

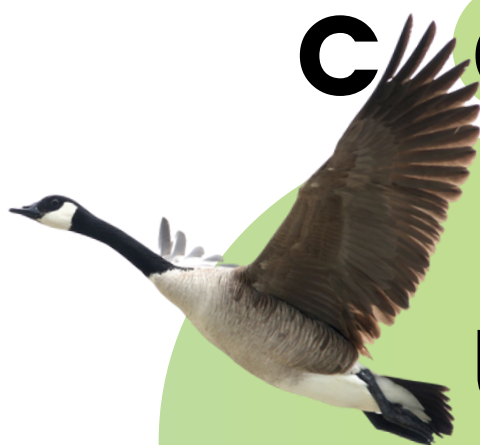
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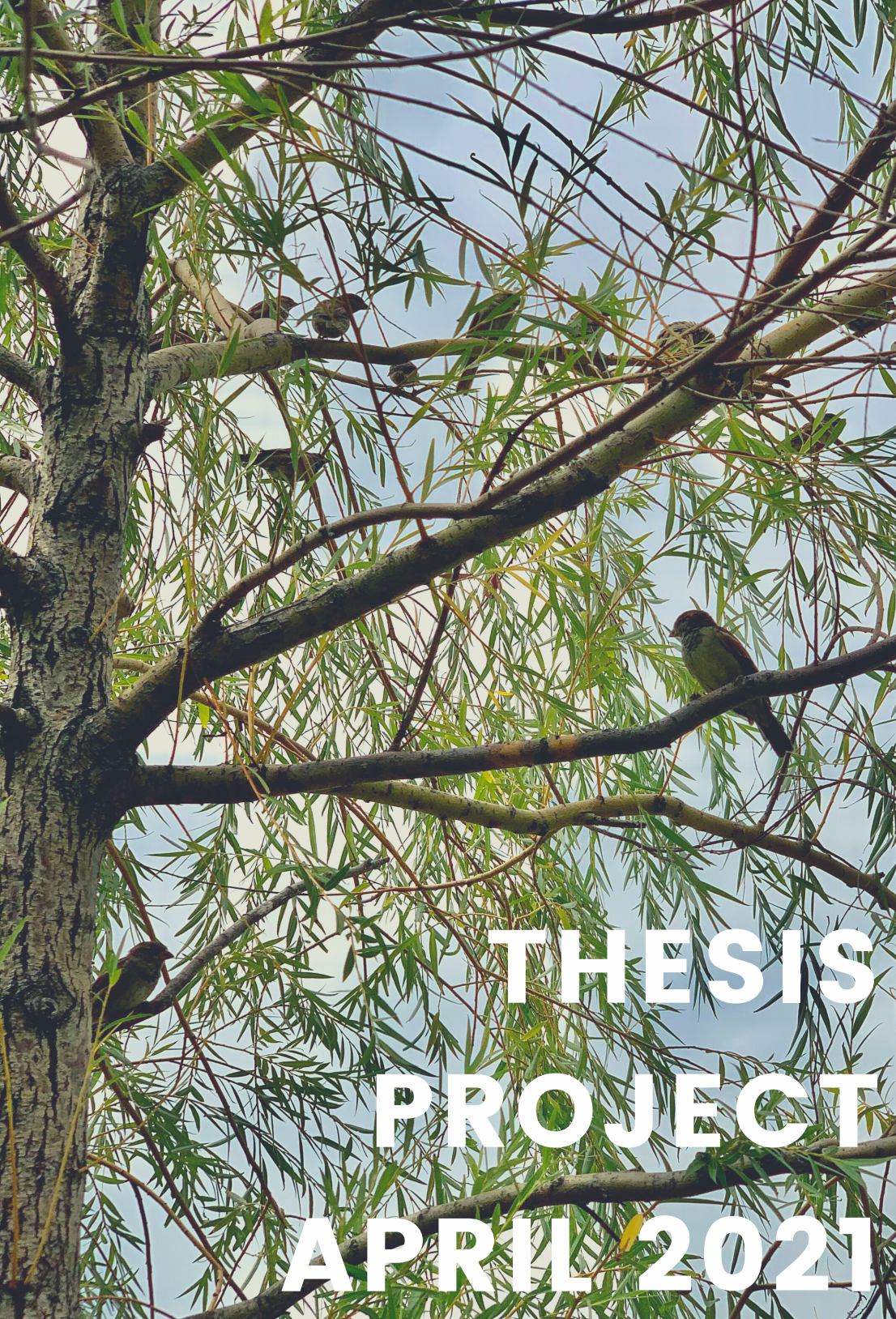
C O N N E C T

W I T H

U R B A N

W I L D L I F E





THESIS PROJECT APRIL 2021

MFA DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION
SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS, NYC

DESIGNED BY
JIAYI (JACQUELINE) BAO

ADVISED BY
KARA MEYER

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PREFACE

ABOUT ME!

- Hi, Jacqueline Bao, a transforming visual designer and UI/UX designer focusing on nature-centered needs and connecting design with the social activity process.

I'm passionate about wildlife conservation and the magic of connected ecosystems. What attracts me most is the balance between humans (activities) and other species (wildlife, etc.)

My undergraduate background is in English Literature and Digital Media Design. Design isn't about expressing one's personal style or emotions but about understanding how people feel and that social designers are more like behind-the-scenes people who introduce creativity and innovation to others' lives.



INSPIRATION



**HERE IS
A STORY THAT
BEGINS WITH A
LITTLE SPARROW!**



When I was young, like before kindergarten, there were always sparrows in my hometown, Shanghai. They would stand together, about like dozens of fluffy balls, on the street. Even when people get close, they're not scared. Once, even a sparrow flew into my window and seemed too weak to fly in winter.

I took care of it for days and tried to feed it with rice and water. But on the third day, this little one wanted to fly away already. I was unwilling to let it go, and my Mom said, you can't raise a sparrow. They're too free to be inside of a cage. So I untied the little rope attached to its feet, put it on a branch of a tree, and turned around.

I was hoping it wouldn't fly away. But when I turned back, it's gone and nothing left. I was so sad and confusing at that time. After I grew up, I learned that the life of sparrows always seems to revolve around human habitation. They eat grains and other human food, they build their nests in holes in buildings or rain gutters, but they will never really get close to humans like pets.

And humans benefit from them invisibly. They eat insects! Sometimes annoyed by them, very directly, for they're kind of in the center of humans' habitat and human's lifestyle may have some conflicts with them.

CONCERNING COVID-19



WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS DURING COVID-19-LOCKDOWNS HAVE RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a worldwide shutdown of cities large and small. While drastically altering human lives. This has caused a massive shift in human activities—reduced motorized traffic, restricted travel and trade, shuttered businesses, and closed parks, beaches, and recreational areas. The whole onset brought an unusual decrease in human activity associated with partial and total lockdowns. It also has the potential to impact wildlife significantly. Early in the shutdown, images of wildlife in cities were common in news reports and social media, garnering increasing public attention and declarations of wildlife reclaiming urban habitats.



BACKGROUND

URBAN WILDLIFE AND NEW YORK CITY

WHY DOES WILDLIFE LIVE IN NYC?

New York City is a habitat designed for people, but the physical land itself is also home to wild animals that arrived or existed long before humans settled here. Humans and wildlife both require food, water, shelter, and space to survive. As such, New York City has all of the requirements for hearty wild animals to thrive. The presence of many diverse species of wildlife is a good indicator of the general health of the urban environment.

WHAT IS URBAN WILDLIFE?

Urban wildlife is any wild animal that lives in an urban environment, such as New York City. Urban wildlife includes birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, and amphibians. Some urban wildlife is native, like eastern grey squirrels, while some are non-native, like mute swans. Domesticated and companion animals, like dogs, exotic pets, and farm animals, are not considered urban wildlife. Domesticated but feral animals like pigeons and stray cats are also not considered urban wildlife.



CONTEXT

8.5 million New Yorkers

Data from Official Website of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation



Nearly 8.5 million New Yorkers share their streets, backyards, waterfront, parks with more than 600 species of wild animals.

>600 species of neighbors



THE CONTINUED
EXISTENCE OF WILDLIFE
AND WILDERNESS
IS IMPORTANT TO
THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF
HUMANS.

