



Fall 2025

Bugging Out - Insects on the Wing

Fall migration is upon us once again, after a disappointing summer that lacked an abundance of insects. There was the occasional butterfly, Pearl Crescents, American Snout, Monarchs and a few Zabulon and Silver-sided Skippers. Dragonflies weighed in with Northern Blue Dasher, Meadowhawks and a

the insects were low, and many birders, naturalists and entomologists are concerned. One entomologist stated, “I remember the days when I drove on the back roads in upstate New York at night and the amount of bugs squished on my windshield was reason for me to use the wiper fluid and wash away an avalanche of wings and

meadows in Central Park looking for winged beauties. Hairstreaks, tiny butterflies with red, coral or gray streaked wings were nowhere to be found. The only butterfly that seemed to be present in a small quantity was the Hackberry emperor Butterfly on the Hackberry tree in the North Woods of Central Park. There we could count up



Pictured from left to right: American Snout, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Buckeye, Painted Lady, Eastern-Tailed Blue butterflies, and Spicebush Swallowtail. Photographs: Buckeye & Spicebush Butterflies, Debbie Becker. All other photographs by Janet Wooten, Instagram: sprite772

Twelve-spotted Skimmer. There were also hoover flies, leaf-cutter bees, bumble bees, and an assortment of mud wasps, bald-faced hornets and great black wasps.

But the quantity and frequency of

body parts. This summer, there were no insects at all.”

Birders who butterfly during the summer scanned the Butterfly Meadow at 103rd Street, the Conservancy at 105th Street, and all the other

to three or four of these winged creatures. Also abundant were American Snouts. But most of our butterflies, dragonflies, and insects were dramatically reduced in numbers from previous years or absent altogether.

What the Experts Are Saying

Janet Wooten, New York City Naturalist

There is a combination of factors that lead to a decline in insect populations and butterflies in particular. At the top of the list is the persistent widespread overuse of pesticides at residences and at commercial and agricultural areas. Habitat loss because of development with a subsequent loss of host plants for food and shelter is another big factor as are excessively maintained residential gardens and lawns. Combine these factors with climate change (which could affect the relationship between insects and the timing of plant growth cycles), disease, and local weather patterns (too dry, or too cold and rainy) and the populations will be negatively affected. That said, America Snouts are having a banner year in the New York area and have been abundant all summer. I do not know why!

- Instagram: sprite772



Monarch Butterfly, www.ellenmichaelsphotos.com

Ellen Michaels, Wildlife & Nature Photographer

I've been photographing the birds, butterflies and insects of Central Park and the New York area for over twenty years. During that time, the volume and diversity of insects has dwindled markedly, especially in the last several years. Since insects account for more than half of all organisms on the planet it is quite shocking that so few can be seen nowadays. I sure do miss them!

Consensus says that the ongoing pesticide use as well as urbanization are major factors in the "insect apocalypse."

www.ellenmichaelsphotos.com



Differential Grasshopper, www.ellenmichaelsphotos.com

Mike Feller, Chief Naturalist

I've spent most of my adult life in and around urban green spaces and had a hand in creating, restoring, and managing plant communities in order to help establish greater diversity of higher quality habitats. Overall, I've seen that the greatest loss of habitat results from development, especially on Staten Island. However, there are sites in all five boroughs where I've been observed improved conditions.

I have a colleague, an ecologist at the Parks Department, who facilitates a kind of grief counseling group for natural resources professionals. I can relate to this. I'm old enough, I've paid enough attention, and my memory is good enough to remember the cicada emergence on Staten Island in 1962 (pre-Verazzano Bridge) when I was four years old—a periodic experience greatly diminished every subsequent 17 years; and, in during 1960s summers, the giant silk and noctuid moths that fluttered around street lights in my Brooklyn neighborhood—no longer to be seen.

On a positive note, I've also seen Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Bald Eagle, and colonial wading bird populations increase in the city.

-New York City Park Department Natural Resources Group, Chief Naturalist (retired)

