. We seek representatives from all five boroughs.

Any DIRECT Member of NYC Audubon may submit a nomination. Please contact board member Oakes Ames, chair of the Nominating Committee, at 212-691-7483 or board@nycaudubon.org.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, *THE URBAN AUDUBON*: THE NEWSLETTER BEGINS ITS THIRD DECADE *Ned Boyajian*

This month *The Urban Audubon* begins volume XXX. The changes in the newsletter over the years reflect the growth in numbers, sophistication, and impact of NYC Audubon.

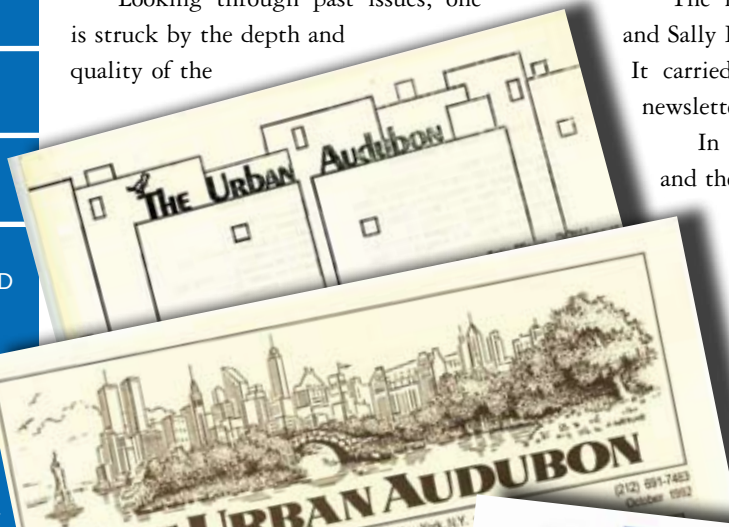
Looking through past issues, one is struck by the depth and quality of the

articles, even from the newsletter's earliest days. All the more remarkable is the process that was established in getting out the newsletter. It started and continues today as an all-volunteer effort in selecting content, in writing, and in editing.

The first issue, edited by Lewis Rosenberg and Sally Ellyson, was published in January 1980. It carried a notice of a contest to design the newsletter's nameplate.

In September of that year, the beige paper and the nameplate bearing Manhattan's world-famous skyline first appeared. The nameplate was created by Muriel Henriques and the newsletter was designed by Fran Oelbaum. The skyline nameplate, layout, and beige paper remained in use for more than two decades.

*continued on page four*



## 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, Kristy Bredin, Doug Brin, Audrey Fisher, Peter Joost, Mary Jane Kaplan, Gloria Kuhn, Susan Ludmer-Gliebe, Abby McBride, Don Riepe, Tod Winston  
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### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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### NYC AUDUBON

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

## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Glenn Phillips



Another new year has rolled around and what a year this is. This issue marks the 30th year of the publication of *The Urban Audubon*, and the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's discovery of New York Harbor approaches in September, along with the 30th anniversary of the founding of this organization.

The time has come to support NYC Audubon by giving to its Annual Appeal using the envelope enclosed in this issue. The deadline to give is March 31, 2009. Please help support our local programs, advocacy, and research. If you have not already become a DIRECT member of NYC Audubon, you now have an additional reason to join: DIRECT members have the privilege of early registration for trips and classes. Call the office at 212-691-7483 or see [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org) for registration and information. Use the form on page 11 to become a DIRECT member.

It's customary at this time to make some New Year's resolutions. Here are a few things that anyone can do to make our environment better and save money!

### EAT LESS MEAT

A recent study by researchers at Cornell University compared 42 diets using only foods that can be produced in New York State, varying the amount of meat and fat. The most efficient, in terms of land use, was a diet with less than 2 ounces of meat and eggs daily, and moderate amounts of fat. On average, Americans eat 5.8 ounces of meat daily. Eating less meat reduces human impacts on the oceans as well, since fish meal makes up a significant portion of animal feeds. Make one day each week a meatless day.

### SPEND MORE TIME OUTDOORS

A recent 15-year trend analysis by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found significant declines in all outdoor pursuits. It showed declines of 16 percent among anglers, 11 percent among hunters, and 23 percent among those taking trips to watch wildlife. At the same time, new research is showing critical health benefits of time spent outdoors, especially for children. So gather your family and friends and take a trip with NYC Audubon and do your part to reduce our nature deficit.

### KEEP YOUR CAT INDOORS

Cats kill hundreds of millions of birds and over a billion small mammals every year, including threatened and endangered species like piping plovers. Studies show predation rates ranging from one hundred kills per year to upwards of 1500, even for well-fed cats. With an estimated 90 million cats in the United States, that's a significant impact. Keeping your cats indoor not only saves wildlife, but also is healthier for your cat.

