



NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON ANNUAL REPORT **2015**



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Officers, board, and
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to December 2015; staff
from January 2015

¹ Term ended June 2014

² Elected June 2014

³ Appointed September

2014

⁴ Term ended June 2015

⁵ Elected June 2015

⁶ Term ended December

2015

ANNUAL REPORT

Writing, Editorial

Production

Susan Elbin,

Kellye Rosenheim,

Tod Winston

Design

Christina Rubin

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.



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

June 2016 will mark the end of my five-year tenure as President of NYC Audubon—one of the finest, if not *the* finest, local grass-roots organizations in the country devoted to the protection of wild birds and their habitat. Reading this annual report and comparing it to the one prepared five years ago, I am struck by how far we have come and how much we have accomplished.

Our successes this year have been many, as can be seen from the diverse projects and programs featured in this report. These accomplishments range from the successful challenge of the shooting of snowy owls at John F. Kennedy Airport to our effective advocacy leading to the restoration of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge's West Pond as freshwater habitat. Of course, these are only two examples of many efforts this year that have contributed to making the City a healthier place for our birds.

Most important, however, is what we do from here. Birds in New York City, across the country, and indeed across the globe are facing increasing threats. Populations of many bird species are in decline, and destruction of their habitats continues worldwide. As is true in addressing the looming threat of climate change, *the time to act is now*. NYC Audubon must join environmentally conscious people everywhere in acting *right now*, while there is still time to reverse the many negative trends facing us.

To do our part, NYC Audubon requires the support of our members. We need your financial support, of course, but we also need your contributions as volunteers and advocates. Please do whatever you can to help. It will not only be greatly appreciated but will make a difference to our birds. Please visit us at www.nycaudubon.org to learn how you can personally contribute.

With thanks,

Harry Maas
President

The great egret, saved from near extinction in the early 20th century by dedicated conservationists including the founders of the National Audubon Society, nests on five of New York City's Harbor Heron islands. These recently hatched nestlings were photographed on Jamaica Bay's restored Elders Point East Island, the harbor's newest colony and also its most diverse: six wader species nest here. This thriving colony, with nests located on or near the ground, is particularly vulnerable to disturbance from human recreation, predators, and sea-level rise



DEDICATED ADVOCACY

New York City Audubon safeguards birds and their habitats across the five boroughs of New York City. We are the only organization solely dedicated to conservation, research, education, and advocacy for the City's over 350 species of wild birds—and our conservation programs focus on activities that will have the most significant impacts on species of conservation concern. In this era of increasing threats from development, sea-level rise, and myriad man-made perils all along the migration pathways of our birds, our work to protect the limited habitat available to them in New York City—and provide safe passage to the millions that migrate through here—is ever more urgent.

Throughout its history, NYC Audubon has drawn upon conservation research and sound science to inform advocacy efforts on behalf of New York City's birds: we contributed to the preservation of critical bird habitats such as Floyd Bennet Field and the Harbor Heron Islands—and advocated on behalf of urban pioneers Pale Male and Lola, the forerunners of the City's robust red-tailed hawk population. More recently, we successfully advocated for protection of the natural resources of Gateway National Recreation Area in the National Park Service's new General Management Plan. And just this year, we saw the Park Service commit to the restoration of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge's West Pond as a critical freshwater habitat, following a sustained campaign in favor of repairing the damage done by Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

As we build our next five-year strategic plan, advocacy remains a fundamental tool to achieve our goals. This year's Annual Report highlights the vital role that recent science-based advocacy has played in our three major program areas: **Project Safe Flight**, **Waterbirds of the New York Harbor**, and **New York City Raptors**. These signature programs address two over-arching conservation issues that impact birds of greatest conservation need in our region: safe passage during migration and high-quality habitat during the breeding and non-breeding seasons. Through population monitoring and behavioral, reproductive, and ecological assessments, NYC Audubon staff is able to provide reliable data and scientifically sound recommendations to resource managers for regional planning and protection of vulnerable species and the places they need. And by working cooperatively and leveraging relationships and expertise from National Audubon, Audubon New York, the Audubon Council of New York State, and the Audubon Urban Chapter Network, we are able to have an even greater impact on the advocacy issues that are most crucial to our threatened bird populations and the green spaces they need to survive—and thrive.

