

# THE URBAN BIRD CALL

**FINDING INSPIRATION IN A  
BIODIVERSITY CRISIS**

**HONORING GOOGLE AND  
DR. ERIC W. SANDERSON**

**OSPREY: THE COASTAL  
FISH HAWK**



## MISSION & VISION

NYC Bird Alliance protects birds and their habitats, strengthening urban biodiversity through science, advocacy, and community engagement. We envision New York City as a leader in urban bird conservation, where nature thrives and all New Yorkers appreciate and care for the City's biodiversity.

## COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

NYC Bird Alliance believes all people have the right to a close connection to the natural world and the right to a healthy environment. Preserving our environment is only possible if we all feel that connection. For more information, visit [go.nycbirdalliance.org/edia](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/edia).

## THE URBAN BIRD CALL (FORMERLY THE URBAN AUDUBON)

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## PHOTO CREDITS

**Cover Photograph:** The Osprey is a magnificent fish-eating raptor with a hunting success rate of up to 70 percent. Just like Red-tailed Hawks and Peregrine Falcons, the Osprey has a remarkable wildlife comeback story in New York City. But with threats like human disturbance and overfishing, their future could still be at risk. Learn more in our Species Profile (back cover). Photo © Paul

## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Dear NYC Bird Alliance members,

As fall brings migrating birds back to the City, our opportunities for engagement and conservation action abound with migration-themed bird outings, bird-collision monitoring, our work with the City Council to advance bird-friendly legislation, and, of course, our annual Fall Roost gala.

This year, we're celebrating two honorees who help make New York City a vibrant biodiversity hub: **Google** and **Dr. Eric W. Sanderson**.

Since 2023, NYC Bird Alliance has partnered with Google to monitor biodiversity across its New York City campuses, documenting nearly 80 bird species on the green roofs of their St. John's Terminal building alone. A founding sponsor of NYC Bird Alliance's Biodiversity District (pg. 5), Google is creating a game-changing model for how corporate leadership can advance urban ecological resilience.

We're also thrilled to honor Dr. Eric W. Sanderson, renowned ecologist, vice president for urban conservation at the New York Botanical Garden, author of *Mannahatta* and the upcoming *Before New York*, and a leading voice in reimagining the ecological future of cities. Through decades of groundbreaking research on New York City's historical ecosystems, Eric has transformed how cities understand and design for nature. His work has informed sustainable design at Google's New York City buildings and continues to shape conservation strategy and urban resilience efforts across the region.

Partners like Google and visionaries like Eric Sanderson fortify and energize our work at NYC Bird Alliance. We hope you'll join us at the Fall Roost on October 13 (pg. 7) to celebrate these partnerships and our work to build a more biodiverse and bird-friendly New York City. Support the Fall Roost by visiting [go.nycbirdalliance.org/roost](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/roost). ■

  
Michael Yuan  
Board President



  
Jessica G. Wilson  
Executive Director



Jessica Wilson and Dr. Eric W. Sanderson aboard the 2026 Sunset Eco-cruise.



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# BEHIND THE SCIENCE: STAYING INSPIRED IN A BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

An Interview by Kellye Rosenheim, Publications Committee

**F**eeling like it's all bad news? Even if it's not, how can we stay optimistic in these interesting times? Dr. Dustin Partridge, senior director of conservation and science, joined NYC Bird Alliance in 2014 as a contract scientist, working on the Javits Center green roof for his PhD research. This summer, I asked Dustin, who now oversees all our major science initiatives, how he stays optimistic on the frontlines of a biodiversity crisis.



Dr. Dustin Partridge atop the Javits Center green roof.

## When did you know you wanted to work in conservation?

As long as I can remember. I was that kid who'd say, 'Do you want to talk about nocturnal animals?' The natural world has always been my biggest interest. On the baseball team, I was in right field looking for bugs in the grass.

## And there you were years later on the Javits Center green roof, looking for bugs again.

Exactly. I was never interested in a purely academic approach to science. I wanted to find solutions that benefit people and the environment, which is why I chose to study green roofs. They're a practical solution for biodiversity loss and climate change, directly benefitting people.

## How can we make NYC a thriving green space for birds?

New York is *already* a thriving space for birds, an incredible biodiversity hotspot. To protect and improve it, we should do all that NYC Bird Alliance already prioritizes: make sure streets and green roofs incorporate native plants, bird-safe glass is everywhere, and the Harbor continues to host rich biodiversity.

