

ANNUAL REPORT 2012







MAKING A FUTURE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S BIRDS



OUR MISSION

he mission of NYC Audubon is to protect wild birds and their habitat 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, restoration, 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 tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. NYC Audubon meets all of the Better Business Bureau's Standards of Charity Accountability.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

ore than 30 years ago, several dozen members of the National Audubon Society founded NYC Audubon to be the voice for birds and wildlife habitat in New York City. Originally an all-volunteer group, over the years we have grown into a professional organization in order to meet the critical need for scientific knowledge, expertise, and advocacy on behalf of the wild birds that live, breed, winter, or stop over in the five boroughs.

At heart, though, we remain a grassroots organization. Our effectiveness depends on the tremendous amount of time, effort, expertise, and financial support that our members, volunteers, and donors—you!—contribute.

To guide our work going forward, in September 2011, our board approved a new five-year strategic plan developed by board, staff, and volunteers. It identifies priority species and focuses on the most effective avenues for protecting them: preserving key habitat regions and making the City's built and natural landscape safer and more hospitable to birds.

The plan also recognizes that in order to advise and advocate effectively on issues affecting birds, we must increase and broaden the ranks of New Yorkers involved in conservation. We must build new partnerships and achieve sustainable funding for our research and outreach programs.

This report highlights what our dedicated community of conservationists has accomplished over the last year toward the plan's goals. To succeed in our mission of protecting the City's wild birds and habitat, we count on you to stay involved and bring in new friends and supporters. Please use the enclosed card to contribute or to get more information on how you can help.

With thanks,

Harry Maas

Fledging a Focused Strategy

PROTECTING CITY BIRDS

ild birds, our closest connection to nature in New York City, face an uncertain future. In addition to continuing habitat loss and fragmentation, the changing climate poses unknown risks. Birds migrating through the City face an increasingly hazardous skyline and fewer stopover spots. Alarmingly, 105 of the some 300 species that spend all or part of the year in the five boroughs are listed as birds of conservation concern. This includes not just species well known to be in trouble, but also some of our most common wild birds. Even the City's most abundant native species, the white-throated sparrow, has suffered a sharp population decline.

NYC Audubon advocates for the protection of wild birds based on a scientific understanding of their habitat needs and population trends, and the threats to their survival. We work by providing research data and expert advice to natural resource managers, regulatory agencies, and private developers—and by mobilizing our members and New Yorkers to speak out when birds and their habitats are threatened. Last year, as board, staff, and volunteers convened to develop our strategic plan for 2011-2015, we focused with a renewed sense of urgency on how we can be most effective in safeguarding the City's wild birds.



The strategic planning process began with the creation of a list of priority species on which to focus our conservation efforts. Consulting with outside experts, we weighed factors such as the percentage of a given species' population in the City and its ecological importance; the existence of local threats; and NYC Audubon's opportunity to have an impact because of our expertise, the availability of funding, or a gap in other conservation efforts.



A primary goal of the plan, highlighted in this report, is to focus on activities that will have the greatest impact on priority species and their habitats. Strategies include improving stopover habitat and reducing collision threats (our Project Safe Flight) and concentrating our research, restoration, and advocacy on three regions most important to priority species: Jamaica Bay, Western Long Island Sound, and Staten Island.



Equally important are our goals to increase the number and diversity of people engaged in the conservation of New York City birds, and to build organizational capacity and reach. Thanks to our dedicated members, volunteers, and donors, we have created a solid foundation of advocacy, volunteer engagement, partnership, and scientific research. Now, we must widen our base and expand our scientific and educational efforts to meet the challenge of protecting wild birds in an urbanizing and warming world.



NYC AUDUBON PRIORITY SPECIES

American oystercatcher Red knot Ruddy turnstone Semipalmated sandpiper Short-billed dowitcher Greater yellowlegs Dunlin Sanderling Saltmarsh sparrow Piping plover Whimbrel American golden-plover Black-bellied plover Buff-breasted sandpiper Black-crowned night-heron Glossy ibis Snowy egret Willet Hudsonian godwit Marbled godwit Purple sandpiper American woodcock Seaside sparrow Great egret Yellow-crowned night-heron Red-necked phalarope Little blue heron American kestrel Black-throated blue warbler Canada warbler Cape May warbler

Bay-breasted warbler



Safe Streets (and Buildings) for Birds



Project Safe Flight seeks to reduce the alarming number of bird collisions in New York City caused by reflective or transparent glass and by buildings lit at night. Every September, our volunteers monitor the Tribute in Light (right) for birds trapped in the light heams. If necessary, the lights are shut off to allow the birds to escape.



uring fall and spring migration, millions of birds traveling the Atlantic Flyway between their wintering and nesting grounds funnel through New York City, stopping in parks and natural areas to rest and refuel. In addition, dozens of species live in the five boroughs year-round. But the City can be perilous for birds. A scientific study we published in 2009 found that every year some 90,000 birds die or are injured from collision with City buildings; birds become confused by lights at night and by a dizzying abundance of reflective and transparent glass that appears to show safe passage to sky or trees.

