



THE URBAN AUDUBON

After Sandy



**NYC AUDUBON
MISSION & VISION**

Mission: NYC Audubon is a grassroots community that works for the protection of wild birds and habitat in the five boroughs, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

Vision: NYC Audubon envisions a day when birds and people in the five boroughs enjoy a healthy, livable habitat.

THE URBAN AUDUBON

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BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Glenn Phillips



Last fall's Hurricane Sandy had impacts across the region, some of which are described in this issue of *The Urban Audubon* and in greater detail on NYC Audubon's blog, *Syrinx*.

This spring, we have our work cut out for us to make sure that New York City responds appropriately to the lessons learned from Sandy, and that our natural areas, which protect us all and provide critical habitat for birds and other wildlife, are enhanced in preparation for future storms.

NYC Audubon's key projects include coordinating volunteers to clear debris washed and blown onto critical shorebird habitat on Jamaica Bay, pressuring government agencies to clean up a deluge of oil and chemical contamination not seen in decades and mitigate its damage to wildlife, and undertaking a study that compares the effects of the storm-related pollution on gulls, cormorants, and other waterbirds to the baseline developed from ongoing research on toxic contamination in the harbor.

In addition, our best opportunity to have a lasting impact is to champion an improved plan for the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, which was heavily damaged by the storm surge. A new concept is needed, one that provides for better and more diverse habitat for birds, improves viewing access for naturalists, reduces disturbance from humans, and protects the refuge from sea-level rise and future storm surges.

In the 60 years since the refuge was created by then Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, the freshwater ponds have gradually become saline, invasive plant species (some of them consciously planted to attract birds) have proliferated, and the surrounding salt-marshes have declined dramatically. In recent decades, the refuge has been managed largely by letting nature take its course, which has led to environmental degradation. The refuge is an artificial habitat located in a highly disturbed urban ecosystem, and it requires pro-active, ongoing management to retain its value for wildlife.

I propose that the new Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge slightly reduce the size of the West Pond to provide a larger buffer of saltmarsh and brackish ponds between the bay and the freshwater pond, with improved sources of freshwater. The East Pond should be replaced with a mosaic of freshwater ponds and marshes, brackish ponds, saltmarsh, and mudflats, with a primary emphasis on providing habitat for migratory shorebirds whose numbers are in significant decline. Throughout the refuge, improved trails, boardwalks, and blinds will provide better wildlife viewing with fewer disturbances. The wildlife refuge is the jewel in the crown of the Gateway National Recreation Area. It's high time it was treated as such.

STARR SAPHIR 1939-2013

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Starr Saphir on February 5, 2013. Legendary for her encyclopedic birding knowledge and devotion to teaching her craft in Central Park, Starr guided tours there for over 30 years. Our thoughts and sympathy are with Starr's family and friends.

NYC AUDUBON

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Cover Photograph:

Aerial view of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, taken November 4, 2012, ©NOAA

Small Banner Photographs:

Susan Elbin, Steve Nanz, and Don Riepe

©Ron Bourque



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CONSERVATION NOTES

Susan Elbin



IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS AND PROJECT SAFE FLIGHT

NYC Audubon's bird collision monitoring continues this spring, with added emphasis on correlating building light emission at night with collisions. New buildings are signing up for Lights Out NY, and migratory stopover habitat work continues. Our data have become more accurate over time as we focus on recording data when birds are not found and by including a measure for specimen persistence and detectability in the landscape.

JAMAICA BAY

Migratory shorebirds, horseshoe crabs, American oystercatchers, and "sharing the beach with wildlife" are all part of a new project for us called "Be a Good Egg," a joint project with Audubon New York and New Jersey Audubon. As we continue our monitoring work on oystercatchers

with partners at the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, we will be comparing pre- and post-Sandy nesting activity at Breezy Point. In 2012, project leader Emilio Tobon found a total of 24 nests, 51 eggs, and an average of 1.33 chicks fledged per nest—more than double the productivity recorded in 2011. Sandy has resculpted the beach. Will there be more nesting habitat or less in 2013?

WESTERN LONG ISLAND SOUND AND THE NARROWS

NYC Audubon has been monitoring long-legged wading birds annually for more than 30 years, but neighboring states have not. This year our data will be part of a regionally coordinated waterbird monitoring effort. We will be able to analyze our data within a larger context, comparing trends with those of neighboring states along the eastern seaboard.

STATEN ISLAND

Prall's Island is the focus of NYC Audubon's joint habitat restoration project with New York City Parks & Recreation, funded by a grant from the Harbor Estuary Program. In addition to replanting trees that will serve as nest sites for wading birds, we have been monitoring migratory land birds and taking censuses of potential predators. We recorded more than 40 species and banded 139 individuals. Using camera traps, we documented the presence of deer, turkeys, and skunks. Alex Summers (NYC Parks & Recreation) also reported raccoon and fox tracks on the island. We are hoping that the newly planted saplings will have survived Hurricane Sandy's seawater wash-over and its crushing debris.

You can find the latest conservation project updates on our blog, *Syrinx*, at www.nycaudubon.org/?Itemid=224.

VOLUNTEER!



Work in NYC Audubon's friendly office or in the field and make a difference for the City's wildlife. An orientation session for new volunteers will be held on Monday, March 4, from 6:30-7:30pm, at 71 West 23rd Street. If interested in either our general orientation session or the specific projects listed below, please contact John Rowden at volunteer@nycaudubon.org or 212-691-7483.

OFFICE HELP

Answer inquiries about wildlife and our field trips, classes, events, and conservation work. Help with mailings, filing, and general office work. Computer skills and birding knowledge are not required. If you do have computer and/or Excel

skills, however, we can always use help with conservation and education projects.

BOOKKEEPING/FILE MANAGEMENT

Our finance manager is in great need of a detail-oriented person to help with bookkeeping tasks and maintenance of financial records and files. Accounting and/or bookkeeping experience is helpful but not necessary. Perfectionists welcome.

PRESS AND PROMOTION

If you have a background in event promotion or publicity, we need your help in spreading the word about our trips, classes, and events.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Become a citizen scientist and help conduct conservation research; you can read below about the various ways to be involved.

Project Safe Flight: Spring is here, and migrants confront many hazards as they migrate through New York City. Volunteers are needed to monitor designated buildings for bird collisions, rescue injured birds, and record any casualties. Orientations will be held on Monday, March 18, and Thursday, March 21, 6:30-7:30pm.

Jamaica Bay: Count shorebirds and horseshoe crabs in Jamaica Bay, an important stopover for migratory shorebirds. Orientations will be

held Thursday, April 4, and Monday, April 8, 6:30-7:45pm.

Harbor Herons Foraging Study:

Observe herons and egrets as they forage in NYC waterways. Orientations will be held Monday, April 15, and Thursday, April 18, 6:30-8pm.

Bird Transporters:

We often receive calls from individuals who have found injured birds but are unable to transport them to a rehabilitator. We need caring volunteers to transport these birds to licensed wildlife rehabilitators in the area. A training session will be held at the Wild Bird Fund Center on Wednesday, March 20, 6:30-7:30pm.

Illustrations © Abby Medfride



Blue-headed Vireo

slightest of hooks on the upper mandible. And unlike many of the warblers we were to see, male and female plumage is identical. If my tally from that trip is to be trusted, we saw five vireo species: red-eyed vireo, warbling vireo, blue-headed vireo, yellow-throated vireo, and white-eyed vireo.

