



NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON



**ANNUAL REPORT 2011**

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

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New York City is home to more than 350 bird species. For some it is a year-round residence, for others a seasonal breeding ground, while some may pay a visit just once in a decade. Remarkably, that number represents more than a third of all bird species in the US.

It is ironic that New York City is a birder's paradise because as the decades fly by, the millions of birds that pass this way annually have less and less space in which to rest, nest, and forage. It is the work of NYC Audubon and supporters like you to reverse that trend. This year, more than 400 volunteers joined us in our ongoing programs throughout the city, clearing more than a ton of garbage from the shores of Jamaica Bay

in Brooklyn and Queens, planting more than 600 native trees in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, removing invasive plant species from Clove Lakes Park in Staten Island and Idlewild Park in Queens, and monitoring bird populations throughout the harbor.

Our efforts also continue to protect Four Sparrow Marsh in Brooklyn, Arlington Cove Marsh and Pouch Camp in Staten Island, and Ridgewood Reservoir in Queens and

Brooklyn, among others, to ensure the future of these natural areas and keep them safe for our winged neighbors. This year our recently launched environmental education program for inner-city students reached a total of almost 350 teens whom we brought to the Bronx River and Jamaica Bay to look around, and learn. If we are able to continue this outreach, over time we will greatly expand our advocacy base with the energy and diversity of a new generation.

Our Lights Out New York program continues to grow and we expect to soon close in on our near-term target of having recruited 100 NYC office towers for the program. Participants such as the Chrysler Building, Bank of America Tower, Con Edison Clock Tower, New York Times Building, and many more have all agreed to shut off their exterior decorative lights from midnight until dawn during the spring and autumn migration seasons, vitally important for the safety of migrating birds.

We have much work to do in the coming year: Increase our efforts to defend and enhance the natural areas that our hundreds of bird species need to sustain them in the most developed urban area in the country. We need to expand our studies of flight patterns and window collisions so we can get our Lights Out program and bird-safe glass included in NYC building codes. We have to increase our efforts to plant native species and remove invasive species in parks and natural areas throughout the city. And we need to continue our efforts in removing trash from areas where birds nest and forage in all five boroughs—work our under-funded city agencies frequently cannot perform.

Birds cannot defend themselves from the onslaught of development or continued outpouring of toxins into their environment. They need our help, and yours, and we are grateful for and encouraged by all the help we have had this year. Thank you.

Regards,

Oakes Ames  
President

# EDUCATION

*New York City Audubon offers a rich array of education programs for members and the general public.*



## EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

Our trips allow participants to explore all five boroughs, as well as regional and international sites that are important destinations for our city's migrating birds. We hosted more than 270 events this year, including classroom courses, bike trips, and nature walks in all five boroughs, as well as eco-cruises on the East River. More than 3,100 participants enjoyed this year's adventures.

## EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

NYC Audubon reaches the children of New York City in a variety of ways. Almost 5,000 students receive *LookAround NYC*, our award-winning, science-based newsletter for 4th to 6th graders. The focus of this year's *LookAround* issues were the underwater Hudson Canyon, the layers of life in the forest, fishing, and how to keep city garbage and sewage from harming marine wildlife.

In the recent past, we have brought almost 350 New York City students to the natural environments of the boroughs. This year in a new effort, we developed an eight-part outdoor curriculum for 2nd graders. Launched in a Bronx charter school, we introduced the students to a variety of natural habitats in parks using a hands-on, experiential program. We also received a grant from the Catskill

Watershed Corporation to teach students about the watershed of New York City, including trips to important reservoirs, and began teaching that program to students at a middle school in Brooklyn.

In addition, we initiated a project with the nonprofit organization Rocking the Boat (RTB), located in the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx, to involve students in their after-school programs in monitoring long-legged wading birds. NYC Audubon trained RTB staff and their interns in identification and monitoring techniques and mentored the students as they collected data in support of our citizen science project, studying foraging patterns of waders in New York Harbor.

We also continued our partnership with the Wallerstein Collaborative for Urban Environmental Education at New York University to teach students about the ecology of Jamaica Bay and its importance to migratory shorebirds. Two NYU graduate students worked with us to refine a three-part curriculum that included classroom sessions as well as a trip to the bay for monitoring and cleanup. Three schools participated this year.

# VOLUNTEERS

*Volunteers are the lifeblood of NYC Audubon and assist us in achieving our mission in numerous ways.*



Education volunteers assisted with eco-cruises, and other nature trips, helped produce our children's newsletter, *LookAround NYC*, and our member newsletter, *The Urban Audubon*. Inside our offices, volunteers were an instrumental presence as well, helping to answer phones, assisting with important mailings and working on special projects. Our volunteers come from all five boroughs and are representative of the diversity of people in the city.