### CLOSE YOUR BLINDS OR CURTAINS

Heating and cooling our homes accounts for about half of all residential energy use. By closing your curtains when you don't need the sunlight, you can significantly reduce your heating and cooling loads, since curtains provide an extra layer of insulation. In addition, closed curtains can reduce the risk of bird collisions with windows, by reducing see-through effects and, in some cases, reflections.

## CONSERVATION NOTES

Susan Elbin



NYC Audubon has been selected to receive one of 41 grants from a newly created TogetherGreen Innovation funding program created by National Audubon and Toyota Corporation. Our grant focuses on Jamaica Bay and will help us engage local boaters, specialty school students and other residents in removing marine debris that hampers ongoing restoration work in New York City's largest wetland.

The Jamaica Bay beaches and wetlands are special habitats for wildlife and people. During a recent symposium on Jamaica Bay (October 28), the NYC Department of Environmental Protection assembled a panel of experts to discuss the myriad conservation issues impacting salt marsh in the Bay. The challenges are many, including large-scale issues of global climate change and invasive species to more immediate and localized issues of increased nitrogen concentrations and decreased rates of sediment deposition. One sur-

mountable impact identified was "smothering by marine debris." Our Innovation Grant addresses this issue.

The 20,000-acre Jamaica Bay is a vital stopover site for hundreds of migratory bird species. Horseshoe crabs spawn and nest on its beaches. Many bird species, including semipalmated plovers, ruddy turnstones, and red knots, rely on horseshoe crab eggs for food when they migrate north through Jamaica Bay. Yet these benefits are jeopardized by long-lasting trash that covers the beaches and pollutes the water. Declines in crab populations over the past two decades have been accompanied by falling bird populations.

Through coordinated efforts with students, volunteers, and agency staff, NYC Audubon and its partners will target specific sections of beach, focusing special efforts on sites identified as potential egg-laying sites for horseshoe crabs, like the extremely degraded Plum Beach. Along with education and outreach programs targeting recreational boaters and communities bordering the Bay, events like Dock Parties, Block Parties, and Shorebird Festivals will help engage the community in a productive way.

By getting people involved in the clean-up activity we hope to inspire them to help in even more conservation efforts. The TogetherGreen grant will enable NYC Audubon, along with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, the American Littoral Society, and other project partners, to reduce trash and debris on Jamaica Bay beaches and salt marsh, to clear pathways for breeding crabs to return to the sea, and to create a healthier, more enjoyable beach for birders, boaters, and beachwalkers.

©Justin Boaler



*Plum Beach Cleanup*

## VOLUNTEER!



We need your help! NYC Audubon has a wide range of volunteer opportunities in support of its field work in conservation. No experience is required, and all necessary field training will be provided. Upcoming Citizen Science projects include:

**Project Safe Flight**, a continuing program to monitor bird migration through the city. Volunteers regularly check for bird collisions at specific sites and rescue stunned and injured birds that have collided with glass.

**TogetherGreen**, a project to engage citizens in local conservation and restoration

action through habitat cleanup, invasive species removal, and planting native trees.

**Harbor Herons Nesting Surveys**, an annual census of colonial waterbirds breeding in the Greater New York Harbor, takes place during the last two weeks of May.

**Harbor Herons Foraging Study**, a new project starting this spring, will use scientific data collected by volunteers to determine where harbor herons spend their non-breeding time. Citizen scientists will be trained in behavior observation techniques and will document the health of the harbor by observing birds.

**Breeding Bird Census**, similar to last

year's census in Central Park, will take place this year in Prospect Park. Breeding bird identification skills are needed as well as a commitment to make repeated weekly visits to the park from the end of May through the beginning of July.

**The Conservation Committee** is the watchdog for conservation in the five boroughs of New York. Members must be DIRECT members of NYC Audubon and attend monthly committee meetings at the headquarters.

If you would like to volunteer, e-mail [volunteer@nycaudubon.org](mailto:volunteer@nycaudubon.org) or call the office at 212-691-7483.



## Birthday...continued from page one

A pleasure of thumbing through the newsletter's old issues is reliving the concerns that once occupied the organization. Just one example: the January/February 1981 issue contains this announcement:

The Chapter has written letters to officials opposing the artist Christo's scheme to clutter up Central Park with miles of colorful screens ... It may be nightmare past. Christo, however, is known to be very persistent ...