A red-eyed vireo was first, appearing almost instantly at Strawberry Fields. This bird is found in city parks from May into summer, and is occasionally visible. A mid- to upper-level forager in deciduous trees, its leisurely, multi-phrase song laced with rests can always be heard emanating from somewhere you and your friends will not locate.

Next, slightly smaller than the red-eyed vireo, with a shorter bill and

On my first NYC Audubon trip four Mays ago, Joe Giunta, guide extraordinaire, imparted an observation that greatly simplified migrant songbird identification for this then-beginning birder. We in the gathering group were keen to experience the spectacle of peak migration in Central Park, especially the droves of warblers that surely awaited us. Joe also briefed us about the vireo species we could expect to see. He described their movement from perch to perch as slightly slower than that of the warblers. Vireos are also larger, all similarly-sized, and with thicker bills possessing the

plain coloring all around, was the warbling vireo. This bird too breeds in city parks, almost always close to water. It has a quick, warbler-like song with a tone quality similar to that of the red-eyed vireo but without the pauses. And it is equally invisible.

In the Ramble, a blue-headed vireo awaited. The most distinctive of the vireos, its blue head and white “spectacles” render it unmistakable, which is helpful, because the blue-headed vireo song, while slower than that of the red-eyed vireo, is phrased almost identically.

Further along, near the Gill, was my first-ever yellow-throated vireo. With its wingbars and prominent yellow and green tones, it can be mistaken for a pine warbler. But its steady “three-eight...three-oh” song, bright yellow spectacles, and presence high in a deciduous tree confirmed the ID.

Last came the white-eyed vireo, so named for the adult’s distinctive white iris. Its song is harsh, without the sweet tone of the other vireos. This vireo is the oddball in the group in terms of foraging and nesting habitat, preferring thickets and scrub to deciduous canopy. However, viewing it requires as much patience as the other vireos, though—happily—less neck muscle fatigue.

And thanks to Joe, after that first exposure to vireos, I have (almost) never confused one for a warbler.



White-eyed Vireo

TOGETHERGREEN VOLUNTEER DAYS



Join us this spring as part of the TogetherGreen initiative, an alliance between Audubon and Toyota.

WOODLAND RESTORATION IN RIVERSIDE PARK
Saturday, April 13, 10am-1pm
With Riverside Park Fund
 Meet at the Riverside Park entrance

at 116th Street and Riverside Drive. We will help improve the habitat in the Woodland Restoration Area by weeding, removing invasive plants, and planting native species. This will be the third year we have participated; see how your efforts are bearing fruit.

JAMAICA BAY SALTMARSH RESTORATION
Date and Time TBA
With American Littoral Society, National Park Service, and

NYC Department of Environmental Protection

Join us as we help the recovery from Hurricane Sandy by planting *Spartina* grasses as part of saltmarsh restoration efforts. Saltmarsh acted as an important buffer during Sandy, and increasing saltmarsh coverage will help the bay recover. Transportation from Manhattan provided. Please check www.nycadubon.org or email volunteer@nycadubon.org for updated information on this event.

AFTER SANDY

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

At the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, the most visible signs of destruction after Hurricane Sandy were the breaches to the East and West Ponds. While the East Pond breaches were fixed by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority during repairs to the adjacent subway tracks, a large channel continues to connect the West Pond to the saltwater bay. These two formerly brackish ponds provided key habitat for many bird species that rely on freshwater for drinking and foraging. The National Park Service must now decide whether to repair the West Pond breach and attempt to return the two man-made ponds to brackish or freshwater status. These decisions will require careful consideration of the sustainability of low-lying freshwater ponds amidst the predicted rise in sea levels and coastal storm activity.

Sandy's floodwaters spread heating oil from homes in nearby Broad Channel into Jamaica Bay. Much of that oil has already evaporated, though, and its short-term effects appear to have been minimal. "I didn't see one dead bird or dead fish after the storm," said Don Riepe, Jamaica Bay guardian for the American Littoral Society and vice president of conservation for NYC Audubon.

The storm also marooned boats, propane tanks, and portions of decks or docks amid the marshes at Jamaica Bay. Riepe expects that debris clean-up will be a major focus for spring volunteer projects, but overall, he remains optimistic about the refuge's future as a sanctuary for birds in New York City: "Marshes are resilient. These areas are used to dealing with this sort of storm activity." *MH*



The Breach of Jamaica Bay's West Pond

© Ron Bourque



Tree Roots Exposed by Erosion at Plumb Beach

Plumb Beach, Sandy, and More Sand

Plumb Beach is a one-mile strip of sand on the southern coast of Brooklyn that lies between the inexorable forces of the sea and the Belt Parkway. After the Belt Parkway was nearly undermined in November 2009, a sandbag seawall was constructed as a temporary measure to stem further erosion. It took nearly four years to plan, fund, and finally nourish 700 yards of beach with clean sand dredged from Rockaway Inlet channels. Even with a two-week setback caused by Sandy, the contractor finished the work and removed the ¾-mile sand-slurry pipeline from the beach.

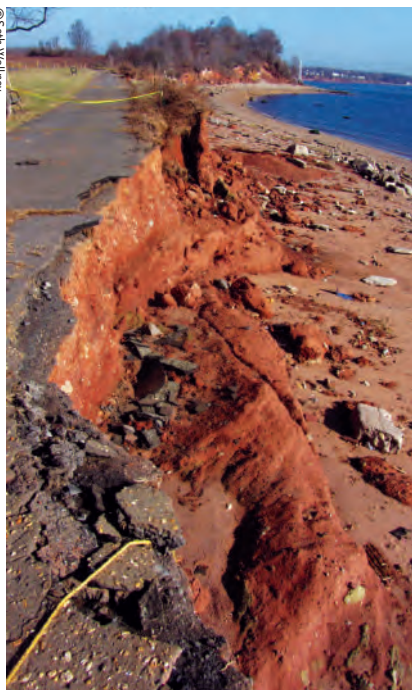
What remains to be done is the construction of rock groins at either end of the sand deposition area that will contain the sand and the building of a breakwater to protect the beach from erosive wave action.

Of most concern to NYC Audubon are the effects of sand nourishment and groin construction on the saltmarsh, tidal lagoon, and the eastern beach itself. This has been the destination every spring for at least a thousand horseshoe crabs seeking good habitat to deposit and fertilize their eggs. For the past four years, NYC Audubon volunteers have been methodically counting horseshoe crabs that arrive here. These data will serve as an invaluable baseline upon which to measure the effects of the radical manmade and natural reshaping of Plumb Beach on horseshoe crabs breeding. NYC Audubon's continued monitoring is essential to reveal the effects of these changes in the years to come. *RB*

Staten Island and Arthur Kill

During Hurricane Sandy, the east and south shores of Staten Island were smacked head-on as the storm left the Atlantic on October 29th and headed west to the south of Long Island. The surge, over 16 feet in some places, washed over Prall's Island and caused three major oil spills including a storage tank accident: 350,000

© Seth Wolfrey



Storm Damage at Staten Island's Mt. Loretto Unique Area

success for snowy egrets. But the Arthur Kill's problems do not arise solely from the occasional accidental catastrophe. Its shores are heavily populated on both sides, meaning urban runoff and dumping are the norm. When the attendant pollution of the daily commercial boat and tanker traffic is added to the equation, the Arthur Kill becomes an object lesson in the difficulties of managing urban habitat.