Ken Chaya, Urban Naturalist

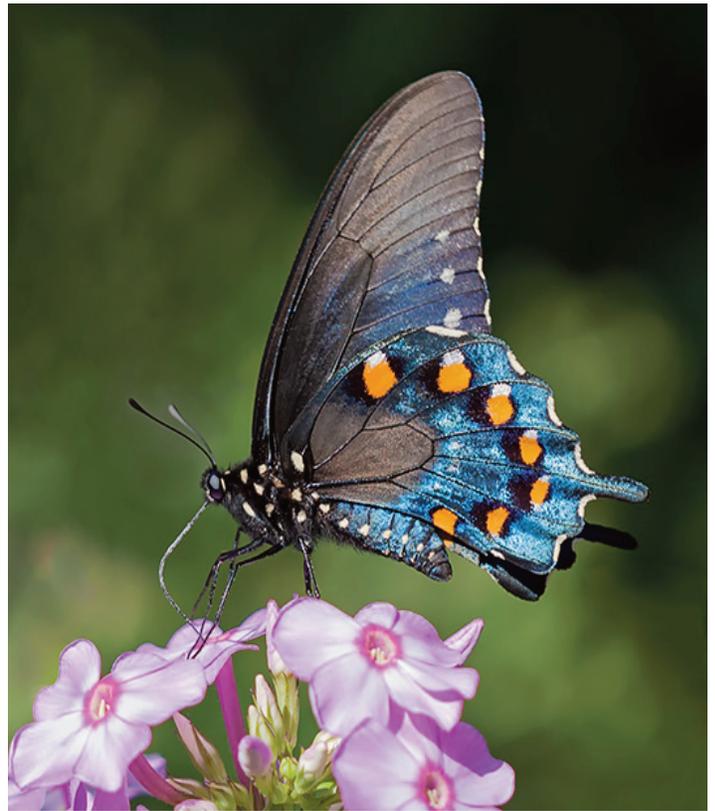
I think that the low numbers of insects seen in our area this past summer reflects the ongoing environmental concerns that scientists have been warning us about for some time now. Climate change is real and we are now beginning to see the profound changes it will bring globally. This alone is cause for great concern, but there are also a number of other factors that play a role with insect populations, including:

- loss of habitat (from suburban sprawl with its devotion to monoculture, from chemically-treated green lawns to the vast devastation of habitat by big agriculture); continued pollution of the environment—both by chemicals and light; extreme weather (which may be attributable to climate change); the arrival of invasive species (both animals and plants); and finally and in particular, the devastating use of neonicotinoid pesticides. These events all must be taken into consideration.

According to local reports and my experience, this summer in New York State thus far has been very poor for sightings of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). The number of species and quantity of individuals is way down from past years at this time.

On the other hand, this past June was an amazing season locally for fireflies. I am not sure of the reason for this. It may be because the spring was a very wet one and the rains helped the populations of these beetles in ways we don't yet fully understand. This is all to say that there are many factors that can affect insect populations throughout the seasons—and, that not all insect orders will be affected equally in the future. However, the overall recent decline in many insect populations—the "Insect Apocalypse"—is real. The most severe diminishing trends have been noted specifically in the United States and Europe, where the most up to date studies have been done.

Instructor, New York Botanical Garden
Past President, Linnaean Society of New York



Pipevine Swallowtail, www.ellenmichaelsphotos.com



Peck's Skipper, www.ellenmichaelsphotos.com



Hackberry emperor Butterfly, Debbie Becker - BirdingAroudNYC.com



Antlered Flutter Fly, www.ellenmichaelsphotos.com

Why Every City Should Adopt An Avian Neighbor

Across North America, birds are vanishing. According to the State of the Birds Report, we've lost nearly three billion birds since 1970—more than one in four. These losses are not from a single disaster but from countless overlapping threats: habitat loss, climate change, pesticide use, window collisions (which kill up to a billion birds a year), cats, cars, and disease. It's death by a thousand cuts.

Faced with such staggering numbers, it's easy to assume that only large, global conservation organizations can help. But that assumption ignores a crucial fact about birds: they are both migratory and local. They winter in one hemisphere and nest in another. They rely on healthy stopovers, coastlines, parks, and cities along the way. That means what happens in your town—your block, your shoreline, even your school's campus—matters.

That's why municipalities across the country should identify, select, and officially recognize a species as their official avian representative.

This symbolic step, may initially seem trivial; however, it can be a powerful catalyst of targeted conservation, civic engagement, community pride, and hopeful action. I've seen it happen firsthand in my city, Hoboken, NJ.

Our city council passed a resolution honoring the Common Tern, a sleek seabird nesting on a privately owned pier along the Hudson River. That simple vote did more than make headlines—it gave our community a shared symbol. In the weeks after the resolution, Our Tern, the organization founded by residents working to protect Hoboken's avian life, persuaded the owner of the private pier to remove nets meant to deter the birds from nesting. Within days, numerous terns returned to the site where they ultimately completed a successful breeding season.

In the year since, Our Tern has launched a PR campaign that has raised awareness and built enthusiasm. After a series of nature walks and presentations, creation of a limited edition beer, t-shirts, a social media campaign linking the bird and its presence to the people in our community, the creation of a local birding group, a steady dose of eTERNal puns, and a citywide festival known as the Tern Parade, the community has embraced its feathered neighbor and taken it under its wing (no pun intended). Tangible results have followed: as of this writing, counters have spotted 34 adults maintaining 17 nests. The city is backing a plan to provide a permanent home for its terns on an artificial island in an underutilized cove. And that's just the beginning. Our Tern aspires to invite other pelagic birds to Hoboken's shores. The simple action of providing a safe area for birds in the city has led to birders spotting other pelagic birds on the pier such as Black Skimmers, Ruddy Turnstones, Western Sandpipers, Sanderlings, Killdeer, and others.