Christo persistent? To say the least. It took 24 years, but a magnificent art installation, The Gates, went up in 2005. NYC Audubon is persistent, too. The organization negotiated successfully to modify the portions of Christo's plans that could have done damage to Central Park and its wild birds.

In 2004, when NYC Audubon adopted the kestrel as its emblem, *The Urban Audubon* got a fresh look that reflects the organization's growth and renewed focus on the wild birds of all five boroughs. The logo and new look for the newsletter were generously donated by Whitehouse & Company, an award-winning New York City-based design firm.

In 2008, *The Urban Audubon's* first color issue was printed, and the newsletter grew to 12 pages, reflecting NYC Audubon's renewed burst of activities in advocacy, education, and enjoyment of New York's wild side.

## PhotoSIG

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 6PM

SPEAKER: JEFF FULLER

Canon Pro Market Representative

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 6PM

SPEAKER: KEITH ELLENBOGEN

An Underwater Odyssey

THE COFFEE HOUSE

20 WEST 44 STREET, 6TH FLOOR

A \$3 donation is requested to help cover the cost of the room. For information about PhotoSIG, please visit [www.nycaphoto.org](http://www.nycaphoto.org).

UPCOMING:

Tuesday, March 17, 6pm

Speaker: Tony Sweet

## MEET NYC AUDUBON'S NEW ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

*Doug Brin*

### SARAH GRIMKÉ AUCOIN

Sarah is director of the Urban Park Rangers for New York City Parks & Recreation. Raised in New Haven, she and her husband and young sons now reside in The Bronx. The four of them also spend time in New Orleans, where her husband was raised, and recently helped Habitat For Humanity in its rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Katrina.

It seems like Sarah's been everywhere. "I lived in Hawaii's Volcano National Park, where I studied the endangered goose population. I got into birding in the Missouri Ozarks where I was out and about seven days a week. What a great place! I spotted my first scarlet tanager there!"

In each and every venue, she's "had an interest in the natural world, starting with tadpoles and frogs. Frogs are the proverbial canary in the coal mine, the first to absorb toxins and warn of environmental degradation. I've always been interested in evolutionary ecology.

"NYC Audubon is in a unique position. The urban environment offers so many opportunities. And birds are the gateway into so much of the natural world.

"I want to help NYC Audubon develop more programs and reach a more diverse audience. My Parks Department experience has given me a broad perspective. Just here in The Bronx—in Pelham Bay—so many species 'drift down' from the rest of the continental U.S."

### REBEKAH CRESHKOFF

In 1997, Rebekah Creshkoff launched the effort now known as Project Safe Flight, whereby volunteers document collisions of birds with glass at selected high- and low-rise buildings in the city. She sought to reduce casualties by persuading building owners and managers to dim their lights and retrofit killer windows with netting. She increased awareness of the collision issue in the media and drafted comments on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Freedom Tower. More recently, she composed language about bird safety to be included in future sustainable building design criteria.

It all started years ago when Rebekah was coming out of the subway near Wall Street and was shocked to find "a little yellow warbler on the sidewalk." She later found her curiosity regarding its demise answered in a birdwatching class and then learned of Toronto's FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program), the model for Project Safe Flight.

Rebekah hopes someday a glass will be produced that "is recognizable to birds as a solid barrier." "I'd grown up wanting to save the world, and here is a specific place where people can make a difference," especially when you consider that as many as one billion birds are killed by glass each year in the United States. Rebekah travels by bicycle to her office at JPMorgan Chase, where she writes daily news stories for the corporate intranet.

# 2009 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

*Rob Fergus*

The 12<sup>th</sup> annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon, is coming up February 13-16, 2009. Contact National Audubon at [citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org) for detailed information.

Last year, birdwatchers in the U.S. and Canada counted over 9.8 million birds representing 635 species, providing a great snapshot of the winter bird populations across the continent.

You can take part for as little as fifteen minutes (or as long as you wish) from your window, local park, or anywhere you happen to be during the count weekend. So mark your calendars and make sure to see some birds—even if they are just pigeons, mallards, or house sparrows—and submit your counts online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

Last year, New York City birders reported 10,700 birds representing 82 species. Brooklyn reported the highest number of species with 57. Thanks to a surfeit of rock pigeons and mallards, Manhattan totaled 4,659 birds. But surprisingly, New York City's totals represent fewer than 100 individual checklists. For the largest

city in America, that's pretty low! Charlotte, North Carolina, blew New York City out of the water with 493 checklists!

New York City has an abundance of birds and has a higher percentage of parkland than any other major city. Get out over Valentine's Day weekend with your friends, count the birds you see, and report them online to provide an accurate picture of the birds in your city.



