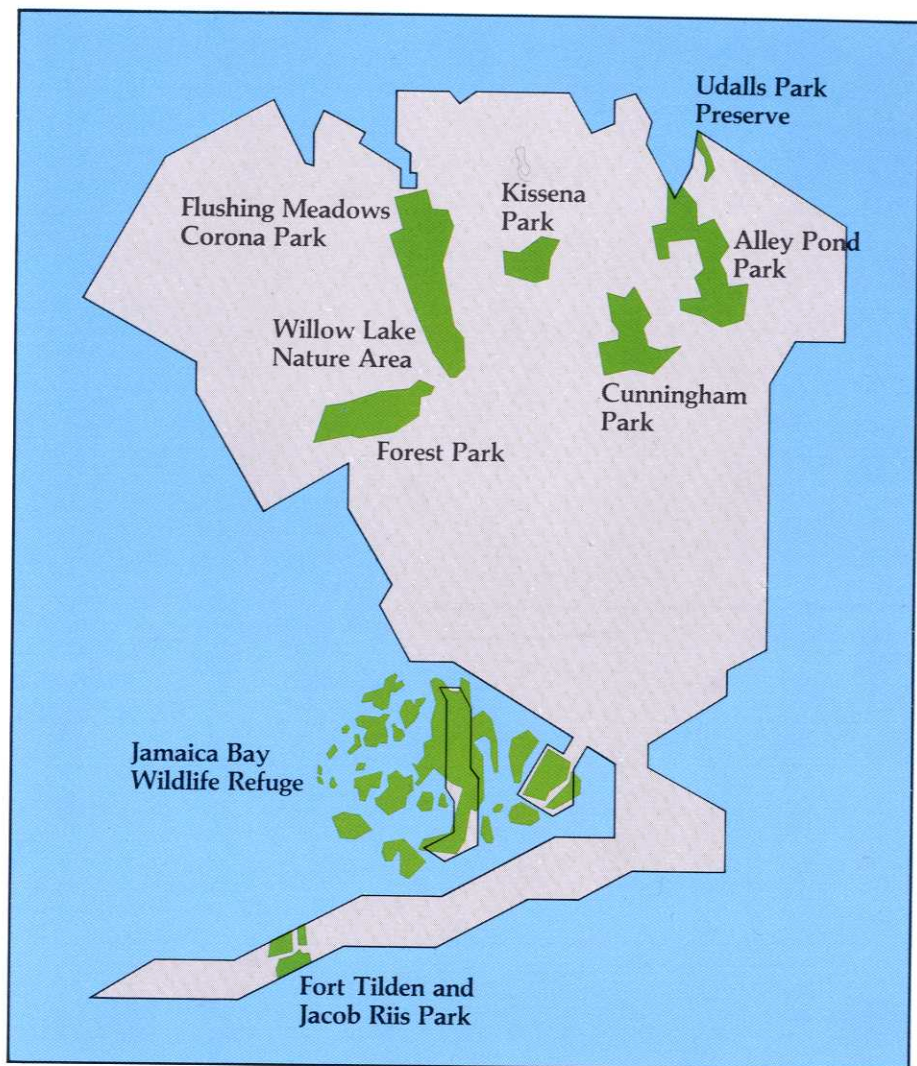


# A Guide To The Birds of Queens





**Map of Queens with  
Highlighted Parks**

Cover:  
*The male scarlet tanager, one of the  
most dazzling songbirds, can be seen in  
many Queens parks in spring.*



# The Birds of Queens

This year, an estimated 61 million people nationwide will take part in the fastest-growing outdoor activity in America: birdwatching.

There are many reasons why people watch birds. Some like the challenge of finding and identifying new birds, while others enjoy seeing familiar ones. For some, birdwatching, or "birding," is a detailed science. For others, it is an escape from the rigors and routines of everyday life; a time to explore and rejuvenate, either alone or with friends. Unlike most other outdoor activities, you can bird anytime, anywhere, and well into old age.

Modern day birdwatching began right here in New York City in the 1920s, when Ludlow Griscom of the American Museum of Natural History replaced the practice of looking at birds down the barrel of a shotgun with that of viewing them through binoculars. By paying attention to key details of a living bird, he demonstrated, one could identify it as accurately as one could a dead specimen. Based on Griscom's teachings, and others' observations, Roger Tory Peterson developed his now-famous field guide, which has introduced several generations of people to birds.

It is hard to imagine that birding would take place in a concrete and glass metropolis. But within its borders, New York City boasts a rich diversity of habitat, suitable for resident and migrant birds alike. Situated on the Atlantic

coast, the city forms a "bottleneck" for species that follow the shoreline on their journeys. More than 400 species have been documented as occurring in New York City—more than half of the species regularly found in North America.

Queens, the largest of the City's five boroughs, contains more parkland than any other. With its great variety of settings—forests, fields, lakes, marshes, and seashore—Queens is an ideal place for both beginning and expert birders.

In this brochure we will provide background information on bird habitats and migration, highlight the best spots to watch birds in Queens and suggest the optimum times to visit them, and provide you with a list of suggestions for further study of the birds of Queens.



## Habitat

A habitat is the place where a plant or an animal lives. In choosing a specific habitat, a bird must locate food, water, shelter, and, if it is to breed there, a nesting site. The abundance and variety of these usually determine where birds are found.

Each bird species has adapted to its particular habitat over thousands of years, and often exhibits characteristic anatomical traits or behaviors. Cardinals can survive in shrublands, forest edges, and urban backyards; the sea side sparrow has nasal glands that allow it to excrete excess salt—a useful adaptation to living in salt marshes. Because many birds are so specialized, they cannot simply “pick up and move” when habitat is lost. Today, destruction of habitat by humans is causing the most rapid world-wide extinction of species ever.

While there are many different habitats in Queens, they can be broadly divided into five categories: forest, field, freshwater, salt marsh, and seashore. When you explore the parks, take note of how the birds are distributed among these habitats.

## Forest

The oak-hickory forest found in much of Queens is a transitional forest: it has northern trees, such as American beech and white ash, as well as southern ones, such as tupelo, sweetgum, and tuliptree.