Jim Fowler

**EVEN A SMALL TREE IN THE YARD
CAN BE LANDSCAPED TO ATTRACT
BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES, BENEFICIAL
INSECTS, AND SMALL ANIMALS.**

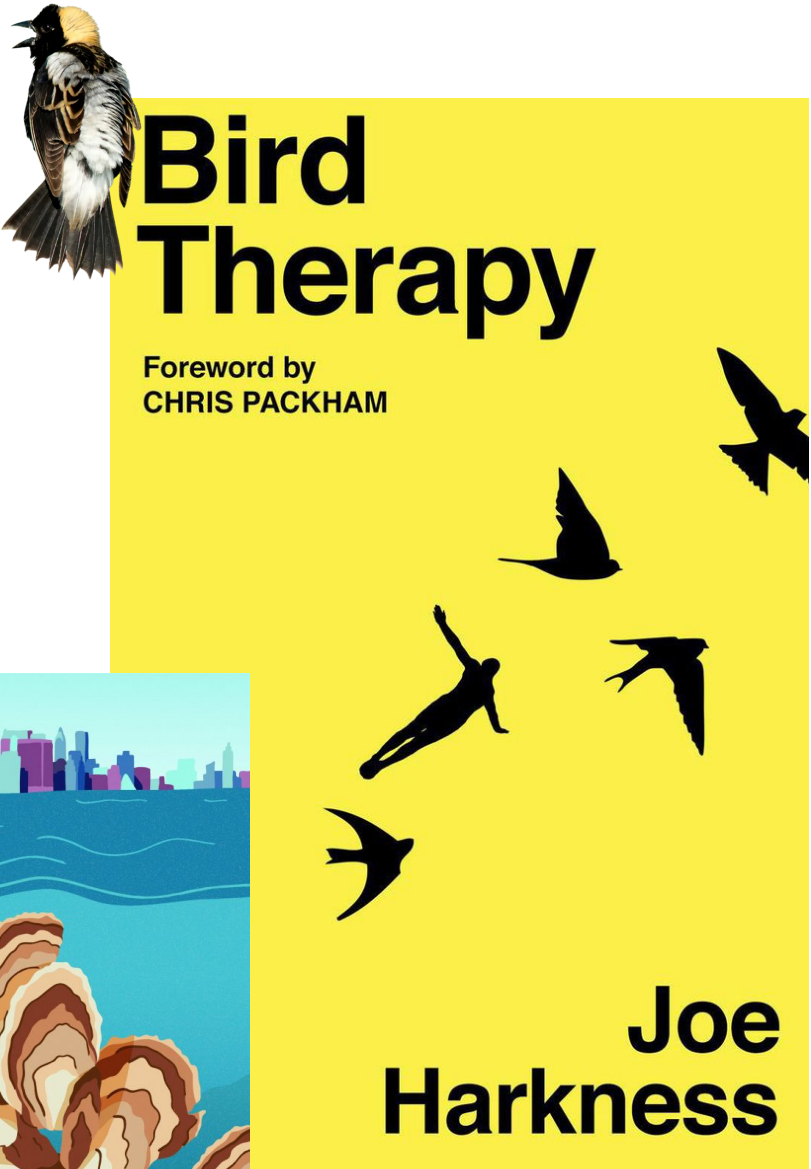
<https://www.arborday.org/trees/treefacts/>



NYC Urban beekeeper Andrew Cote



Illustration of New York Harbor's Oysters by Brittany Falussy and Kath Nash

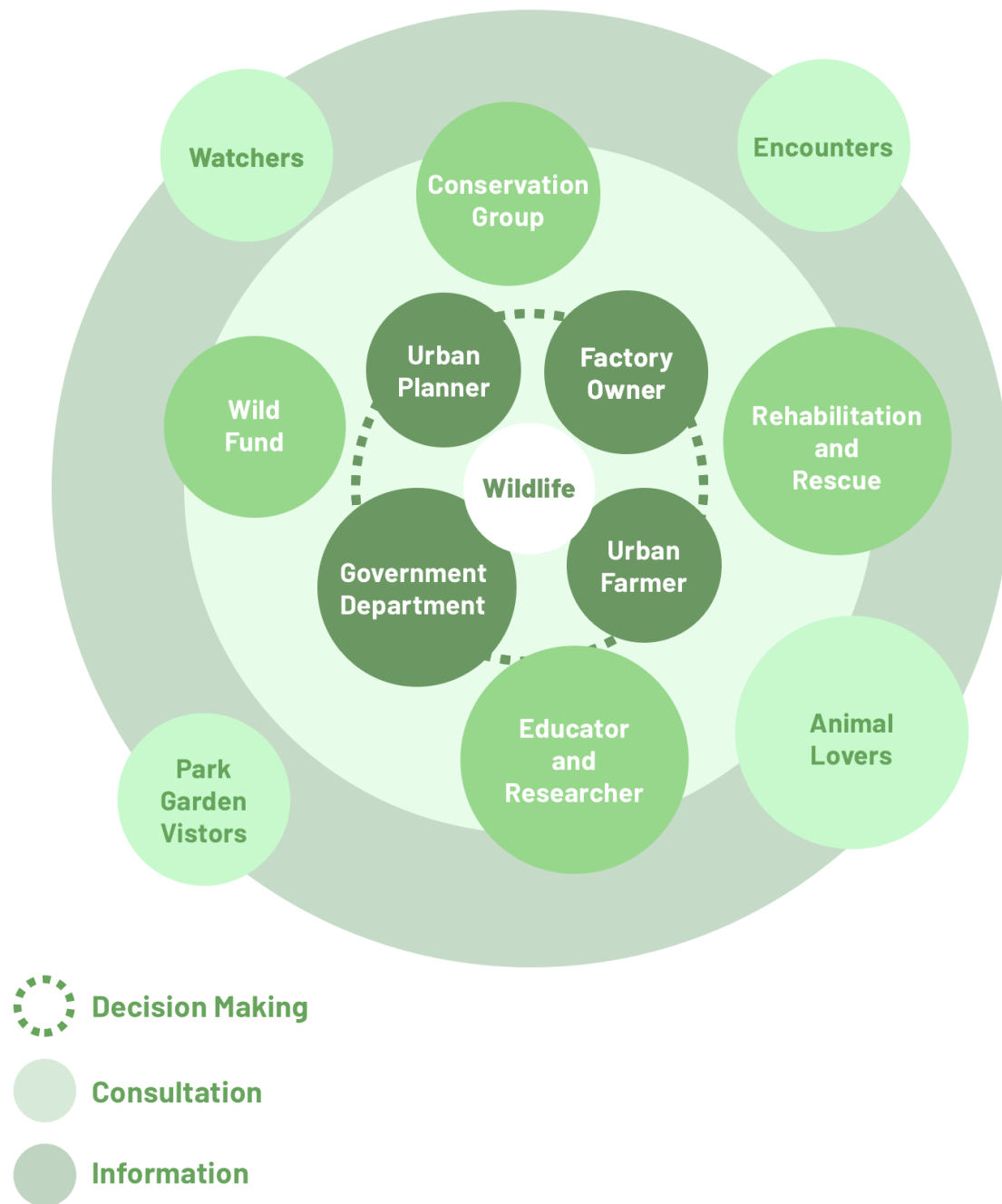


An account of how birdwatching saved author's life

Zoom in, we can see in this city, the connection between humans and wildlife could be only one backyard tree, served as a habitat for some birds or squirrels to happily thrive. Trees, shrubs, and other plants provide shelter and food for wildlife. The plants you use for food and cover will help determine the wildlife species attracted to your backyard. We can add nesting boxes, feeders, and watering sites to improve the habitat. Zooming out, from the food chain industry, water quality improvement to mental therapy, wildlife around is closely related to human activities, and together they form a complex urban ecosystem.