© Abby McBride

## Audubon's Aviary: Some Things Old, Some Things Borrowed, But Most Things New

**FEBRUARY 15 - APRIL 5, 2009**  
**NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**170 CENTRAL PARK WEST**



This year's exhibition is the last in a series intended to explore the extraordinary range of Audubon's watercolors and the artistic innovations in his ornithological portrayals. Once again it features around 40 original watercolors, but its approach is unique. Audubon, who was keenly aware of the ornithological tradition predating his great work, frequently based the poses of various birds in his compositions on earlier precedents (both European and American). However, he digested these lessons and transformed the images he studied in various ways into his dazzling, cinematic watercolors that capture the essence of each species. The fifth Aviary exhibit examines Audubon's debts to his predecessors alongside his radical advancements, to illuminate his brilliant contributions to the history of ornithological illustration and to the development of watercolor as a sophisticated medium. For hours and information call 212-873-3400.

## REMEMBER NYC AUDUBON

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

# EVENTS AND ADVENTURES

- NYC Audubon Events
- Partnership Events

## ● NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACHWALK, QUEENS

Thursday, January 1, 11am-2pm  
Guide: Don Riepe

### With American Littoral Society

Meet at Fort Tilden in Breezy Point for a brisk walk along the beach and dunes. Celebrate the New Year and the 25th anniversary of the Beachwalk with coffee, cake, and champagne afterward. Other New Year's Day Beach walks will take place at Fire Island, Jones Beach, and Sandy Hook, NJ. For information and reservations, call 718-318-9344 or email [driepe@nyc.rr.com](mailto:driepe@nyc.rr.com). Free

## ● WINTER RESIDENTS OF PELHAM BAY PARK

Saturday, January 3, 9am-3pm  
Guide: Ron Bourque

Meet at Pelham Bay Park station, the last stop on the 6 train, to look for hawks, passerines, and waterfowl in one of NYC's largest parks. With luck the group may encounter owls. Dress warmly and bring binoculars and water. Limited to 15. Free

## ● MONTAUK WINTER WEEKEND

Friday-Sunday, January 9-11  
Guides: Don Riepe and

### Mickey Cohen

#### With American Littoral Society.

Spend the weekend at the luxurious Manor House (heated pool/sauna/Jacuzzi and spacious lobby). Hike the beaches, dunes, and woods during the quiet season, with visits to Montauk Bluffs, "Walking Dunes," Oyster Pond, and Hither Woods.

Look for seals, loons, scoters, goldeneyes, and lots of other sea ducks. Price includes 2 nights double-occupancy lodging, 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, and free pickup at the LIRR station in Montauk. Limited to 70. For information and reservations, call 718-318-9344 or email [driepe@nyc.rr.com](mailto:driepe@nyc.rr.com). \$345 (No discount to DIRECT members)

## ● DIGITAL NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY FOR BEGINNERS

Wednesday, January 28, 6-8pm  
Instructor: Rik Davis

This class will cover equipment, camera settings, processing, and printing, with areas of focus determined by class interest. The instructor's work will be used to illustrate principles throughout the evening. Members may bring any equipment they have to the class, as well as any work that they would like to present for critique and advice. Limited to 15. \$50

## ● SNOW BIRDS OF FLOYD BENNETT FIELD AND FORT TILDEN

Sunday, February 1, 10:30am-4pm  
Guide: Gabriel Willow

### Transport: Van

Winter brings many unique and rare birds to NYC that can't be found here at any other time! Some of the most exciting are the "snow birds," birds of the Arctic tundra which can occasionally be found in tundra-like habitats further south, such as snow buntings and snowy owls. We will travel to Floyd Bennett Field in search of these and other winter species (horned lark, tree sparrow, and rough-legged hawk are possible). We will then head to Fort Tilden and Breezy Point to look for wintering ducks, grebes, loons, and other seabirds. Limited to 12. \$70

## ● ADVANCED DIGITAL NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Wednesday, February 4, 6-8pm  
Instructor: Rik Davis

This class will cover advanced equipment, camera settings, digiscoping, depth of field, processing, and printing, with areas of focus determined by class interest. The instructor's equipment and work will be used for demonstration and illustration throughout the evening. Class members may also bring their own work to present for critique. Limited to 15. \$50

