

NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON ANNUAL REPORT 2014











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- 1 Term ended June 2014. 2 Elected June 2014. 3 Appointed September 201
- 3 Appointed September 2014. 4 Departed April 2014.

ANNUAL REPORT

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Page 8: NYC Audubon
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New York City Audubon works to protect wild birds and their habitats in the five boroughs of New York City, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers. We are an independent nonprofit with 10,000 members, donors, and volunteers whose dedication and support make our research, advocacy, and education work possible. NYC Audubon is affiliated with the National Audubon Society, and provides local services to its members. NYC Audubon is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law. NYC Audubon meets all of the Better Business Bureau's Standards of Charity Accountability.

CREATING PARTNERSHIPS TO PROTECT OUR BIRDS

ew York City Audubon, the principal voice for New York City's birds and their habitats, pursues its mission by means of three fundamental tools: science-based conservation, educational outreach, and advocacy. We speak, and fight, for the City's birds. Substantial accomplishments this past year have been empowered by fruitful partnerships—with City agencies, private corporations, fellow environmentalists, and bird enthusiasts—which have allowed us to bring our research expertise and rigorously collected field data to bear in offering solutions to the complex challenges facing our urban bird populations.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, we met with the National Park Service, government officials, and fellow environmentalists to influence the final draft of the General Management Plan for Gateway National Recreation Area. We succeeded in strengthening the plan's protections of crucial habitats for breeding waterbirds and horseshoe crabs. We also brought concerned parties to the table, including the Birders Coalition for Gateway, to discuss the future of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge's West Pond, and submitted the preferred restoration proposal to the Park Service.

When snowy owls were culled at JFK airport last winter, we successfully collaborated with Audubon New York and utilized press and grassroots outreach to pressure the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to utilize non-lethal methods—and then partnered with the Port Authority to implement a new trap, band, and relocate program. We also piloted a new partnership with Bryant Park Corporation, engaging the maintenance staff in reporting dead and injured birds as part of Project Safe Flight. These contributions will supplement those from citizen scientists now able to participate in the project via our new online database, D-Bird.

These are just a few examples of the growing partnerships that NYC Audubon has forged in the last year, in our efforts to safeguard the incredible diversity of birdlife that New York City enjoys—but must work tirelessly to protect. "On the ground," these efforts are made possible by our small but dedicated professional staff, and by our network of committed and passionate volunteers. None of our accomplishments would be possible without the generous support and participation of friends like you.

We count on you to stay involved and enable us to continue fighting for our city's birds.

With thanks,

Harry Maas President CONSERVATION
GOALS OF
THE 2011-2015
STRATEGIC PLAN

Focus our conservation work on activities that will have the most significant impacts on bird species of conservation concern and their habitats.

- Improve stopover habitat quality and reduce threats to birds from buildings, artificial light, and reflective glass in Manhattan and throughout the City
- Focus on three regions for priority bird species within New York City:
 - Jamaica Bay, the Northeast's most significant wetland
 - Western Long Island Sound/ The Narrows, a highly urbanized estuary, yet one of great ecological significance
 - Staten Island, the least developed of all five boroughs
- Contribute substantially to changes in law, regulations, and government programs that protect birds and their habitats in New York City

Increase the number and diversity of people engaged in the conservation of NYC birds

- Provide additional quality programs that bring New Yorkers closer to nature
- Engage more students in class trips and afterschool programs related to Important Bird Areas
- Expand opportunities for citizen science in all five boroughs
- Engage more New Yorkers in public advocacy

uring the past year, New York City Audubon continued to safeguard birds and their habitats across the five boroughs of New York City, via our science-based bird conservation work. Leaders in the field, we are the only organization solely dedicated to conservation, research, education, and advocacy strictly for the City's wild birds. We focus our

conservation programs on activities that will have the most significant impacts on

bird species of conservation concern and their habitats
—while utilizing synergistic partnerships with key
organizations and agencies in the City.