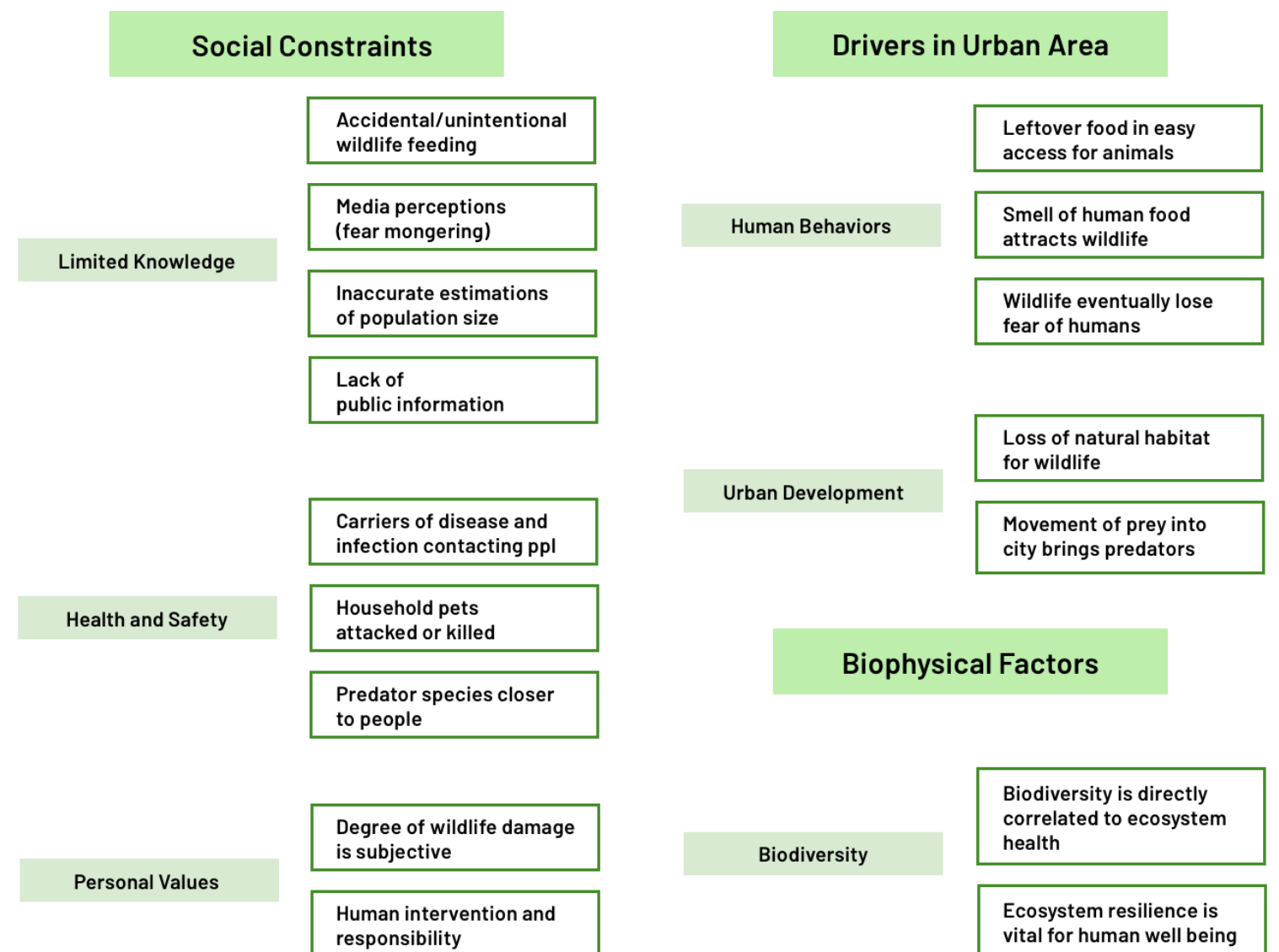
OUR DAILY LIFE DEPENDS ON URBAN WILDLIFE.

ECOSYSTEM MAP

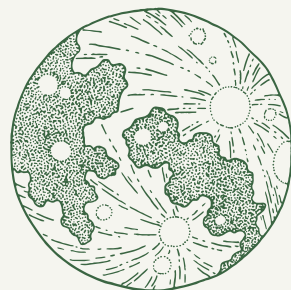


WILDLIFE-HUMAN CHALLENGE MAP

Social constraints affect people's opinions. Limited knowledge leads to the outlook that feeding wildlife is not harmful or results in accidental or unintentional wildlife feeding. Perceptions are also formed from the media in fear-mongering as the media portrays some urban wildlife as highly dangerous. Inaccurate estimations on population size could also be an issue in biodiversity conservation. There also exists a lack of public information on how to deal with urban wildlife.



RESEARCH



**PROCESS SNAPSHOTS
DURING
RESEARCH & PROTOTYPE PHASE**

14 INTERCEPTS

of random New Yorkers

39 SURVEY RESPONSES

from animal lovers, garden/park visitors and etc.

4 EXPERT INTERVIEWS

of Rehabbers, educator and Conservation Groups

11 PARTICIPANTS

of one-on-one story sharing workshop

3 OBSERVATIONS

of Central Park, Gantry Plaza State Park and East River Park

2 PROTOTYPES

Online survey and Story-sharing workshop

PROBLEM

To understand NYC citizens' understanding and feeling of wildlife in NYC and to know more about the general and core problem underneath human-wildlife conflicts in NYC, I conducted a survey and kindly asked Urban Utopia Rehabilitation Group and Creature Conserve to spread among their newsletters and social media platforms to gather responses.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you know about urban wildlife? (0 is nothing and 10 is professional expert)

4.1 out of 10

On a scale of 1 to 10, how often do you encounter wild animals in New York City? (0 is never and 10 is daily experience)

6.5 out of 10

Results from survey conducted from Feb, 2021



What I found...

New Yorkers **encounter wildlife very often**. However, they pay little attention to wildlife. And they **have misunderstandings** towards urban wildlife due to limited knowledge.



“THIS WHOLE IDEA THAT WE ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES BY NOT DOING STUFF JUST DOESN'T WORK.”

Natalie Jeremijenko
Scientist, Environmental Artist



**“HUMAN INTERVENTION
IS NECESSARY.”**

*Pete Malinowski
Executive Director and Co-Founder of
the Billion Oyster Project*

INSIGHTS

” All these are valuable words
but what can we do in daily lives? ”

From the ecosystem map, we can easily find that all of us can directly encounter wildlife ourselves, no matter the position's on the inner circle to make decisions for wildlife, or you're just receiving different kinds of information.

Even though these professional decision-makers try to send the correct message of what to do when encountering or treating wildlife, it's hard for everyone to fully accept the ideas and apply them. There is a disconnection that could be linked between people who dedicated their lives to protect urban biodiversity and people who merely want to admire the cuteness of wildlife.

What's more, compared to other social issues, the wildlife-human conflict is a truly invisible struggle. Wildlife in the city is kind of in the center of humans' habitat and our lifestyle may not align with them. If people know more, the problem can be solved little by little.

**THERE'S A DISCONNECTION BETWEEN NEW
YORKERS AND LOCAL WILDLIFE,
BUT WE'RE ALL INTERCONNECTED.**

PROTOTYPE #1

ONLINE SURVEY

The first one is an online survey to see what New Yorkers 'experience with urban wildlife looks like. The goal is to understand the current situation of NYC citizens' relationship with local wildlife and to further realize if professional knowledge and correct messages are communicated to citizens.

Questions:

How do you identify yourself in relation to urban wildlife?

What do you want every New Yorker to know about urban wildlife?

Type *three adjectives* for wildlife that come to your mind.

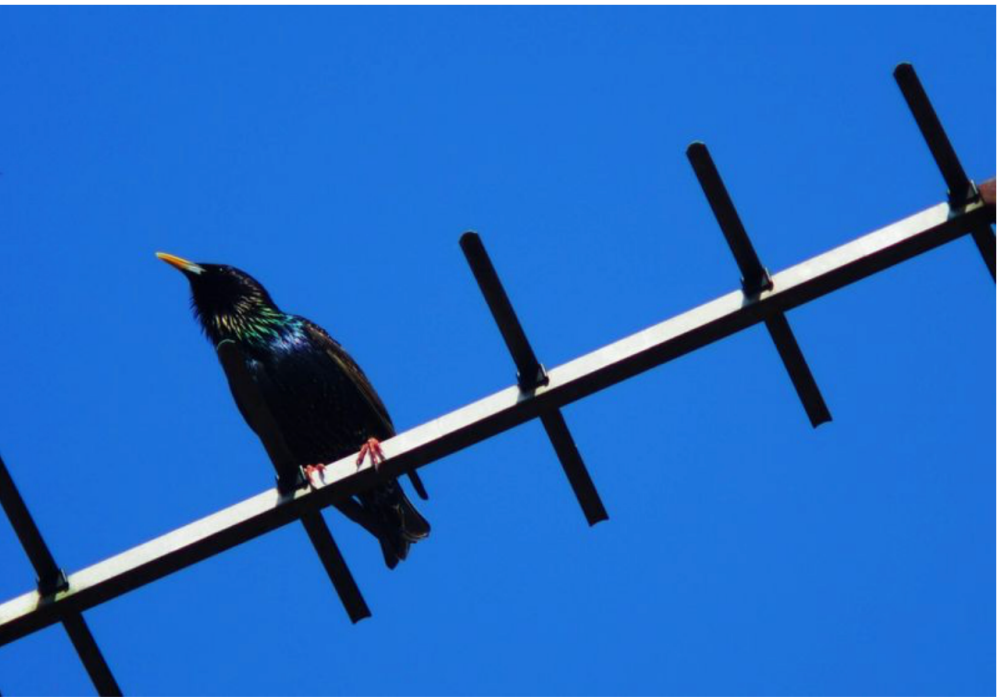
On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you know about urban wildlife?
(0 is nothing and 10 is professional expert)

On a scale of 1 to 10, how often do you encounter wild animals in New York City?
(0 is never and 10 is daily experience)

Have you ever had an unexpected encounter with wildlife in NYC?

Could you please share a short story about your encounter?

Do you have a photo of this encounter and could you upload here?



Hi there,👋 I'm Jiayi Bao (Jac Bao), a graduate student in the School of Visual Arts, Design for Social Innovation program. I'm now working on my thesis project on **urban wildlife and better coexist with them in NYC**. This survey is about what your experience with urban wildlife in NYC looks like!

Takes 7+ min

Let's start

press Enter ↵

Urban Wildlife													
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PROTOTYPE #2



STORY-SHARING WORKSHOP

From the survey, I invite several active volunteers to participate in the one-on-one story-sharing interview/workshop to understand further what kind of activity could better increase positive awareness and how the messages could communicate correctly and effectively.