Also this year, through the support of a Toyota TogetherGreen Volunteer Days grant, our volunteer crews planted hundreds of

native trees and removed alien species in city parks, and joined in International Coastal Cleanup Day. Citizen science volunteers also collected data for the Great Egret Foraging Study around New York Harbor, patrolled routes around the city looking for dead and injured birds in support of Project Safe Flight, monitored the Tribute in Light on September 11th, and more (see "Conservation").

Our thanks to the 400 volunteers who contributed more than 2,500 hours this year!

# CONSERVATION

*NYC Audubon's conservation programs are made possible by leadership support from the Leon Levy Foundation and from TogetherGreen, a partnership between Toyota and the National Audubon Society.*

## PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

New York City is located at a crucial crossroads on the New York City Atlantic Flyway, one of just four major migration routes in the United States. Millions of birds make a stop here every year to refuel for their journeys, which may be thousands of miles long. Our research indicates that as many as 90,000 birds unexpectedly end their flights here every year when they collide with reflective glass and die.

Project Safe Flight's monitoring and research program improves our understanding of the causes behind bird collisions with glass and studies ways to prevent them. During the 2010 spring and fall migrations, 25 volunteers patrolled Manhattan and found dead or injured birds from 25 different species. These surveys enable us to approach the managers of the most deadly buildings to discuss mitigation.

This year NYC Audubon created a workshop for architects about making the city safer for birds. Partnering with the NYC chapter of the US Green Building Council, NYC Audubon was able to award the two-dozen participating architects with continuing education credit from the American Institute of Architects. Given the success of this first effort, we plan to hold these workshops at least semi-annually in the future.

Project Safe Flight also continued its monitoring of the September 11 "Tribute in Light," with 12 volunteers and staff participating in all-night observation. The conditions this year presented the perfect storm: after a succession of stormy days that delayed migration for most birds, on September 11 the rain stopped, there was a new moon, and low winds. When the birds whose migrations had been delayed finally took to the skies, the September 11 memorial trapped more than 10,000 of them in the huge beams of light rising from Battery Park. Fortunately, NYC Audubon and the Municipal Art Society, the sponsor of this annual memorial event, had a protocol in place: The



lights were turned off five times during the course of the night-long ceremony, allowing the birds to escape the beams and continue safely on their migratory pathways.

Subsequently, NYC Audubon staff ornithologists Susan Elbin and John Rowden, and board member Andrew Farnsworth, presented a paper about nocturnal migration and the lessons learned from the Tribute in Light to the Association of Northeastern Biologists during their Albany conference on applied field biology.

## HARBOR HERONS

Keeping count of colonial waterbirds enables us to determine the health of New York Harbor on a continuing basis. The 2010 nesting survey marked NYC Audubon's 25th year in this effort. This year we observed nine species of wading birds nesting on nine islands in the harbor. In comparison to the last comprehensive nesting survey conducted in 2007, population increases were observed for great egret (+24%), black-crowned night-heron (+6%), glossy ibis (+4%), and yellow-crowned night-heron populations (+107%). Snowy egret population numbers had declined slightly (-10%), and cattle egret, little blue heron, tricolored heron, and green heron have persisted at constant, low numbers. These population levels indicate that the New York Harbor is providing good nesting and adequate foraging habitat. Additional information about colony productivity is still needed.

In addition to our population survey work, three doctoral students are working with us in the colonies, examining feathers of nestling birds for growth and environmental stressors, and for nestling diet as evidenced by isotopic signatures in carbon and nitrogen found in growing feathers. These studies and our analyses of regurgitated, partially-digested food and pellets (composed of bones, scales, and other nondigestible matter) help us identify the diet composition and quality. This information allows resource managers to protect important areas that support birds as they raise their young.

## NATURAL AREAS INITIATIVE

At the request of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, NYC Audubon volunteers conducted a first-ever breeding bird census in Cunningham Park, Queens—240 acres of forest habitat and ponds. Beginning in May 2010, three trained volunteers systematically searched Cunningham Park for breeding birds during a 10-week period, beginning in mid-May. Using standard Breeding Bird Census protocols, the team observed 44 species, 10 of which were confirmed or probable breeders. American robins were the most abundant breeding bird on the site.