CONSERVATION AND SCIENCE

2015 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



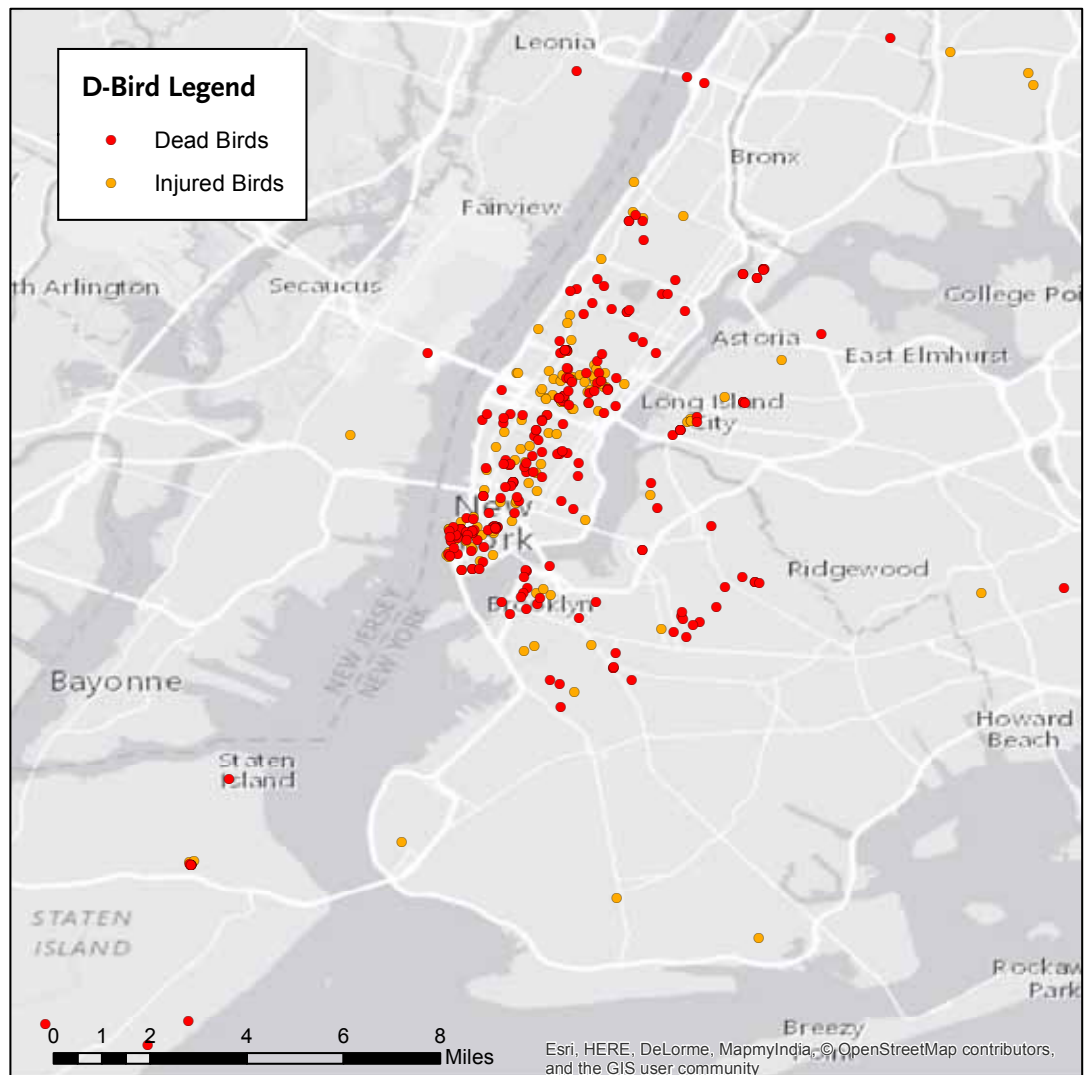
Above: We've tested over 1,000 birds belonging to more than 50 species, including this blue-winged warbler and rose-breasted grosbeak, at our glass-testing flight tunnel at the Bronx Zoo. Our flight tunnel testing evaluates the efficacy of different glass treatments in deterring bird collisions

Right: D-Bird, our online data-collecting tool for bird-building collisions, is increasing our knowledge of the most hazardous areas for birds in New York City

PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

Project Safe Flight makes the City safer for migrating birds via several components:

- Monitoring bird collisions with reflective and transparent glass
- Testing solutions to help birds avoid windows
- Educating architects and City agencies about bird-friendly design
- Monitoring the annual Tribute in Light Memorial and promoting Lights Out New York
- Improving migrant stopover habitat
- Creating bird-friendly roof habitat
- Identifying gaps in basic knowledge



NYC Audubon's mutually beneficial relationship with the organizers of the September 11 Tribute in Light paid off handsomely this year. A huge migration push was underway that night, and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum cooperated in turning the lights off eight times over the course of the evening, allowing tens of thousands of trapped migratory songbirds to escape

Supported this past year by the Leon Levy Foundation, the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, and NYC Audubon's donors, we have been able to expand the scientific core of Project Safe Flight and have become increasingly active on advocacy and policy issues. Working with academic partners at New York University's Center for Urban Science and Progress, we are applying creative ways to use 'big data' to analyze the quality and intensity of artificial light emitted into the skies over New York City. Outcomes from our partnership with American Bird Conservancy and architecture firms Ennead, FxFowle, and Prendergast Laurel resulted in a bird-friendly pilot credit update to the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) standards in architecture design and to technical standards for testing glass products produced by the American Society of the International Association for Testing and Materials (ASTM). We continue to improve the accuracy of collision data submitted by volunteer citizen scientists and casual observers.

SCIENCE-BASED ADVOCACY AND OUTCOMES

This year, NYC Audubon scientists and staff:

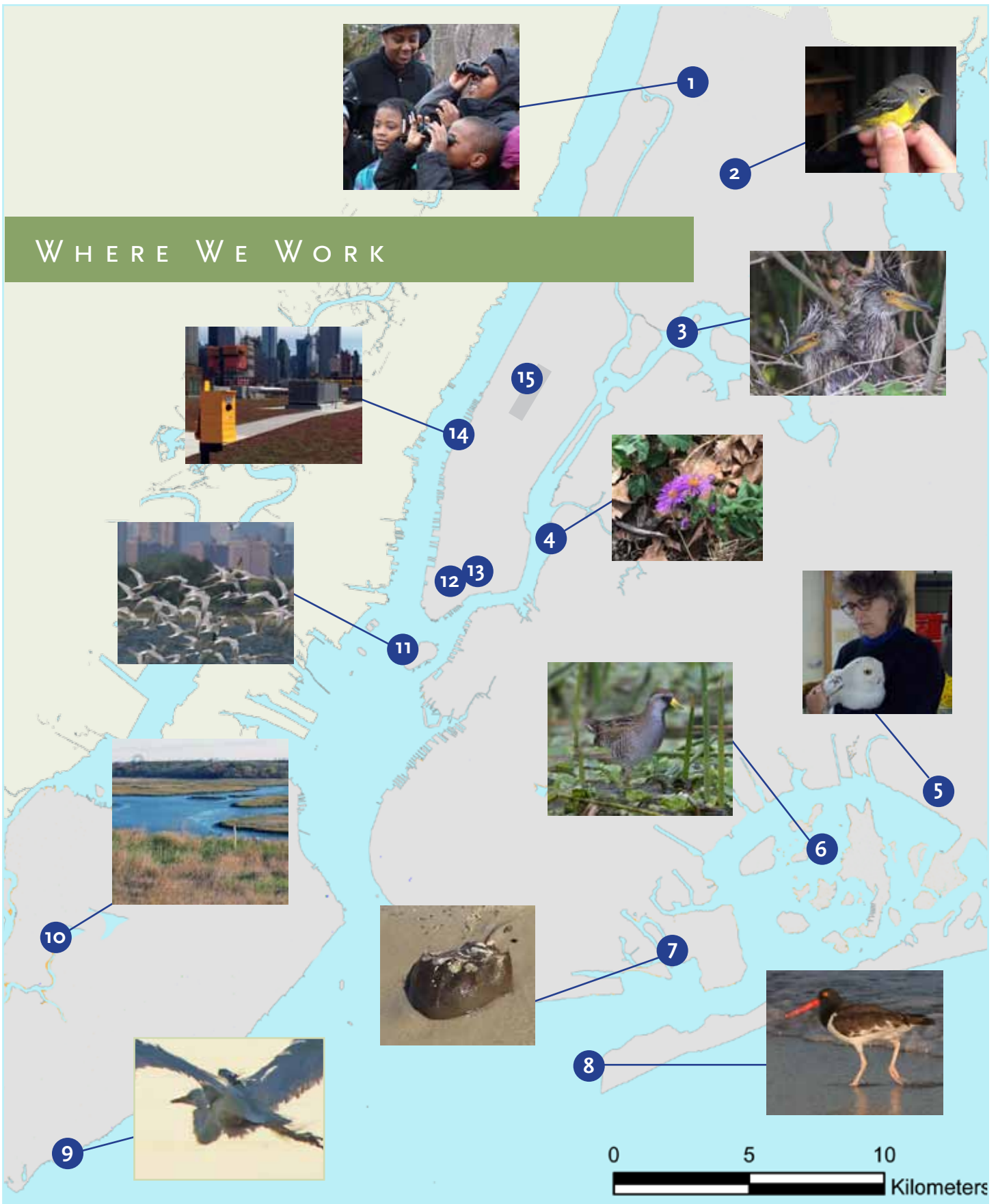
- Testified to the New York City Council in support of proposed legislation that would require commercial buildings to turn off lights when not being used by tenants