## ● SOARING RAPTORS: EAGLES AND OWLS OF THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY

Saturday, February 7, 12-7pm  
Guide: Joe Giunta,

### Happy Warblers LLC

#### Transport: Private Coach

You don't have to travel to Alaska to see our country's emblem, the American bald eagle. As a result of one of the most successful reintroduction programs on record, many eagles now soar

over the beautiful Hudson Valley. Travel with us to view this spectacular raptor, as well as possibly spot the shy and secretive short-eared owl. Part of the Hudson River EagleFest at Croton Point. Bring lunch, water, and binoculars. Limited to 35. \$55

## ● NYC AUDUBON WINTER WILDLIFE HIKE

Sunday, February 15, 10am-noon  
Guide: Don Riepe with Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge for an easy hike around the West Pond, gardens, and upland woods. Learn how plants and animals adapt to winter and look for wintering birds there. For information and reservations, call 718-318-4340. Limited to 25. Free



Long-Eared Owl

## ● LOOK AROUND NYC PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN: WILD RAPTORS, UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Saturday, February 21, 11am-noon  
Instructor: Volunteers for Wildlife

Learn about the hawks, owls, and falcons that live right in your own backyard! Join us at the Arsenal in Central Park (64th Street and 5th Avenue) for a live raptor program with Volunteers for Wildlife, where you'll get to meet these amazing birds up close! Limited to 20 children. \$25 (Parents free)



Harlequin Ducks





● **WINTER WATERFOWL AND SEALS OF NEW YORK HARBOR**

**Saturday, February 21, 11am-1pm**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

Attention hardy New Yorkers! Take an exciting winter cruise around New York Harbor to discover some of the amazing wildlife that can be found here only in the colder months. We will explore the waterways and shores of New York Harbor in search of gulls, ducks (such as mergansers & scaup), geese, loons (common and red-throated), grebes, cormorants (double-crested and great), and even harbor seals. Our craft will be a NY Water Taxi, which provides both an outdoor deck and a luxurious heated cabin. Hot drinks will also be provided. Meet at South Street Seaport. Come equipped with binoculars, warm winter clothing, and a sense of adventure. To register, contact NY Water taxi at 212-742-1969 or [www.nywatertaxi.com](http://www.nywatertaxi.com). Limited to 45. \$35 (no discount for DIRECT members)

sea meet. We will travel in search for harlequin ducks, horned larks, Lapland longspurs, snow buntings, winter finches, snowy owls and short-eared owls, in this introduction to birds of the New Jersey shore. Bring lunch, water, and binoculars. Limited to 12. \$75

● **BIRDING EXPEDITION AT THE GREENBELT**

**Saturday, March 7, 11am-4pm**

**Guide: Joe Giunta**

**In partnership with the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation and the Greenbelt Conservancy**

The nearly 3,000 acre Greenbelt on Staten Island is a flagship park of NYC, replete with wetlands, woodlands, meadows, old-growth forest, and 35 miles of hiking trails. The hike will begin and end at the Greenbelt Nature Center, a new orientation facility built in the Frank Lloyd Wright architectural style at the crossroads of Greenbelt Trails, and the Greenbelt Conservancy will provide refreshments after the hike.

● **WINTER BIRDS OF SANDY HOOK**

**Sunday, March 8, 10am-5pm**

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

**Transport: Private Coach**

Take a trip to Sandy Hook, a barrier island at the northernmost point of the New Jersey coast. This spectacular peninsula hosts a variety of species including birds wintering from the arctic and harbor seals that haul out on the beach to warm up in the sun. Other possible sightings include loons, rarely seen ducks, and land birds hidden in the fields and woods of the area, such as snow bunting and horned lark. Bring lunch, water, and binoculars. Limited to 35. \$55

● **PEREGRINE FALCONS IN THE CITY**

**Sunday, March 22, 9am-noon**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

The peregrine falcon is a remarkable and charismatic bird, and a great conservation success story. It is a top predator and the fastest bird in the world; it can reach speeds of nearly 250 MPH. It was nearly driven to extinction by the use of the insecticide DDT, but has staged a remarkable comeback in recent years. NYC is now the proud home to over 15 pairs, the highest population density in the world of this species! Come on an early spring walk to seek our local nesting falcons on the Brooklyn Bridge and learn more about their urban habitat. Limited to 15. \$20

● **EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS**

**Saturday, March 28, 10am-1pm**

**Guide: Don Riepe**

**With Gateway National Recreation Area**

Visit the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge to look for phoebes, ospreys, oystercatchers, and other early migrants. Learn about the

history and ecology of this 9,000-acre preserve during an easy hike around the ponds and gardens. Meet at the visitor center. For information and reservations, call 718-318-9344 or email [driepe@nyc.rr.com](mailto:driepe@nyc.rr.com). Limited 25. Free

● **BIKING AND BIRDING SERIES: BIRD THE 5 BOROUGHS BY BICYCLE!**

**Guide: Gabriel Willow**

**With Transportation Alternatives**

- Sunday, May 3, Prospect Park, and Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn
- Sunday, May 17, grassland birds at Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn
- Sunday, June 7, Clove Lakes Park & Silver Lake Park, Staten Island
- July Date TBA, Ridgewood Reservoir & Forest Park, Queens
- Sunday, August 2, Spuyten Duyvil, Riverdale Park and Wave Hill, The Bronx
- Sunday, September 13, Medieval Birds, the Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park

Series \$66 DIRECT member or member Transportative Alternatives; \$106 nonmembers. More details forthcoming.

