the Long Island Conservation Alliance



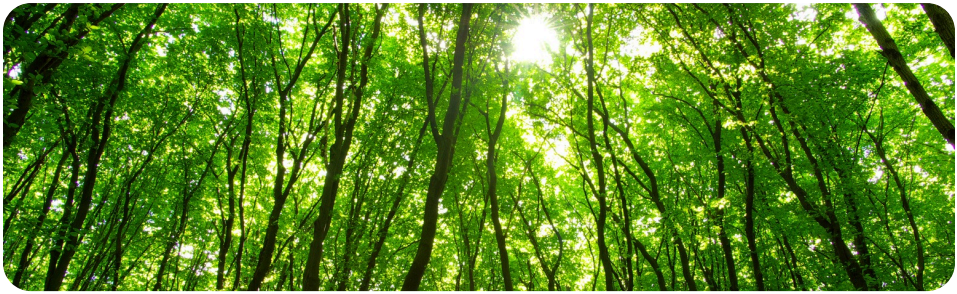
A NATURALIST'S POCKET COMPANION

Native Birds of Long Island

Twenty-eight birds of the bays, barrens, and dooryards — portrayed in the hand of John James Audubon.

A free resource from the Long Island Conservation Alliance

the Long Island Conservation Alliance



A word before you begin

Long Island is a crossroads. Slung out into the Atlantic along one of the hemisphere's great migratory highways, it gathers birds the way its beaches gather driftwood — from the Arctic, from the tropics, from the marshes of the Great South Bay just beyond the dunes.

This little book is not a complete record. It is a walking companion: twenty-eight birds you can reasonably hope to meet across the Island's living habitats, from the salt marsh to the Pine Barrens to the hedge outside your own door. Each is paired with the plate Audubon engraved for it nearly two centuries ago — portraits made when these same species wheeled over a wilder coast.

Some of these birds nearly left us. The Osprey and the Bald Eagle were poisoned to the brink within living memory, then carried back by people who decided the skies were worth keeping. Others — the Saltmarsh Sparrow, the Piping Plover, the Whip-poor-will — depend on us still. Let their portraits be an invitation to look closer, and to protect what looks back.

the Long Island Conservation Alliance

The birds

I

Bay, Beach & Salt Marsh

01 Osprey
02 Great Blue Heron
03 Great Egret
04 Snowy Egret
05 American Oystercatcher
06 Piping Plover
07 Common Tern
08 Saltmarsh Sparrow
09 Red-winged Blackbird

II

Woodland & Pine Barrens

10 Wood Thrush
11 Scarlet Tanager
12 Ruby-throated Hummingbird
13 Pileated Woodpecker
14 Great Horned Owl
15 Eastern Whip-poor-will
16 Eastern Towhee
17 Pine Warbler

III

Field, Sky & Raptor

18 Bald Eagle
19 Red-tailed Hawk
20 American Kestrel

IV

Dooryard & Garden

21 Northern Cardinal
22 American Robin
23 Eastern Bluebird
24 Baltimore Oriole
25 Gray Catbird
26 Cedar Waxwing
27 American Goldfinch
28 Black-capped Chickadee

Status notes reflect typical occurrence on Long Island and will shift with season and place. Carry it lightly; look often.

the Long Island Conservation Alliance

I

Bay, Beach & Salt Marsh

The Great South Bay, the barrier beaches, and the tidal marshes — the living heart of the Island's coast.













01

BREEDING / SUMMER

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

The fish hawk, a Long Island conservation icon.

Plunges talons-first for menhaden and other fish over the bays. Builds bulky stick nests on poles, channel markers, and platforms. Devastated by DDT, it rebounded spectacularly after the ban; nesting platforms now dot the South Shore.



02

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Great Blue Heron

Ardea herodias

The Island's largest heron, a tall blue-gray sentinel stalking creeks, marshes, and pond edges.

Flies with neck folded and slow heavy wingbeats. Nests colonially in tall trees. A patient ambush hunter of fish, frogs, and even small mammals.



03

BREEDING / SUMMER

Great Egret

Ardea alba

A stately all-white heron with a yellow bill and black legs, fishing the salt marshes and mudflats.

Nearly wiped out by the plume-hunting trade, its recovery helped launch the Audubon movement. Nests in mixed colonies on marsh islands.



04

BREEDING / SUMMER

Snowy Egret

Egretta thula

A dainty white egret with black legs and bright yellow feet, dancing through shallows to stir up prey.