Progress toward achieving our strategic plan is best illustrated by our two flagship programs: Project Safe Flight and the Waterbirds of New York Harbor. These two programs address over-arching conservation issues that impact birds of greatest conservation need in our region: safe passage during migration and good quality nesting and foraging habitat during the breeding season. Documenting land bird diversity, addressing collisions with built

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structures, and improving upland stopover habitat are the primary foci for Project Safe Flight. Waterbirds of the New York Harbor focuses on the role of herons, egrets, gulls, oystercatchers, and their allies as bioindicators of aquatic habitat quality. Through population monitoring; behavioral, reproductive and ecological assessments; and habitat protection, our staff is able to provide key information to resource managers for regional planning and protection of vulnerable species.



This American oystercatcher was banded in Georgia before we encountered it in New York City. Understanding oystercatchers' migration patterns and comprehensive habitat needs enables us to protect this species of conservation concern.

Highlights
from the
Past Year's
Conservation
Program
Activities



Project Safe Flight

he goal of Project Safe Flight is to make the City safer for migrating birds. Supported by the Leon Levy Foundation, the USFWS Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, and Audubon's Toyota TogetherGreen, NYC Audubon has been able to make great strides in identifying collision risks and hot spots, and proposing viable solutions. Our future work on this issue will include in-depth investigation into the role of artificial light in bird collisions, especially as light is involved in attracting birds to other obstructions to migration in the built environment; i.e., wind turbines and airports.

WE MONITORED ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING AND PUBLISHED THE RESULTS

Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin, PhD, Research Assistant Kaitlyn Parkins, and Intern Elle Barnes conducted a study in Bryant Park, with the help of Project Safe Flight monitors. They evaluated the relationship between the amount of artificial light, the expanse of glass windows, and bird mortality. Recently published in the *Northeastern Naturalist* journal, the paper points to a combined effect of nighttime lighting and daytime reflection as a driver for bird mortality in and around Bryant Park. From our monitoring of the 9/11 Tribute in Light memorial, we know that beacons of artificial light disrupt bird migration. Migration was high the night of September 11, 2013, as it had been in 2010—and our partners at the Municipal

NYC Audubon
launched a web-based
research tool designed
to collect crowd-sourced
bird mortality data
in the City

Art Society turned the lights out for the birds four times. The wave of migration missed New York City in 2014, and the lights remained on.

WE LAUNCHED A NEW PROGRAM: D-BIRD

NYC Audubon has launched a web-based research tool designed to collect crowd-sourced bird mortality data in New York City. Now when a person finds a dead or injured bird, they can report that bird online through D-Bird. Using an interactive map, users record the date, time, location, and species name of the dead or injured bird. These data are stored in a searchable database for use by NYC Audubon researchers.

Data collected through D-Bird are intended to complement the more scientifically rigorous monitoring data collected in Project Safe Flight. This reporting system will allow NYC Audubon to better capture the scope and degree of collision-related bird mortality throughout the City. D-Bird may be accessed via a link on the NYC Audubon homepage, or directly at http://nycaudubon.neocities.org/D-Bird.htm.

WE ENGAGED NEW PARTNERS

We have been leading birding trips in Bryant Park for several years, but this past year the Bryant Park Corporation (BPC) became a partner in Project Safe Flight. Together we piloted a program to involve maintenance staff in reporting bird collisions. Project Safe Flight volunteers have learned a lot from maintenance staff and doorkeepers of the buildings they patrol, since they are often first on the scene when a bird hits a window but are without the resources to transport the bird to a rehabilitator or report the collision. We decided to make them part of the team.

Thirty-one members of the BPC sanitation staff attended a training session to learn about bird-building collisions and how to use a simple text-in system to report any dead birds they find while working in the park. The staff ended up reporting several birds this spring, including a hermit thrush, an ovenbird, and an indigo bunting. We are continuing to work with BPC and will use the pilot program as a model for working with Business Improvement Districts in other areas of the City.