● **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. Classes meet at 71 West 23<sup>rd</sup> St. Room 1523. DIRECT Members receive a 10% discount (except as noted) and may register one week early. See [www.nycaudubon.org](http://www.nycaudubon.org) or call 212-691-7483 for registration dates. To become a DIRECT member, see form on page 11.**

**IMPORTANT information for all bus and van trips:**

- **The meeting location is in front of 71 West 23<sup>rd</sup> St. in Manhattan unless otherwise specified.**
- **We depart promptly at the stated start time.**



*Harbor Seals*

● **WINTER BIRDS OF BARNEGAT**

**Tuesday, March 3, 9am-3pm**

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

Explore Barnegat Inlet's expansive beach to view the winter birds that gather where land, bay and

Transportation will be provided between the Staten Island Ferry terminal and the Greenbelt Nature Center. Meet at the Staten Island Ferry terminal in Manhattan – the tour will begin on the ride over to Staten Island. Limited to 20. Free

# PANAMA

*Peter Rboades Mott*

Panama is what one must call a flagship destination for the North American birder. It is the winter home to at least 120 of “our” neotropicals and the land route for many more as they pass on to South America.

In addition to being a passage way and the real home to many North American migrants that spend seven months on their winter territories and only come north for four or five months to breed, Panama has a rich native bird population. The country’s mix of lush rain forest, high altitude cloud forests and highlands offers a wide range of habitats. There are more than 940 species recorded in Panama. Part of the population is representative of the typical Central American avifauna and another group is from Colombia and is typical of the South American continent. There are 11 species that occur only in Panama.



*Collared Aracari  
in Panama*

The country’s extensive system of National Parks, its well developed ecotourism industry, and its Audubon Society make Panama an easy place to bird. If you go to [birdingpal.com](http://birdingpal.com), you can find eight volunteers who will take you birding or four guides-for-hire. Or you may wish to call Eric Karff to join NYC Audubon’s leader Joe Giunta on the March trip to Panama. Any way you arrange it, have a great trip. If you can’t travel to Panama, join me on the web at Panama Hotspots to learn about more enticement.

# VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY

On Saturday, November 15, NYC Audubon held a special brunch and birding trip to celebrate the work of its volunteers. Rain was pouring down as our bus arrived at Floyd Bennett Field. But after a nice brunch, blue sky appeared. Our excited group headed to the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. For many it was a return trip; for others it was an eye-opening first visit. The group walked down the gravel path, passed the osprey post, and headed to the West Pond, stopping at points along the way to view the waterfowl. The group, led by Joe Giunta, saw ruddy ducks, mute swans, great egrets, American coots, brant, green-winged teals, and more. While on the shore of the West Pond, Joe noticed something in the reeds in the middle of the pond: a black-crowned night-heron seemingly playing hide-and-seek with the group.

NYC Audubon volunteers are the life of the organization. The board of directors and staff cannot express enough gratitude for their hard work and dedication. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with NYC Audubon and joining a community of bird- and fun-loving activists, please contact the office at [volunteer@nycaudubon.org](mailto:volunteer@nycaudubon.org) or 212-691-7483 for more information, and see Volunteer! on page 3.

## 2009 LECTURE SERIES

All lectures are free and open to the public. Please note the change in location for this year’s series.

### CONSERVATION IN AN ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

BY WAYNE KLOCKNER

Wednesday, January 14 at 6pm with  
The Nature Conservancy, New York

### THE ARSENAL

CENTRAL PARK

64<sup>TH</sup> STREET AT 5<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE

Wayne Klockner will examine the challenges posed by rapid, human-induced climate change to species and natural habitats that are the focus of conservation efforts past, present, and future. Given the likelihood of a more dynamic natural world, driven by changes in precipitation and temperature, new approaches to conservation are needed. He will explore the emerging discipline of adaptation science, the study and application of enhancing the resilience of natural habitats.