While the Arthur Kill was strongly affected by the storm surge, the east and south shores of Staten Island were even harder hit. Widespread erosion of beaches, dunes, and bluffs means fewer suitable nesting sites for breeding birds in the area. Much dune vegetation is now covered by sand, which, in the short term, reduces foraging opportunities for spring and fall passerines. In the long term, it remains to be seen how these modified habitats will continue to provide sustenance to the diverse bird populations of Staten Island. MR

Breezy Point

Following Hurricane Sandy, reports from Breezy Point were grim. With one exception: "This coming breeding season could be one of the best for terns and plovers in years," said Ron Bourque, a member of NYC Audubon since 1979 and past president. Bourque, who spearheaded efforts to save 140 acres of grasslands at Floyd Bennett Field, was one of the first civilians to make it out to the national park at the tip of Breezy Point. The sand road leading to the ocean beach was flooded and littered with collapsed fencing, so he had to walk along the

gallons of diesel fuel spilled into the Arthur Kill, the tidal strait that runs between Staten Island and New Jersey. These traumas highlight the fragility, complexity, and resilience of urban habitats, especially the ecosystems that support bird life.

The Arthur Kill has long been an area of special concern to NYC Audubon. Prall's Island, located on the New York side, has been home to breeding colonies of long-legged waders and has been the focus of restoration efforts spearheaded by NYC Audubon since the mid-1980s. In January 1990, a spill of 576,000 gallons of heating oil from an underwater Exxon pipeline caused declines in fledging

bay side, where exposed rock jetties were evident for the first time in decades. "They'd been buried under sand—I'd never seen them before," he noted. More importantly: the dunes at the tip of the peninsula—primary, secondary, and tertiary—"have all been completely flattened—and there is hardly any vegetation."

The big change in topography to beachfront "will present a large breeding ground for the terns and plovers," Bourque noted. In fact, a decade ago there had been a proposal to bulldoze the primary dunes: the nesting area for the piping plovers (on the federal endangered species list) was shrinking as the high-tide line came closer and closer to the dunes. The state-listed common terns had moved eastward, close to Breezy Point Surf Club, a bad situation for both birds and people, as the terns bombarded humans when they invaded the birds' new nesting ground. "It would be nice if the birds moved back toward the point—it could be a plus," noted Bourque.

Tony Luscombe, who works as the National Park Service biological technician, agrees. Luscombe has covered the area from Jacob Riis Park to the tip of Breezy Point for almost two decades (he calls himself the "sheriff of the place"), and believes that this storm has been the greatest thing for the habitat: "The beach is now 10 to 15 times bigger, the tip is a desert, and there's not a dune left."

Essentially, Hurricane Sandy did what nature had been doing for years, until recently. "Typically, nor'easters would keep the dunes in check," he says. "My ex-boss said that back in 1993, the beach looked very much like it does now, after Sandy." As harsh winter storms diminished, the dunes began to grow, as did the vegetation. "This is bird heaven now." For piping plovers, black skimmers, and common, least and roseate terns, the hurricane could turn out to be a blessing, creating habitat for hundreds more birds. In recent years, the highest recorded number of plovers in the area was about 22 nesting pairs. "This will be an interesting season," said Luscombe. There is one worry: Getting the washed-out sand road to the point repaired. "If I don't have easy access, I can't keep people in check. They just go out there and take over on their ATVs and four-wheel drives." SC

© Ron Bourque



Flattened Dunes at Breezy Point

EVENTS AND ADVENTURES

● NYC Audubon Events ● Partnership Events

● VAN CORTLANDT BIRD WALKS, THE BRONX Saturdays, March 2-May 25, 8-9:30am Guide: Andrew Baksh or Urban Park Rangers (first Saturday of the month) With the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy and NYC Department of Parks & Recreation

Meet at Van Cortlandt Nature Center. These walks celebrate the tradition set by influential birders, such as Roger Tory Peterson and Allan D. Cruickshank who learned their craft on Van Cortlandt Park's ecologically diverse grounds. Participants will look for resident and migrant species and discuss a wide range of avian topics. For more information, please call 718-548-0912. No registration necessary. No limit. Free

● BIRDING FOR FAMILIES Sundays, March 3-May 26, 10-11am Guides: NYC Audubon Offered by the Central Park Conservancy

Meet at the Dana Discovery Center (inside the Park at 110th Street between Lenox and Fifth Avenues). Bring the kids and visit one of New York City's richest bird habitats. As a family, learn how to spot and identify our feathered neighbors. Binoculars can be borrowed from the Discovery Center. For weather cancellation information, call 212-860-1370. Limited to 20. Age 5 and up. Free

● WINTER BIRDS OF BARNEGAT, NJ Tuesday, March 5, 9am-4pm Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Explore Barnegat Inlet's expansive beach to view the winter birds that gather where land, bay, and sea meet. Search for harlequin ducks, horned larks, Lapland longspurs, snow buntings, and snowy and short-eared owls. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 11. \$80

● WINTER BIRDS OF SANDY HOOK, NJ Saturday, March 9, 10am-5pm Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Sandy Hook, a barrier island at the northernmost point of the NJ coast, hosts a variety of species including Arctic-bound migrants and harbor seals that lie on the beach to warm up in the sun. Other possible sightings: loons, sea ducks, snow buntings, and horned larks. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 11. \$65

● BIRDING AT WAVE HILL, THE BRONX Sundays, March 10, April 14, and May 12; 9:30-11:30am Guide: Gabriel Willow With Wave Hill

Meet at the Perkins Visitor Center and search for spring migrants in the beautiful gardens and woodlands of Wave Hill. Advanced registration is recommended, online at www.wavehill.org, by calling 718-549-3200 x305, or at the Perkins Visitor Center. (Walks take place rain or shine; in case of severe weather call the number above at x245 for updates.) Ages 10 and up welcome with an adult. Walks are free; please visit www.wavehill.org for Wave Hill admission pricing. NYC Audubon members enjoy two-for-one admission

● MARCH MEMBER WALK IN PROSPECT PARK Tuesday, March 26, 7:30-9am

Meet at the entrance to Prospect Park across from Grand Army Plaza, and join NYC Audubon Board Member Tom Stephenson for a members-only early spring migration walk in Prospect Park. Please call Adriana Palmer at 212-691-7483 to register. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up

● EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS AT JAMAICA BAY Saturday, March 30, 10am-1pm Guide: Don Riepe With Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. Hike around the East and West Ponds and gardens to look for osprey, as well as returning ibis, egrets, oystercatchers, phoebes, and other migrants. To register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or donriep@gmail.com. Limited to 25. Free

● BIRDING TOURS OF BRYANT PARK, MANHATTAN Mondays, April 8-May 20, 8-9am Thursdays, April 11-May 23, 5-6pm Guide: Gabriel Willow With Bryant Park Corporation

Meet at the Birding Tour sign at the 42nd Street and 6th Avenue entrance to the park. Discover the birds that call Bryant Park home, as well as those that may stop by during migration. No limit. Free

● PHOTOGRAPHY CLASSES: PHOTOSHOP EXTENSION Tuesdays, April 9 and 16, 6:30-8pm Instructors: David Speiser, Lloyd Spitalnik

Join Lloyd Spitalnik and David Speiser for two new Photoshop classes focused on making your spring images really pop. The April 9 class will focus on using plug-ins to enhance your images, image sharpening, noise reduction, and the NIK suite (and Photoshop alternatives). The April 16 class will cover overall presentation, including an in-depth exploration of superior photo composition, placement, and ways to refine your final images to create winning shots. Take advantage of this small-group setting to answer all your questions. Limited to 12. \$145 for the package of 2 workshops; \$95 per workshop