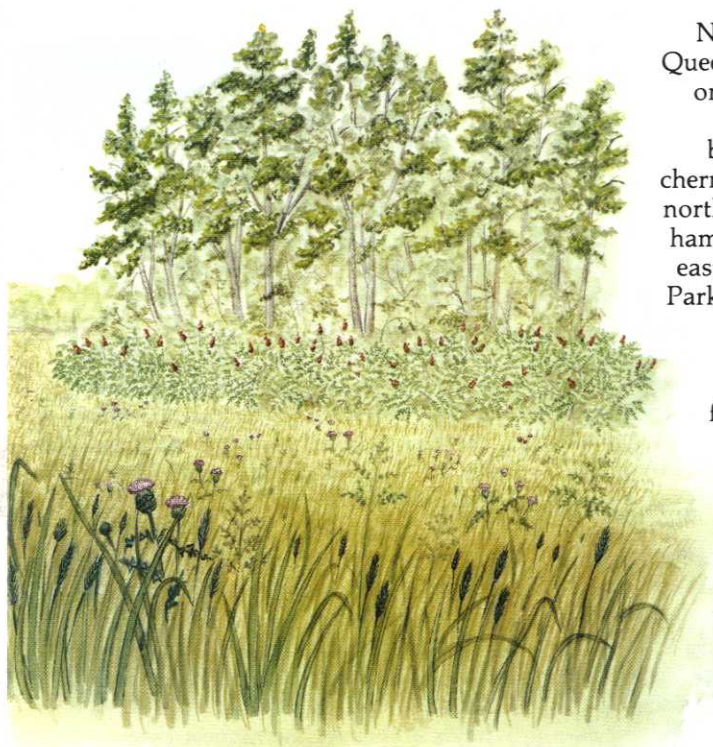
Queens is a transition zone for birds as well. Northern species such as northern (Baltimore) oriole and black-capped chickadee, blend with southern ones such as red-bellied woodpecker and Carolina wren.

The mature forests in Forest Park and parts of Alley Pond and Cunningham parks are dominated by red, black, and white oaks, with a mix of hickories and black birch. These trees form a canopy layer up to 100 feet above the ground,



where local breeders, such as red-eyed vireos, make their nests and many other birds hunt insects. The understory, when present, is comprised of smaller trees, such as

home to an array of wildflowers and ferns. Ovenbirds bob along the ground while towhees scratch the leaves for insects in summer, and white-throated sparrows do the same in spring and fall.



*The border between forest and meadow is a good place to find a variety of birds.*

flowering dogwood and sassafras, which grow in the shade of the canopy. Here wood thrushes perch to sing, and eastern wood-pewees build camouflaged nests. The shrub layer, often composed of spicebush, witchhazel, and maple-leaf viburnum, provides nest sites and shelter for cardinals and others. The forest floor, with its protective covering of leaf litter, is

Not all of the forests in Queens are mature. Young or "successional" forests largely dominated by black locust and black cherry can be found in the northern part of Cunningham Park, and the southeastern corner of Kissena Park. These young forests do not provide either the preferred food or nesting sites for birds found in older woods, so different species, such as gray cat birds and house wrens, are more typical. In migration, though, these areas can often contain as many birds as the nearby mature forest.

## Fields

Whether a forest is burned down by lightning, blown down in a storm, or cut down for farming, the effect is the same: the trees no longer shade the ground, and species that require full sunlight can grow. In the eastern United States, a predictable succession of plants will grow in an open field, gradually converting it back into a forest.

## Salt Marsh

The first set of plants, called annuals, have evolved to grow in poor soil. While they only live for one year, they produce many seeds, sometimes thousands per plant. Examples of these are ragweed and crabgrass. Next in the progression are biennials, such as Queen Anne's lace, burdock, and thistle, which live for two years—the first year as a rosette of leaves on the ground, the second year producing flowers and seeds. Each successive season's plant growth enriches the soil with nutrients and minerals until soil conditions become suitable for the growth of perennials—plants and shrubs including goldenrods, asters, and sumac, which live for several years. Finally, pioneering trees such as cottonwoods and black cherries appear, and the meadow is well on its way to becoming a forest again.

The area where two habitats meet is commonly referred to as "edge." Often there is a greater diversity of animal life in these areas than in simple habitats, because there is a wider variety of plant species. Some animals are found almost exclusively in these transitional areas. Where meadows and forests meet, you can find field birds, such as the song sparrow; forest birds, such as the catbird; and characteristic edge birds, including the eastern kingbird, yellow warbler, and northern mockingbird. During migration, fields and edges are good places to see typical open-country species like bobolink, eastern meadowlark, and various sparrows.

Salt marshes can occur wherever an area is flooded by tides and protected from strong waves. Here, sediments build up, allowing the growth of grasses adapted to periodic flooding by saltwater and freshwater. A healthy salt marsh has distinctive zones just as a forest has layers, but they are determined not as much by tolerance to shade as by tolerance to salt.

Closest to the shore are mudflats, which lack vegetation and are exposed to the air at low tide. Farther inland is the low marsh, characterized by a single grass, saltmarsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*). Twice a day, at high tide, the roots of the saltmarsh cordgrass are completely submerged. Behind this first band of vegetation, on ground perhaps just inches higher and flooded only a few times each month, is the high marsh, characterized by salt-meadow cordgrass (*Spartina patens*). An assortment of shrubs and wildflowers, such as marsh elder and seaside goldenrod, mark the upper reaches of the high marsh, which is flooded only a few times a year by the highest tides. The high marsh gradually merges with adjacent upland habitat, such as meadow, sand dune, or forest.

Dying cordgrasses continually decompose into a nutrient-rich muck. This muck, along with microscopic organisms, is food for a tremendous variety and quantity of animals, including mussels, clams, oysters, and crabs. Many kinds of fish, such as the striped bass and bluefish, use the marsh as a nursery before leaving for the ocean.



The salt marsh is also host to many birds. Clapper rails sneak through the grasses in search of crabs and worms, marsh wrens glean insects from the vegetation, and egrets stalk the shallows for fish and crustaceans. The mudflats feed thousands of migrating shorebirds, and the deeper waters are vital for ducks and geese. Some northerly species of ducks that are not seen here during the rest of the year, such as bufflehead and canvasback, spend each winter in salt marsh creeks.



## Freshwater

In Queens, freshwater is found in lakes, ponds, streams, and cattail marshes. These habitats all support a wide variety of birds.

Most lakes and ponds in Queens were formed when Ice Age glaciers receded 15,000 years ago, leaving behind buried blocks of ice. As the blocks melted, the depressions that were formed filled with water. Streams form wherever this trapped water has an escape route or where rainwater has a downward path to follow.

Freshwater marshes can develop at the edges of lakes, along streams, or in wet meadows. In these marshy areas, plants like cattails, sedges, and rushes thrive, with their lower stems submerged in water. There are also "floaters", such as water lilies and duckweed, as well as entirely submerged plants such as milfoil. These plants, as well as algae, provide food for many ducks, and sustain fish and aquatic organisms on which other ducks and birds feed.

In addition to waterfowl, several bird species are associated with freshwater wetlands: red-winged blackbirds defend their territories amidst the cattails; common moorhens forage for aquatic plants and snails; and spotted and solitary sandpipers snatch insects at the water's edge.



## Shore

The proximity of the ocean and coastal zone sets apart the birds of New York City and Long Island from that of the rest of the State. Dozens of species that find food along the shores of the ocean and back-bays—from terns and black skimmers to diving ducks—occur in estuaries, on barrier beaches, and on the pebble beaches along the north and south shores of Brooklyn, Queens, and the rest of Long Island.