### UPCOMING LECTURES

Wednesday, March 11, 6pm  
Birding at the Intersection of  
Art and Science  
with Audubon NY  
by David Sibley

Wednesday, April 8, 6pm  
Field Guide to New York City  
by Leslie Day

Wednesday, June 10, 6pm  
The Mannahatta Project  
by Eric Sanderson

The 2008-2009 Lecture Series is made possible by a generous donation from Dr. Claude Bloch.



# HIGH-TECH RECORDINGS DOCUMENT WHALES IN NEW YORK CITY WATERS

Mary Jane Kaplan

The November-December *Urban Audubon* included a report on NYC Audubon's "Passage Through New York" project, which enlists students from city schools to monitor migrating birds with the help of roof-mounted microphones connected to computers in the classrooms—a demonstration of how technology is helping gather at-a-distance information that is vital to conservation planning.

Only a bit farther from home, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), together with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's

Bioacoustics Research Program, is using state-of-the-art recording equipment to detect the presence of species at the other end of the size scale: whales. Most of us associate whales on the East Coast with Massachusetts, Maine, Nova Scotia—certainly not with the area just outside New York City's harbor. But their passage has been confirmed by elaborate recording equipment placed on the sea bottom just thirteen miles from the harbor entrance and off the shores of Fire Island. And not just any whales, but rare North Atlantic right whales—40 to 70 tons in weight, up to 55 feet in length, and among the most endangered of all mammal species: only 300 to 400 individuals are estimated to exist. No less impressive, but somewhat less threatened with extinction, are fin whales and humpback whales, whose calls have also been detected. All three species migrate between New England and Florida, following their food resources.

The mass of sound data collected from the project's first season is now being analyzed in detail. Beyond adding to our store of basic scientific information about the whales' condition, numbers, and life histories, an eventual goal of the project may be to prevent collisions between ships and whales, which are estimated to cause one-third of right whale deaths. Another sound-detection project, involving the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary near the entrance to Boston's port, includes a sophisticated warning system for ships that will alert vessels to the presence of vocalizing whales so they can proceed at safe speeds and post lookouts.

Should data from the New York project find that whales are in similar danger from ships in the area, a good case can be made for extending the Boston model southward. However, according to Nicole Mihnovets, who is managing the New York project for the DEC's Bureau of Marine Resources, it took two years just to form the needed coalition and obtain financing for the New York project, which does not include the automatic detection units for transmitting warnings to ships. Clearly this is a project we will want to follow and support—even if whale-watching trips leaving from the South Street Seaport are not imminent.

For more about the remarkable technology developed by the Bioacoustics Research Program as well as real-time data on whales in Boston's shipping channel and videos of the whales, go to Cornell's website, [www.listenforwhales.org](http://www.listenforwhales.org).



© Don Rippe

*Humpback Whale Diving*

## SNOWY OWLS IN NEW YORK CITY

Don Riepe

**B**e on the lookout for a visitor from the north this winter. Snowy owls nest in the Arctic tundra and winter chiefly in southern Canada. Each year a few will venture southward to the Atlantic coast. Occasionally (every few years) when small mammals such as the brown lemming are scarce up north, the

owls will migrate in good numbers and venture as far south as the Carolinas. These cyclic occurrences are not considered true migrations but “irruptions” or movements in search of food. The best places to see a wintering snowy owl in New York City are open, tundra-like habitats such as the dunes of Breezy Point,

Queens; Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn; the Fresh Kills landfill in Staten Island; as well as any large, open beach/dune area where they can find rats, mice, and rabbits, which are their chief prey. One of the most reliable wintering sites is JFK Airport, where they hunt exotic black-tailed jack rabbits that either were introduced years ago or somehow escaped from a cargo plane. Unfortunately, the airport is off-limits to birders. Outside of the city, good places to search for snowy owls are the west end dunes of Jones Beach and Smith Point, Fire Island.

If you care to venture up to Amherst Island in southern Canada, you may also see a boreal owl as well as several snowy owls. Some very irruptive years that I remember were during the winters of 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 when snowy owls were reported on many beaches from Montauk to Breezy Point.



*Snowy Owl at Breezy Point*

## LOOK AROUND NEW YORK CITY

**L**ook Around New York City, NYC Audubon’s award-winning children’s nature publication, is again available FREE both in print and online. The themes for this year’s issues are nature journaling, Year of the Frog, and hot-button environmental issues for New York City.

After the retirement of Naola Gersten-Woolf, *Look Around’s* long-running publisher, Erik Karff, Manager of Education and Outreach, took over this awesome responsibility.