- Participated at the invitation of Assemblymember Deborah Glick in a panel discussion about bird-friendly design and zoning implications for her constituents. After the discussion, members of the audience were asked to write to their local legislators and demand bird-friendly construction in future construction projects in New York City
- Revised LEED Pilot Credit 55 using criteria for bird-friendly glass standards that resulted from our glass testing research
- Helped draft a standard protocol for interpretation of results from glass testing as part of the ASTM committee
- Improved D-Bird, our user-friendly, interactive website for recording incidental bird mortality. The site now accepts photos of dead birds found by users and is being rolled out to other organizations monitoring collisions. A total of 253 birds were reported this year at www.d-bird.org
- Partnered with the Wild Bird Fund, incorporating their collision data and treatment records into our D-Bird dataset
- Shared our September 11 Tribute in Light monitoring story with the director of *The Messenger*, an award-winning documentary film that portrays worldwide threats to migratory birds. The Tribute in Light monitoring program was featured in the film



- Partnered with the Jacob K. Javits Center to monitor the use of its new green roof habitat by wildlife
- Joined with advocacy efforts by Audubon New York to oppose lifting restrictions on incidental take of eagles at wind turbine sites
- Alerted our membership to petition and oppose any federal actions to weaken the Migratory Bird Treaty Act





- 1. Van Cortlandt Park
- 2. The Bronx Zoo
- 3. The Brother Islands
- 4. Greenpoint
- 5. JFK Airport
- 6. Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- 7. Plumb Beach
- 8. Breezy Point
- 9. Wolfe's Pond Park
- 10. Freshkills Park
- 11. Governors Island
- 12. National September 11 Memorial & Museum
- 13. City Hall
- 14. Jacob K. Javits Convention Center
- 15. Central Park (continued on page 7)

OUR PROGRAMS FOCUS ON ACTIVITIES THAT HAVE THE GREATEST CONSERVATION IMPACT



1. VAN CORTLAND PARK

We conduct free bird walks that are open to the public

2. THE BRONX ZOO

We test bird-friendly glass at our songbird flight tunnel

3. THE BROTHER ISLANDS

We've monitored a total of 17 Harbor Herons nesting islands for over 30 years



4. GREENPOINT

We're working with the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund to make this a greener neighborhood

5. JFK AIRPORT

We partnered with the Port Authority to create a program to trap, band, and relocate snowy owls at area airports

6. JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

Following several years of continuous advocacy and cooperation with many partners including the Birders Coalition for Gateway, the West Pond breach will be repaired, restoring the pond to a freshwater habitat

7. PLUMB BEACH

We tag and monitor horseshoe crabs, an important food source for the endangered *Rufa* red knot

8. BREEZY POINT

We work with the National Park Service to monitor the nest productivity of American oystercatchers

9. WOLFE'S POND PARK

In cooperation with multiple partners, we fitted two great egrets with GPS/SMS transmitters, to better understand their use of foraging habitat and migratory patterns

10. FRESHKILLS PARK

We bring groups to this newly opened refuge and grassland habitat, home to a significant nesting population of grasshopper sparrows