And because we're such a well-known metropolis, we can be the example. Our actions can inspire conservation in cities around the world.

## Given how high the stakes are, how do you stay undaunted by the task at hand?

Conservation is a crisis discipline, and we have challeng-

ing moments: discovering a dozen dead birds beneath lethal glass or hearing that conservation laws are being stripped. What I constantly come back to is: our solutions make a difference. I love walking around the City and seeing a new building with bird-safe glass. It's amazing that thousands of New Yorkers spoke up to get the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act signed into law. In those moments, we know this work is making a difference.

## Your team discovered a critical decline of Black-crowned Night Heron. How was it receiving that news?

Dr. Shannon Curley and I were working through 40 years of survey data – an incredibly valuable dataset that is tracking the largest remaining population of Black-crowned Night Herons in the Northeast. One night she sent me the result: a rapid decline of 55% over just 22 years. I felt this raw shock.

I had just put my six-year-old daughter to sleep, and I thought: what does this mean for her future? We're losing this bird, an indicator species, and its decline is telling us that something's wrong with our environment, and potentially with our waterways.

As scary as this news is, the fact that we discovered it while this common bird is still common is huge. That was the hope I went toward. We have enough time to make a change, save this bird, and ensure that our harbor is a healthy ecosystem for our wildlife and community.

## What would you say to a person going into conservation?

Balance is important. And get out in the field.

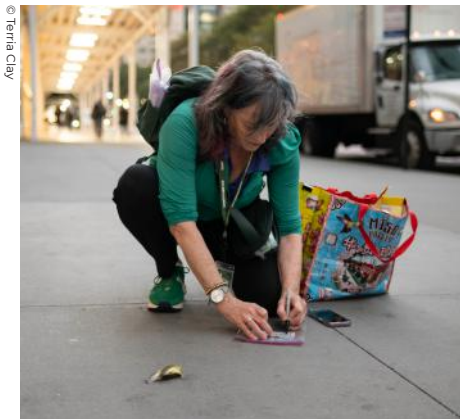
Every summer I go out to the Harbor Heron islands in NY–NJ Harbor, where these little dinosaurs nest from the ground to the canopy. These areas are so wild – full of lush vegetation and uninhabited by people. Then in 20 minutes you're back in Brooklyn. It's so cool to know that this natural world exists here. It's those moments that keep hope alive and demonstrate that our work does have living, breathing impact. ■

Read the full interview: [go.nycbirdalliance.org/dustin](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/dustin).

# SHAPING A BIODIVERSE, BIRD-SAFE CITY

## REDUCING COLLISIONS

*NYC Bird Alliance's collision-reduction science, research, and advocacy have saved hundreds of thousands of birds, emerging as a national model for bird-friendly buildings and legislation.*



Project Safe Flight volunteer documents a dead bird, killed by a window collision, near Bryant Park.

### NEW FRAMEWORK COULD INSPIRE BIRD-SAFE POLICIES NATIONWIDE

Each spring and fall, NYC Bird Alliance recruits hundreds of volunteers to monitor for collisions, documenting dead and injured birds that have struck buildings. Project Safe Flight, begun in 1997, has become one of the largest programs of its kind, and the

data has been instrumental in passing bird-friendly legislation in NYC.

To help launch new collision-monitoring programs and affect even more bird-friendly change, NYC Bird Alliance has created a shareable framework on how to run a collision-monitoring program, including sample datasheets and collision routes, so other conservation and community groups can begin their own monitoring programs. As a leader in collision reduction, we're thrilled to share a resource that will hopefully empower people around the world to gather data and use the science to advocate for bird-safe change.

This framework will be published in the journal *Urban Ecosystems* this fall.

### HELP PASS LIGHTS OUT LEGISLATION

Each year, millions of birds migrate through New York City, relying on the stars for navigation. But nighttime light pollution disrupts this process, disorienting birds and drawing them

into our dangerous urban environment where they face deadly collisions.

After months of NYC Bird Alliance collaboration with Council Member Epstein, new Lights Out legislation was introduced this August. Lights Out would reduce unnecessary nighttime lighting in commercial, office, and educational buildings – expanding on a groundbreaking law NYC Bird Alliance helped pass in 2021, requiring city-owned buildings to turn lights off at night. This new Lights Out bill will have even greater impact as a common-sense conservation practice that will help millions of birds migrate safely, support mental and physical health for New Yorkers by dimming our skylines, and reduce unnecessary energy consumption in our city.

