

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

[NYC AUDUBON](#)

New York, New York



The Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with NYC Audubon in the search for an Executive Director.

The Executive Director will be responsible for the day-to-day management of NYC Audubon and its staff, including top-notch science and advocacy professionals. The Executive Director will work with the organization's diverse, active, and experienced Board of Directors and lead the way in executing NYC Audubon's bold [Strategic Plan 2020-2025: A Vision for the Future](#), with ambitious goals that include doubling membership and social media following and expanding elementary school after-school programs from the Bronx to all five boroughs. Working closely with the Development Director and Controller, the Executive Director will be responsible for the organization's fundraising and financial management.

This is an opportunity for a visionary, entrepreneurial, hard-driving not-for-profit executive to join the environmental leadership in the largest and most exhilarating city, and one of the most diverse, in the country. At the helm of one of the most respected environmental conservation groups in New York City, the Executive Director will interact with other environmental community leaders, city and state officials, and the media in this, the media capital of the world.

NYC Audubon is a dynamic, innovative, and financially stable environmental organization that champions birds and nature in the 30,000 acres of wetlands, shoreline, forests, and grasslands of New York City. Its cutting-edge scientific research and advocacy campaigns have led to landmark legislation saving hundreds of thousands of migrating birds from collisions with buildings in the nation's densest urban landscape. Its exciting educational initiatives with urban schoolchildren, and its passionate Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility focus, are creating a constituency for conservation as broad and diverse as the city itself.

NYC Audubon's **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility** mission recognizes that inequities in society are widespread and hinder access to nature. To thrive as an organization and effectively advance its mission and vision, NYC Audubon is committed to reflecting the diversity of New York City's people and welcomes that diversity in its leadership, staff, and membership. The expertise, values, and perspectives of a diverse and inclusive organization are foundational to expanding the reach and impact of NYC Audubon's conservation, advocacy, and educational efforts. NYC Audubon's existing initiatives such as participation in Black Birders Week, Pride Birding events, and after-school education and festivals in underserved communities are opportunities to expand the audience for its messaging and mission of bird conservation. Its embrace of EDIA values and its continued work putting them into place will strengthen the reach of its advocacy and education programs, allow it to foster a love of nature in more New Yorkers, including the next generation, and inspire them to be stewards of the environment.

For over 40 years, NYC Audubon's **conservation programs** have studied and advocated on behalf of the City's wild birds. Working with a network of volunteers and scientists as part of programs such as Project Safe Flight and Waterbirds of New York Harbor, it protects birds and preserves their habitat, from marshlands and nesting islands for herons and egrets to woodland park areas so important to migrating and nesting species.

Since its founding, NYC Audubon has engaged in **advocacy work** in all five boroughs to speak up for birds and their habitats. In 1978, a cadre of regular Central Park bird watchers successfully opposed a Central Park Conservancy plan to “restore” the Ramble through changes such as tree removal. These fledgling activists soon founded the NYC Audubon Society and launched 40 years of dedicated advocacy for habitat preservation and protection for birds.

NYC Audubon believes the best way to create the **next generation of conservationists** is to instill a love of birding in them. To do that, it conducts over 200 education programs a year, including field trips to local birding hotspots and destinations out of state, a lecture series, Feathered Friends After School Birding Club, classes, a seasonal nature center at Governors Island, community science opportunities, seasonal bird surveys, and volunteer events.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Executive Director will report to the Board of Directors, led by President Karen Benfield. All NYC Audubon staff will report, directly or indirectly, to the Executive Director.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director will:

- provide overall leadership for strategy, operations, financial oversight, and fundraising, and for furthering equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility goals;
- promote an organizational culture that fosters cooperation, open and frequent communication, EDIA values, teamwork, and ardor for NYC Audubon’s mission;
- collaborate closely with the Board of Directors to ensure that NYC Audubon continues to thrive;
- promote and support the Board’s engagement in strategic planning, resource/financial development, membership development, and overall organizational wellness;
- ensure that the organization is adhering to the strategic plan adopted by the Board, and that it is making progress toward the plan’s goals;
- zealously promote NYC Audubon’s commitments to infuse EDIA values into all aspects of its operations and to becoming ever more diverse and inclusive in its leadership, staff, membership, and programming;
- bring an uncompromising focus to achieving binding EDIA targets, which include increasing the percentage of people of color on the Board of Directors from the current 36% to 50% by 2025, and doubling its free guided bird walks in English, Spanish, and other languages in areas with underrepresented populations;
- working together with the Director of Development and Board of Directors, raise from foundations, individuals, members, and corporations approximately \$1.5 million annually to support the organization’s budget;
- help plan and oversee the organization’s annual dinner and other fundraising events;
- together with the Board and staff, be responsible for all aspects of NYC Audubon’s programming including research and advocacy to protect the millions of birds that live in or migrate through

New York City; walks, trips, and online programming; elementary-school educational programs; and festivals and lectures;

- maintain NYC Audubon’s leadership roles in the NYC conservation community and in the Audubon network, including the Audubon Urban Chapter Network, and maintain strong relationships with conservation partners such as the American Bird Conservancy and local birding groups;
- recruit, manage, motivate, and empower a strong staff, overseeing training, career development, hiring and dismissals, succession planning, and performance management;
- ensure that the organization is fiscally sound and complies with regulatory requirements; and
- work with staff and the Board of Directors to prepare budgets, establish accountability standards for grant and budget tracking, oversee consultants and vendors, and make financial and operational decisions based on plans and policies developed with the Board of Directors.