Another plume-trade victim that became a conservation emblem. Breeds on Island marsh islands; a Great South Bay summer signature.



05

BREEDING / SUMMER

American Oystercatcher

Haematopus palliatus

A boldly pied shorebird with a long, blade-like orange bill for prying open shellfish.

Nests on sandy and shell beaches alongside terns and plovers. A species of high conservation concern, benefiting from the same beach protections as the plovers.



06

BREEDING / SUMMER

Piping Plover

Charadrius melodus

A pale, sand-colored plover that nests on Long Island's open beaches; federally threatened.

Symbolic fencing and seasonal beach closures protect its scrapes from people, vehicles, and predators. A flagship of barrier-beach conservation and at the heart of beach-access debates.



07

BREEDING / SUMMER

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

A graceful, fork-tailed seabird that hovers and plunges for small fish in the bays.

Black cap and orange-red bill. Nests in dense, noisy colonies on marsh islands and beaches. Vulnerable to predators, flooding, and disturbance; a colony-protection priority.



08

BREEDING / SUMMER

Saltmarsh Sparrow

Ammospiza caudacuta

A secretive, orange-faced sparrow restricted to tidal salt marshes, where it times nesting to the tides.

Globally vulnerable and projected to decline sharply with sea-level rise. The Great South Bay and South Shore marshes are critical habitat; a top regional conservation concern.



09

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Red-winged Blackbird

Agelaius phoeniceus

The marsh blackbird whose males flash scarlet shoulder patches and sing “conk-la-ree” from cattails.

Among the first signs of spring. Females are streaky and sparrow-like. Defends marsh territories fiercely; gathers in vast flocks in winter.

the Long Island Conservation Alliance

II

Woodland & Pine Barrens

From the shaded hardwood understory to the globally rare Pine Barrens, the Island's forests hold its richest birdsong.





10

BREEDING / SUMMER

Wood Thrush

Hylocichla mustelina

A warm-brown, boldly spotted thrush whose flute-like, ethereal song is the soul of the Eastern summer forest.

Nests in the shady understory. Declining from forest fragmentation and acid rain on both breeding and wintering grounds; a conservation priority.



11

BREEDING / SUMMER

Scarlet Tanager

Piranga olivacea

A breathtaking songbird; the male is flaming scarlet with jet-black wings, hidden high in the summer canopy.

Sings a hoarse, robin-like song. Needs large unbroken forest tracts; sensitive to fragmentation. A treetop gem of mature Island woods.



12

BREEDING / SUMMER

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Archilochus colubris

The Northeast's only breeding hummingbird, a green jewel that hovers at flowers and feeders.

Males flash a ruby throat. Builds a thimble-sized lichen nest on a branch. Favors native tubular flowers; a powerful pollinator and a backyard delight.



13

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Pileated Woodpecker

Dryocopus pileatus

A crow-sized woodpecker with a flaming red crest, chiseling rectangular holes in big trees.

The model for cartoon woodpeckers. Scarce but increasing on Long Island where mature forest persists; its loud ringing call carries through the woods.



14

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

Our largest common owl, with prominent ear tufts and a deep hooting song.

A powerful nocturnal hunter taking rabbits, rodents, and even skunks. Nests very early, often in old hawk or crow nests. The apex predator of Island woodlands at night.



15

BREEDING / SUMMER

Eastern Whip-poor-will

Antrostomus vociferus

A nocturnal, leaf-patterned bird heard far more than seen, chanting its name endlessly on spring nights.

Catches moths on the wing at dusk. Declining sharply as pine barrens and open woods are lost; the Long Island Pine Barrens are a regional stronghold.



16

BREEDING / SUMMER

Eastern Towhee

Pipilo erythrophthalmus

A large, boldly colored sparrow (black, white, and rufous) that rummages noisily in leaf litter, calling “drink-your-tea.”

A characteristic bird of the Long Island Pine Barrens and scrubby edges. Declining with the loss of shrubland habitat.



17

BREEDING / SUMMER

Pine Warbler

Setophaga pinus

A yellowish warbler tied closely to pines, foraging methodically along the boughs and trilling a musical song.

A signature breeder of the Long Island Pine Barrens. One of the few warblers that visits feeders for suet and seed, especially in cold snaps.

the Long Island Conservation Alliance

III

Field, Sky & Raptor

The hunters of open country and the recovered birds of prey that once vanished from these skies.