Now, we need your help turning Lights Out into law! Write your city council member and let them know NYC needs Lights Out. Take action: [go.nycbirdalliance.org/lightsout](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/lightsout). ■

## SAFEGUARDING WATERBIRDS

*Through long-term scientific monitoring and evidence-based advocacy, NYC Bird Alliance works to protect nesting sites and coastal habitat critical to the health of the Harbor's ecosystem.*

### SUPPORTING TERNS ON GOV. ISLAND

For more than a decade, we have protected and championed the large colony of State-threatened Common Terns that nest on the piers of Governors Island. Now, with the construction of a new climate campus, the island is undergoing major changes, including construction at Lima Pier, which will put the tern population in jeopardy.

Following meetings between NYC Bird Alliance and the Trust for Governors Island, we're thrilled to report that the Trust has agreed to fund, build, and maintain alternate nesting habitat for these terns. We will continue to work with the Trust to offer science-based recommendations to protect

the tern colony and the valuable habitat that Governors Island provides for hundreds of bird species.



Banding oystercatcher chicks in the Rockaways.

### 200+ OYSTERCATCHERS BANDED

Each summer, NYC Bird Alliance scientists flock to the Rockaways to monitor American Oystercatchers. This season, Field Biologist Emilio Tobón monitored 57 nesting pairs,

which have so far raised nearly 40 chicks. Once all have fledged, we will calculate the “productivity” of the site: a measure of success that can be compared to beaches along the entire Atlantic Coast.

In addition to building a valuable dataset begun in 2012, we passed a major milestone this season when Emilio banded 32 oystercatcher chicks. This was the highest number banded by NYC Bird Alliance in a single season, bringing our total number of banded oystercatchers to 201. These ID bands help us – and scientists all along the flyway – identify and track these Rockaway-born shorebirds, including one spotted in Honduras. ■

# RECENT HIGHLIGHTS & PROJECT UPDATES

## PROTECTING HABITAT

*NYC Bird Alliance protects and enhances bird habitat across New York City's parks, rooftops, shorelines, and neighborhoods to strengthen biodiversity and climate resilience.*

### STREET MEDIAN DATA ENCOURAGES BIODIVERSITY ON PARK AVENUE

This spring, NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) unveiled plans to redesign the Park Avenue medians from E. 46th to 57th Street, presenting the perfect opportunity for NYC Bird Alliance to share our scientific data and influence real-world investment in birds and biodiversity.

Using survey data from Manhattan's Broadway Malls, where our scientists demonstrated that native, locally evolved plants in street medians increase bird diversity and abundance, our advocacy team met with DOT and the landscape architect overseeing the project to encourage similar design principles along Park Avenue. Pairing this strategic outreach with action from over 300 of our Avian Advocates who provided public feedback –

emphasizing the importance of native plants, natural designs, and areas designed for connecting with nature – our community is speaking up for the importance of urban biodiversity.

"This is proof of concept for NYC Bird Alliance's work," says Executive Director Jessica Wilson. "Our rigorous scientific research, paired with community engagement and partnerships, influences policy and planning to make the City better for birds and people."

### BIODIVERSITY DISTRICT: A MODEL FOR URBAN CONSERVATION

As federal protections for wildlife habitat face increasing uncertainty, local conservation efforts have never been more important.

That's the idea behind NYC Bird Alliance's Biodiversity District, an innovative model that will bring together

public agencies, nonprofits, businesses, property owners, and community groups to coordinate conservation efforts. With Google as a founding sponsor, our pilot district on Manhattan's Lower West Side will create a healthier, more resilient landscape for birds and other wildlife while making neighborhoods greener and more livable for people. District participants will have access to resources and best practices, including for implementing bird-friendly glass and incorporating native plants in medians or on rooftops. With a targeted public launch in 2027, the Biodiversity District could become a blueprint for neighborhoods across New York City and the country, demonstrating how urban communities can work together to restore biodiversity. Learn more at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/district](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/district). ■

## MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES

*NYC Bird Alliance inspires New Yorkers to connect with nature and take action for birds and biodiversity. Our inclusive programs turn a love of birds and nature into stewardship and effective advocacy.*



Residents of the Gowanus NYCHA campus join a free, guided bird outing with neighbors.