Urban Wildlife in NYC- Story and Vision together

General Info

People
4-8

Each Time
10-20 min

Tools
Cellphone
Pen

Set the stage
Welcome everyone and establish the rules of engagement:

1. Embrace a positive spirit of continuous improvement and sharing.
2. Listen with an open mind, and remember that everyone's experience is valid (even those you don't share).
4. Set the boundary of your discussion - Is it that last sprint? the last quarter? since the project started? Be clear how far back you're going to go.
5. Encourage the team to embrace an improvement mindset, away from blame.

Next Step...


What went well?
Group similar or duplicate ideas together. Discuss your ideas briefly as a team.

What needs improvement/refinement?
To co-design a proper prototype for the final goal.


Let's do this together !

Welcoming and Icebreaker

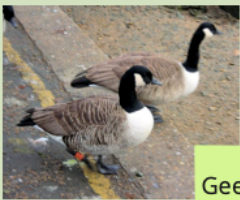
What is your favorite urban wildlife in NYC? Or do you know any NYC wildlife? Name it, search it online and put a pic, think about the story behind...




Coyote




Rat




Geese




Red-tail hawk




Birds I don't recognize




Opposum




Bat



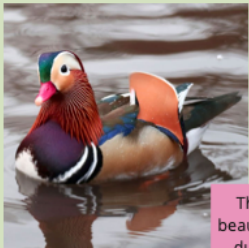
Ducks floating in the river




Bunnies




Owl




This beautiful duck




Fox




Raccoons




Squirrel




Pigeons! Lots of them!




Sparrow




Frogs



Butterflies and Bees



Ravens



Maybe deers?

Why do I start planning?

I want to learn more about the human-wildlife relationship in NYC right now and what people need from different perspectives: professionals or common ppl. This interview-like workshop aims to share story/experience in the early phases of the design process. It is a tool for discovery and exploring opportunities rather than producing final solutions, and aims to guide design decisions, for example by building concepts, which informs what contents should be designed and on which platform.

What do I want to achieve?

My objective for the workshop is to better understand the context of NYC's urban wildlife and both wildlife's needs and citizens' needs regarding disconnection between citizens and nature/wildlife in the city. Additionally, instead of involving only designers and experts in the project, I'm curious how actual users (New Yorkers) would improve their experiences and create a new concept. For this, I want to use some fast-paced activities to generate ideas and construct rough concepts through prototypes.

Experience Bank

Now, please recall some good or bad experiences you had with a scenario relevant for urban wildlife, as a professional or as a New Yorker.

The goal here is to unload and share people's experiences and quickly focus on meaningful ones during the rest of the workshop.



Helping an injured opossum

I saw some squirrels and ducks walk across the street in a line! The mother duck is leading those baby ducks!

I encountered a goose family once I took a walk after a pandemic (I was keeping social distancing) And there's a dog who's curious about the family. Mr. dog started running towards Mr. Goose, wanting to smell his butt. Simultaneously, Mr. Goose thought Mr. Dog wanted to attack his kids, shouting aloud to him. In the end, Mr. Dog sneaked away in the hanks...

Observing hawks and other creatures unexpectedly

Untangling baby opossums from a soccer net in Bk, and reuniting them with mom

When I carry a bag of biscuits to go to central park to do my project research, I just sit there take some rest and open the biscuits bag, there are several squirrels that appear like a robber take the biscuits on my hand.

When I see bunnies I try to get as close as possible before they run away

A wild cat became very friendly with me and he lets me pet him and eats from my hand. He has been coming by daily for the past year

Good Experiences

Walking right into a fierce raccoon

Raccoons digging out trash bins

See dead body of animal (fur and dry blood) in the park, disgusted and sad

Some seagulls robbed my bread of me and tried to attack my friend

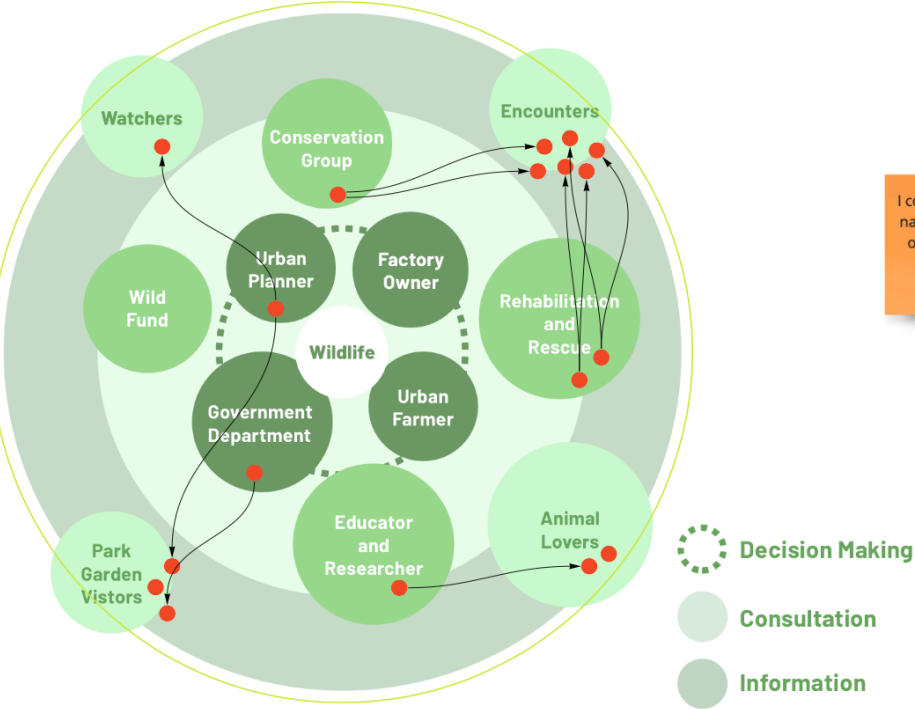
Central Park -> BIG RAT -> Got eaten by a bird -> Super Scary

Once my kids and I were watching baby squirrels chase each other around a tree in Central Park. Out of nowhere a hawk swooped in and snatched up one of the squirrels. I was horrified but my kids thought it was super cool

Bad Experiences

World Mapping 🌍
Use red dots and arrows to mark your experience in the circles of stakeholder map.
Where would be this experience fall into?

Imagery World ✨
Imagine a world that's harmonious, idealized and with all the funds! Pick one of the bad experiences and picture a creative solution and a happy ending for it! Prototype it by using emojis and pics! Share with us the story!



I could know the name and habit of the wildlife and quickly search it.

Whenever you're, you could still embrace the nature and wildlife as long as you open the door and feel!

To know what's good and bad for urban ecosystem like more plants, greens/less plastic and takeouts!

I want to witness them more often and take photos (remember each chance encounter)

KEY FINDINDS

- 1 Participants are quite **interested in other's experiences and stories**, willing to hear more.
- 2 Participants feel the importance of **reintroducing the urban wildlife to citizens' daily life little by little**.
- 3 Contents like tiny biography of wildlife, fact sheets, and **scavenger hunt/bingo games are highly appreciated** and participants would love to try.

I LEARNED THAT PARTICIPANTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE ATTRACTED BY EXPERIENCE, STORY-SHARING, AND ENGAGING ACTIVITIES. THEY LOVE THE PROCESS OF NOTICING AND REINTRODUCING WILDLIFE INTO THEIR DAILY LIVES.

PARTNER



Share survey and posts through their network and together co-create the wildlife go-to messages for New Yorkers



A network of NYC-based wildlife rehabbers and educators



Provide wildlife calendar and information/tips on watching and encountering wildlife



A campaign launched by NYC government full of valuable information and content

QUOTES FROM WORKSHOP

I ALWAYS FIND URBAN WILDLIFE BEAUTIFUL, INTERESTING, AND ALSO BE MISUNDERSTOOD BY MANY OF US. IT'S ALWAYS BETTER TO SEE BIODIVERSITY IN THE AREA AND OBSERVE NATURE.

Olla, an encounter who helped an injured opossum before

IT'S QUITE INTERESTING TO HEAR THESE STORIES AND NOTICE THAT WILDLIFE ACTUALLY IS EVERYWHERE IN NYC, EVEN I ALREADY AM A LICENSED RESCUER. I FEEL THIS SESSION OF REINTRODUCING ANIMALS INTO PEOPLE'S DAILY LIFE IS ESSENTIAL AND POWERFUL. FIRST, YOU GOTTA NOTICE BEFORE YOU START TO CARE ABOUT IT.

Jenn, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator/web designer

THESIS STATEMENT

How might we remind New Yorkers of the abundance of this city's wildlife and encourage them to care about and help the ecosystem around them to thrive?

My thesis goal is to create a framework that reconnects urban wildlife to New Yorkers' daily lives by increasing positive awareness.

— “ —

The key is the reintroduction of an animal back into the ecosystem.