Explore the beach on a summer day. At the high tide line, you will find a band of organic debris washed ashore. Behind this line is the familiar zone of sandcastles and sunbathers, where plants cannot grow because the sand is blown away by the wind. Farther back, the sand accumulates in dunes where beach grass grows. A variety of other plants also grow here, including bayberry, beach plum, cocklebur, and salt spray rose.

Piping plovers and least terns, both endangered species, nest on the open beach. Once nearly wiped out by hunting, these and other beach- and dune-nesting birds are now threatened by development and recreation. The trampling of beach grass leads to the destruction of dunes, while unleashed dogs and off-road vehicles often kill fledglings feeding on the shore.

## Human Impact

Several hundred years ago, Queens was covered with forest, dotted with ponds, and fringed with salt marsh. Humans have dramatically altered the landscape—cutting down forest for developments, contaminating the water, and filling the marshes with garbage and rock. This has had an enormous effect on birds and other wildlife. While much of this impact is all but irreversible, there are still some things that can be done to improve the remaining natural land.

Our forests are fragmented. Many species of birds and mammals require uninterrupted forest to survive. Thus, one stand of 100 acres is better than two separate stands of 50 acres. While it is now impossible to restore large tracts of forest necessary for wolves and bears, smaller woodlots can provide habitats for wood thrushes, cuckoos, and many other species. Forest damage is often the result of erosion caused by people straying from trails and trampling plants, and by bicycles, horses, and cars. These patches can be reforested by adding soil and replacing the various plant layers, and by limiting pedestrian access to a formalized trail system.





Another problem in our parks is the invasion of non-native species, such as Norway maple in woods, mugwort in meadows, and phragmites in marshes. These plants out-compete native species and proliferate, depriving wildlife of the benefits of the native plants to which they have adapted. Proper management can limit the harm done by invasive species.

Many species, from trees to shrubs and grasses, can be planted to attract birds and wildlife by providing them with food and cover.

Spicebush berries, rich in fat, serve as an excellent source of energy for migrating wood thrushes and veeries in the fall; the spicebush swallowtail caterpillar feeds on its leaves in spring. The waxy fruits of bayberry are eaten by tree swallows and enable yellow-rumped warblers to winter farther north than most other wood warblers. Highbush blueberry is an important food for scarlet tanagers, and is a preferred source of leaves and tender shoots of the eastern cottontail.

Still another method of habitat improvement is to allow meadows to grow where lawns are now maintained, especially in areas adjacent to forests. This can often be done

by mowing only once a year, in the late fall. The shrubby transition zone that develops between the two habitats, has proven to be of great value for wildlife.

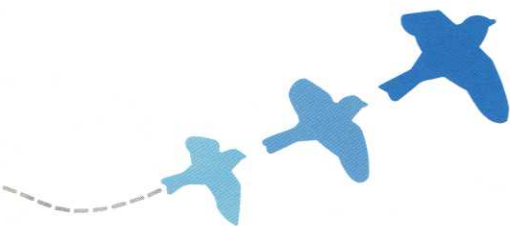
Sometimes, managing a single site for species with narrow habitat preferences, is better than managing for the greatest diversity because it can result in greater regional diversity. A meadow properly maintained can attract grasshopper sparrows, horned larks, and other specialists at the expense of catbirds and song sparrows—species that will inevitably breed in other parks anyway.



# Migration

The overhead honking of geese flying in formation is for many a deeply-felt symbol, of the changing seasons. But geese aren't the only birds that migrate. In fact, of all the birds seen annually in Queens, only a small fraction remain year round. Seasonal migration allows birds to take advantage of rich summer food supplies and avoid harsh winter climates. The majority of birds will only be found at specific places, at specific times, in the spring and fall.

The spring migration is the most exciting event of the year for many birders. Birds arrive from their wintering grounds in bright breeding plumage, and parks abound with colorful warblers, tanagers, and grosbeaks. Song fills the air, especially early in the morning as male birds try to stake out a territory, and attract a mate.



Not surprisingly, migration depends on weather patterns; warm weather accompanying winds from the south, favors spring migration, while cold weather and north winds are best in fall. Spring migration begins for a few hardy species in late March, but the real thrust starts in April, and reaches a peak for shorebirds, and most songbirds in May. When several cold days are followed by warming conditions, a "wave" of migrants may be seen. On one such May day several years ago, an incredi-

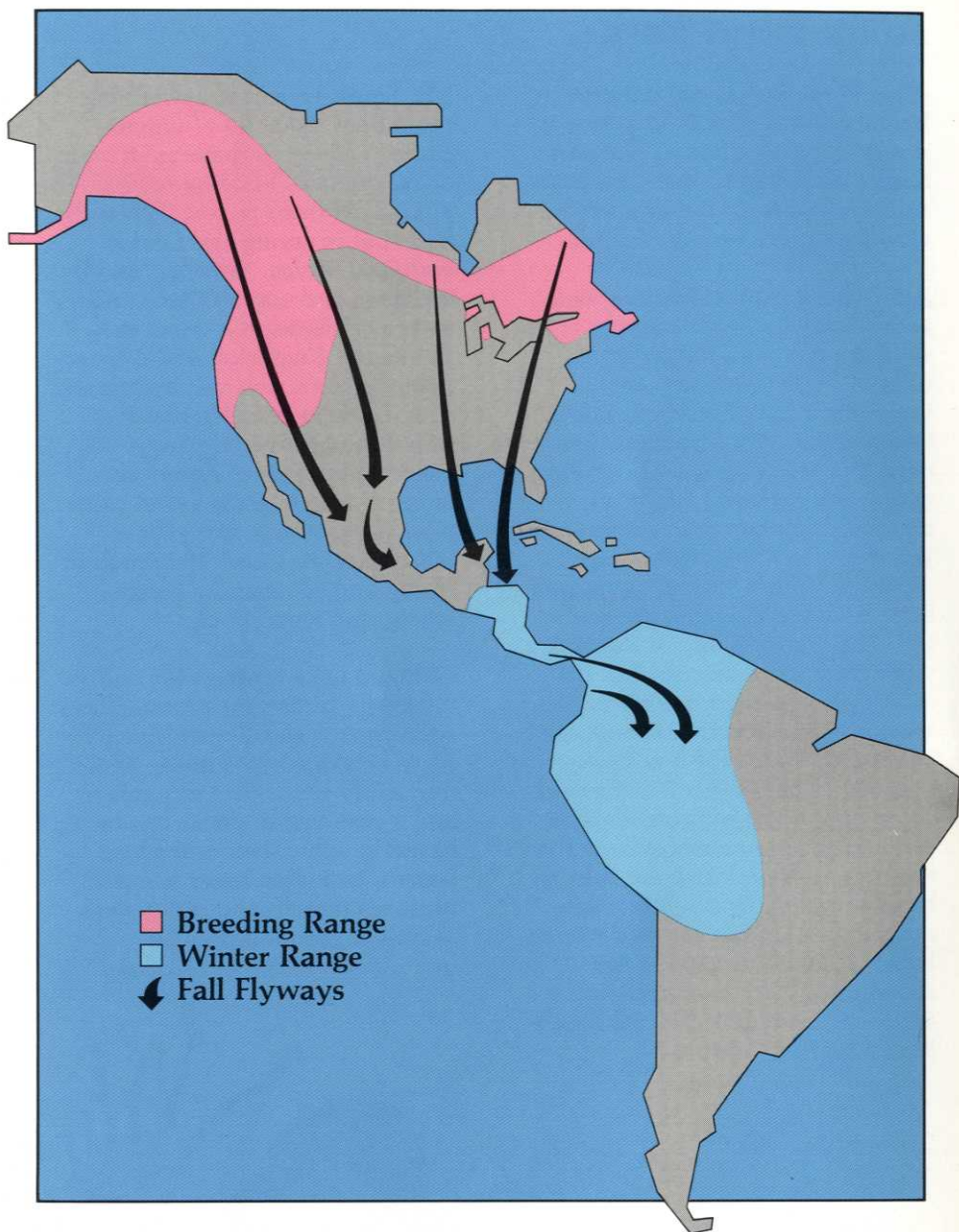
ble 34 species of warblers were seen in Forest Park.