### SUSTAINED OUTREACH CREATES RECORD ENGAGEMENT

Working alongside New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents, tenant leaders, and community organizations, our team has grown our out-

reach efforts to better understand community needs and potential interest in our NYCHA in Nature program, which brings free, guided bird outings to the City's public housing campuses. This spring, we hosted 16 programs with over 100 people in attendance – the highest engagement since the inception of NYCHA in Nature in 2023. In addition, many campuses invited us to host more than one outing, demonstrating growing resident interest. Spring highlights included welcoming first-time birders and returning participants, inviting a local bird expert from McGolrick Park to join residents of Cooper Park Houses, and spotting a Yellow-crowned Night Heron nest at Nostrand Houses. Learn more at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/nycha](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/nycha).

### CONNECT WITH OTHER BIRDERS

The fall season brings the best of our guided bird outings, including exclusive member events (pg. 7) and conservation celebrations across the boroughs.

- **Sept. 12–20:** Latino Conservation Week
- **Sept. 20–27:** Climate Week NYC
- **Sept. 27:** Raptorama Festival at Jamaica Bay
- **Oct. 3:** City of Forest Day
- **Oct. 10:** World Migratory Bird Day
- **Oct. 17:** Raptorama Festival at Marine Park
- **Oct. 24–25:** Pumpkin Point on Governors Island

Visit [go.nycbirdalliance.org/cal](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/cal) to find events near you. ■



## NEWS & NOTES

### BIRD COLLECTIVE HONORS HARBOR HERONS

Bird Collective, the iconic Brooklyn-based brand, creates apparel, accessories, and gifts in collaboration with artists, conservation groups, and causes. This summer, Bird Collective launched a new collection: Herons and Egrets. This line celebrates the remarkable wading birds of our wetlands, shorelines, and waterways, and honors NYC Bird Alliance's 40+ years of research on New York Harbor's nesting herons and egrets.

Bird Collective's cofounder, Angie Co, has served on our board of directors since 2021, helping lead our efforts to make the world of birding more diverse and inclusive. Help support our collective mission of protecting birds and habitats by shopping at [www.birdcollective.com](http://www.birdcollective.com).

### JOINING THE 2026 NEW YORK CITY MARATHON

For the second year, NYC Bird Alliance was selected as an official charity partner for the TCS New York City Marathon. This November 1, we'll have three runners on our Team Greater Yellowlegs: Eric Balcanoff, Andrea Fondulas, and, for a second year, Michael Hainey. Each has committed to fundraising for NYC Bird Alliance and helping us grow visibility in New York City as part of their marathon journey. Support our runners by reading their stories, visiting their fundraising pages, and cheering them on this fall: [go.nycbirdalliance.org/marathon](http://go.nycbirdalliance.org/marathon).

### SAVE THE DATE: 127TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

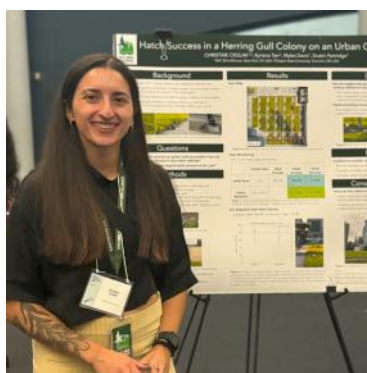
Join us on Sunday, December 20 for the annual Christmas Bird Count. Help us count birds across Manhattan as part of the effort to collect data on bird populations across the Western Hemisphere. More details, including registration information, will be included in our November eGret eNewsletter. Subscribe today: [go.nycbirdalliance.org/egret](http://go.nycbirdalliance.org/egret).

### THANK YOU, SEASONAL SCIENTISTS

NYC Bird Alliance thanks our remarkable seasonal staff for their work monitoring birds and biodiversity across the City, including at the Javits Center green roof, Google's office buildings, the Upper West Side's Broadway Malls, Jefferson Market Garden, the Rockaways, and the Harbor Heron Islands. ■



© All photos by NYC Bird Alliance



Our science work depends on the critical data collected by these amazing scientists. From top, left to right: seasonal and core staff at the August Lights Out Rally; Irma Cardenas, Cenithia Bilal; Junko Suzuki; Christine Cieslak; Myles Davis, Andrea Trigueros; Richard Aracil, Tod Winston; Michelle Talich.