11. GOVERNORS ISLAND

Our annual tern festival and common tern monitoring help this species of conservation concern

12. NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

This year the Tribute in Light's beams were turned off eight times as part of our monitoring program to protect night-migrating songbirds

13. CITY HALL

We've advocated on behalf of the Lights Out program, a ban on harmful microbeads, and reduction in usage of plastic bags

14. JACOB K. JAVITS CONVENTION CENTER

We monitor birds, insects, and other wildlife on the Javits Center's new green roof

15. CENTRAL PARK

We conduct year-round bird walks and classes and organize the Audubon Christmas Bird Count



Seven species of wading birds nested this year on New York City's Harbor Heron islands. NYC Audubon has monitored these breeding colonies since they were first established over 30 years ago, and documented abandonment of colonies due to suspected human disturbance, predators, and environmental pollution. Continued monitoring will allow us to better understand a decline in the harbor-wide population documented in the last several years, and provide research data needed to protect the birds' nesting and foraging habitat



WATERBIRDS OF THE NEW YORK HARBOR

WATER QUALITY AND HABITAT PROTECTION

The Waterbirds program aims to protect habitat for shorebirds, wading birds, and other waterbirds during the breeding season and migration. Our “city of water” is vulnerable to storm surges, climate change, sea-level rise, and pollution from heavy metals, organics toxins, plastics, and other pollutants. Waterbirds are top predators in the food web and are therefore excellent bio-indicators of overall habitat health and water quality. Waterbirds of the New York Harbor includes our Harbor Herons and Tidal Connections projects.



NYC Audubon scientists partnered with New Jersey Audubon, Lenoir-Rhyne University, the U.S. Forest Service, and New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to catch and tag two great egrets on the mud flats of Staten Island. The birds were fitted with GPS/

SMS transmitters and have been text-messaging their location four times daily. (The two New York City birds settled in coastal South Carolina for the winter.)

Harbor Herons

- Tracking the health of the harbor by monitoring population sizes and distributions of nesting long-legged wading birds and other waterbirds
- Evaluating available food resources by conducting Harbor Herons foraging surveys
- Engaging in full life-cycle conservation for aquatic bird species by protecting habitat important for nesting and migrating wading birds
- Facilitating communication of data among resource practitioners, agency staff, scientists, citizen scientists, and academics

Tidal Connections

- Surveying populations of migrating shorebirds
- Monitoring food resources via horseshoe crab spawning surveys
- Monitoring and banding beach-nesting shorebirds
- Engaging students and adults in local conservation action

Supported in large part by the Leon Levy Foundation, Director of Conservation and Science Dr. Susan Elbin participates in regional and international waterbird meetings and management discussions, and is immediate past president of the Waterbird Society. NYC Audubon is leading efforts to understand and interpret threats to waterbirds from human and natural disturbances. We continue to build an ever more comprehensive waterbirds program, with the Harbor Herons and Tidal Connections components at its core.

SCIENCE-BASED ADVOCACY AND OUTCOMES

This year, NYC Audubon scientists and staff:

- Joined with Audubon New York in opposing state-funded support of Trap/Neuter/Release cat programs; this bill was later vetoed by Governor Cuomo
- Shared results from the 31st annual Harbor Herons nest survey and shorebird work during the 11th Annual Harbor Herons and Other Waterbirds Working Group Meeting. Organized and led by NYC Audubon, this meeting brings together biologists and resource managers working with waterbirds and waterbird habitat in the New York City metropolitan region
- Testified to the New York City Council in favor of banning the sale of products containing plastic microbeads and supported legislation in New York State. These efforts contributed to many others across the nation to ban such products on a local and state level. In December 2015, The Microbead-Free Waters Act passed the U.S. Senate by unanimous consent and was signed into federal law
- Participated in advocacy efforts in opposition to the Port Ambrose Liquefied Natural Gas project, which was subsequently vetoed by Governor Cuomo

- Contributed to a letter to the mayor's office in favor of legislation to reduce the usage of single-use carryout bags
- Advocated for habitat restoration work at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge West Pond. The National Park Service was responsive, and the breach in the pond will be repaired. The pond will return to a freshwater state via installation of a water control structure and ground well
- Completed a fundraising campaign for the purchase of a new Zodiac boat, which will allow continued monitoring of the City's waterbirds and their fragile nesting habitat