What the fall migrants lack in color, they make up for in numbers. Because many of the birds that flew through in the spring have bred, the parents are now joined by their young — which are often drab-plumaged — on the southward journey. The fall migration begins in late July and August with shorebirds, peaks for songbirds in mid-September and for hawks in September and October.

The migration routes of different species are not identical, but many species use the same routes for part of the way. The main flyways in the United States are the Pacific, central, Mississippi, and Atlantic. Many of the migrants seen in our area follow the north-south oriented coastline as a guide. Although more research is needed to determine the routes in our area, some local routes appear to include the Atlantic coastline of Long Island, the Hudson River, and the Long Island Sound coastline, as well as some inland ridges.

A majority of these avian migrants spend the winter in Central and northern South America, but some, for example the bobolink, travel as far as Argentina. The destruction of the rainforests throughout Latin America not only diminishes bird populations, but affects our forests, too. The northward migration through our area coincides precisely with the spring hatching of insects. Without the healthy populations of insect-eating birds, these insects would seriously defoliate our plants and trees.





The Swainson's thrush, common in our area during migration, follows the same fall flyways as many other birds.

## Alley Pond Park

Alley Pond Park is not only the largest natural park in Queens — it is also the most diverse. The park's forests, woodlands, marshes, fields, and ponds, are excellent places for viewing a great variety of birds.

Alley Creek is brackish, supplied with freshwater from a spring at its southern end, and flushed by the tides of Little Neck Bay. Along with muskrat and raccoon, one can find great and snowy egrets, killdeer, and red-winged blackbird in spring and summer; and black-crowned night-heron and kingfisher year-round. In the fields alongside the creek, bluebirds and woodcock have been sighted in spring and fall. The flight display of the male woodcock, once described as the silliest phenomenon in natural history, is a spectacle that should not be missed. Watch for it at dusk in mid-March to mid-April in the field southwest of the environmental center. During summer, willow flycatcher and American goldfinch can be seen in the low scrub throughout the area. In late fall and winter, look for common snipe in wet spots, tree sparrows in the shrubs and trees, and an occasional rough-legged hawk overhead.

The Southern Forest, containing more than 100 acres of uninterrupted canopy, is made even more attractive to wildlife by several glacially-formed ponds. This is the best spot in spring and fall for warblers, vireos, thrushes, and flycatchers, and may produce rarities such as Philadelphia vireo; prothonotary, Kentucky, and Connecticut warblers; and yellow-breasted chat. Look here in summer for nesting eastern wood-pewee, Carolina wren, and American redstart and, in some years, rose-breasted grosbeak and yellow-billed cuckoo. Check the ponds in spring and summer for herons, egrets, and wood duck.

Oakland Lake is accessible and visited by birds year-round. Check southwest of the lake in March for rusty blackbirds. Warbling vireos frequently breed here in summer, and a grab bag of ducks can be found in winter before the lake freezes, including lesser scaup, northern pintail, and ruddy duck, as well as pied-billed grebe.



*Well-camouflaged American woodcock are hard to see until flushed.*





## Directions

**Subway:** IRT #7 train to Main Street, Flushing; then Q12 bus; or E or F train to Union Turnpike/Kew Gardens, then Q44A bus (see below).

**Bus:** The Q12 runs west-east along Northern Boulevard between Main Street and Little Neck Parkway. Take bus to Alley Pond Environmental Center (APEC) stop.

**Car:** Cross Island Parkway to Northern Boulevard East. Park at APEC on right OR Grand Central Parkway to Alley Park/Winchester Boulevard exit.

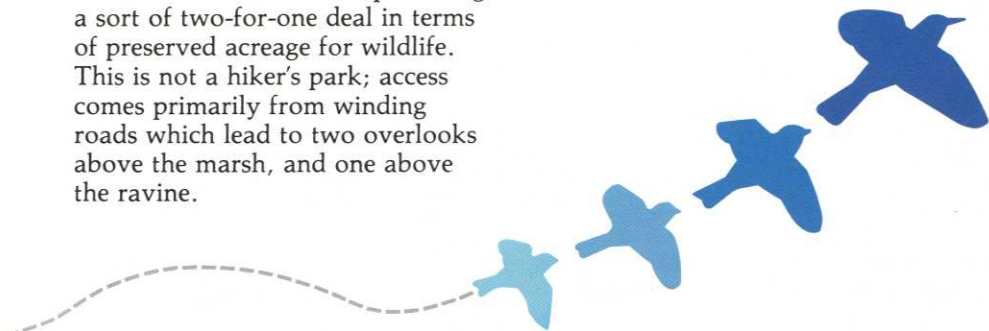
# Udalls Park Preserve

Udalls Park Preserve, a 30-acre natural area with wooded upland, a freshwater pond, and salt marsh, could be considered a miniature Alley Pond Park. One of the City's most recent parkland acquisitions, it is adjacent to Nassau County's Great Neck Estates Park — providing a sort of two-for-one deal in terms of preserved acreage for wildlife. This is not a hiker's park; access comes primarily from winding roads which lead to two overlooks above the marsh, and one above the ravine.

Amidst the marsh grasses here, live hard-to-see clapper rails and marsh wrens. The clapper rail gives its “kek-kek-kek” call at dusk, the marsh wren its reedy gurgle throughout the day. Also breeding here are seaside and sharp-tailed sparrows, American black ducks, and mute swans. Virginia Point, a clearing at the end of Little Neck Parkway provides a good view of the salt marsh. This is a fragile environment — please do not attempt to walk out onto the marsh.