WE IMPROVED STOPOVER HABITAT

McGolrick Park, in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, is unknown to most New Yorkers—but to the Greenpoint community, it is the hidden jewel of their neighborhood. One of very few green spaces in industrial north Brooklyn, McGolrick Park is a nine-acre City park, consisting of sparse lawns, some cultivated gardens, and a dog run. It's a great place for picnics and play, and now, thanks to



PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT IN BRYANT PARK

After spotting a few brown feathers tucked under a bush in Bryant Park, Kenrick Carvan wheeled over his trash bin, pulled out his phone, and snapped a picture of a hermit thrush, now deceased, that had crashed into a glass window. He quickly sent off a text message. He then swept up the bird and carried on with his day. Mr. Carvan is a member of the sanitation crew for the Bryant Park Corporation (BPC), and one of 31 BPC staff members participating in NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight program. The text he sent contained a picture of the bird he found, the time, and his location, and it went to the NYC Audubon bird collision database to be added to more than 15 years of data on birdbuilding collisions in the City.

a generous grant from the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund, it's a little more bird friendly, too. NYC Audubon, along with the help of many volunteers, has installed a 0.25-acre native plant garden in the southwestern corner of the park.

The garden, affectionately called "the Urban Oasis in McGolrick Park," was designed to provide high-quality stopover habitat for birds migrating through New York City. Native plants were carefully selected to provide cover and food sources for birds throughout the year. Some of the species chosen include lowbush blueberry, Canadian serviceberry, joe-pye weed, gray goldenrod, and common milkweed. In total, more than 4,000 plants were planted by 35 volunteers over two days in June. A group of more than 30 volunteers continue to weed, water, and maintain the garden.

Volunteers from the Greenpoint community also assisted NYC Audubon Research Assistant Kaitlyn Parkins and Intern Melanie del Rosario with biodiversity surveys before the garden planting began. Throughout May and June, they inventoried

plants, performed bird and bat surveys, and sampled arthropods throughout the park. These data will be compared to surveys after the garden becomes established, to determine whether the native plants increased the park's biodiversity.

WE SEARCHED FOR NEW SOLUTIONS

We continued our research and testing of glass treatment at our flight tunnel, located at the Wildlife Conservation Society's Bronx Zoo, to improve visibility of glass to birds (with the American Bird Conservancy, Ennead Architects, Fordham University, and New Jersey Audubon Society).

Local residents helped us transform a sparse piece of Brookyn's McGolrick Park into a wildlife-friendly native plant garden.

Photo Page 4: Thousands of migratory birds were trapped in the Tribute in Light memorial on September 11, 2013. At the request of NYC Audubon monitors, the lights were turned off temporarily to allow the birds to disperse.



This male hooded warbler, caught at our flight tunnel at the Bronx Zoo, helped us test bird-safe glass before continuing its migration.

Water
Quality and
Habitat
Protection

The Waterbirds of New York Harbor



ew York City is a city of water—and is vulnerable to storm

surges, climate change, sea level rise, and

water-based toxins and pollutants. Waterbirds are at the top of the food chain and are excellent bioindicators of habitat health and water quality. Supported in part by the Leon Levy Foundation, Director of Conservation and Science Susan Elbin has been participating in regional and state waterbird meetings and management discussions, and she is currently the president of the Waterbird Society. NYC Audubon has the capacity to be a leader in waterbird conservation and is leading efforts to understand and interpret threats to waterbirds from human and natural disturbance. NYC Audubon is continuing to create a comprehensive waterbirds program, with "Harbor Herons" and migratory shorebirds programs at its core.

WE ARE BUILDING A SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM DATABASE OF NESTING BIRDS (30 YEARS AND COUNTING)

On May 30, 2013, NYC Audubon's Harbor Herons survey team landed on Goose Island, one of seventeen potential nesting

NYC Audubon
has been banding
birds since 2006
in an effort to
determine where
'our' birds go
during the winter

islands in the harbor, and encountered a panorama strikingly different from the healthy colony surveyed the year before. As they searched for nests among the island's thick stands of low trees, the team of four researchers encountered a silent tableau of abandoned nests, broken eggs, and dead adults. Along with signs of predators, the researchers found evidence that people had been spending time on the island—most likely frightening the birds off their nests, exposing their eggs, and possibly attracting pests by leaving food remains.