● MONDAY EVENING SPRING MIGRATION WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK Mondays, April 15-May 20, 5:30-7pm Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet at 72nd Street and Central Park West for this expanded six-week series of walks. Witness the spectacle of spring migration as songbirds follow the Atlantic flyway northwards. Look for orioles, tanagers, warblers, vireos, and other migrants in the wilds of Central Park, and learn about the finer points of their identification and ecology. Limited to 15. \$110

© Lloyd Spitalnik



Glossy Ibis



● **TUESDAY EVENING SPRING MIGRATION WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK**

Tuesdays, April 16-May 21, 5:30-7pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet at 72nd Street and Central Park West for this expanded six-week series of walks. Witness the spectacle of spring migration as songbirds follow the Atlantic Flyway northwards. Look for orioles, tanagers, warblers, vireos, and other migrants in the wilds of Central Park, and learn about the finer points of their identification and ecology. Limited to 15. \$110

©Francis Portman



Scarlet Tanager

appropriate; bring a long lens and macro lens if possible. Limited to 8. \$60

● **BIKING & BIRDING: PROSPECT PARK AND GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY, BROOKLYN**

Sunday, April 21, 9am-1pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet at the Grand Army Plaza Arch. To celebrate "May is Bike Month" get back on your bike. Tour Prospect Park, an Important Bird Area, and Green-Wood Cemetery, home to nesting monk parakeets. A gentle ride of moderate distance with some hills. Bring your bicycle. Limited to 15. \$30

● **MORNING SPRING MIGRATION WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK**

Wednesdays, April 24-May 22,

7:30-10:30am

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Meet at 72nd Street and Central Park West. This five-week series of walks will observe the waves of birds passing through Central Park during spring migration. Limited to 15. \$95

● **INTRODUCTION TO BIRD SONG**

Class: Thursday, April 25,

6:30-8:30pm

Trip: Sunday, April, 28, 8am-noon

Instructor: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Do you ever wonder who is singing? Learn to identify the large variety of migrant and resident birds in

New York City. Leading NYC birder Joe Giunta will first introduce you to the subtleties of bird-song identification in the classroom, followed by a field trip in Central Park to bird by eye and ear, and reinforce your learning. Limited to 12. \$50

● **THE BIRDS OF WOODLAWN CEMETERY, THE BRONX**

Saturday, April 27, 7-8:30am

Guides: Tod Winston, Joseph McManus, Friends of Woodlawn Docent

With The Friends of Woodlawn

Meet at the Jerome Avenue Entrance of Woodlawn Cemetery. Join us for a morning bird walk and tour of the beautiful cemetery. Look for spring migrants and year-round residents on the expansive, wooded cemetery grounds, while a Friends of Woodlawn docent will share fascinating stories about Woodlawn's history and the interesting mixture of individuals interred there. To register, call Friends of Woodlawn at 718-920-1470. Adult admission \$15; Seniors, students and NYC Audubon members \$10 (payment at time of walk). Free admission for children under 6

● **SPRING MIGRATION WORKSHOP AT JAMAICA BAY**

Sunday, April 28, 10am-1pm

Guides: Don Riepe, Tod Winston With Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for a slide presentation on spring migration followed by a hike around the ponds and uplands to look for spring migrants. To register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or donriep@gmail.com. Limited to 25. Free

● **VAN TRIP TO THE SPRING MIGRATION WORKSHOP AT JAMAICA BAY**

Saturday, April 28, 9am-3pm

Register for our van trip to the Spring Migration Workshop, and get to Jamaica Bay the easy way. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van. Limited to 12. \$20

● **SPRING WARBLERS**

Class: Thursday, May 2,

6:30-8:30pm

Trip: Sunday, May 5, 8-11am

Instructor: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

First learn to identify the 30-plus species of warblers that migrate through our area each spring, using field marks and other techniques. Then go out in Central Park and reinforce what you've learned. Limited to 12. \$50

● **THE NEW NATIVE PLANT GARDEN AT THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN, THE BRONX**

Friday-Sunday, May 3-5; Saturday-

Sunday, May 11-12

With The New York Botanical Garden

Join The New York Botanical Garden and NYC Audubon for two festival weekends celebrating the opening of the Garden's newly designed Native Plant Garden, a display garden showcasing native plants of the northeast region. Take a guided tour, sample wine, enjoy music, and bring the kids for storytelling, butterfly and family scavenger hunts, and much more. The celebration starts with a symposium on Friday, May 3; experts who will cover various aspects of native plants,

APRIL MEMBER TRIP

● **WOODCOCK COURTSHIP AT JAMAICA BAY**

Thursday, April 18, 3-8pm

Guides Don Riepe, Peter Mott

Witness the spectacular flight of the woodcock. After a leisurely check of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge's West Pond and gardens, adjourn to the woodcock courting grounds to look for male woodcocks executing their dramatic flight displays. Please call Adriana Palmer at 212-691-7483 to register. Bring dinner; transport by passenger van, snacks, and drinks provided. Limited to 11. Free to members only at the Family and Supporter levels

● **PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP: SONGBIRD MIGRANTS AND INSECTS IN PROSPECT PARK, BROOKLYN**

Saturday, April 20, 9am-noon

Guide: Steve Nanz

Meet at the Grand Army Plaza park entrance at the Stranahan statue, across the street from Brooklyn Library. Prospect Park's varied landscapes provide habitat for multiple species of migratory songbirds. Photograph songbirds and learn insect macro-photography using conservation-friendly field techniques. Digital cameras are

EVENTS AND ADVENTURES (CONTINUED)

from their ecological importance to their artistic use in garden designs. For event schedule, admission information, and tickets, please visit www.nybg.org/nativeplantgarden

● STERLING FOREST WARBLERS, NY

Saturday, May 4, 9am-5pm
Guides: Don Riepe, Tod Winston
Explore the woodland and pond habitat of the 20,000-acre Sterling Forest preserve during peak spring migration. Look for nesting warblers (including golden-winged, cerulean, hooded, prairie, and blue-winged) as well as spring wildflowers, reptiles, and amphibians. Visit the rustic visitor center. Trip involves 4-mile hike and some rocky terrain. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van. Limited to 11. \$70

● BIKING AND BIRDING: CLOVE LAKES PARK AND SILVER LAKE PARK, STATEN ISLAND

Saturday, May 4, 9am-2pm
Guide: Gabriel Willow
Meet at the Staten Island Ferry, Manhattan side. May is Bike Month, so cycle to the borough of Staten Island to discover some of its best birding spots. Look for ducks and seabirds in New York Harbor on our way across and then ride to Staten Island's premier "migrant traps," Clove Lakes and Silver Lake parks. Bring lunch and your bicycle. Limited to 15. \$30

● PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP: STERLING FOREST WARBLERS, NY

Sunday, May 5, 6:30-11am
Instructor: David Speiser
Meet at the Sterling Forest Visitor Center for an intensive small-group workshop focusing on breeding warblers including chestnut-sided, hooded, blue-winged, and prairie warblers, as well as indigo buntings, yellow-billed cuckoos, and more. David Speiser will take you to the best spots to look for these species, as well as threatened cerulean and golden-winged warblers. Topics to be addressed include field set-up, exposure, and

composition. Bring your longest lens (400mm+, DSLR only, tripod and flash optional). Some light hiking required. Limited to 4. \$125