The playground bordering the marsh to the west, on Douglas Road, offers a good vantage point for green-backed herons and great and snowy egrets, as well as common terns, glossy ibis, and sometimes, black skimmer. This is also an excellent spot to view wintering great blue herons, red-breasted mergansers, and diving ducks such as canvasback, greater scaup, common goldeneye, and bufflehead.

Aurora's Pond, just south of Sandhill Road, is home to wood ducks, and common moorhen, can be found to the north of Sandhill Road. The surrounding trees teem with all kinds of songbirds in spring and fall.



## Directions

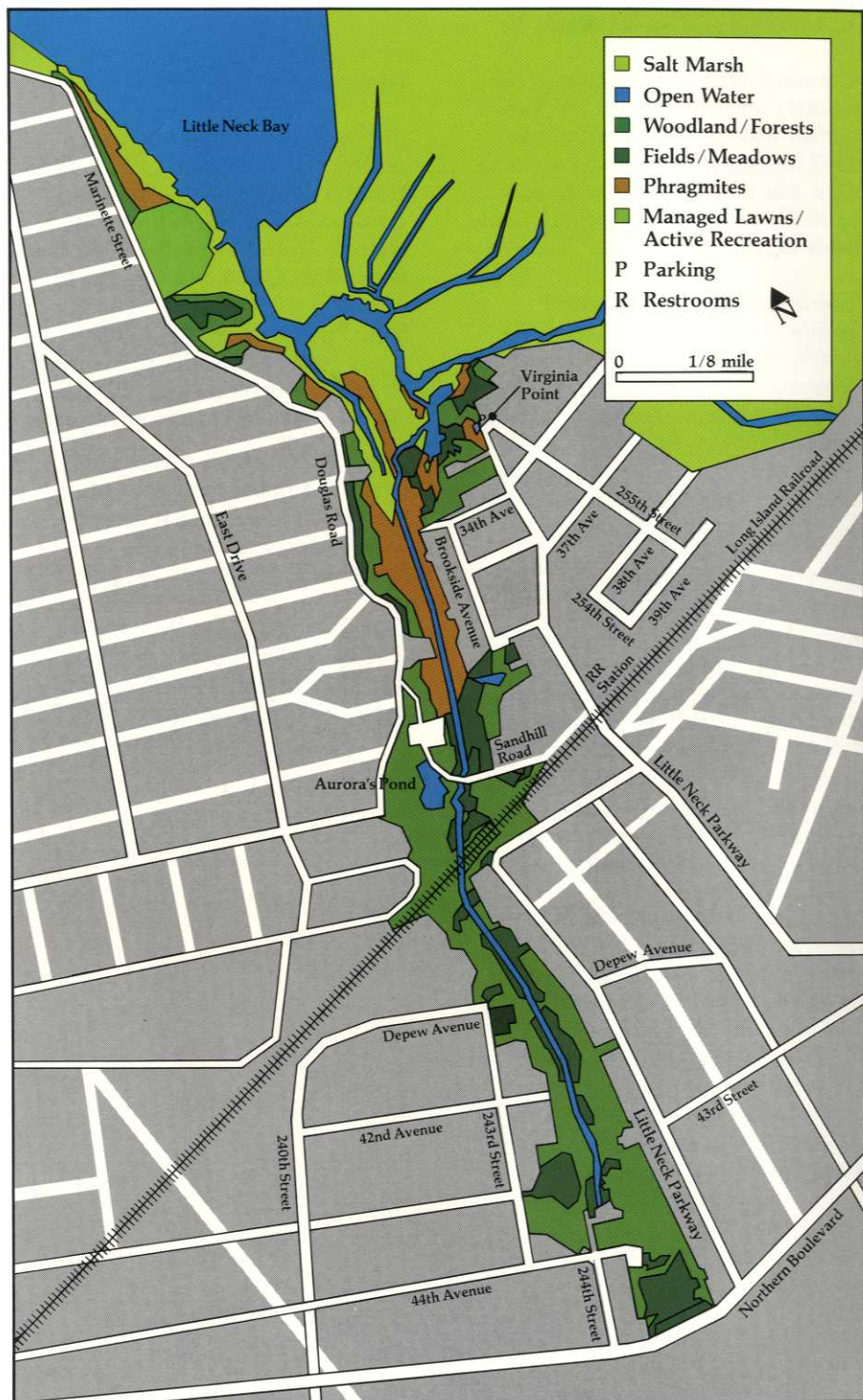
**Subway:** IRT #7 train to Main Street, Flushing, then Q12 bus and transfer to Q12A at Little Neck Parkway (see below); or E or F train to Union Turnpike/Kew Gardens, then Q44A bus and transfer to Q12A at Little Neck Parkway (see below).

**LIRR:** To Little Neck Station; walk north on Little Neck Parkway to marsh.

**Bus:** The Q12A runs north-south along Little Neck Parkway from Jamaica Avenue to 40th Avenue. Take bus to 40th Avenue and walk north on Little Neck Parkway to marsh.

**Car:** Long Island Expressway to Little Neck Parkway exit. Turn north on Little Neck Parkway and follow to end.





# Cunningham Park

Cunningham Park is home to the country's first highway: the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway, built in 1908. Although pieces of the parkway still remain, it is the remnants of native forest which attract many birds and birdwatchers.

The breathtakingly beautiful Southern Forest contains several ponds, as well as the least disturbed understory and groundcover of any forest in Queens. At a glance you'll notice the many species of ferns which grow here—in fact, nearly every species found on all of Long Island. During migration season, this area abounds with warblers and thrushes. Look here for possible gray-cheeked thrush, and worm-eating and hooded warblers. Check the ponds in summer for green-backed heron and the surrounding woods for resident red-bellied woodpeckers, and red-eyed vireos. Another spot worth trying, especially during migration, is the woods east of the pedestrian overpass in the Northern Forest.

In fall, the fields south of 73rd Avenue are good habitat for migrating sparrows, American woodcock, eastern meadowlark, and bobolink. In winter, check these same fields and the woods behind the ballfields at Oceania Street for lingering sparrows, including American tree, field, fox, and white-throated sparrow.

## Directions

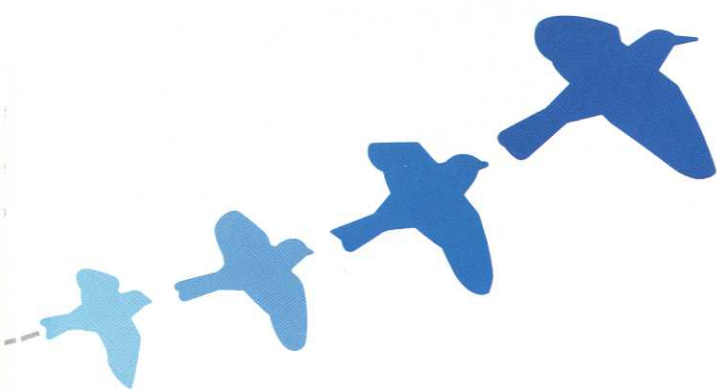
**Subway:** IRT #7 train to Main Street, Flushing, then Q12 bus and transfer to Q76 at Francis Lewis Boulevard (see below); or E or F train to Union Turnpike/Kew Gardens, then Q44A bus (see below).