The places in the city where birds can safely rest, find food, and raise their young are few and far between. A major goal of NYC Audubon is to make the City more bird-friendly. We began Project Safe Flight in 1997 to increase and improve urban bird habitats and reduce the dangers of glass and light in the built landscape. With the leadership support of the Leon Levy Foundation, we are conducting research on bird collisions, helping to develop solutions, and raising awareness of the problem among architects, developers, and government agencies.



MILESTONES

- Nearly 100 buildings participated in our Lights Out New York program, turning off their lights after midnight during migration, reducing the risks to birds.
- Sixty architects attended our second year of workshops on bird-friendly building design.
- Staff and interns gathered data needed to map bird migration pathways through New York City by recording movement and flight call data from rooftops.
 Analysis of the data will yield the firstever maps of migration through the City to support our effort to persuade the City to include bird-friendly construction in its planning and zoning.
- Project Safe Flight staff and citizen scientists conducted a study to increase the accuracy of our bird collision data, determining what percentage of birds harmed in collisions remain near buildings long enough to be counted.
- More than 40 members of New York
 State Audubon chapters participated in
 our bird collision monitoring training
 in order to bring Project Safe Flight
 monitoring to their cities and towns.



MAKING A DIFERENCE Susan Houston, Helping Prevent Bird Collisions

Several times a week in the fall and spring, Susan Houston is out at 6:30 a.m. scouting the perimeter of the glass-fronted sections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for dead and injured birds. For the past two years, Houston has been a volunteer monitor for NYC Audubon's Project Safe Flight, gathering data to determine which birds are most at risk from window collisions and what building elements and locations pose the greatest threat. She is also trained to pick up and properly release stunned birds so they don't fly right back into the window. "It's always a good day when I don't find any birds," she says. "But I'm glad that I'm doing this field work so NYC Audubon can correlate the information and understand the big picture."



Targeting the Top Places for Birds



JAMAICA BAY Diverse Ecosystem Embedded in a Human Landscape

Within the City's borders lies one of the Northeast's great wetland complexes. Jamaica Bay's open waters, wetlands, beaches, islands, and uplands provide habitat for more than 300 species of birds, as well as a diversity of fish, butterflies, and plants. But the challenges are great. Critical sites remain vulnerable to development. Pollution, trash, a continuing loss of wetlands, and predicted sea level rise threaten the bay's ecological viability. NYC Audubon is a major stakeholder in the planning and management of the bay's lands and waters, advising and advocating with government agencies regarding the impacts of proposed actions. We are engaging residents, students, and volunteers in restoration and stewardship of the bay and research into its ecology.

strategic plan calls for focusing on the three regions with interconnected ecosystems that are most significant for birds: Jamaica Bay, Western Long Island Sound, and Staten Island. These areas hold key habitat for priority species, especially waterbirds, shorebirds, and beach-nesting birds that thrive in the rich ecological zones at the harbor's edge. They contain most of the City's Important Bird Areas as designated by the National Audubon Society and Audubon New York.

MILESTONES

- For the third year in a row, NYC
 Audubon volunteers surveyed spawning horseshoe crabs at Plumb Beach, and we added two additional monitoring sites, providing data for our ongoing study of migratory shorebirds and their habitat needs. Horseshoe crab eggs are an important food source for migrating shorebirds.
- Working with student teachers from New York University's Wallerstein
 Collaborative for Urban Environmental
 Education, we conducted a three-part
 classroom and field ecology curriculum
 with 60 students at three schools in
 neighborhoods near the bay.
- We provided data on horseshoe crab and shorebird numbers to the U.S.
 Army Corps of Engineers and U.S.
 Fish and Wildlife Service to inform restoration planning for Plumb Beach.
- Staff and interns led the second year
 of a study on Rockaway peninsula
 to monitor nesting American
 oystercatchers, a priority species
 for NYC Audubon, whose Atlantic
 Coast population is slowly recovering
 from near extirpation but remains
 vulnerable. Our research will fill a gap
 in a region-wide study led by Manomet

Center for Conservation Sciences.