LEADERSHIP

Karen Benfield **President**

Karen Benfield has been a member of the Board of Directors for six years and has been President since June 2020. She has steered the annual Fall Roost fundraiser for several years and has produced many videos for NYC Audubon. As President, Karen is involved in the work of all NYC Audubon committees. Professionally, Karen is a television and video producer who specializes in long-form television narratives and nonprofit video storytelling. Her environmental interests and concern for urban habitat and birds led her to NYC Audubon.

Mike Yuan **Executive Vice President**

Mike Yuan has served as NYC Audubon's Board Executive Vice President since June 2021 and as a Director since 2019. Professionally, Mike is a data and technology specialist supporting public policy and advocacy initiatives. He is involved with NYC Audubon's Nominations, Engagement, Conservation, and Audit Committees. He is an active birder and compiler of the Audubon Christmas Count, Brooklyn count circle, and on the leadership council of the Brooklyn Bird Club.

Sarah Jeffords **Vice President**

Sarah (Sally) Jeffords is a retired attorney, working for the City of New York and New York Transit Authority for 20 years. Since her youth, Sally has been inspired to get involved with environmental conservation and, in particular, efforts to save land from development. Through her family foundation, Sally has been involved with the National Audubon Society since the 1980s. She currently serves as a member of the Board of National Audubon, chair of Audubon New York’s Advisory Board as well as an advisory board member of the Audubon Seabird Institute, Audubon International Alliances program, in addition to serving as Vice President of the Board of NYC Audubon. An active community member, Sally is also a board member of the Friends of Hog Island in Maine, the Lancaster Land Conservancy, the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in Saratoga, and serves as Chair of the Steering Committee of the Friends of American Arts at Yale, another of her lifelong passions.

Deborah Laurel **Secretary**

Deborah Laurel holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from The University of Texas at Austin, and after a period of work in Houston, was drawn to New York City in 1989. As a principal at Prendergast Laurel Architects, she has designed both public and private projects including for public institutions such as The

New York Public Library, The Fire Department of New York, and PS1 MOMA. Deborah began working on the bird/building collisions issue in 2010. Working with The Bird-Safe Buildings Alliance, she supported efforts on the 2011 San Francisco Design Standard, the LEED Pilot Credit 55 "Bird Collision Deterrence" of 2011 and 2015, and NYC's Local Law 15 of 2020. She continues to work with the BSBA team to advance research and solutions. She has delivered presentations on bird friendly building design at Greenbuild, the AIA, Pratt Institute, and SUNY Stonybrook. Deborah joined the Board of New York City Audubon in 2016 and currently serves as Secretary as well as advising both the Conservation and Education Committees.

Drienne Benner

Treasurer

Drienne Benner is a Managing Director for Appomattox and is responsible for business development and client service. She has over 30 years' experience in investment management and is currently focused on environmental, social, and governance investment strategies.

She earned a BA from Pennsylvania State University in 1978 and attended graduate studies in regional planning in international development at Cornell University. Drienne is a Charter Financial Analyst ("CFA") charterholder and is a former board and executive committee member of the CFA Society New York. Drienne is Treasurer of the New York City Audubon Society; chairs the Investment Committee member of the American Friends Service Committee, is president of the Orient Association, and is on the Finance/Investment Committee of the Oysterponds Historical Society.

Jeffrey Kimball

Immediate Past President

Professionally, Jeffrey Kimball has worked in the film industry as a producer, cinematographer, and music supervisor. He recently originated, produced, and directed the acclaimed HBO documentary *Birders: The Central Park Effect*, about the birds and birders of New York's Central Park. He has an MFA from NYU Graduate School of Film and a BA from Stanford University.

A lifelong amateur naturalist, and a birder for over 30 years, Jeffrey joined the NYC Audubon Board in 2013, and was elected as President in 2016. He currently serves in the position of Immediate Past President and as Chair of the Nominations Committee.

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

NYC Audubon seeks an Executive Director with:

- a commitment to the mission of NYC Audubon: to protect wild birds and habitats in the five boroughs of New York City, and, in so doing, to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers;
- energy, an entrepreneurial mind-set, vision, strong communication skills, and experience achieving sustainable growth in a challenging environment;
- a commitment to the goals of NYC Audubon's equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility mission;
- significant leadership skills developed through experience in senior management positions;
- experience in and dedication to fundraising, including knowledge of and success in attracting foundation and corporate partners as well as the ability to identify, steward, and solicit individual donors;
- excellent personnel management skills;
- experience in strategic advocacy and in building collaborative partnerships;
- an understanding of not-for-profits and experience working with boards of directors and volunteers;
- experience managing budgets as well as generating and interpreting financial reports;

- an ability to create, execute, and populate dynamic programming;
- excellent communication skills, both written and oral, including strong presentation skills;
- an ability to foster a healthy organizational culture, to encourage teamwork and collaboration;
- strong interpersonal skills including the ability to inspire and motivate, as well as successfully manage conflict; and
- experience collaborating with a strong and effective Board of Directors.

Five years of experience in a not-for-profit role that includes fundraising and oversight of staff is preferred.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

NYC Audubon offers a competitive salary. All full-time employees are provided with a competitive benefits package, which includes medical insurance, dental and vision insurance, short-term disability, long-term disability, accidental death and dismemberment, and term life, SIMPLE IRA with up to 3% match, PTO, and paid holidays.

LOCATION

This position is located in New York City.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission and values of NYC Audubon as well as the responsibilities and qualifications presented in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit:

[Executive Director, NYC Audubon.](#)

To nominate a candidate, please contact Gregory Leet:

[gregoryleet@aspenleadershipgroup.com.](mailto:gregoryleet@aspenleadershipgroup.com)

All inquiries will be held in confidence.