**Bus:** The Q76 runs south-north along Francis Lewis Boulevard between 15th Avenue and Hillside Avenue. Take bus to Union Turnpike.

The Q44A runs west-east along Union Turnpike between Queens Boulevard and Hewlett Avenue. Take bus to Francis Lewis Boulevard.

**Car:** Grand Central Parkway to Francis Lewis Boulevard North. Turn left at Union Turnpike and park in parking lot at 196th Place.





## Kissena Park

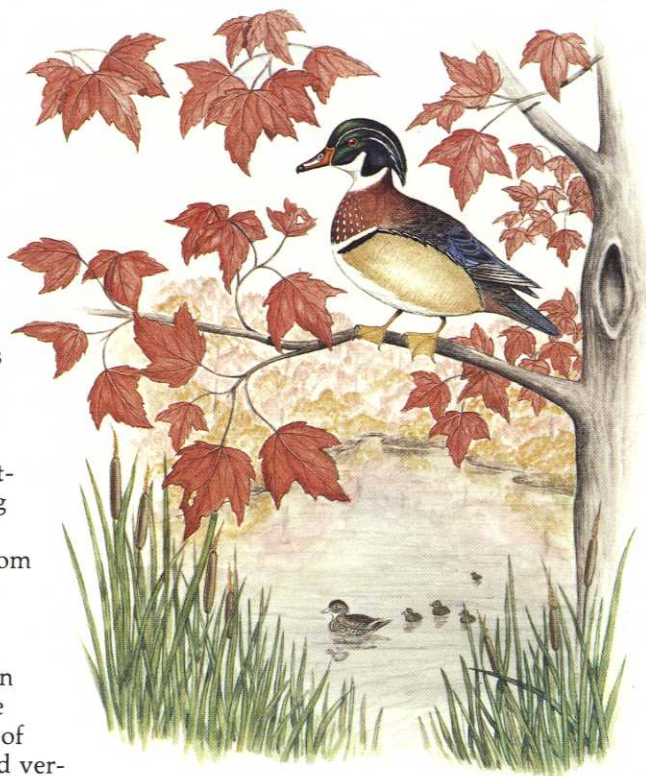
Kissena Park's mosaic of meadows, open water, upland and remnant swamp forest make it an attractive area for a variety of migrants. It is also home to a small, but interesting assortment of breeding birds.

The horseshoe-shaped upland forest encircling the tennis courts and the adjacent Historic Grove (a relic of Samuel Parson's nursery — one of the first in the country) are the best locations in spring and fall for sighting warblers, vireos, thrushes, and tanagers. The birds can be easily seen from the paths because of the forest's small size. Species to look for include yellow-bellied sapsucker, yellow-throated vireo, and Nashville and Tennessee warblers. Northern and Louisiana waterthrush can be seen where the pipe drains the lake and feeds the marsh. Check the lake in spring and summer for wood duck. In fall, look for ruby-throated hummingbirds feeding on the nectar of jewelweed flowers at the bottom of the stairs south of the nature center.

The expansive meadow in the central portion of the park, with its sprinkling of cottonwoods, sumac, and vernal ponds, provides habitat for breeding killdeer, yellow warbler, willow flycatcher, and pheasant. In the fall, many species of hawks, including sharp-shinned, red-shouldered, and red-tailed, can be

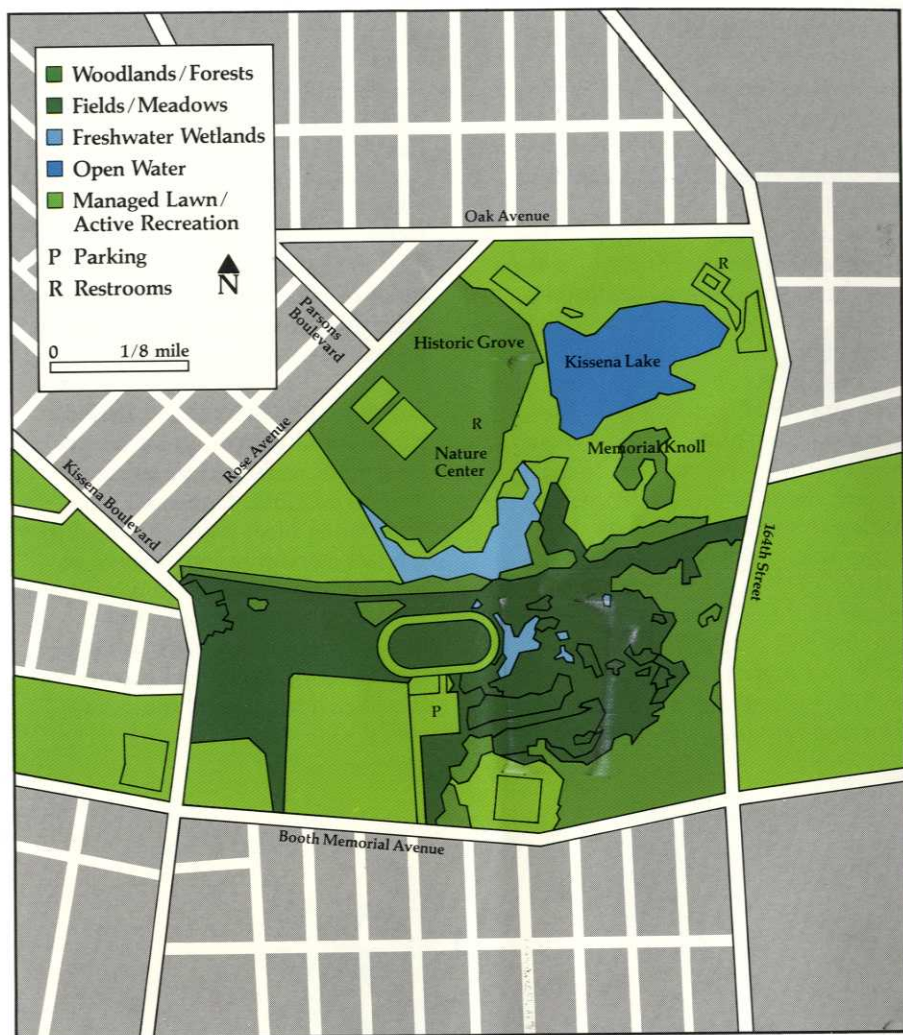
spotted from atop the bicycle track. Bobolink can often be found on the grass, inside the track, itself.