In the context of an overall decline of 26% in our nesting wading bird population between 2010 and 2013, as measured by full nesting surveys completed in those years, the story of Goose

Island is particularly disturbing. While the Harbor Heron islands provide refuges necessary for the City's nine species of long-legged waders to successfully nest, these island colonies are particularly vulnerable to disturbance by both people and predators. Particularly in light of ongoing decision-making concerning the safeguarding of Jamaica Bay islands from recreational disturbance, it is crucial that adequate protections are ensured for these island colonies. NYC Audubon continues to post signage alerting the public against visiting the islands, and to advocate for sensible restrictions on recreational activity close to the islands.

Our 2014 survey again found no nesting activity on Goose Island. While numbers have remained constant across the harbor in the last year, and healthy colonies were found on the East River's South Brother Island as well as on Jamaica Bay's Subway Island and the restored Elder's Point East in 2013 and 2014, we must remain vigilant to ensure that these colonies do not suffer the sad fate of Goose Island.

In an effort to determine where 'our' birds go during the winter, and if they return to breed when they are mature, NYC Audubon has been banding birds. Since 2006, we have banded 47 glossy ibis and 29 snowy egrets. In 2013 and 2014 we were able to attach wing tags to 49 great egrets and have learned that our newly fledged egrets spend time in areas close to the City: the NJ Meadowlands and northern New Jersey, as well as places farther afield (Philadelphia and Quebec). One now two-year-old wing-tagged egret has returned to the harbor. We would never have known this without our banding efforts.

WE ARE WORKING WITH OTHER WATERBIRDS OF THE NEW YORK HARBOR

To date, we have banded 1,500 double-crested cormorants, 175 herring and great black-backed gulls, and 29 American oystercatchers. A small colony of herring gulls has appeared on the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center's new green roof, tripling in size from two pairs in 2013 to six pairs in 2014. We banded the chicks from those pairs and hope to see them when they are ready to nest—in a few years. Plans for the future include creating a map of migratory connectivity using banding data and re-sighting observations.



NYC Audubon's 30 years of Harbor Herons nesting survey data provide a valuable baseline to monitor the health of our vulnerable wading bird colonies.

Research Associate Liz Craig has been leading our team to band common terns nesting on several decommissioned piers on Governors Island (off the southern tip of Manhattan). To date we have banded 147 common terns. In 2013 we banded four breeding adults on Lima Pier. In 2014, all four returned to nest on that same pier. One 2014 adult had already been banded in March—in Argentina!—before arriving in New York City to breed.

WE ARE STEWARDS FOR JAMAICA BAY'S MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS AND SPAWNING HORSESHOE CRABS

For the sixth year in a row, NYC Audubon took to the shores of Jamaica Bay to monitor horseshoe crabs and shorebirds, with the help of dozens of citizen scientist volunteers. Each spring, shorebird species such as semipalmated sandpiper, ruddy turnstone, and red



knot stop in Jamaica Bay, where they fuel up on horseshoe crab eggs before continuing their northward migration to breeding grounds in the Arctic. Monitoring the number of spawning horseshoe crabs each spring is an important

step in assessing how much of this valuable food resource exists for migrating shorebirds in Jamaica Bay, and whether this resource is changing over time.

In the previous five years of horseshoe crab monitoring in Jamaica Bay, our team of citizen scientists counted few if any horseshoe crabs on Plumb Beach West, despite consistently high numbers on the eastern half of the beach. This western half of



THE HARBOR HERON ISLANDS

Just a few hundred yards across the East River from the Bronx's Co-op City, providing a glimpse of wildlife to the towers' 43,000 residents, lies Goose Island—a tiny, tear-drop-shaped spit of land that up until 2012 was home to a thriving wading bird colony. Despite its proximity to high-density residential development, this diminutive wild oasis was revealed by NYC Audubon's 2012 waterbird survey to host III breeding pairs of black-crowned night-herons, great and snowy egrets, and great blue herons—a 12% increase in numbers from the previous year's counts. The health of the colony was to be short-lived, however; and its fate is both a sad reminder of what can happen if the New York City's Harbor Heron islands are not carefully protected—and a clear call to action.

the beach had been suffering from high rates of erosion over the years, making the habitat less than ideal for horseshoe crab spawning. Even after the beach was replenished with sand in 2012 to mitigate erosion and prevent damage to the adjacent Belt Parkway, horseshoe crab numbers remained low at Plumb Beach West when it came time for spawning.