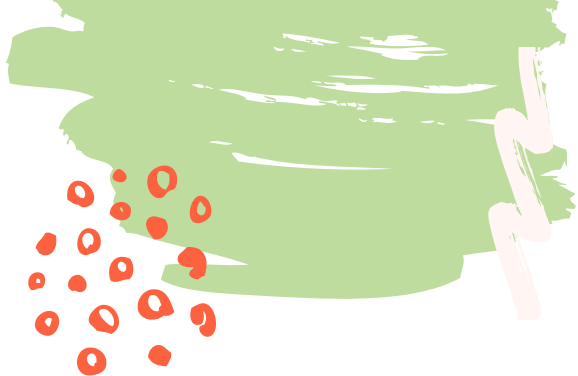
This necessitates a deeper understanding of the interconnections between individuals and between species. This is where science becomes art.

— ” —

INTERVENTION



___ (Underscore) Around is my final intervention. It means you can put any words in the front, like cuteness around, fabulous around...what I want everyone to notice is that no matter what you think urban wildlife are, they're always around and interconnected with your life.



FRAMEWORK

The framework contains three different parts, which are social media platforms to create a space for people who have the same goal and passion for a healthy urban ecosystem. Urban wildlife photo gathering and scavenger hunt game designed for specific space and the offline activity booth.



Social Media Platform (Fact sheet/Wildlife bio/Data Viz.)

delightful contents to encourage people to change their behaviors gradually



Urban Wildlife Photo Gathering
Scavenger Hunt Game

fun activities to bring up awareness and enlarge the knowledge base



Offline Activity
Noticing/Story-sharing Booth

printed booklet and map to stimulate the interest and reinforce the concept



MEDIA CONTENTS

WILDLIFE PLATFORM @URBAN___AROUND

An Instagram-based platform (@urban___around) that calls for heightened awareness of urban wildlife in NYC, aiming to create a relationship and foster healthy co-existence between wildlife and humans. This is created to be an open space that can gather people who're showing similar interests towards urban wildlife.



The structure of posts is basically encountering stories + data visualization + professional guide. Posts include fact sheets, some bios of wildlife, and stories of wildlife photography.

interesting or meaningful encounters/experiences

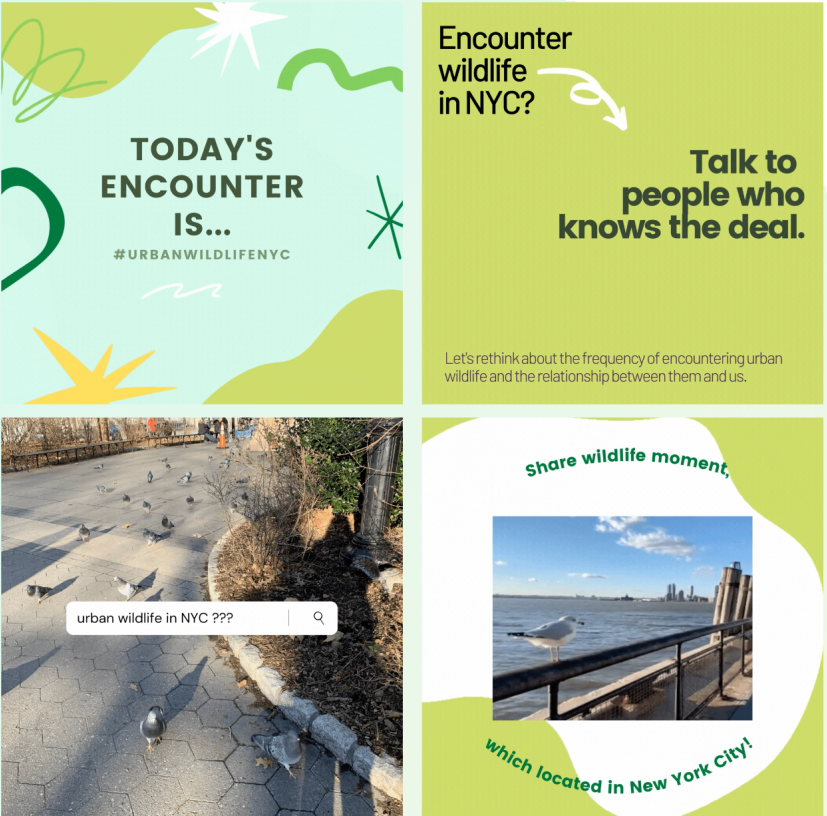
STORY

DATA
VIZ

appealing data visualizations and elements

GUIDE

informal link or guide to wildlife expertises

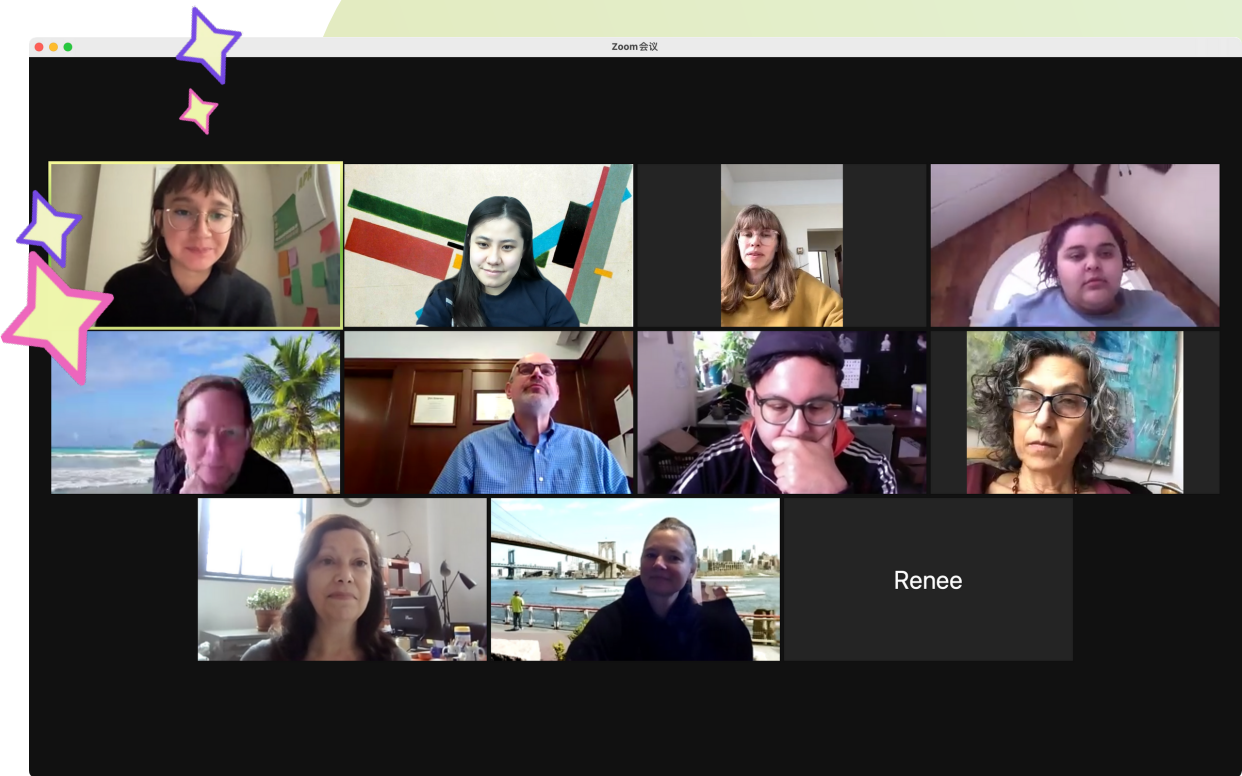


I gathered a lot of likes (one of the posts I collected more than 300 likes!) and private messages of people's interesting or unforgettable stories with local wildlifes.

OFFLINE ACTIVITY

NOTICING BOOTH IN EAST RIVER PARK

Another intervention is an offline activity I called noticing booth that took part in East River Park's community resiliency event. This is an engaging activity that reconnects people to wildlife in the neighborhood of East River Park.



On April. 17th, the event is to celebrate/rethink the coming closure of East River Park. The suspension of maintenance on green spaces, cut-down of budgets can all seriously impact the conservation of key habitats and species.



