



HATCHING A NEW NAME FOR NYC AUDUBON:

A Legacy of Conservation, Looking
to the Future



A REPORT FOR NYC AUDUBON MEMBERS
MAY 1, 2024



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NEW NAME, SAME MISSION



For nearly two years, New York City Audubon has discussed the Audubon name. We've wrestled with our namesake's legacy, and considered hundreds of possible new names, while continuing our important work of protecting wild birds and habitat across the five boroughs. After a robust and inclusive process involving thousands of stakeholders, we are excited to soon introduce ourselves as **NYC Bird Alliance**. This name will soon adorn hats and t-shirts worn proudly in urban parks, on Harbor Islands, and on green roofs across the City.

This report explains our process and the road to a new name. While the name we use to introduce ourselves is new, [our work isn't changing at all](#). We continue to collect data on bird populations and the habitats they need to thrive; we lead hundreds of public programs across the City annually, including a new initiative that welcomes public housing residents into birding; we fight to make New York City a bird-friendly urban environment with legislation that reduces light at night and makes windows safe for birds.

For 45 years, since our founding by a group of dedicated bird conservationists, we've been a proud chapter of the National Audubon Society and we remain an [affiliated chapter](#), even with the name change. It is imperative that we work collaboratively among an alliance of like-minded conservationists to achieve the results that make birds' lives better—and safer—in our city and beyond. As an urban chapter, we have worked alongside the national organization and our fellow chapters on important conservation initiatives on the Atlantic Flyway, and on national initiatives coast-to-coast.

At our Annual Meeting on June 5, 2024, our members will be able to [vote](#) to approve the new name and to share in our excitement about our future work and impact.

NYC Audubon Director of Conservation and Science, Dustin Partridge, PhD, holds a banded American Oystercatcher chick at Jacob Riis Park in Queens, part of our organization's efforts to monitor and protect the shorebirds that nest each summer on City beaches.

A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION



In 1978, a group of 30 trailblazing Central Park birders met to explore the possibility of forming a New York City chapter of the National Audubon Society. Their goal: create a local, broad-based environmental organization that could advocate for bird habitat in the City's parks and natural areas.

This small group of conservation activists quickly notched notable and substantial victories as they expanded their ranks. The young NYC Audubon effectively opposed a Central Park Conservancy plan to alter the critical bird habitat in the park's woodland Ramble, rallying support from the public, attending meetings with park officials, and producing a *Report of Birding Areas in the Ramble* that led to amendments which made the plan more bird-friendly. Their hard work earned the organization prominent recognition in *The New York Times*. Additionally, during the organization's first meeting to elect officers in December 1979, the group expanded their activism beyond Central Park, successfully opposing the environmentally unsound "Westway" highway project along the Hudson River on Manhattan's West Side.

Since its activist beginnings, our organization has consistently utilized sound science and passionate advocacy to protect New York City's birds and habitats. This includes the City's [longest-running bird survey of the Harbor's islands](#) to sound the alarm on declining waterbird populations, as well as crucial efforts to preserve the ecologically vital Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens in the '80s and '90s. Today, we are a nationwide leader and model for urban bird conservation, spearheading initiatives such as the groundbreaking Project Safe Flight collisions research and prevention program started in 1997, successful advocacy of [landmark bird-safe buildings legislation in 2019 and 2022](#), and most recently, advocating for incentives to promote green infrastructure and studying the biodiversity on green roofs for buildings like the Javits Center and influential companies like Google.

NYC Audubon began as a grassroots organization run by visionary volunteers. We owe them an enormous debt—a debt we can repay by moving their work forward. Four and half decades on, we are a leading environmental organization in New York City with a professional staff, an army of thousands of volunteers, and now a new name to usher us forward. Our mission remains the same, as we follow the path laid by our founders by marrying our decades of scientific data with the thousands of New Yorkers we engage, to protect our City's birds.



In 2004, NYC Audubon led a rally after the nest of iconic Red-tailed Hawk Pale Male was removed by a building near Central Park. Amidst public pressure, the building worked with NYC Audubon to build a nest platform, ensuring Pale Male and his mate Lola could continue breeding and helping to establish the vibrant Red-tailed Hawk population New Yorkers see today.