● SPRING HOT SPOTS OF STATEN ISLAND

Sunday, May 5, 8am-3pm
Guides: Cliff Hagen, Tod Winston
Come visit some of the beautiful, bird-rich spots on Staten Island. We'll start looking for migrating warblers, flycatchers, and more along the lovely wooded and streamside trail of Clove Lakes Park and then move on to Great Kills Park, looking for shorebirds and wading birds. Time permitting, we'll make a third stop at the spectacular North Mount Loretto Unique Area. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$75

● BEGINNING BIRDING

Classes: Thursdays, May 9 and 16, 6:30-8:30pm
Trips: Saturdays, May 11 and 18, Times TBA
Instructor: Tod Winston
Learn the keys to identifying the spectacular variety of birds that migrate northwards through New York City every spring. Even if you've never picked up a pair of binoculars, you'll soon be identifying warblers, thrushes, waterbirds, and more—both by sight and by ear. Two fun and educational in-class sessions, paired with field trips to Central Park and Jamaica Bay (transport to Jamaica Bay included). Limited to 12. \$85

● PEAK MIGRATION DAY AT ALLEY POND PARK AND JAMAICA BAY

Friday, May 10, 8am-4pm
Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC
This tour covers the crown jewels of Queens: Alley Pond Park and Jamaica Bay. First visit Alley Pond's wooded grounds and kettle ponds to search for warblers and vireos, and then hike the trails of Jamaica Bay to see migrant shorebirds, waterfowl, and more. Bring lunch.

Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$75

● VAN CORTLANDT PARK BIRD-A-THON, THE BRONX

Saturday, May 11, 6am-7pm
Rain Date: Sunday, May 12
With the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy and NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
Meet at Van Cortlandt Park for a great day of birding and support the park at the same time, whether you're a birding beginner or a pro. Come any time between 6am and 7pm to participate in Van Cortlandt Park's first bird-a-thon. Count the number of bird species you spot and get your supporters to chip in for each species you find. Experts will be on hand to help with identification. For more information and to learn about pledge collection, visit www.vcpark.org or call 718-430-1890. No limit. Free

● MAY MEMBER WALK IN CENTRAL PARK

Friday, May 17, 7-8:30am
Meet at Central Park West and 72nd St for a members-only walk. Come ramble in the Ramble of Central Park with NYC Audubon President Harry Maas and enjoy the height of spring migration. Please call Adriana Palmer at 212-691-7483 to register. Limited to 20. Free for Contributing NYC Audubon members at the Student/Senior level and up

● SPRING MIGRATION ON RANDALL'S ISLAND, NY

Saturday, May 18, 9am-12pm
Guides: Gabriel Willow, Victoria O'Neill
With Randall's Island Park Alliance, Inc.
Meet on the NW corner of 102nd Street and the FDR Drive. We'll walk across the foot bridge to Randall's Island, an under-explored location on the East River that is home to restored freshwater wetlands and saltmarsh. We'll look for spring migrants (both



Blackpoll Warbler

waterbirds and land birds) as we explore the results of recent restoration efforts. Two miles of walking and some modest climbs. Limited to 20. \$25

● NESTING PEREGRINES AND RED-TAILS OF THE UPPER WEST SIDE, MANHATTAN

Sunday, May 19, 9am-noon
Guide: Gabriel Willow
Meet in front of Riverside Church. Many New Yorkers are astonished to discover that this city of steel and glass is home to a population of large birds of prey: The City boasts the world's highest densities of the peregrine falcon, the world's fastest flyer, and a growing population of red-tailed hawks (several pairs of which have reached celebrity status). We'll visit the nesting site of a pair of each of these fascinating species, and may glimpse parents feeding their chicks. Limited to 15. \$30

● EXPLORE THE BRONX RIVER BY ROWBOAT

Sunday, May 19, 1-3pm
Guide: Chrissy Word
With Rocking the Boat
Meet at Rocking the Boat at 812 Edgewater Road in the Bronx, and launch from the adjacent Hunts Point Riverside Park. Come explore the Bronx River aboard a hand-built wooden boat, led by experienced rowers. The Bronx River is the city's only true river and hosts wildlife including herons and egrets, osprey,

and belted kingfishers. Visit restoration sites and learn about the Bronx River eco-system and the area's history. Rowing optional. Limited to 20. \$35 for adults, \$25 for ages 18 and under

● **RED KNOTS AND HORSESHOE CRABS AT JAMAICA BAY**
Sunday, May 26, 9am-noon
Guide: Don Riepe
With Gateway National Recreation Area

Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center to view the annual mating ritual of prehistoric horseshoe crabs, along with red knots, sanderlings, and ruddy turnstones. Hike along the beach and marshland edges to see fiddler crabs, egrets, and other wildlife. Bring lunch. To register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or donriep@gmail.com. Limited to 25. Free

● **JAMAICA BAY SUNSET ECOLOGY CRUISE**
Sunday, May 26, and Sunday, June 23, 5-8pm
Guides: Don Riepe, Mickey Cohen
With American Littoral Society

Meet at Pier 2 in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. Enjoy a three-hour narrated cruise aboard the 100-foot boat "Golden Sunshine." Visit backwater marshes near JFK Airport, and learn about the 13,000-acre Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. See nesting peregrine falcons, ospreys, egrets, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Includes refreshments. To register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or donriep@gmail.com. Limited to 140. \$55

● **HAWK WATCH IN ASTORIA PARK, QUEENS**
Saturday, June 1, 11am-12:30pm
Guide: Urban Park Rangers
With NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, Urban Park Rangers

Meet at the parking lot at Hoyt Avenue and 19th Street in Astoria. A pair of red-tailed hawks has been nesting in Astoria Park on the RFK Bridge for years. Observe these residents and learn about their nesting and foraging habits. No registration required. For more

information call 718-846-2731. No limit. Free

● **EXPLORE THE MYSTERIES OF THE MEADOWLANDS BY PONTOON BOAT, SECAUCUS, NJ**
Sunday, June 2, 9am-2pm
Guide: Mike Newhouse
With NJ Meadowlands Commission

Come explore the Meadowlands' Mill Creek Marsh, a 225-acre restored wetland off the Hackensack River. We'll take a relaxing pontoon boat ride and see many egrets, night-herons, marsh wrens, and belted kingfishers—along with blue and fiddler crabs and diamondback terrapins. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van provided. Limited to 12. \$70

● **SUNSET ECOCRUISES TO THE HARBOR HERON ISLANDS**
Sundays, June 2 through August 11
South Street Seaport, Pier 17
7-8:30pm (Brother Islands; Hoffman and Swinburne Islands)
6-9pm (Jamaica Bay)
Guide: Gabriel Willow
With New York Water Taxi

Meet at South Street Seaport's Pier 17. This summer we'll continue our explorations of the City's principal island rookeries. Depending on which weekend you choose, cruises may visit the fascinating Brother Islands, the large egret and cormorant colonies on Hoffman and Swinburne Islands, or the great expanses of Jamaica Bay. Whichever your destination, you'll experience the wonders of New York's famous harbor at sunset and see some of the three thousand herons, egrets, and ibis nesting on these urban islands. To learn about specific cruise dates and to register, contact New York Water Taxi at 212-742-1969 or www.nywatertaxi.com. Limited to 90. Pricing varies by destination

● **THE BREEDING BIRDS OF DOODLETOWN ROAD, ROCKLAND COUNTY, NY**
Wednesday, June 5, 8am-4pm
Instructor: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

A variety of warblers and other

songbirds, including species at risk, breed at Doodletown Road in Bear Mountain State Park. Hooded, cerulean, and golden-winged warblers may be seen, as well as indigo buntings, wild turkey, and much more. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$75

● **BIKING AND BIRDING: JAMAICA BAY**
Saturday, June 8, 9am-2pm
Guide: Gabriel Willow

Meet at Grand Army Plaza. Bike your way through Brooklyn neighborhoods and along scenic greenways to Jamaica Bay, to look for migrant shorebirds as well as breeding egrets, oystercatchers, and more. This is a 16-mile trip; return by subway from Broad Channel. Bring lunch and your bicycle. Limited to 15. \$30.