The Memorial Knoll, consisting of pines, spruces, and firs, frequently harbors great horned and long-eared owls in fall and winter. Evergreens are good places to look for owls in any park; they provide a place to hide and sleep in the daytime during the cold-weather season, when the rest of the forest is bare of leaves.



*The wood duck often eats acorns and berries and has the unusual behavior of nesting in tree cavities.*





## Directions

**Subway:** IRT #7 train to Main Street, Flushing, then Q25/34 or Q17 bus (see below); or E or F train to Union Turnpike/Kew Gardens, then Q44A bus and transfer to Q25/34 at Parsons Boulevard.

**Bus:** The Q25/34 and Q17 run north/south between Jamaica and Flushing. Take either bus to Rose Avenue.

The Q65A runs north-south along 164th Street between Jamaica Avenue and 45th Avenue. Take bus to Underhill Avenue.

**Car:** Long Island Expressway to Kissena Boulevard exit. Turn north on Kissena Boulevard. Turn right at Rose Avenue. Look for parking.

## Forest Park

Forest Park boasts the largest forest in Queens. It is also one of the best places in the entire city to witness the spring migration of land birds. Nearly every species of warbler, vireo, and thrush occurring in the northeastern United States has been seen here, most quite regularly.

Although there are two ponds on the nearby golf course, there is only one small waterhole in the mature forest east of Woodhaven Boulevard. In years when the waterhole dries up, some species of birds are missed. But when the waterhole is wet, the majority of species in the park can be seen here for several hundred yards around, making this one of the most likely spots in Queens for rarities. These include summer tanager and yellow-throated, cerulean, and mourning

warblers. Follow the yellow trail west from Metropolitan Avenue and East Main Drive to find this hotspot. For a better view look at the forest edge along the railroad tracks and in the gullies south of the tracks. This will also provide temporary relief of warbler neck—a birder's affliction caused by looking at the tops of trees for extended periods.

Notable species breeding here include wood thrush, great crested flycatcher, red-eyed vireo, and northern oriole. Curiously, the number of birds sighted here during fall migration isn't nearly as high as in the spring. In addition to wintering woodpeckers, nut-hatches, and chickadees, look for the flocks of dark-eyed juncos found each year, and the occasional pine siskin.



*The black and white warbler hunts insects on the trunks of trees while the northern parula warbler searches further out among the leaves.*





## Directions

**Subway:** J train to Woodhaven Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue, then Q11 bus (see below); or E or F train to Union Turnpike/Kew Gardens, then Q37 bus (see below) or walk west on 80th Road to The Overlook (Queens Parks Headquarters).

**Bus:** The Q11 runs north-south along Woodhaven and Crossbay Boulevards between Horace Hard-

ing Boulevard and Jamaica Bay. Take bus to Forest Park Drive.

The Q37 runs north-south between Union Turnpike and Rockaway Boulevard. Take bus to Forest Park Drive.

**Car:** Interborough Parkway to Metropolitan Avenue exit. Turn east on Metropolitan Avenue and park along Park Lane South several blocks ahead.

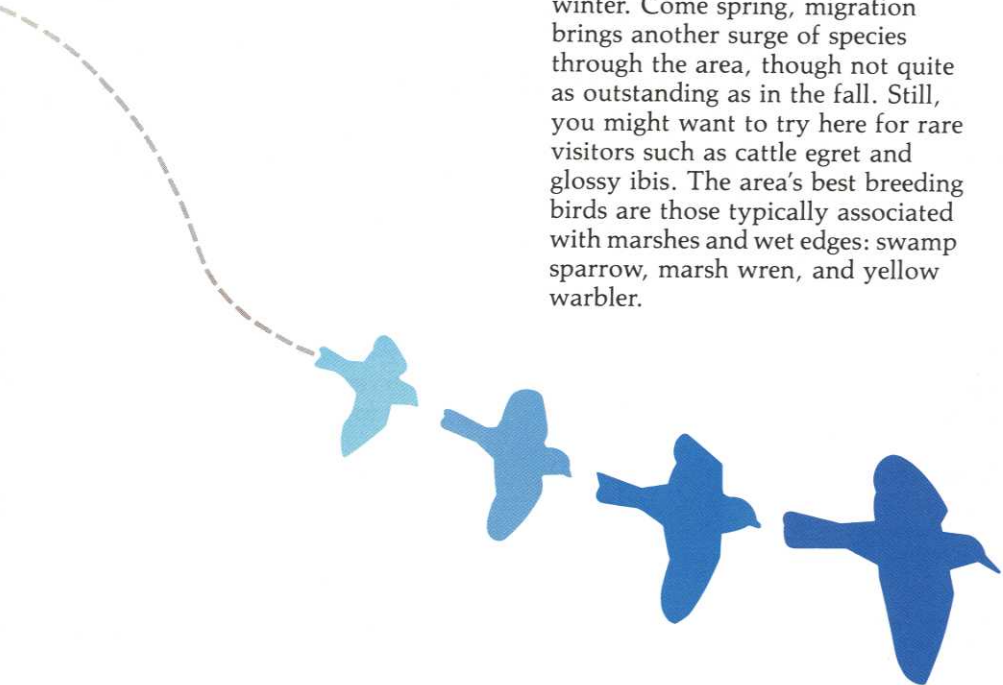
## Willow Lake Natural Area

Willow Lake, at the southern end of Flushing Meadows Corona Park, is not only one of most inconspicuous birding spots in Queens, it is also undergoing a fascinating biological change. Originally a marsh, extending all the way to Flushing Bay, this area was filled in the 1930s, and made into a freshwater lake, and ballfields. The ballfields, no longer used, are becoming more soggy each year, and the re-emergence of sedges and rushes shows that Mother Nature is trying to restore what once was.

The main attraction at Willow Lake is fall migration. Nearly 140 species have been seen in this season alone. In the lake itself, you're likely to see northern

shoveler, blue-winged teal, and ruddy duck, but be on the lookout for other waterfowl such as red-head and pied-billed grebe. In spring an unexpected variety of warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and other land birds can be found in the southern end on both sides of the cattail marsh, and also along the path west of the lake. Among the most common of these are Tennessee, northern parula, black-throated green, and blackpoll warblers. Savannah, white-crowned, Lincoln's, and other sparrows, as well as bobolink, eastern meadow-lark, and water pipit are better seen in the fields north and east of the lake. You might also find snipe in the sedges and wet areas east of the lake.

Some ducks and sparrows found at Willow Lake in the fall stay for the winter. Come spring, migration brings another surge of species through the area, though not quite as outstanding as in the fall. Still, you might want to try here for rare visitors such as cattle egret and glossy ibis. The area's best breeding birds are those typically associated with marshes and wet edges: swamp sparrow, marsh wren, and yellow warbler.