Between the 2013 and 2014 spawning seasons however, a breakwater and two groins were built to protect the beach from future erosion. We wondered whether the combination of additional sand and decreased wave activity due to the breakwater would attract more horseshoe crabs to Plumb Beach West, and our questions were answered this year when almost 4,000 spawning horseshoe crabs were counted at Plumb Beach West over the entire season. Continued monitoring at Plumb Beach and other sites, such as Dead Horse Bay and Big Egg Marsh, will be vital to understanding how changes to Jamaica Bay impact the horseshoe crab population upon which migrating shorebirds depend.

Education & Important Outreach

Conservation

Success

WE RECRUITED "GOOD EGGS"

nitially implemented by Audubon North Carolina and piloted in New York in 2013, the "Be a Good Egg" campaign addresses the dangers to beach-nesting birds from human disturbance and incompatible recreation. The program seeks to increase awareness and community pride in our coastal bird populations and instill a conservation ethic. Specifically, the initiative mobilizes volunteers and paid beach stewards to reduce human disturbance to migratory and beach-nesting shorebirds.

Educational outreach to beach-goers is also an important component of conservation action. In coordination with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, Project Intern Terra Weiland spent her summer on the beach, using games and activities to enlist beach-goers at Arverne and at Orchard Beach to pledge to reduce threats to nesting and foraging beach birds. The summer ended with more than 100 volunteers collecting a total of 1,726 pounds of garbage from Pelham Bay Park's Orchard Beach and Jamaica Bay's Broad Channel Bridge Beach as part of International Coastal Cleanup Day.

WE EDUCATED AND ENGAGED YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE CITY'S FIVE BOROUGHS

In 2014, NYC Audubon also accomplished the following additional outreach and education events:

- Explored tidal pools at Hunts Point, Bronx with local residents and families during the June Fish Parade and July City of Water Day
- Tweeted with young birders and their families at the Children's Museum of the Arts over five weeks
- Engaged younger members and prospects in the fashion and design world to count horseshoe crabs for shorebird research
- Created a NYC Audubon KIDS Program for 8- to 12-year-olds, which includes two free bird walks a year and mailed KIDS Members packages of fun birding material

WE PROVIDED EDUCATION AND ENJOYMENT VIA BIRD WALKS, TRIPS AND CLASSES, AND PUBLICATIONS

As the only organization dedicated to the safeguarding and enjoyment of birds in New York City, NYC Audubon's community of supporters relies on us to provide fun, educational, and enriching bird walks, trips & classes, and publications throughout the year.

Last year, NYC Audubon delivered yet another successful year of these opportunities for our friends and members:

- Half-a-dozen free lectures at The Arsenal in Central Park featured work by experts in conservation and ornithological research
- Over 150 trips and classes, reaching over 2,000 participants, included 13 winter ecocruises and 10 summer ecocruises in local waterways such as New York Harbor and Jamaica Bay; regular

local birding trips and overnight birding trips; and bird photography meetings every other month as part of NYC Audubon's Photography Club

Free bird walks open to the public included 13 "Birding For Families" walks offered in partnership with the Central Park Conservancy, 34 bird walks with

NYC Audubon conducted over 150 trips and classes, reaching more than 2,000 participants

Van Cortland Park Conservancy, and 14 walks with the Bryant Park Corporation

- Ten free member events, open only to NYC Audubon members, included bird walks in Central Park and Brooklyn's Prospect Park, a June donor ecocruise around the Brother Islands, and transportation to popular partner events such as the Annual Shorebird Festival in Jamaica Bay
- Our quarterly print newsletter, *The Urban Audubon*, provided approximately 10,000 subscribers with educational articles about bird conservation in New York City
- *The eGret* enewsletter engaged a readership of 5,000 subscribers with timely conservation news and updates
- Our website, <u>www.nycaudubon.org</u>, Syrinx blog, and social media outlets provided online outreach and education opportunities



Data collected from Christmas Bird Counts across the nation made National Audubon's groundbreaking 2014 Birds and Climate Change Report possible.