● **TWILIGHT BAT WALKS IN CENTRAL PARK**
Tuesdays, June 11-July 9,
7:45-9:15pm
Guide: Paul Keim

Meet at 103rd Street and Central Park West. Explore the mysteries of Central Park at twilight as we seek these fascinating and misunderstood flying mammals and learn about their great importance to our environment. We'll see local bat species in flight as they hunt and dive for insects, and hear them with an echolocator. Bring bug spray and a flashlight. Limited to 16. \$25 for adults, \$15 for children under 12. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Recommended for ages 5 and up

● **THE PARAKEETS OF GREENWOOD CEMETERY, BROOKLYN**
Saturday, June 15, 10am-1pm
Guide: Gabriel Willow
With Green-Wood Cemetery

Meet at the cemetery entrance at 5th Ave and 25th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. While it might seem an odd place to go birding, Green-Wood Cemetery is rich in both history and wildlife. It is also the highest point in Brooklyn, affording marvelous views. We

will explore its environs in search of spring migrants and its most unique avian residents: the huge flocks of brilliant green monk parakeets that nest there. Native to South America, these charming immigrants are surprisingly hardy and flourish even in our harsh winters. Limited to 15. \$30

● **BIRDING BY CANOE IN CONSTITUTION MARSH, NY**
Saturday, June 22, 9am-4:30pm
Guides: Gabriel Willow, Eric Lind
With Constitution Marsh Audubon Center & Sanctuary

Join two expert naturalists to explore Constitution Marsh Audubon Sanctuary—a spectacular 271-acre tidal marsh just outside Cold Spring, NY. Observe marsh birds up close as you paddle through this pristine fresh water habitat by canoe—possible sightings include Virginia rails, spotted sandpipers, Louisiana waterthrushes, and bald eagles. Then look for warblers and other spring migrants on the sanctuary's trails. Bring lunch. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 12. \$90

● **TO REGISTER FOR ALL NYC AUDUBON EVENTS and for more information, visit www.nycaudubon.org or call 212-691-7483 unless otherwise specified.**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- **Classes meet at 71 West 23rd Street, Suite 1523.**
- **Contributing Members (Student/Senior level and up) receive a 10% discount on most local trips and classes. See membership form on page 15.**
- **For all coach and van trips, the meeting location is in front of 71 West 23rd Street in Manhattan unless otherwise specified.**
- **We depart promptly at the stated start time.**
- **For all overnight trips, membership in NYC Audubon at the Student/Senior level and up is required. See membership form on page 15.**

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

CAPE MAY SPRING MIGRATION WEEKEND, NJ

Saturday, April 27, 9am-

Sunday, April 28, 7pm

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Come welcome the spring in lovely Cape May, NJ, the East's capital of birding. On good spring migration days, the area's forests and marshes are swarming with warblers in breeding plumage. We'll visit Cape May Point, Higbee Beach, Cape May Meadows, and more in search of returning songbirds, wading birds, ducks, and terns—as well as lingering winter visitors such as sea ducks and gannets. Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$275 (single supplement \$50)

COASTAL MAINE: BIRDING FESTIVALS AND BOREAL SPECIES

Friday, May 24-Saturday, June 1

Guide: Gabriel Willow

Join Maine native Gabriel Willow on an exciting new itinerary to the beautiful Maine coast. We'll visit the both the "Down East" and Acadia Birding Festivals, taking part in expert-led birding workshops, tours, and lectures. Excursions include landing on Macchias Seal Island, home to a large puffin, razorbill, and murre colony; a visit to a bird-banding station; and hikes in spectacular Acadia National Park to seek out breeding warblers and boreal species such as gray jay, spruce grouse, and both crossbills. Includes double-occupancy lodging in Macchias, Lubec, and Bar Harbor; a lobster dinner; and all transportation in Maine (airfare not included). Limited to 12. \$1,795 (\$425 single supplement)

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND, LI

Friday, June 7-Sunday, June 9

Guides: Don Riepe, Mickey

Cohen, Mike Bottini

With American Littoral Society

©David Speiser



Trinidad Motmot

Spend an extended weekend at the eastern tip of Long Island during peak spring orchid and heather bloom. This trip includes double occupancy accommodations at the luxurious Manor House, five meals, five guided hikes, two evening programs, and a star watch, plus free pickup at the Montauk LIRR station. See nesting pine and prairie warblers and visit a cranberry bog with flowering orchids and sundews. Easy hiking in woodlands and on the dunes, beach, and bluffs. For more information or to register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or donriepe@gmail.com. Limited to 60. \$385 (\$120 single supplement)

BASHAKILL, SHAWANGUNK NWR, AND DOODLETOWN, NY

Saturday, June 8, 9am-Sunday, June 9, 6pm

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Look for breeding eastern meadowlarks, American bitterns, cerulean warblers, and more at these three great birding areas. An overnight stay will facilitate being in the right spot at the right time. Bring lunch for the first day, binoculars, and a spotting scope (if you have one). Transport by passenger van included.

Limited to 10. \$275 (\$50 single supplement)

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO: BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY ESCAPE

Sunday, June 9-Saturday, June 15

Guides: David Speiser, Local

Guides

Come explore the lovely tropical islands of Trinidad and Tobago—and enjoy the photography and birding experience of a lifetime. Via photo excursions carefully designed by professional wildlife photographer David Speiser, you'll enjoy rare opportunities to photograph the island's spectacular birdlife. Targets include ruby topaz hummingbirds, tufted coquettes, trogons, tanagers, tropicbirds, an oilbird colony, and two of the islands' endemic species, the Trinidad piping guan and motmot. In-depth photo sessions will cover proper technique, composition, exposure, and more. Non-photographer family members are also welcome; enjoy incredible birding during photo outings or explore the extensive trail system and bird-rich veranda of Asa Wright Nature Centre. We'll visit Yerrete hummingbird sanctuary, enjoy a glass bottom boat ride over pristine coral reefs, and visit a nesting colony of red-billed tropicbirds and brown boobies. Accommodations at Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge and the lovely Blue Waters Inn. Limited to 8. \$2,195 (\$210 single supplement)

BASHAKILL, NEVERSINK, AND STERLING FOREST, NY

Saturday, June 15, 9am -Sunday, June 16, 6pm

Guide: Joe Giunta, Happy Warblers LLC

Look for breeding American bitterns, cerulean, hooded, and golden-winged warblers, and more at these three great birding areas. An overnight stay will facilitate being in the right spot at the right time. Bring lunch

for the first day, binoculars, and a spotting scope (if you have one). Transport by passenger van included. Limited to 10. \$275 (\$50 single supplement)