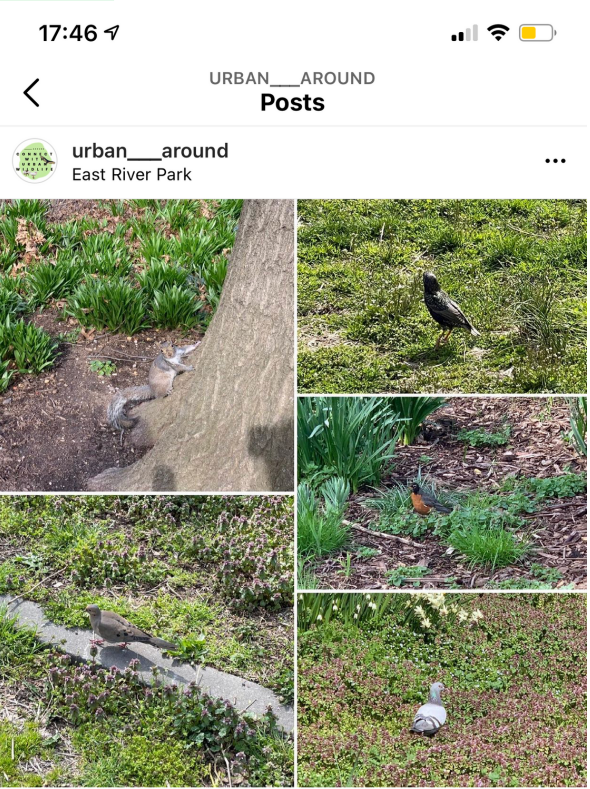
Liked by pluspoolny and 214 others

urban__around This Saturday, join us for a day of fun in East River Park! This will be a day of events hosted by many organizations who work in and around the park, there will be workshops, games, activities, crafts, and tours to alternative green spaces.

Through a fun activity, __ Around will be reconnecting New Yorkers to the abundance of urban wildlife in our city. Find me tabling near the Fireboat House from 11am-3pm!

Link to general Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/spring-community-event-tickets-144917262433>

April 13



Liked by jaivingtatreans and 303 others

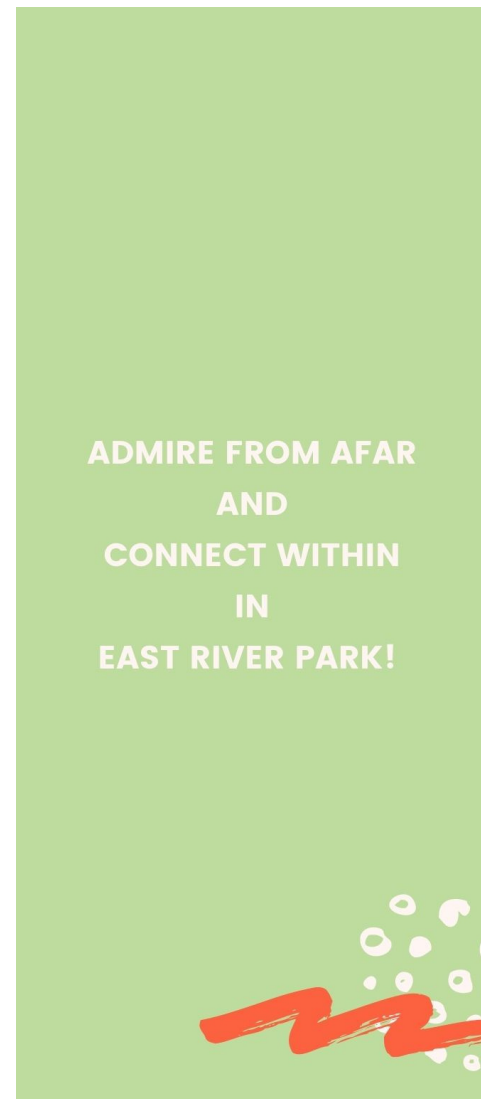
urban__around In East River Park, you can find and admire more than five different wildlife within 2hrs as long as you pay attention 🦋 when walking around! 🦋

Can you tell who these little creatures are? Leave in the comment if you know!

#nyc #newyorkwildlife #newyork #newyorker #wildlifeny #nycwildlife #wildlife #nycnature #wildlifeny #urbanwildlife #urbanwildlifeny #wildlifestory #wildlifeencounter #wildlifeencounters #cutewildlife

April 13

urban__around East River Park



The slogan of _around:
Admire from afar
and
connect within



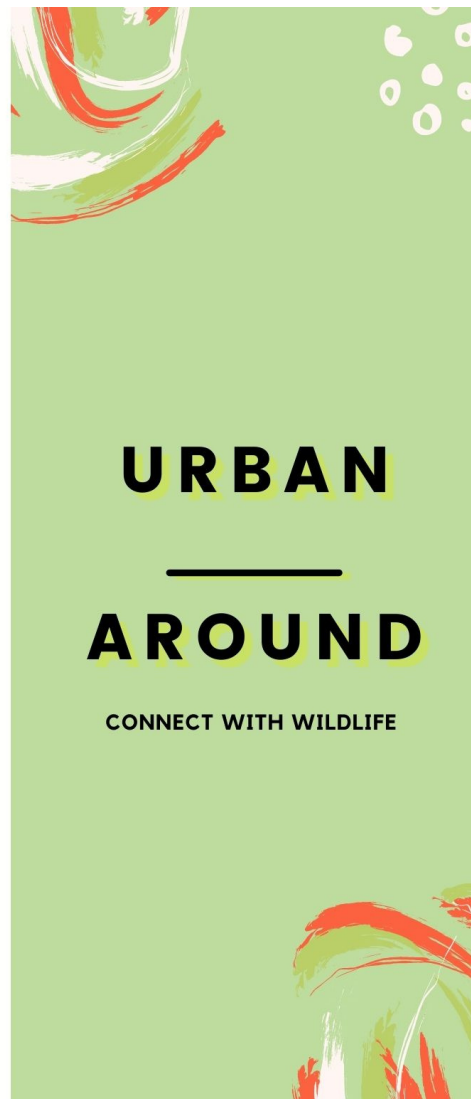
CONTACT



Ins: @urban___around
email: jbao2@sva.edu



A sticker comes
with the booklet
to inspire

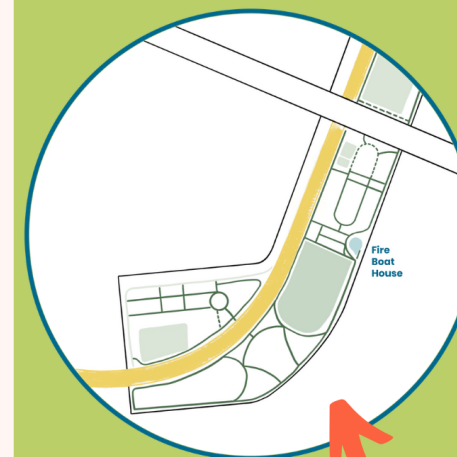


The event's goal is to rethink the coming closure of East River Park. The suspension of maintenance on green spaces can impact the conservation of key habitats and species.

The intro booklet of ___around is for people who're passing by and not ready to stay for a long time in the green space.

ABOUT...

___ Around is an SVA Design for Social Innovation project that aims to increase awareness of NYC urban wildlife. From noticing to understanding, we want to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and foster a healthy co-existing environment together by reconnecting those lovely creatures to daily life and educating people on what to do after encountering them.



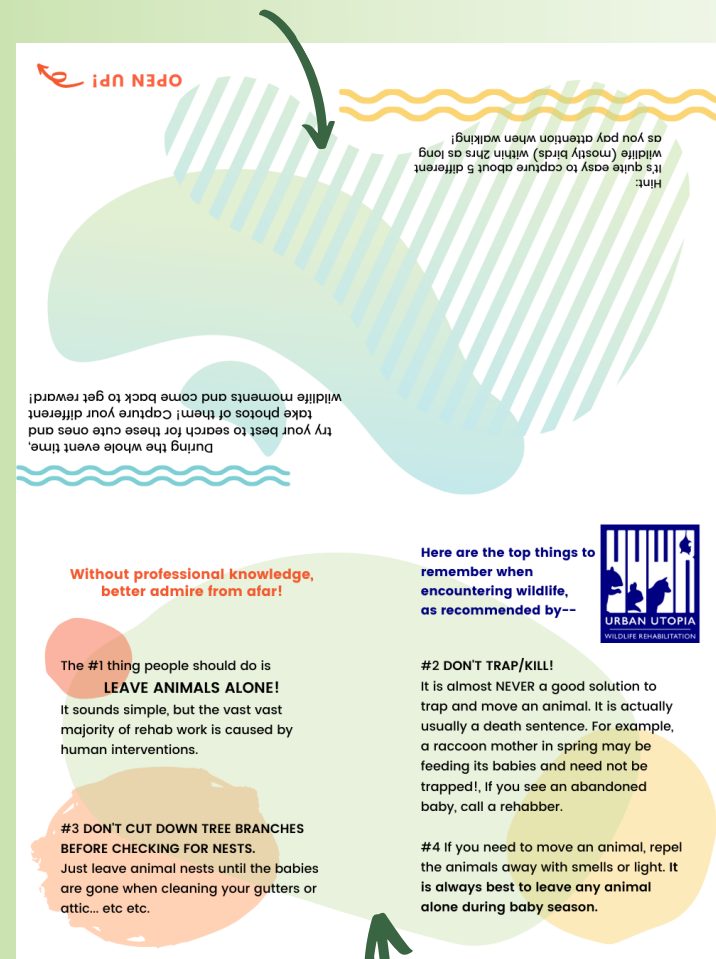
SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW:

FACT

Nearly 8.5 million New Yorkers share their streets, backyards, waterfront, parks, and beaches with more than 6 hundreds of different species of wild animals. We are all neighbors!