## THERE'S MORE ONLINE! DIGITAL URBAN BIRD CALL STORIES

Visit [go.nycbirdalliance.org/digital-ubc](http://go.nycbirdalliance.org/digital-ubc) to find more bird-filled stories.



# JOIN OUR NEST EGG CIRCLE

*If birds matter to you, make sure they're in your plans.*

A planned gift to NYC Bird Alliance is a simple but significant way to protect birds for generations to come. By joining our **Nest Egg Circle**, you'll be part of a growing community of people who have chosen to invest in the future of New York City's biodiversity. Together we can ensure birds thrive in NYC.

## TWO EASY WAYS TO LEAVE A NEST EGG

- INCLUDE US IN YOUR WILL
- NAME US AS A BENEFICIARY

*You will be thanked with a lifetime membership, an invitation to yearly gatherings, and public recognition (if you wish).*

## ALREADY INCLUDED US IN YOUR WILL?

*Please let us know by emailing Matthew Coody at [mcoody@nycbirdalliance.org](mailto:mcoody@nycbirdalliance.org).*

## MEMBERS, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU



Advocate, actor, and NYC Bird Alliance board member Lili Taylor joins members on a bird outing in Central Park.

**TAKE OUR SURVEY:** Members, please fill out a short survey (below) so we can hear your thoughts on our membership program.



SCAN FOR SURVEY

And don't forget to enjoy your member benefits this fall migration, including exclusive Member Events with NYC Bird Alliance staff and board members. Register today at [go.nycbirdalliance.org/cal](https://go.nycbirdalliance.org/cal).

## 2026 FALL ROOST GALA

*Celebrating vision and leadership in urban biodiversity.*

Tuesday, October 13 | Tribeca 360°

Join us at the 2026 Fall Roost gala as we honor **Google** and **Dr. Eric W. Sanderson**.



Scan for more





## NYC BIRD ALLIANCE

71 West 23rd Street

Suite 1523

New York, NY 10010

[www.nycbirdalliance.org](http://www.nycbirdalliance.org)

**NYC BIRD  
ALLIANCE**  
A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL AUDUBON

DATED MATERIAL:

Fall 2026 Issue

# OSPREY: THE COASTAL FISH HAWK

By Don Riepe, NYC Bird Alliance Advisory Council Member and Former Board Member

© Abigail Zent



Osprey with a freshly caught Menhaden in its talons.

**T**he Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), a magnificent fish-eating raptor with a wingspan of up to five feet, has made one of the most remarkable wildlife comebacks in New York City – but its future is still uncertain.

Once a common sight along the City's coastal marshes, bays, and estuaries, Osprey populations declined dramatically during the 20th century due to habitat loss, human disturbance, and widespread use of the pesticide DDT, which caused eggshells to become so thin that many broke before hatching. By the early 1970s, breeding Ospreys had virtually disappeared from New York Harbor and much of the surrounding region. Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* highlighted the issue and in 1972, DDT was banned from use in the U.S.

In the 1980s, Osprey populations started to rebound. As a ranger at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, I worked

with NYC Sierra Club volunteers and National Park Service ranger staff to put up several nesting platforms in Jamaica Bay. In 1990, we documented the first nesting Osprey in New York City for nearly 20 years.

Today, there are 25 active Osprey nests in the greater Jamaica Bay area, and Osprey populations have fully recovered thanks to conservation action and government protections. But despite this success, wildlife conservation is an ongoing challenge, as raptors face new threats.

For more than three decades, NYC Department of Environmental Protection biologist Chris Nadareski and I have banded and checked the health of young Ospreys in Jamaica Bay. Fledgling survival the past two years has been dismal. This year, 20 of 25 Osprey nests surveyed were empty, making it the worst year for productivity in 36 years. Many suspect the cause is overfishing of Menhaden, Ospreys' most important food source. Numerous studies show that the nesting success of Atlantic Coast Ospreys is closely tied to Menhaden populations, and there are active calls to reduce overfishing of Menhaden along the entire coast. NYC Bird Alliance is a member of the new Menhaden Coalition, which is currently advocating for protection of these fish and coordinating Osprey and fish-related data across state lines. ■

**Learn more about raptors at the Raptorama festival on Sept. 27 in Jamaica Bay!** See wild Ospreys on the guided outing and rehabilitated raptors at this family-friendly event. Visit [go.nycbirdalliance.org/festivals](http://go.nycbirdalliance.org/festivals).