At a time when federal funding for wildlife management and environmental stewardship is difficult to come by, taking steps to honor a local species or population is an empowering way for individuals or small groups to ensure that wildlife contin-

ues to get the support it needs.

Though official or honorary status is wholly symbolic, it serves to publicize the bird, which is crucial when attempting to support its habitat. People tend to care more about a creature thriving in their own backyard than they do about one living in an entirely different hemisphere. Once they see that a species relies on, say, a patch of land near their home or a food source in a nearby grove, they are more likely to invest in the protection of the creature.

What's more, the work that birders do leading up to the designation by writing narratives, posting photos and videos, speaking to the public, or even debating which species is deserving of the title "Official" - helps locals to grasp the connections between themselves and the bird, and forges a sense of community.

It doesn't matter which species cities, towns, municipalities, boroughs, or even schools, choose as their honorary residents. When we assist with one bird's ecology, generally speaking, we tend to help multiple species by providing pockets of ecological health. What's more, birds are not the sole beneficiaries of stewardship. In the process of helping one creature we also support local plants, trees, fish, insects, etc.

These days it is common to hear the refrain: "My actions don't matter." Local stewardship is an antidote to this cynicism. Supporting populations of wintering or breeding birds in your area helps sustain global populations. Because birds are migratory, they offer us the opportunity to help our communities and our world at the same time. Or, perhaps there is even a bird in your locale that is an endemic or regional creature. Working to save it may prevent extinction and may serve to help its population expand.

Furthermore, anyone who lobbies local officials to recognize a bird is likely to follow up these efforts with acts of stewardship. This is the crucial, ongoing work that will ensure that the bird continues to thrive. Rallying others around an ecological cause, especially nonbirders who may not even know that such creatures exist, generates a positive enthusiasm for conservation. Instead of feeling demoralized, scolded, or apathetic, people feel excited about helping a creature who lives in their own back yard. The more people who are willing to engage in stewardship are a boon to nature everywhere.

We conceived of the name Our Tern because of how it functioned as a pun. Yes, our group of dedicated people is working to protect a species of tern. However, we wanted the name to remind others that wildlife conservation is an endeavor for everyone. It's *our turn*—to get involved, to do good, and to participate in the vital work of supporting the birds around us.

So, start the discussion: which bird should be your community's official avian representative? A fun follow up to this could be: thinking about what might the official birds of each borough could be?

-Jeff Train
ourtern.com

Birding for a Cause:

Birdathon 2025 Raises Nearly \$10,000 for Great Gull Island!

Each spring, Linnaean Society members flock to the field—not just to view migrating birds, but also to raise vital funds for the Great Gull Island Project, home to the Western Hemisphere’s largest nesting colonies of Common and Roseate Terns. This year’s Birdathon Weekend, held May 10–11, brought out the best in our community. Together, we raised nearly \$10,000 in support of this long-running conservation effort.

Over two days, four individuals and six teams birded their hearts out, combining deep commitment with a healthy dose of friendly competition.

Highlights include:

- 🕒 **Slow Birding Saturday** – Top fundraising team.
- 👤 **Richard Davis** – Top individual fundraiser and highest individual species count at 74, birding all the way from San Francisco!
- 👥 **Quack Pack (Field Trip Committee)** – Highest team species count with 81.

👥 Other teams included: The Wandering Warblers (Board), Third Born, Crescendo Chickens, and Our Local Patches.

👤 Other individuals included: Suzanne Zywicki, Jai-En-Ho, and Ann Plum.

We’re just shy of our \$10,000 goal; if you’d like to help us get there, there’s still time to make a tax-deductible donation.

Mailing Address - Please make your check payable to:
“GREAT GULL ISLAND PROJECT – AMNH”

Great Gull Island Project
Ornithology—AMNH
200 Central Park West
New York, NY 10024

Thank you to everyone who birded, sponsored, and cheered us on. Your efforts help ensure the continued success of the Great Gull Island Project and the future of these extraordinary seabirds.

Great Gull Island Report

We'd like to introduce you to the fruits of your labor - the Great Gull Island Conservation Plan, accessible through our new purpose-built website. We appreciate Linnaean's leadership through the decades and want to thank the members for their support, so please share this with the them. We would be happy to do a program for LSNY this fall or winter, if it is of interest to them.