**FIND THEM
AND
TAKE A PHOTO!**

Spaces for note-taking



Co-created contents with Urban Utopia Wildlife Rehabilitation

A little map of the park



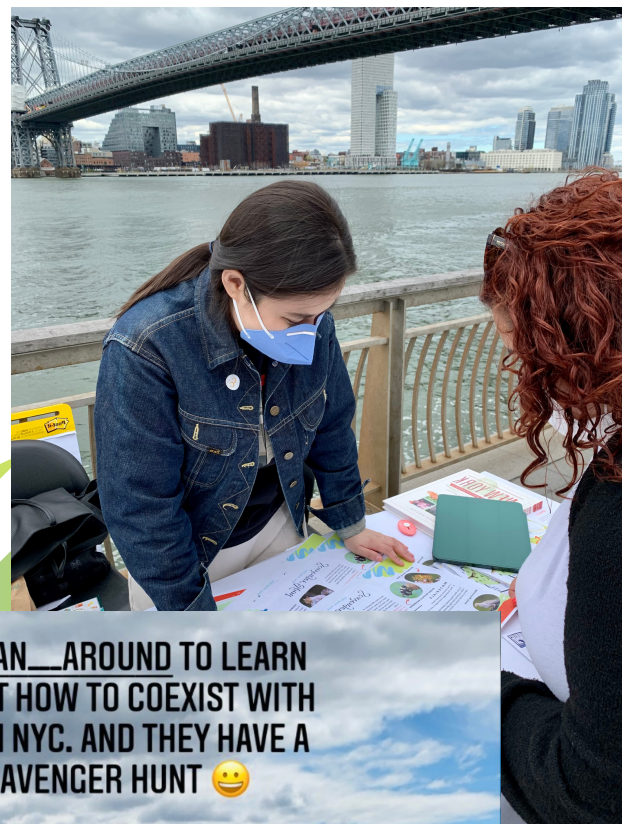
East River Park version

A ZINE designed for East River Park. In the booklet, there are the go-to messages for New Yorkers I co-created with Urban Utopia. On the back, it's the scavenger hunt game map of this park's wildlife, especially during April migration season.

A scavenger hunt game map of East River Park wildlife, especially during April migration season. It contains a biography of several animals like the honey bee, squirrel, and species of birds.



<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vstDs42cRPA9RmCM9CJWUnHW-lyy1ghu/view?usp=sharing>



AND @URBAN__AROUND TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO COEXIST WITH WILDLIFE IN NYC. AND THEY HAVE A FUN SCAVENGER HUNT 😊



Shout out to +POOL!

The Urban __ Around is here!

Story-sharing:
Do you have some interesting stories about wildlife?

Material:

1. Post-it and pen
2. A huge piece of paper
3. Instagram handle QR code
1. Your story, phone, and your eyes!
2. Scavenger Hunt Zine
3. ERP wildlife intro booklet
 - information based on iNaturalist website, WildlifeNYC website
 - tips and suggestions based on Urban Utopia Wildlife Rehabilitation
4. Reward: stickers and printed photos of today's favorite animal
5. Share out on Instagram

During this time, try your best to search for these cute ones and take photos of them! Capture different wildlife moments and come back! (It's quite easy to capture about 5 different wildlife within 2hrs as long as you pay attention when walking. These are photos I took on 4/10 afternoon.)

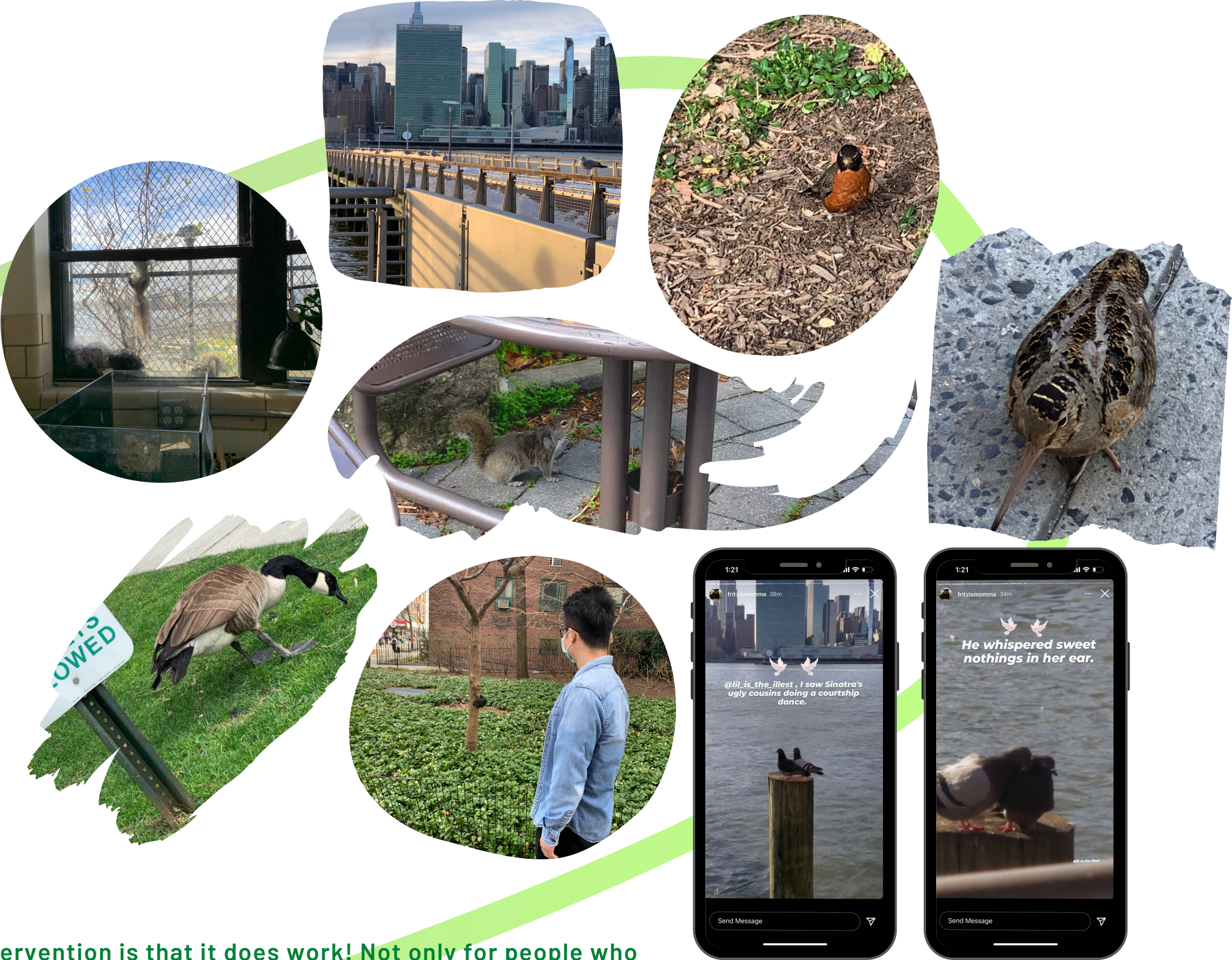
Take your reward after connecting with creatures in East River Park. Please choose one of your favorite photos among them and freshly print! Add a sticker to remind you of this adventure and re-connection with wildlife today! You can share your stories/photos/your filled booklet and your feelings/comments to the Instagram account! I hope you like this activity and learn more about the abundance of NYC wildlife!

The design process of the booth/tabling set (booklet, zine, and the greeting) can be applied to any green space through easy modification.

LEARNINGS

During the short time from 11 am to 3 pm, I'm grateful for people walking or jogging by and stop to ask what my work. I distributed 37 zines, more than 25 intro booklets in total, collected more than 10 stories. I received photos and stories, and of course, words that really from the bottom of the heart.

What I learned the most from this intervention is that it does work! Not only for people who join this time, but people around me, hearing me talking about urban wildlife again and again. The moment they start to notice the existence of wildlife is the moment I feel so proud.



**"...IN FACT, NOW I NOTICE
THAT THEY'RE ALL AROUND
ME AND IT FEELS STRANGE
TO REALIZE THIS FACT
UNTIL NOW!"**

**"THOSE ANIMALS SAVED MY
LIFE DURING COVID."**

"I LOVE YOUR VIBE!"