This young little blue heron was banded on Elders Point East Island in spring 2015



This year, over 100 volunteers monitored spawning horseshoe crabs at various spawning sites throughout Jamaica Bay and tagged 751 individual crabs



We monitored nesting American oystercatchers, a species of conservation concern in New York State. As part of this effort, we band chicks and adults to track how they use our city's beaches over time



NEW YORK CITY RAPTORS

Above: NYC Audubon cooperates with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to trap, band, and relocate snowy owls at area airports

Right: This weak and malnourished red-tailed hawk was taken to a rehabilitator by one of our raptor rescue volunteers

New York City supports the largest urban population of peregrine falcons in the United States. It is also home to nesting pairs of red-tailed hawks, osprey, American kestrels, and great horned owls, and hosts occasional migratory irruptions of snowy owls. Bald eagles have become more common in the City in recent years—and in 2015 a young pair built a nest on Staten Island, the first confirmed breeding attempt in the City in over 200 years. The major threats that all of these top predators face in New York City are automobile traffic and secondary poisoning by rat poison.

The New York City Raptors program includes a volunteer rapid-response raptor rescue team that investigates reports of injured or trapped birds of prey, assesses each bird's health, and makes sure it is either transported to a rehabilitator or safely released back into the wild. We also publish a pamphlet about the best way to use rodenticides in the City and distribute these at no cost at outreach events.



SCIENCE-BASED ADVOCACY AND OUTCOMES

This year, NYC Audubon scientists and staff:

- Coordinated our volunteer raptor rescue group
- Joined the American Bird Conservancy in writing a letter to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, demanding a ban on second-generation rodenticide
- Aided in banding and transport of snowy owls from City airports

OUTREACH

WE EDUCATE
AND ENGAGE
YOUNG PEOPLE
AND THEIR
FAMILIES
THROUGHOUT
THE CITY'S FIVE
BOROUGHES



Above: Through our ongoing Tidal Connections education program, we teach local students about the beach and marsh ecosystems of Jamaica Bay and lead beach cleanups each spring at local beaches including Plumb Beach, Brooklyn

NYC Audubon provides fun educational opportunities through outreach events, publications, and special programs. In 2015, we:

- Raised awareness about the dangers to beach-nesting birds with our “Be a Good Egg” campaign
- Explored Floyd Bennett Field with local students during the Spring Fling
- Introduced the wildlife of New York Harbor via a free City of Water Day harbor ecocruise
- Celebrated Governors Island’s colony of New York State-threatened common terns with our inaugural “It’s Your Tern” Festival
- Engaged young birders via our KIDS Member Program for 8- to 12-year-olds, which includes two free bird walks per year
- Published three new issues of *Look Around New York City*, our newsletter for children in grades 3-5. Over 5,000 copies were distributed including 3,800 to local public schools and environmental centers



Over 200 local school children took part in a NYC Audubon bird walk and talk at the Spring Fling at Floyd Bennett Field

We connect people to the birds and natural world of New York City via bird walks, trips, classes, and publications.

As a grassroots community, we provide fun, educational, and enriching activities and resources that foster engaged stewardship, especially in sensitive areas like Jamaica Bay.

- Over 200 public programs, reaching over 2,000 participants, included 17 summer and winter ecocruises in New York Harbor and Jamaica Bay; regular local birding trips and overnight birding trips; and meetings of NYC Audubon's Camera Club
- Seven free lectures at the Arsenal in Central Park featured work by experts in conservation and ornithological research
- Free bird walks open to the public included 13 "Birding For Families" walks offered in partnership with the Central Park Conservancy, 35 bird walks with Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy, and 19 walks with the Bryant Park Corporation
- Ten free member events, open 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* monthly newsletter engaged a readership of 5,000 subscribers with timely conservation news and updates
- Our website, www.nycaudubon.org, Syrinx blog, and social media outlets provided online outreach and education opportunities

The 10th Annual Shorebird Festival drew 175 participants to bird walks and presentations at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge



MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

With funding from the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund, NYC Audubon and local residents created a native plant garden in McGolrick Park, Brooklyn, to provide quality stopover habitat for migratory songbirds



NYC Audubon's 3,000 Contributing Members, hailing from all five boroughs, make all of the work that we do possible. Our success also depends fundamentally on our corps of stalwart volunteers, who sustain all of our conservation and outreach. In addition to their invaluable contributions to our primary conservation work via Project Safe Flight and the Waterbirds of the New York Harbor program, volunteers took part in many events throughout the year, including planting and care of the "Urban Oasis," a new native plant garden in McGolrick Park, Brooklyn; saltmarsh restoration; beach cleanups; and conservation outreach events. In all, more than 961 volunteers contributed over 3,600 hours of volunteer work to NYC Audubon's mission over the last year.