In addition to Erik, the Editorial Board

included: Yuko Ashida, Ron Bourque, Cecily Channell, Leslie Chase, Leslie Day, Debbie Dieneman, Nicole Delacrétaiz, Anna Gale, Naola Gersten-Woolf, Nadia Islam, Abby McBride, Alexis Mychajliw, Glenn Phillips, Christina Rubin and Gabriel Willow. Junior Contributors were Tatiana Eder and Stephanie Fernandez.

Members who would like to receive print copies of *Look Around New York City* for themselves or for the NYC child(ren) in their lives, should send a stamped, self-addressed envelope (no larger than 6”x9”) with 76¢

postage to the office (attention: LANYC-UA) no later than January 15. The envelope must be addressed horizontally. Or you can send your email address to [lookaround@nycaudubon.org](mailto:lookaround@nycaudubon.org) with “*Look Around* issues” in the subject line; we’ll notify you when it’s posted on the website. Remember that if you’ve requested *Look Around* in the past you’re already on our mailing list!

Printing and free distribution of the 2008-2009 issues of *Look Around* is made possible by a generous donation from Con Edison.

# News and Notes

## NYC AUDUBON TESTIFIES

Executive Director Glenn Phillips testified before the City Council's Transportation Committee in support of Introduction 757, a measure proposed by Council Member Alan Gerson, which would require the Department of Transportation to use fully shielded street lamp fixtures when making repairs or replacements. This measure is part of a package of "Dark Sky" legislation intended to reduce light pollution in the city.

## US GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL GETS BIRD FRIENDLY

In a conference call on November 4 with the American Bird Conservancy, The Bird-Safe Glass Foundation and NYC Audubon, the US Green Building Council announced that it would include bird-friendly language in its upcoming revision of the Reference Guide for LEED™ 2009. While the team was unable to convince USGBC to insert language directly into the LEED standards, this new language will significantly expand awareness of bird collision issues in sustainable architecture.

## NEW ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER

Driane Benner has joined NYC Audubon's advisory council. Global Marketing Director for Cadogan Management, Driane is an avid birder and nature enthusiast, and active with the Peconic Land Trust.

## STATE OF THE BAY SYMPOSIUM

On October 28 and 29, over twenty experts explored the physical, biological, chemical, and anthropogenic changes over the years that have played a substantial role in shaping the current ecological status of Jamaica Bay. The well-attended event organized by the city's Department of Environmental Protection included a tour of the bay led by NYC Audubon Board member and American Littoral Society's Jamaica Bay Guardian, Don Riepe.



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The Fall Roost is NYC Audubon's biggest event of the year, and a vital source of funding for our operations. This year's benefit brought in almost \$90,000 for our conservation and education programs. (Please see the November-December 2008 Urban Audubon for a recap of the festivities.) Our work would not be possible without the kind support of the following people and organizations:*

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Betsy & Michael Alderman  
Emily & John Alexander  
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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.

DIRECT Members of NYC Audubon will:

- Receive six issues of *The Urban Audubon*
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Mail this form with your payment to:

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# TAKE A TRIP

## EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK & SOUTH FLORIDA

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21-29, 2009

Guides: Carol Borneman and Don Riepe

Visit the best wildlife areas of south Florida: Flamingo, Shark River, Loxahatchee Refuge, Ding-Darling Refuge, Corkscrew Swamp, Wakodahatchee Boardwalk, and more. Look for gators, American crocodiles, painted buntings, purple gallinules, bald eagles, burrowing owls, barred owls, wood storks, Everglades kites, and 100 other species. Price includes airfare, double-occupancy lodging (single room supplement \$300), local transportation, expert guides, park fees, breakfast and lunches, and snacks. For more information, call 718-318-9344 or email [driepe@nyc.rr.com](mailto:driepe@nyc.rr.com). To reserve a place, send a \$100 deposit to NYC Audubon, 71 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010. \$1,795 (no discount for DIRECT members)

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*Roseatte Spoonbill*

## WINGS OF THE MAYAN WORLD

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14-22, 2009

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Travel for a week to the magical land of the Maya in Southern Mexico. See the great ruins of Chichen Itza, Coba, and Tulum. Swim in the Caribbean and explore coral reefs and white sand beaches. Hike through the jungle in search of monkeys, jaguars, peccaries, crocodiles, and other exotic creatures. And of course, see the amazing birdlife of the region: there are close to 550 species of birds in Yucatan, of which 14

are endemic and found nowhere else. From parrots and toucans to flamingos and trogons, Yucatan is home to an incredible diversity of birdlife, including many of our familiar neotropical migrants that winter in the region. More information forthcoming.

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