This was a collective project, and the gift of everyone's time and expertise greatly improved the plan. Thirty-three people attended the workshops or otherwise invested time in helping to improve our understanding of the threats to the birds and the most important actions needed to take to ensure that the terns on GGI are protected and continue to thrive into the future. Dozens more people participated in stakeholder interviews, or have worked on GGI, or manage other colonies. To each of you we send sincere thanks.

There are a few other products in the works that are related to this project - an updated Vegetation Management Plan, and a Monitoring Protocols document; both will be available for viewing by the end of this field season.

We are already acting on the top priorities in the plan:

We submitted a proposal in May to the Long Island Sound Futures Fund to complete and implement a biosecurity protocol, to enhance nesting habitat in a degraded Common Tern site, and to enhance Roseate nesting habitat by upgrading nest boxes to a new, evidence-based style.

We are working every day to keep invasive plants at bay, and to test restoration techniques in areas that need to be cleared of Asiatic Bittersweet.

We continue to focus on improved monitoring at GGI and are working with colleagues on tern movement projects at GGI, and

on the wintering grounds.

Our monitoring work on provisioning and on fecal DNA, coupled with the movement data, is giving us the best possible understanding of the way the GGI terns use the seascape during the breeding season, and how the quality of the fish, as well as feeding rates, influences productivity.

We are working with colleagues to ensure we have a rapid and safe response to any pathogenic or toxin mortalities on GGI.

The terns are now hatching on GGI, and soon another cohort of young birds will be taking wing. Each tern sends its thanks to you for being part of this effort. We also take time each day to think of Helen and to give thanks for her work saving this vital engine for the resilience of the Common and Roseate Terns. Her memory is, indeed, a blessing.

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Our Annual Homecoming Picnic

Sunday, Sept 21, from 12:30–3:30 (rain date September 28)

The event will be held at Summit Rock in Central Park (enter at Central Park West and West 81st or West 85th Street). Please register online so we know how many people to prepare for. Bring your binoculars and a sandwich; we will provide snacks, drinks, and dessert. LSNY hats will be available for a donation of \$25.

After lunch we'll play a fun trivia game and then end the occasion with a bird walk. Don't worry if you haven't met any members yet—we're a friendly crowd, and we'll be happy to get to know you.

Please bring friends who may be interested in joining LSNY.

Fall Migration Websites

ebirds.org - Start your birding diary on ebirds.org and help keep count with the rest of the world.

Hawkmigration.org - Track migrating hawks all over the world in this amazing depository of hawks and eagle migration.

Birdcast.org - Not sure if the birds migrated last night? Take a look at real time radar on Birdcast.org

iNaturalist.org - A great way to keep a photo diary of your finds with immediate identification.

If you find an injured bird - please place it in a paper bag - and take immediately to the Wild Bird Fund, 565 Columbus Avenue between 87th and 88th Streets, New York, NY 10024 - Tel. 646-306-2862 • Hours: 9 am to 7 pm

If you find a deceased bird please report it to Dbird.org

Linnaean Society Meetings are Back in Person!

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

IN PERSON: The Liederkrantz Club, 6 East 87th Street, New York City

Free and open to the public. (Registration not required.)

Online via Zoom, free and open to the public- [Click here to register for the zoom](#)

Please note that due to a scheduling conflict, this month's program is on a Wednesday and not a Tuesday.

7:00 pm, Society's Business Followed By Dr. Rick Lankau

Lecture title: Forest fungi and forest health: what do we know, what don't we know, and how can we use this knowledge to preserve and restore healthy forest in a changing world

The Mission Statement of the Linnaean Society of New York

The Linnaean Society of New York provides a forum for the sharing and advancement of science-based knowledge through a program of lectures and field trips. It fosters an appreciation of the natural world with a special emphasis on birds. Founded in 1878, the Society comprises dedicated amateurs and professionals interested in the study, preservation, and enjoyment of nature and the environment.

About the Society

Established by amateur naturalists in 1878, the Linnaean Society of New York has worked to foster learning about, and stewardship of, the natural world. Its original members included H.B. Bailey, E.P. Bicknell, Ernest Ingersoll, C. Hart Merriam, and John Burroughs. The Society focuses particularly on birds and their place in nature. It organizes regular birding field trips to various destinations in the New York City area and beyond, sponsors lectures from experts on birding and natural history topics, and offers a variety of birding resources, including a rare

bird alert. It also takes a leadership role in addressing local conservation issues of concern to birders and natural history enthusiasts. Its aspirations are reflected in its highest award, the Eisenmann Medal, which is given each year to honor "excellence in ornithology and encouragement of the amateur."

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Please visit our website for additional information:

<https://www.linnaeannewyork.org/>