PURPLE MARTIN FESTIVAL, NJ Friday, August 9, 10am-Sunday, August 11, 7pm

Guide: Don Riepe

With American Littoral Society

Travel to southern New Jersey to observe the spectacle of thousands of purple martins on migration to their wintering grounds, and get to know this beautiful, spacious landscape of marsh and woodland. Visit remote salt- and freshwater marsh and woodland habitat to see bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and a great variety of wading birds, terns, shorebirds, and more. Explore the wild and scenic Maurice River by canoe or flat-bottom boat, and visit the abundant wildlife of Brigantine NWR. Includes transportation and double-occupancy lodging. Limited to 60. \$375 (\$95 single supplement)

CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH, MA Thursday, August 15-Sunday, August 18

Guides: Don Riepe, Mickey Cohen

With American Littoral Society

A fun-packed, nature-focused weekend in beautiful Cape Ann, Massachusetts. View pelagic species such as sooty and greater shearwater, Wilson's storm petrel, and common eider—not to mention minke and humpback whales, basking shark, and family pods of dolphins. Includes three nights' stay in historic Gloucester, a half-day whale watch boat trip, an evening Essex River Cruise, easy canoeing on Ipswich River, birding at Parker River Wildlife Refuge, and guided hikes, plus a lobster dinner. To register, contact Don Riepe at 917-371-8577 or donriepe@gmail.com. Limited to 40. \$395 (\$180 single supplement)

Little Night
By Luanne Rice
Pamela Dorman Books, 2012

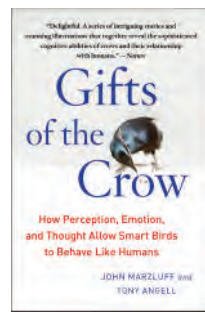


Set in present-day New York City, Luanne Rice's *Little Night* tells the story of Clare Burke, an urban birder and nature blogger—and an ex-convict. Eighteen years before, a confrontation with the abusive husband of her sister Anne turned violent. Anne's false testimony in defense of her husband sent Clare to jail, but despite her sister's betrayal, Clare still longs to see her. Now Anne's daughter has shown up on Clare's doorstep under mysterious circumstances, setting off a chain of events that will help break down the walls that Clare built up around herself in prison.

The power of nature to heal and even resurrect the spirit is a recurring theme in *Little Night*. From Battery Park to Floyd Bennett Field and Staten Island wetlands, the city's avian environs set the scene for much of the action. But it is the author's detailed descriptions of Central Park that most clearly convey her knowledge of and love for New York City's natural areas.

The park provides an escape for Clare and Anne as children, and reassures Clare of her freedom after her release from prison. Central Park is also a symbol and source of hope and renewal—sentiments with which many birders can surely identify. *MH*

*Gifts of the Crow:
How Perception, Emotion,
and Thought
Allow Smart Birds to
Behave Like Humans*
By John Marzluff, Tony Angell
Free Press, 2012



John Marzluff and Tony Angell's *Gifts of the Crow* is a fact- and story-filled romp through the mystery of bird intelligence. Each page crams in more scientific facts about neurochemistry and bird behavior than entire chapters of typical nature writing. While the reading can be dense at times, the fascinating stories of crows, ravens, jays, and magpies—corvids, as this family of birds is known to scientists—pulls the reader deeper into the

story. The accompanying drawings by Tony Angell add an element of whimsy with their portrayal of many of the stories. A few oddities of the text should not deter you. The authors routinely refer to themselves in the third person, as if this were a scientific paper. It creates some awkwardness and makes the stories feel less personal. Although there aren't footnotes, there are extensive notes about information sources for each chapter. A lengthy set of appendices provide additional background about bird neurochemistry and brain function.

If you ever wondered about the brain chemistry that underlies both human and bird behavior, this book is a perfect introduction, as the authors consistently move from anecdotes illustrating behaviors to analysis of those behaviors for cognitive function and then to a detailed discussion of the possible brain chemistry that underlies that cognition. In the chapter titled "Frolic," devoted to how corvids play, the authors propose that in long-lived and slow-to-mature species like most corvids, play becomes an essential survival tool, allowing social bonds and building problem-solving skills that allow an older bird to breed more successfully than a bird that doesn't play. The authors then go on to explore the roles that dopamine and endorphins play in the experience of fun for both birds and people. Overall *Gifts of the Crow* is a thought-provoking look at how crows and their kin learn, live, and even love. *GP*

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

NYC Audubon is seeking nominations to its board of directors for three-year terms beginning in June 2013. Please submit your suggestions to David Speiser, chair of the nominating committee, at nominations@nycaudubon.org. Elections will be held online in 2013. For a final list of nominees, nominee biographies, and details about the election, please visit www.nycaudubon.org/election2013.

REMEMBER NYC AUDUBON

A bequest is a thoughtful and straightforward way to protect birds and bird habitat in the five boroughs. It can be expressed "I bequeath [a sum of money or a percentage of my estate] to New York City Audubon Society, Inc. a not-for-profit organization with offices at 71 West 23rd Street – Rm 1523, New York, NY 10010 for its general purposes." Consult your attorney and give Executive Director Glenn Phillips a call at 212-691-7483.

TRIP LEADER PROFILE: JOE GIUNTA

Catherine Heller

Wisdom might have it that a professional birder, someone who can lead walks not only in the New York City area, but in Texas, Panama, Costa Rica, and Colombia, and can give classes in confusing fall warblers, would have started birding in childhood. But that's not the case with Joe Giunta, who leads many trips and classes for NYC Audubon. As a youngster in Brooklyn, Joe loved the outdoors and particularly the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, to which he was introduced by his mother. But not until he was 44, when he bought some birdseed and scattered it on his lawn on the south shore of Long Island, did his fascination begin with "the stuff that started to come," as he puts it. He bought a bird book and began identifying cardinals, tufted titmice, and warblers, which became his passion. This interest led him back to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, where he enrolled in a birding course given by naturalist and bird illustrator John Yrizzary. For 12 years, Joe attended the class, and when Yrizzary retired, Joe was chosen as his replacement. Joe has been an instructor there ever since.

Nine years ago, when Joe retired as math teacher and program chairman at Fort Hamilton High School, he started his company Happy Warblers, LLC. His organizational skills and patience, honed as a teacher and director of schedules and budgets, are qualities well suited to a career as a birding instructor.

Needless to say, my request for an interview turned into a morning of bird watching at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in late August. He helped me identify 29 species, including an American avocet and a white pelican, a species Joe needed for his list of 300 bird species spotted in NY State each year (it was 2012's number 269). He gave me important tips on observing bird behavior and feeding habits as well as color and size.

Birding with Joe is entertaining and educational for both the casual and the more serious birder. Sign up for one of Joe Giunta's courses or go out on a walk with him and find out for yourself.



Joe Giunta

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR JAMAICA BAY

Glenn Phillips

Last summer after the announcement of a cooperative agreement to manage the Jamaica Bay complex by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the National Park Service issued three management alternatives for a new General Management Plan for three districts of Gateway National Recreation Area: Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Breezy Point, and Floyd Bennett Field. During a comment period, NYC Audubon and NYC Audubon members spoke out. In the next few weeks, the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement will be released, and it is hoped that our concerns are incorporated.