Policy & Advocacy

WE RAISED OUR VOICES, AND WE WERE HEARD.

his past spring, NYC Audubon achieved a major victory in our efforts to protect the wildlife and habitat of Gateway National Recreation Area. In August 2013, the National Park Service (NPS) released a draft of a new General Management Plan (GMP) for Gateway. NYC Audubon submitted comments and proposed a set of recommendations. The final plan, released in May, included some of those recommendations. Most important among them were continued access restrictions to the sensitive islands of Jamaica Bay and Staten Island. NPS's original plan called for allowing access to several Jamaica Bay Islands for camping, as well as for the construction of a dock on Hoffman Island to allow visitation. Regardless of the time of year, human intrusion on these islands has the potential to harm birds and habitat. Historically, NPS has restricted visitor access to all of these islands. NYC Audubon strongly supported the maintenance of this policy; ultimately, NPS agreed. Additionally, at the urging of NYC Audubon, a number of other critical habitat areas throughout Gateway were also rezoned in the final GMP to afford them greater protection. These areas include the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Breezy Point tip, Bergen Beach, Floyd Bennett Field, and Plumb Beach, where NPS has cancelled a major recreation program in order to prioritize the protection of shorebirds and horseshoe crabs.



A new trap, band, and relocate program for snowy owls will continue at City airports in 2015.

At the Wildlife Refuge, the post-Sandy fate of the breached West Pond is still being decided. NYC Audubon developed and submitted well-received concept plans to recreate a freshwater pond.

NYC Audubon would like to thank all those that have supported us in our efforts on this campaign, including the offices of Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, Congressman Gregory Meeks, Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, and Congressman Joseph Crowley. Discussions with the newly formed Birders Coalition for Gateway were instrumental during our development of the West Pond plan.

WE STOOD OUR GROUND

In December 2013, NYC Audubon responded quickly and forcefully to reports of culling of snowy owls at City airports, in partnership with Audubon New York. Via a joint letter, press release, and grass-roots outreach, we urged the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to employ non-lethal methods of control and relocation in lieu of culling. We also reached out to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as well as the Governor. NYC Audubon then partnered with the Port Authority in a new and successful trap, band, and relocate program.



NYC Audubon's passionate volunteer corps makes all of our work possible.

Volunteers

ur success would not be possible without our corps of stalwart volunteers, who enable all of our conservation and education work. In addition to their invaluable contributions to our primary conservation work via Project Safe Flight and the Waterbirds of NY Harbor programs, volunteers took part in many

conservation events throughout the year, including woodland and saltmarsh restoration, beach clean-ups, and conservation outreach events. In all, more than 400 dedicated volunteers contributed over 6,750 hours of volunteer work to NYC Audubon's mission over the last year.

NYC Audubon's more than 400 dedicated volunteers contributed to over 6,750 hours of volunteer work

Support for New York City Audubon

LOOKING FORWARD

TO 2015

With your continued support, NYC Audubon will continue to address the major conservation challenges facing wild birds and their habitat in New York City.

FISCAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 2014

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

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(\$2,500 and above) ANONYMOUS

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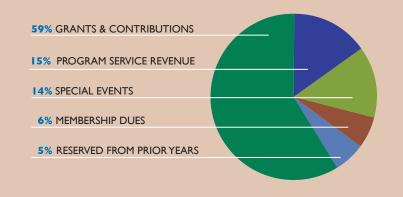
Financials

SUPPORT & REVENUE

Total Support & Revenue	\$887,199	100%
Reserved from Prior Years	\$46,768	5%
Membership Dues	\$54,850	6%
Special Events	\$124,468	14%
Program Service Revenue	\$136,752	15%
Grants & Contributions	\$524,361	59%

Lauren and Ethan

Klingsberg



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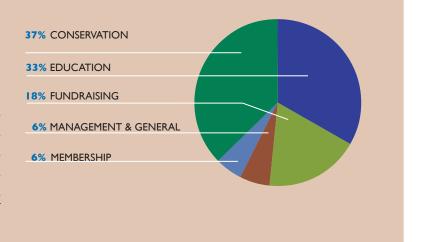
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Membership	\$51,619	6%
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Larry McCoy