- Staff, volunteers, and students removed 8,900 pounds of trash from four miles of beaches important for horseshoe crabs and shorebirds.
- In an expansion of our long-term
 Harbor Herons research in the
 bay, staff and our citizen scientists
 conducted scientific monitoring of
 heron and egret colonies at four islands
 in Jamaica Bay.
- Staff scientists and graduate students surveyed saltmarsh sparrows and secretive marsh birds as part of a larger regional study assessing population sizes and productivity of the saltmarsh sparrow, a NYC Audubon priority species.

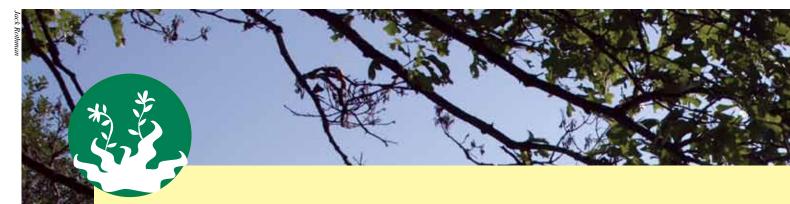


Nesting osprey (opposite page) and sanderling (above) are two of the 300-plus bird species that depend on the Jamaica Bay ecosystem we are working to protect.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE Donna Evans, Monitoring a Shorebird Lifeline

On spring nights with a full or new moon, when the tide is highest, Donna Evans can usually be found on a beach along Jamaica Bay. Measuring off square meters for sampling at regular intervals, she counts the number of horseshoe crabs that have come ashore to spawn, the females burrowing into the sand to lay eggs that the males fertilize. Evans is part of a team of citizen scientists gathering data for NYC Audubon's horseshoe crab monitoring in Jamaica Bay. The eggs are a key food source for migrating shorebirds that refuel in the bay during their northward migration, so declining crab numbers could spell trouble for shorebirds. "It's very exciting to go out at night and see dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of these creatures making their way to shore in this ancient, ancient ritual," she said. Evans learned about the horseshoe crab research on a bird-watching blog three years ago and has been involved ever since. An artist who works on the window display team at Bergdorf Goodman—last summer she painted bird-watching scenes for several windows—she wanted to contribute to conservation science in some way. "I'm thrilled that NYC Audubon has these programs that utilize citizens to collect data, that we can be included in this process without having a Ph.D. in ornithology. It's rewarding for both the volunteers and the organization."



WESTERN LONG ISLAND SOUND Overlooked Bird Habitat in the Inner City

The 1,300-square-mile estuary that begins at the tip of Long Island reaches its westernmost end in the strait between Queens and the Bronx known as The Narrows, or Western Long Island Sound. Even after more than a century of human alteration, this part of the sound remains a significant habitat for birds. Waterfowl crowd the bays along the northern shore in winter, and waterbirds nest on islands. Inland, City parks offer stopover spots for migrants and yearround homes to a number of bird species. NYC Audubon has led the effort to monitor, restore, and protect the island-nesting colonies. We partner with groups in the surrounding community to involve students in restoration and research, and are expanding our research and advocacy to address past degradation and current threats on an ecosystemwide basis.

MILESTONES

- Continuing our long-term
 Harbor Herons research,
 our staff and citizen scientist
 volunteers monitored heron
 nesting colonies on five islands,
 discovering great blue herons
 nesting on Goose Island for the
 second year in a row.
- Our conservation team continued a study to gauge the distribution of heavy metal and organic contaminants affecting island-nesting birds throughout the harbor.
- Partnering with the youth/ community development organization Rocking the Boat, we worked with students to extend shorebird monitoring to the Bronx for the first time, supported by John Rowden's TogetherGreen fellowship.
 Staff introduced high school students to shorebird identification and monitoring, and helped launch a self-

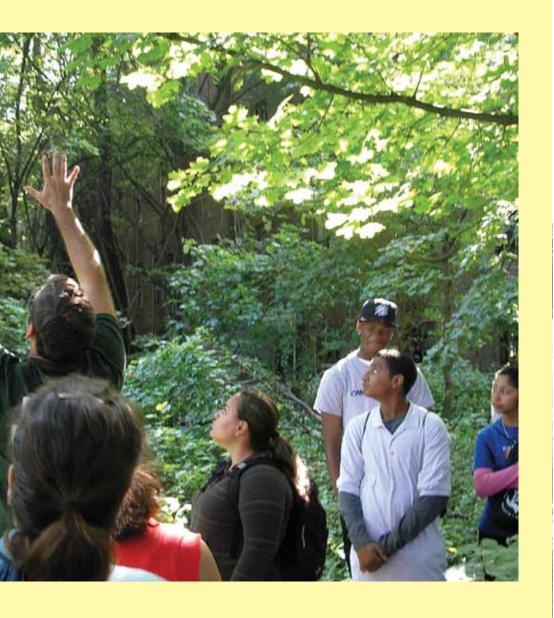
- sustaining shorebird monitoring program at Rocking the Boat's after-school program.
- The City accepted our proposal to design a pilot storm water retention park that also functions as stopover habitat, as part of its groundbreaking Green Infrastructure Plan to reduce combined sewage overflows into the waterways.