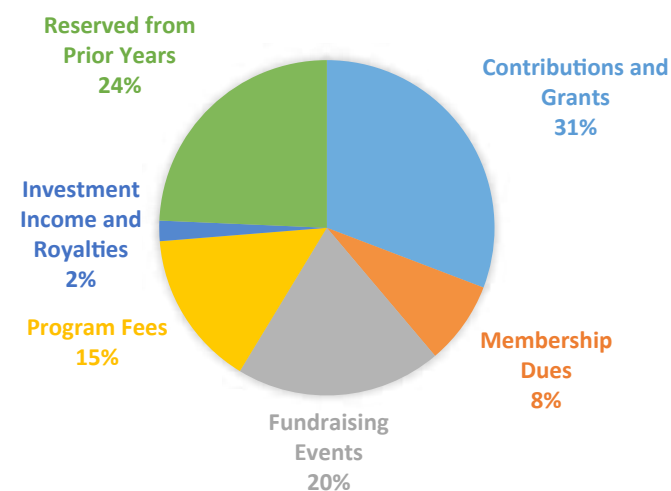


In cooperation with local Hindu group Sadhana, we cleaned up beaches in Jamaica Bay in a manner that respects religious offerings left on the shoreline by the local community

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2015

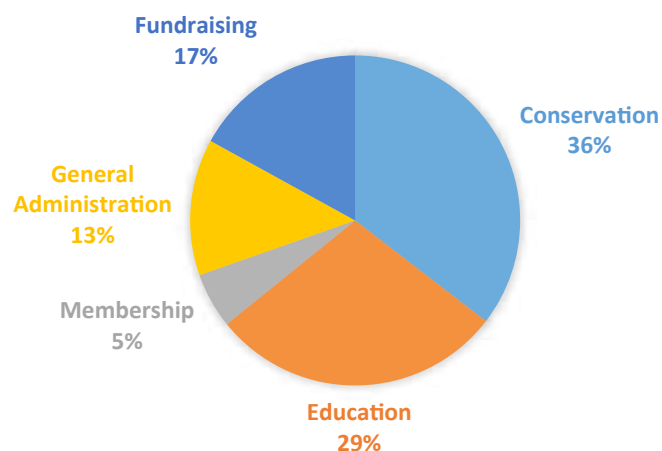
SUPPORT & REVENUE



Contributions and Grants (31%)	\$	303,891
Membership Dues (8%)	\$	79,199
Fundraising Events (20%)	\$	195,790
Program Fees (15%)	\$	148,391
Investment Income and Royalties (2%)	\$	19,413
Reserved from Prior Years (24%)	\$	239,848

Total Support & Revenue **\$ 986,532**

EXPENSES



Conservation (36%)	\$	349,689
Education (29%)	\$	283,521
Membership (5%)	\$	53,584
General Administration (13%)	\$	132,095
Fundraising (17%)	\$	167,643

Total Expenses (100%) **\$ 986,532**

BALANCE SHEET

Assets	Cash	\$17,812
	Receivables	\$25,668
	Prepaid Expenses	\$18,365
	Fixed Assets	\$22,581
	Investments	\$724,430
	Other Assets	\$32,300
	Total Assets	\$841,156
Liabilities	Accounts Payable	\$4,947
	Deferred Revenue	\$47,089
	Total Liabilities	\$52,036
Net Assets	Unrestricted	\$32,390
	Temporarily Restricted	\$724,430
	Permanently Restricted	\$32,300
	Total Net Assets	\$789,120
Total Liabilities and Net Assets		\$841,156

NYC AUDUBON'S

conservation work and outreach programs are made possible by the generous contributions of members and friends. We would like to express our gratitude to the Leon Levy Foundation for its leadership support, and to all those who have supported our work over the past year. The donor listings below include gifts received April 1, 2014, through March 31, 2015.



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