We were also able to conduct a second year of monitoring and site restoration work in Jamaica Bay, studying shorebirds and the horseshoe crabs whose eggs provide an important food source for the birds. From mid-April until late in June, volunteer citizen scientists monitored several Jamaica Bay beaches for shorebirds and Brooklyn's

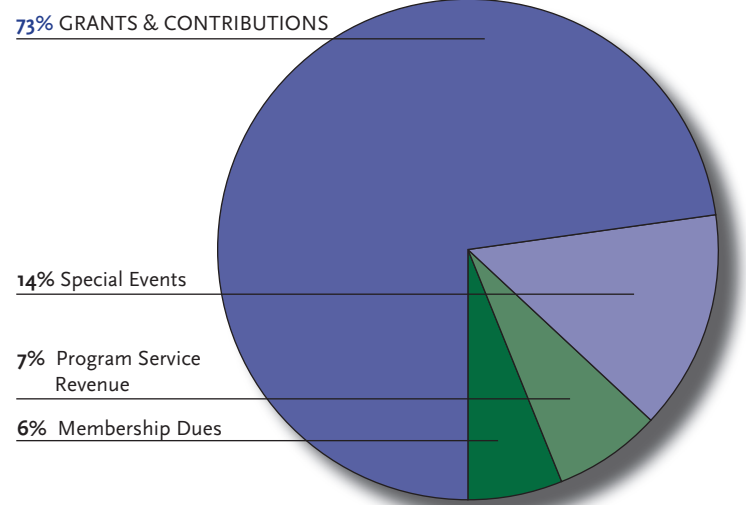
Plumb Beach for horseshoe crabs. This year our team included enthusiastic members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. This program contributed data to the International Shorebird Survey, a long-term database, and to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Horseshoe Crabs database.

Analysis of our data indicates that Plumb Beach is the most productive location for horseshoe crabs of all beaches monitored in the state. Shorebird numbers among the 24 species counted in Jamaica Bay declined quite dramatically between 2009 and 2010, from 28,442 to 11,441. Most of the decline was attributable to local population drops by the thousands in semipalmated sandpipers, sanderlings, and dunlins, with a smaller but high-percentage drop in red knots. Whether these declines are a statistical outlier resulting from weather conditions, or a long-term alteration due to climate change, or a factor we have not yet recognized, remains to be seen. This observed change, however, shows how important our monitoring is in providing an early warning. Results from this monitoring work are shared with the National Park Service and the Shorebird Recovery Project of Massachusetts-based Manomet Center for Conservation Science, which uses such data to inform management practices nationally.

*In our conservation work in particular, we train citizen scientists who adopt as their avocation the work of assisting us in preserving the hundreds of bird species that pass this way every year.*

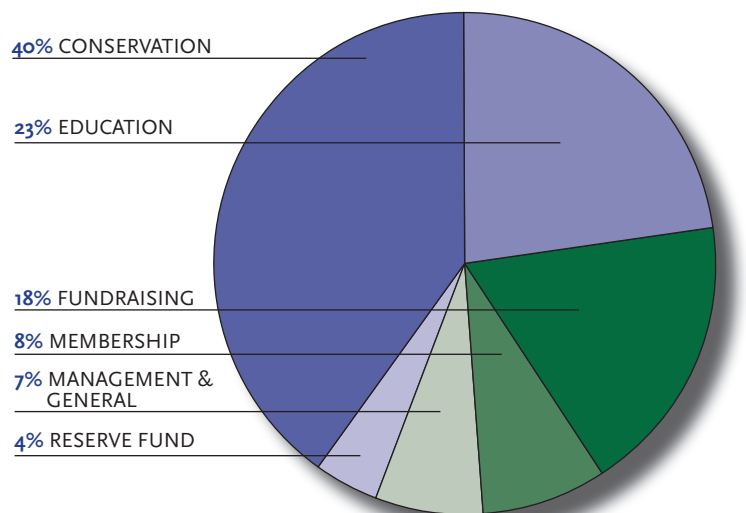


Grants & Contributions	\$624,806	73%
Special Events	122,613	14%
Program Service Revenue	56,540	7%
Membership Dues	48,824	6%
<b>Total Support &amp; Revenue</b>	<b>\$852,783</b>	<b>100%</b>



# INCOME & EXPENSES

Conservation	\$341,375	40%
Education	\$196,500	23%
Fundraising	\$150,479	18%
Membership	\$71,189	8%
Management & General	\$55,941	7%
Reserve Fund	\$37,299	4%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$852,783</b>	<b>100%</b>



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*New York City Audubon's conservation programs are made possible by the leadership support of the Leon Levy Foundation.*



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