ASSESSMENT OF THE AUDUBON NAME (2022-2023)



In 2022, the NYC Audubon board of directors and staff conducted a thorough assessment of the our name's impact on our mission to protect birds and engage New Yorkers in conservation. We did not take this decision lightly, nor do our assessment in a vacuum: many other chapters of the National Audubon Society have had similar conversations about the inclusion of "Audubon" in their names, in light of discussions about our namesake [John James Audubon](#) and his attitudes and actions toward indigenous people and people of color. At the same time, the National Audubon Society undertook its own evaluation of the name.*

As an urban chapter seeking to magnify our impact in bird and habitat conservation, NYC Audubon board and staff considered whether the Audubon name posed any barrier to others joining our work, and if so, to what extent that could affect our ability to advocate on behalf of birds. We wanted to honestly explore whether our name could diminish our impact now and in the future. We also recognized that we have benefited from the visibility and perceived brand that "Audubon" imparted in the past. We weighed seriously what a name change might mean.

Over eight months of talking with members, volunteers, partner organizations, funders, and program participants, our board and staff ultimately concluded that the Audubon name stood in the way of engaging diverse audiences and effectively bringing in others to join our work advocating for and protecting birds. Given the urgency of bird conservation in the face of climate change and the need to protect our City's incredible biodiversity, this was a crucial concern. As stewards of the organization seeking to help it grow in the future, our board of directors voted on March 23, 2023 to drop "Audubon" and begin an inclusive and robust process to identify a new name for our organization. You can read the March 2023 Board of Directors' statement about the change [here](#).

** In March 2023, the National Audubon Society announced that they would retain their name.*



In 2023, NYC Audubon launched a new "NYCHA in Nature" program, a partnership with the Public Housing Community Fund that brings birding to New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) campuses. This initiative is one of many ways NYC Audubon is working to increase accessibility to nature and wildlife for New Yorkers of all backgrounds.

HOW WE CHOSE A NEW NAME (2023-2024)



In Spring 2023, our organization launched a [process](#) to come up with a new name and involved our community of stakeholders and supporters every step of the way. We sought a transparent process that was thorough and thoughtful, to identify an inclusive and welcoming name that represents our work to protect birds and habitat in an urban environment.

Over a period of eight months, we collected nearly 250 name suggestions from 140 different people. We solicited ideas through social media, from our *Urban Audubon* and eGret newsletters, our website, education programs, and in-person events. Along the way, we asked for suggestions and feedback about what a new name should and should not be.

In Fall 2023 we assembled a [Task Force](#) of board members, staff, advisory council members, partners, and volunteers—covering a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and perspectives to ensure we considered all facets of our new name. Guided by insights from marketing and branding experts, the Task Force narrowed the choices down to a shortlist of Top 5 Names. We then solicited feedback on those five names, receiving responses from nearly 1,000 people—including hundreds of members—through a series of Zoom and in-person gatherings, online polls, social media comments, and email responses.

Based on the input received, the Task Force recommended two final names to the Board of Directors: “Birds NYC” and “NYC Bird Alliance.” At its quarterly meeting in March 2024, the Board of Directors chose **NYC Bird Alliance**.



A NYC Audubon community science volunteer records bird sightings during the annual Christmas Bird Count, which celebrates its 125th year in Central Park this year.



Every spring, NYC Audubon hosts “Let’s Go Birding Together” Pride Month celebrations across the City. This photo from our 2022 outing in Central Park, co-hosted with the National Audubon Society and Feminist Bird Club, saw participation from 80 members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies.

ABOUT THE NAME “NYC BIRD ALLIANCE”



NYC Bird Alliance highlights where we work and our focus on urban biodiversity. It underscores that we do not undertake our advocacy, conservation, science, and engagement work alone: we are part of a large and mighty union of members, activists, and conservation partners who champion birds every day—from within our City to across the country. And, we are allies of the birds themselves. Our legal name will be New York City Bird Alliance, Inc., but we’ll usually refer to ourselves as NYC Bird Alliance.

“Bird Alliance” is also the name that dozens of other [formerly-named Audubon chapters](#) across the country have chosen as their new name. We’re allied with them as well, and our shared name will drive greater visibility for our efforts.

Our new name reflects a commitment to inclusion that is authentic to who we are and what we do. Our name is changing, but our commitment to bird conservation is unwavering. The perils faced by birds are enormous; it will take all of us to advocate and act on their behalf. As NYC Bird Alliance, we will continue to build on the impact that has made a difference for birds in our city for more than four decades. We believe that our new name will invite more New Yorkers to join us, and make us even more effective in our work.

BE A PART OF THIS HISTORIC MOMENT!

Members can vote online to approve the name change at nycaudubon.org/vote.

Members are invited to attend our Annual Meeting. RSVP at nycaudubon.org/vote.

Not a member? Join our flock at nycaudubon.org/membership by June 3, 2024 and receive a ballot to vote after joining as a member.