18

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Once gone from Long Island, our national bird now nests here again.

Adults show the unmistakable white head and tail. Feeds heavily on fish and waterfowl around reservoirs, rivers, and bays. Its return is among the great DDT-era recovery stories.

the Long Island Conservation Alliance



19

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Red-tailed Hawk

Buteo jamaicensis

The broad-winged hawk most often seen soaring over highways and perched on roadside poles.

Adults show a brick-red tail. Hunts rodents in open fields and verges. The default large hawk of suburban Long Island; its scream is Hollywood's stock "eagle" cry.



20

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

American Kestrel

Falco sparverius

Our smallest and most colorful falcon, the size of a jay, hovering over fields and medians.

Males show blue wings and rusty back. Nests in cavities and boxes. Declining across the Northeast as grasslands and farms vanish; a species of concern.

the Long Island Conservation Alliance

IV

Dooryard & Garden

The companionable birds of the hedgerow, the feeder, and the backyard — the ones we come to know first.





21

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Northern Cardinal

Cardinalis cardinalis

The brilliant red, crested songbird (females warm buff) that brightens winter feeders.

Both sexes sing rich whistles; pairs stay together year-round. A southern species that expanded north with feeders and suburbs. Among the most loved backyard birds.



22

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

American Robin

Turdus migratorius

The classic red-breasted lawn bird, tugging earthworms from the grass.

Sings a cheery caroling at dawn. Builds mud-lined nests on ledges and in shrubs; many stay all winter, switching to berries and gathering in flocks. A herald of spring nationwide.



23

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Eastern Bluebird

Sialia sialis

New York's state bird: a sky-blue thrush with a rusty breast, beloved on fenceposts and in meadows.

Nearly lost to competition with House Sparrows and starlings, it rebounded thanks to nest-box trails. A flagship of grassland and nest-box conservation.



24

BREEDING / SUMMER

Baltimore Oriole

Icterus galbula

A flame-orange and black songbird that weaves a hanging pouch nest high in shade trees, often elms and maples.

Drawn to orange halves and jelly in spring. Its rich, whistled song rings from leafy neighborhoods. A dazzling summer arrival on the Island.



25

BREEDING / SUMMER

Gray Catbird

Dumetella carolinensis

A sleek slate-gray bird with a black cap and rusty undertail, named for its catlike mew.

A gifted, rambling mimic that skulks in dense shrubs and hedgerows. Abundant in summer gardens and thickets; loves berries and brushy cover.



26

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Cedar Waxwing

Bombycilla cedrorum

A sleek, crested, silky-brown bird with a black mask and waxy red wingtips, roving in flocks after fruit.

Among our latest nesters, timed to summer berries. Plant native fruiting shrubs and they will come. High, thin whistles announce a passing flock.



27

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

American Goldfinch

Spinus tristis

The “wild canary”: breeding males are brilliant yellow with a black cap, drabber in winter.

Flies in a bouncy, undulating path, calling “po-ta-to-chip.” Nests late, in midsummer, to use thistle down. A strict vegetarian that loves nyjer and sunflower.



28

YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT

Black-capped Chickadee

Poecile atricapillus

The cheerful little black-capped, white-cheeked bird that says its name.

Bold and curious, often first to a new feeder. Caches seeds and remembers thousands of hiding spots. Nests in cavities; a beloved year-round backyard companion across the Island.

the Long Island Conservation Alliance

Help the birds you just met

Every bird in this book is easier to keep when more neighbors look out for it. Two easy ways to start today:

Join our mailing list

Get seasonal tips, ideas for your own yard, and ways to get involved around Long Island. Scan the code or tap the button.

Join the list

Make a gift

Your gift supports LIC's work restoring and protecting native habitat across Long Island. Scan the code or tap the button.

Donate

Questions? info@longislandconservationalliance.org
longislandconservationalliance.org

About LIC

The Long Island Conservation Alliance (LIC) is a science-driven environmental organization restoring ecological function across Long Island's most vulnerable landscapes. Our work rebuilds native ecosystems, strengthens biodiversity, and improves the resilience of natural systems that directly support community health and wellbeing.

info@longislandconservationalliance.org
longislandconservationalliance.org

Illustrations: John James Audubon, *The Birds of America* (1827–1838), public domain. Audubon's nineteenth-century plate titles often differ from the names these birds carry today.