Students from The Point in the Bronx participate in a NYC Audubon afterschool program that includes restoring wading bird habitat on North Brother Island. Above: Common tern.











MAKING A DIFFERENCE Joseph O'Sullivan, Contributing to Harbor Herons Research

Flushing resident Joseph O'Sullivan became a serious birder in 2008, to keep his exercise walks interesting. That summer, he volunteered for NYC Audubon's nesting bird survey in Central Park. Since 2009, he has been contributing to our Harbor Herons research by collecting data on wading birds in Alley Pond Park and proofing the findings, checking the information entered online against volunteers' data sheets. "It gives me a chance to do something more than just bird to be in on the action, to make a difference," he says of his role as a citizen scientist. It also has given him a different perspective on the park where he frequently goes birding. "You're counting the birds and actually watching what they are doing. It gives you an appreciation of how the birds are using the park—they either rest or feed there. It's more important for the birds than I initially realized."



STATEN ISLAND The Wildest Borough

The last of the five boroughs to be developed, Staten Island retains the most extensive natural landscapes in the City, including the Greenbelt and tidal wetlands along the northern and western shores. Many of these sites were preserved only through the determined advocacy of conservation groups, NYC Audubon among them. With its variety of soil types and geology as well as a mix of salt marsh and upland habitats, all within the path of the Atlantic Flyway, the borough harbors the greatest diversity of plants and animal species in the City. NYC Audubon began its Harbor Herons citizen science monitoring program on the islands off Staten Island 26 years ago and is expanding volunteer opportunities in the borough. We have been working since our founding to protect and restore the island's remaining wetlands and other natural habitat.



MILESTONES

- In the 26th year of our Harbor Herons program to track populations of herons, egrets, and other colonial waterbirds in New York Harbor, staff and citizen scientists monitored known nesting colonies on five islands off Staten Island.
- Our conservation team continued a study to gauge the distribution of heavy metal and organic contaminants affecting island-nesting birds throughout the harbor.
- Backed by the grassroots activism of members, we successfully advocated for the re-routing of a proposed natural gas pipeline to protect the habitat of Old Place Creek Marsh, and for the restoration of the never-completed edge of Goethals Bridge Pond Preserve as mitigation.
- We started a one-year habitat restoration project on Prall's Island in the Arthur Kill. Partnering with the Natural Resources Group of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, we will be monitoring avian responses to habitat restoration, with the hope that long-legged wading birds will return to nest.

We are monitoring threatened saltmarsh sparrows in Saw Mill Creek Marsh (below). Inset: Volunteers remove invasive buckthorn on Prall's Island with the hope that wading birds will return to nest. Left: American oystercatcher.







MAKING A DIFFERENCE Emily Loffredo, Science and Restoration for Wading Birds

The volunteer opportunities in The Urban Audubon caught Emily Loffredo's eye. Although her career had led to office jobs, she had a degree in biology and wanted to keep up her field experience. "I love to work outside," said Loffredo. "I want to do my part to help conserve valuable habitat." So she signed up for NYC Audubon's Harbor Herons program, twice a month observing the feeding behavior of wading birds in Saw Mill Creek Park on Staten Island, where she lived. Before long, she also joined our staff, working as membership coordinator before moving to Washington, D.C. in early 2012. One memorable project was organizing a member volunteer day with the City parks department to restore habitat on Prall's Island, across Saw Mill Creek. Wading birds had colonized the island in the 1970s but had since abandoned it. Loffredo and a small group spent a hot April day digging and pulling out glossy buckthorn saplings, which crowd out the native trees wading birds like to nest in. Later that spring, Loffredo saw wading birds feeding on the shore of Prall's. "They have the resources there to feed, at least," she said. "Hopefully they will nest there again."