The three alternatives, Plan B-Discovering Gateway, Plan C-Experiencing Preserved Places, and Plan D-Connecting Coastlines, were first presented in the fall of 2010 and were elaborated on with maps and more detailed descriptions this past summer. While each option maintained some essential protections for natural resources, as mandated by the federal law which created the park, the proposals outlined in Plan C-Experiencing Preserved Places best protect Gateway's critical wildlife habitat and best allow for resilience in the face of climate change and sea level rise, all the more critical after the recent destruction from Hurricane Sandy.

While some of the proposals contained in the other two alternatives would either enhance NYC Audubon's preferred choice or not significantly impact it, some would have significant negative impacts on already declining bird populations. In Plan D-Connecting Coastlines, for instance, it is proposed that Plumb Beach become a destination for "water-based activities and wind sports." Plumb Beach is the most productive beach for horseshoe crabs in New York State, based on studies conducted by NYC Audubon volunteers, and provides critical stopover habitat for migratory birds, many species of which have experienced dramatic declines over the last few years.

Even proposals for Floyd Bennett Field under preferred Plan C-Experiencing Preserved Places fail to protect the critical grassland habitat at the former airport. Grassland birds are among the most threatened bird groups in the United States, and this small but well-studied grassland may play a critical role both during migration and as an overflow site for breeding birds. And some elements from the Plan D-Connecting Coastlines proposals for Floyd Bennett Field may add significant benefits for wildlife by expanding wetlands and developing a new science center and public museum.

This General Management Plan is an important road map for the future management of the Jamaica Bay complex, and while its contents do not guarantee adequate protection of natural resources (note the significant declines over the last thirty years of the current plan), without a strong plan in place, there is little chance for future gains. Visit <http://www.nyc Audubon.org/gateway-gmp> for updates and follow the environmental review process that leads up to the Final General Management Plan, due to be approved in the fall of 2013.

News & Notes

DEVELOPING A RESTORATION PLAN FOR CENTRAL PARK

NYC Audubon is contributing to a Central Park Conservancy initiative to continue the restoration, enhance the management, and plan for long-term stewardship of Central Park's woodlands. As members of the park's Woodlands Advisory Board, NYC Audubon staff and volunteers met with the ecological consulting firm Great Ecology in January to help develop the master restoration plan. Great Ecology is in the process of its Phase I study, which includes a feasibility study and baseline ecological health assessment. NYC Audubon will continue to be involved as the plan moves forward, ensuring that it protects and enhances Central Park's value as a crucial stopover habitat for birds migrating along the Atlantic Flyway.

HARBOR HERONS AND WATERBIRDS MEETING

On January 14 and 15, the Harbor Herons and Waterbirds of the Greater NY/NJ Harbor Working Group, co-chaired by NYC Audubon's Susan Elbin and NJ Audubon's Nellie Tsipoura, held its eighth annual meeting in lower Manhattan. The group reviewed the past year's research and restoration work, including NYC Audubon's American oystercatcher banding, harbor heron nesting survey, and great egret roost survey. The impact of Hurricane Sandy on local waterbird nesting and foraging habitat was also a primary focus, highlighting the importance of monitoring local waterbird populations in 2013.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We are happy to report that Fredric Spar had been appointed to the board of directors. Fred is a managing director at Kekst and Company, a corporate communications consulting firm. He serves on the boards of Generation Schools Network and Friends of Princeton Open Space, and is chair of the Friends of the Charles H. Rogers Wildlife Refuge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

New York City Audubon's conservation work and education programs are made possible by generous contributions from members and friends. We'd like to express our gratitude to all those who have sustained us in our work this past season. In particular, we'd like to thank the Leon Levy Foundation for its leadership support of science and conservation.

AMERICAN KESTREL CIRCLE

Oakes and Louise Ames
Claude and Lucienne Bloch
Ronald and Jean Bourque
Clifford Case and Karen B. Dubno
Joseph and Barbara Ellis
Andrew Farnsworth
Marcia and Bruce Fowle
Philip Fried
Richard Fried and Stella Kim
Cathy and Lloyd Heller
Sarah Jeffords
Dawn and Tommy Lee Jones
Jared and Songmei Keyes
Lauren and Ethan Klingsberg
Steve Nanz and Heidi Steiner
John and Heather Shemilt
Virginia K. Stowe
Elizabeth Woods and Charles Denholm

CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

American Littoral Society
Audubon NY
The Bay and Paul Foundations
Con Edison
The Durst Organization
The Eppley Foundation for Research
Fiduciary Trust International
S. Forest Company
General Contractors Association of New York
Jamaica Bay Institute
The Kimball Foundation
Leon Levy Foundation
Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc.
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
National Audubon Society

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
New York/ New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program of the Environmental Protection Agency
Open Space Institute
Patagonia
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
Sims Metal Management
Spectra Energy
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IN-KIND DONATIONS

Lisa and Lee Lazarus

TRIBUTE GIFTS

In honor of Steve Curtis
Sadie Honey
In honor of Helena Durst on the birth of Frank Domino Durst
Melissa Kasper Shapiro
In honor of Greg and Susan Elbin
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In honor of Juliet Falchi
Charles Leach
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In honor of Marcia Fowle
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In honor of Kathleen Heenan Olmstead's birthday
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In honor of Don Riepe
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MEMORIAL GIFTS

In memory of Charles F. Barber
Mildred Doucette
In memory of Joan Bonagura, 1931-2012
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In memory of James Brown
Roberta C. Smith
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In memory of Jewell Bukantz
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2012-2013 LECTURE SERIES

All lectures are free and open to the public and are held at The Arsenal, Central Park, 5th Avenue at 64th Street, 3rd Floor. This series has been made possible by the support of Claude and Lucienne Bloch and Patagonia.

COWBIRDS, CUCKOOS, AND FOSTER PARENTING IN THE AVIAN WORLD:

By Mark Hauber

Wednesday, March 13, 6pm

Obligate avian brood parasites, including cowbirds in our parks and backyards, honeyguides in Africa and Asia, many cuckoos across the world, and even some finches and ducks, lay their eggs in the nests of other species. The host birds raise the brood parasitic birds' young. Mark Hauber, professor of psychology at Hunter College, will discuss why and how hosts of brood parasitic birds fail to recognize "foreign" eggs in their nests and whether brood parasitic young face challenges, using illustrations and his experimental studies from North America, New Zealand, and Europe.

VISIONS: EARTH'S ELEMENTS IN BIRD AND NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

By Kevin Karlson and Lloyd Spitalnik

Wednesday, May 8, 6pm

Join birding experts and photographers Kevin Karlson and Lloyd Spitalnik for a visual and musical program featuring a spectacular collection of bird and nature images from their recently published book, *Visions: Earth Elements in Bird and Nature Photography*. Reflecting the personal visions of eleven contributing photographers, the images

are themed to the elements of the planet—earth, fire, air, and water—and include some of the finest action and behavioral photographs available. The unique theme and musical interludes in this program will take you on a riveting visual ride through the world of birds and nature.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE AND ANNUAL MEETING

By Susan Elbin and John Rowden

Wednesday, June 12, 6pm

NYC Audubon conducts scientific monitoring in all five boroughs to understand how birds are using our urban environment and how this environment affects them. Project Safe Flight seeks to improve the chances that migrants successfully navigate the city by collecting data which is then used to both identify problems and seek solutions. Our Jamaica Bay program studies populations of migratory shorebirds and horseshoe crabs, investigating the status of these populations over time in this important wetland, New York City's largest. Join us as Susan Elbin and John Rowden provide updates on what this research has taught us in the past year.