## Directions

**Subway:** E or F train to Union Turnpike/Kew Gardens, then walk north on 78th Avenue to Grand Central Parkway overpass into park.

**Bus:** The Q65A runs east-west along Jewel Avenue between 108th Street and 164th Street. Take bus to Park Drive East. Walk south to 73rd Terrace, and across overpass into park.

**Car:** Grand Central Parkway to Jewel Avenue/69th Road exit. Go east on Jewel Avenue, bear right on Park Drive East, and proceed to 73rd Terrace. Park in front of playground, and walk across overpass into park.

# Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

Part of Gateway National Recreation Area, under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, "The Refuge" is known worldwide for its birdlife. More than 320 species have been seen here in the last 25 years. The main attraction at the refuge are two man-made freshwater ponds whose water levels are dropped to provide mudflats artificially during shorebird migration. These are especially good places when the bay is at high tide, and birds from all around converge here.

In spring, check the lowered West Pond as well as surrounding marshes for migratory shorebirds in breeding plumage. Some of the most abundant are black-bellied and semipalmated plovers, red knot, and short-billed dowitcher. The gardens are good for songbirds.

In summer, more than 50 species breed at the Refuge, including willet, American oystercatcher, and common bobwhite, and, more recently, yellow-crowned night-heron and osprey. Black-crowned night-heron and glossy ibis also abound.

Fall migration of shorebirds begins at the East Pond in late July, and continues through October. Look for rarities like Wilson's phalarope, American avocet, Hudsonian godwit, and curlew sandpiper. Warblers pass through the gardens in September and October.

Many species of waterfowl spend winter in Jamaica Bay. In both ponds, and in the bay, you'll find horned grebe, brant, and an assortment of ducks, such as red-breasted merganser, American widgeon, greater scaup, and bufflehead. The

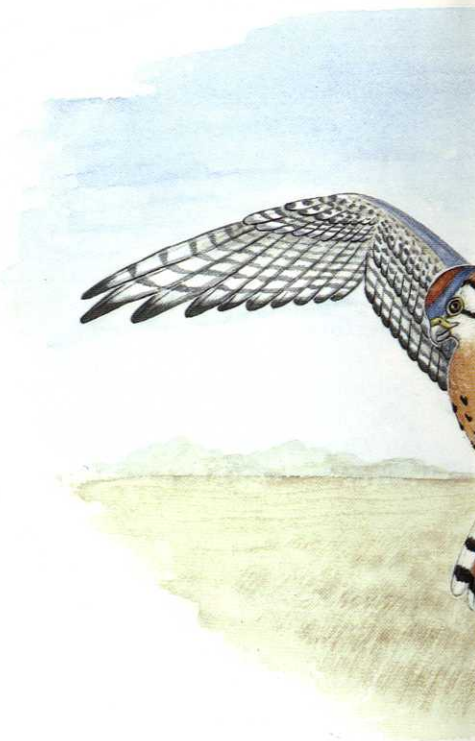
gardens often harbor saw-whet and long-eared owls throughout the winter.

## Directions

**Subway:** A or C train to Broad Channel, then walk west to Cross Bay Boulevard and north about a mile to the refuge entrance.

**Bus:** The Q53 runs north-south along Cross Bay Boulevard between Horace Harding Boulevard and the Rockaways. Take bus to Refuge entrance.

**Car:** Belt Parkway to Cross Bay Boulevard southbound. Head south, cross bridge, and look for parking lot entrance 1 1/4 miles ahead on the right.





## Fort Tilden and Jacob Riis Parks

Fort Tilden and Jacob Riis Parks are also part of Gateway National Recreation Area. As the westernmost barrier beach on Long Island—a jump-off point for many east coast migrants—these areas offer outstanding birding in fall for land birds and raptors.

The Neponsit field, just east of the parking lot, and the open areas and shrubs around the golf course are excellent places for flycatchers, thrushes, and sparrows. This area is also known for producing rarities like loggerhead shrike, blue grosbeak, dickcissel, and lark sparrow.

*The smallest and most common of our falcons, the American kestrel often hovers before diving on its prey, frequently grasshoppers and crickets.*

In the Fort Tilden “forest” (an almost pure stand of non-native white poplar), you’ll find a concentration of passerines, especially golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglets and hermit thrush, and huge numbers of yellow-rumped warblers. The fruiting autumn olives, cherries, and bayberries adjacent to the forest are eaten by warblers and thrushes.

From atop Battery Harris East and West, one can enjoy scenic views of the ocean and watch migrating raptors pass at eye level. Kestrels and sharp-shinned hawks come through in quantity, but you are also likely to see merlin, northern harrier, osprey, and possibly a peregrine falcon. One year, 90 merlins were sighted here in one afternoon. On a good day, you will also see migrating tree swallows and monarch butterflies by the hundreds.

Obtain a free permit at the park office to visit Fort Tilden and Breezy Point.

### Directions:

**Subway:** C train to Rockaway Park/Beach 116th Street, then Q22 bus (see below); or IRT #2 or #5 trains to Flatbush Avenue/Brooklyn College, then Q35 bus (see below).

**Bus:** The Q22 runs east-west along Rockaway Beach Boulevard from Far Rockaway to Fort Tilden. Take bus to Fort Tilden. Park headquarters is on the left.

The Q35 runs south-north on Flatbush Avenue from Nostrand Avenue to Jacob Riis Park. Take bus to Jacob Riis Park.



## What Now?

Watching birds can bring endless hours of enjoyment. There are many ways to extend and deepen your interest in birds.

Many expert birders widen their search to find rarities occurring in the area. A recording of current rarities in the region is kept on the New York Rare Bird Alert, (212) 832-6523.

Another method of improving your birding skills is to go out with experienced guides. Several groups that lead birdwatching trips in Queens, and nearby areas are:

**New York City Audubon Society**  
(212) 691-7483

**The Linnaean Society of New York**  
(212) 213-7783

**Queens County Bird Club**  
c/o Queens Botanical Garden  
(718) 886-3800

**Queens Urban Park Rangers**  
(718) 699-4024

**Alley Pond Environmental Center**  
(718) 229-4000

**Brooklyn Bird Club**  
(718) 875-1151

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Written by Todd Miller, NRG

Illustrated by Robert Villani

Produced by Josephine A. Scalia and Michael J. Feller, NRG

Designed by April Cass Design

Edited by Frederick Baumgarten and Cristine Mesch



City of New York  
Parks & Recreation  
Natural Resources Group

David N. Dinkins, Mayor

Claire Shulman,  
Queens Borough President

Betsy Gotbaum,  
Commissioner, Parks & Recreation

Oliver B. Spellman, Jr.  
Queens Parks Commissioner

Marc A. Matsil, Director,  
Natural Resources Group

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*Happy Bird Day!*