Exploring the Nature in Our Midst



rom early morning bird walks to sunset ecocruises on the East River, from nature photography workshops to lectures by scientific experts, and from school ecology programs to our award-winning *Look Around NYC* newsletter that reaches nearly 5,000 children in grades 4-6, NYC Audubon brings New Yorkers of all ages to nature. To strengthen our advocacy for a sustainable environment for people and wildlife, we are working to engage a greater diversity of New Yorkers in appreciating and conserving nature in the City.

MILESTONES

- We partnered with The New York Times to present the Washington Square Hawk Cam, featuring the red-tailed hawks nesting at New York University. The webcam was viewed by more than 400,000 people all over the world.
- Our new website launched, making it easier for New Yorkers to learn about our adventures, events, and conservation work.
- We began a brand-new blog, Syrinx, to share the latest news about the City's birds.
- Our staff and dozens of volunteers held 275 Events and Adventure programs, serving 2,354 participants of all ages.
- Each issue of The Urban
 Audubon, our quarterly print
 newsletter, reached over

 9,000 members. In the spring

of 2012 the newsletter was changed to a glossy magazine format and expanded to allow for more coverage of our conservation work and growing Events and Adventures program.

Sparrow Marsh, Arlington

friendly design at One World

development projects across

Cove Marsh, and bird-

Trade Center and other

the city.

 NYC Audubon received extensive media coverage, including articles in The New York Times and television reports on WPIX, Fox News, and NYI that cited our experts or covered our activities.

 We led grassroots activists in advocating on behalf of Four



Last year, NYC Audubon held 275 Events and Adventures programs, including bird walks and environmental projects for people of all ages.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE Yoryi De La Rosa, Bringing Conservation to Urban Residents

Yorvi De La Rosa first became involved in NYC Audubon when he counted herons foraging for food in Soundview Park in the Bronx for our long-term research on waterbird populations in New York Harbor. Then he volunteered to enter and analyze the data. Soon he became a mainstay in the office. He researched and wrote a brochure about how rat poison kills birds of prey, which we are distributing widely to encourage homeowners and building managers to use nontoxic rat-control methods. De La Rosa, now in his mid-20s, attended the High School for Environmental Studies, but his interest waned as he wondered whether conserving wildlife in today's world was too big a task. While looking for a job, he decided to volunteer and chose NYC Audubon "to go back to my environmental roots." Now, he says, "I think it can work, especially if you educate people in city neighborhoods about the importance of local wildlife."

SUPPORT FOR NYC AUDUBON

Fiscal Year ending March 2012

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 of our donors, members, and volunteers who have supported our work over the past year.

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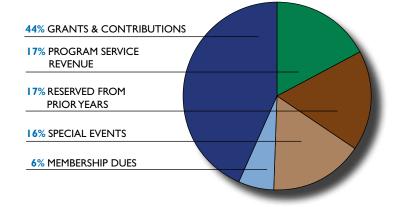
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Total Support & Revenue	\$887,593	100%
Membership Dues	\$52,105	6%
Special Events	\$144,721	16%
Reserved from Prior Years	\$153,579	17%
Program Service Revenue	\$153,181	17%
Grants & Contributions	\$384,007	44%



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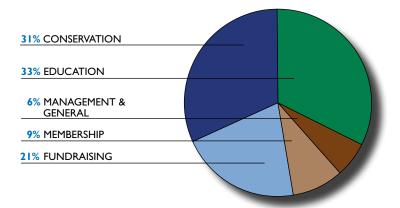
Tracy Cabanis

Amy S. Campbell

George R. Bunn, Jr.

Mary Lindley Burton

Total Expenses	\$887,593	100%
Fundraising	\$185,932	21%
Membership	\$76,189	9%
Management & General	\$54,724	6%
Education	\$290,243	33%
Conservation	\$280,505	31%





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James & Eve Ellan Starkman Tom & Wendy Stephenson Judith Anne Stevens Zoe Sara Strother & J. Reynolds Carolyn Summers & David A. Brittenham Joan F. Susha Charles & Sally Svenson Carl & Oksana Sward Judy Sweeney Marc Sweet Marina Tan Muneer Tarazi & Renata Meyer-Tarazi Loretta A. Terranova Rebecca Myers Thomas Mary Ann Tighe Grace Tilger Margaret M. Tobin Coralie Toevs Judith Torop Victoria Traube Elizabeth Ungar Constantine Valaoritis Lvnne Veitch Carol & Frank J. Veith David Venderbush & Joanna Delson Katherine Von Hartz Nancy Ann Ward Irene C. Warshauer Aaron Wasserman Joyce Jed & Arnold Wendroff

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BEQUESTS

Estate of Frank Maira

Alison Bruce Rea

Donna Roberts

B. Franklin Reinauer III