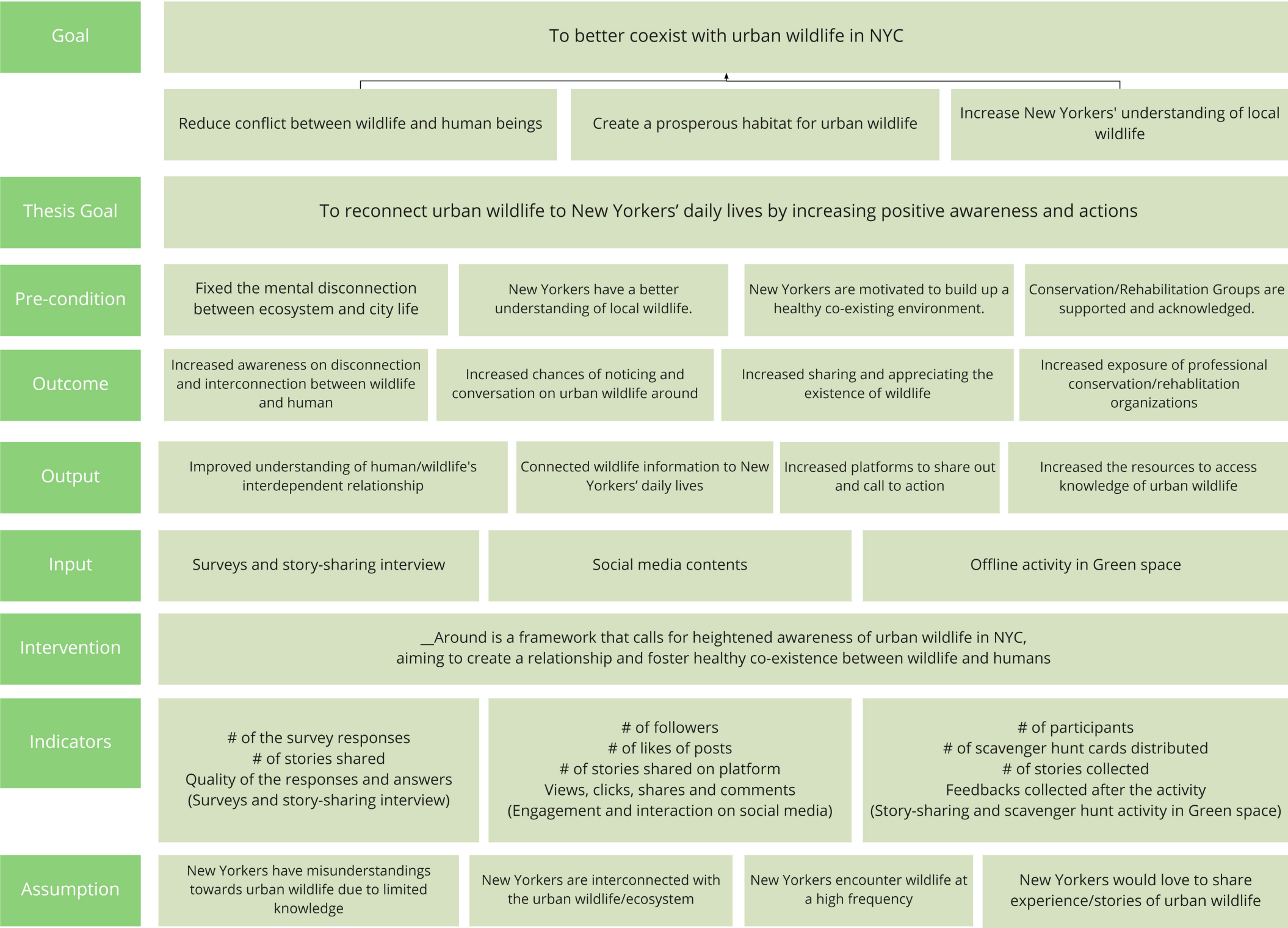
**"I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT
WILL HAPPEN TO THESE
FLUFFY BALLS AFTER THE
PARK'S CLOSURE."**

**"WHERE CAN I FIND
ANOTHER PLACE TO HEAR
THESE BIRD CHIRPS?"**

**"I FOUND ALL OF THEM
EXCEPT THESE TWO BIRDS!
I WONDER WHY CAN'T I
FIND THEM. IS IT
BECAUSE...?"**

CONCLUSION

THEORY OF CHANGE



TOC NARRATIVES

BACKGROUND

In 2020, nearly 8.5 million New Yorkers shared their streets, backyards, waterfront, parks, etc., with more than 600 species of wild animals. By 2050, there'll be more population living in this place designed as human-created habitats, but the city's 30,000 acres of parklands are prime real estate for wildlife in search of food, shelter, and places to raise their families. While hundreds of different wildlife species call New York City home, humans have a greater chance of encountering certain wildlife species than others. However, they lack common knowledge of this undervalued part of the ecosystem. Whether it is a deer wandering across the road or a raccoon looking for something to eat, the possibility of a wildlife encounter exists every day and around every corner.

PROBLEM

New Yorkers' life depends on urban wildlife, and they encounter wildlife very often. However, they pay little attention to wildlife and have misunderstandings towards urban wildlife due to limited knowledge. There is a gap between people who dedicated their lives to protect urban biodiversity and people who merely want to admire the cuteness of wildlife. Professional knowledge and correct messages are not fully communicated to citizens, yet all the New Yorkers can directly encounter wildlife.

ASSUMPTION

New Yorkers encounter wildlife at a high frequency.
New Yorkers don't acknowledge the abundance of urban wildlife around them.
New Yorkers have misunderstandings towards urban wildlife due to limited knowledge.
New Yorkers pay little attention to the urban ecosystem and its functions.

GOAL

The high-level goal of this project is to better coexist with urban wildlife in NYC. My thesis goal is to create a framework that reconnects urban wildlife to New Yorkers' daily lives by increasing positive awareness and actions. This TOC proposes three preconditions that, if met, would drive increased New Yorker citizens' positive awareness and action towards urban wildlife.

1. Fixed the mental disconnection between urban ecosystem and city life
2. New Yorkers have a better understanding of local wildlife, and they're motivated to build up a healthy co-existing environment
3. Conservation/Rehabilitation Groups are more supported and acknowledged.

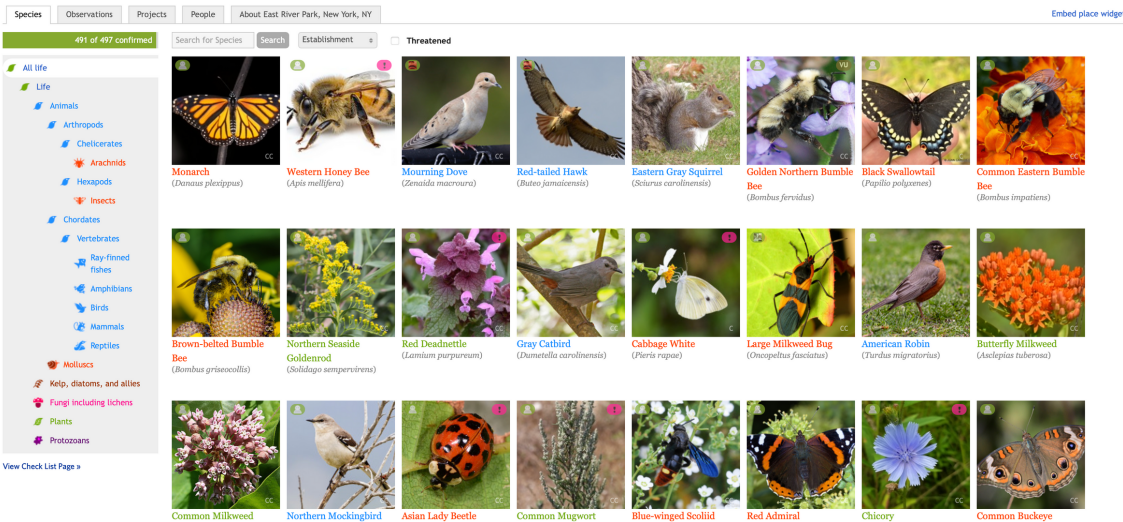
Addressing the first precondition is potentially the most challenging. It requires strategies to fix the mental disconnection and remind New Yorkers of the abundance of urban wildlife around them. The second one is about building motivation for better coexisting with wildlife, to dispel the misunderstanding and ignorance of the importance of human-wildlife relationship, which is the main rooted cause of why people can relate themselves to the whole ecosystem. The third precondition is to increase more accessibility for citizens to learn more and find solutions to encountering wildlife, especially for my partner, Urban Utopia Wildlife Rehabilitation inc. (They're providing amazing go-to messages for New Yorkers and a platform to gather rehabbers and educators!) This problem will address this through the co-created contents of social media posts and booklets distributed during offline activities.

INTERVENTION

The intervention is ____ Around, a framework that calls for heightened awareness of urban wildlife in NYC, aiming to create a relationship and foster healthy coexistence between wildlife and humans. Currently, the framework contains three different parts: social media platforms create a space for people who have the same goal and passion for a healthy urban ecosystem. The structure of posts is stories of encounters + data visualization + conservation/rehabilitation group guide. Posts include fact sheets, some bios of wildlife, and stories of wildlife photography. Photo Gathering and Scavenger hunt game designed for specific space and the offline activity booth, an engaging activity that reconnects people to wildlife in the neighborhood of different green spaces.

FUTURE GROWTH

Use the database of iNaturalist website to apply this framework to different green spaces



Corporate with artists and photographers on Instagram to generate more appealing contents

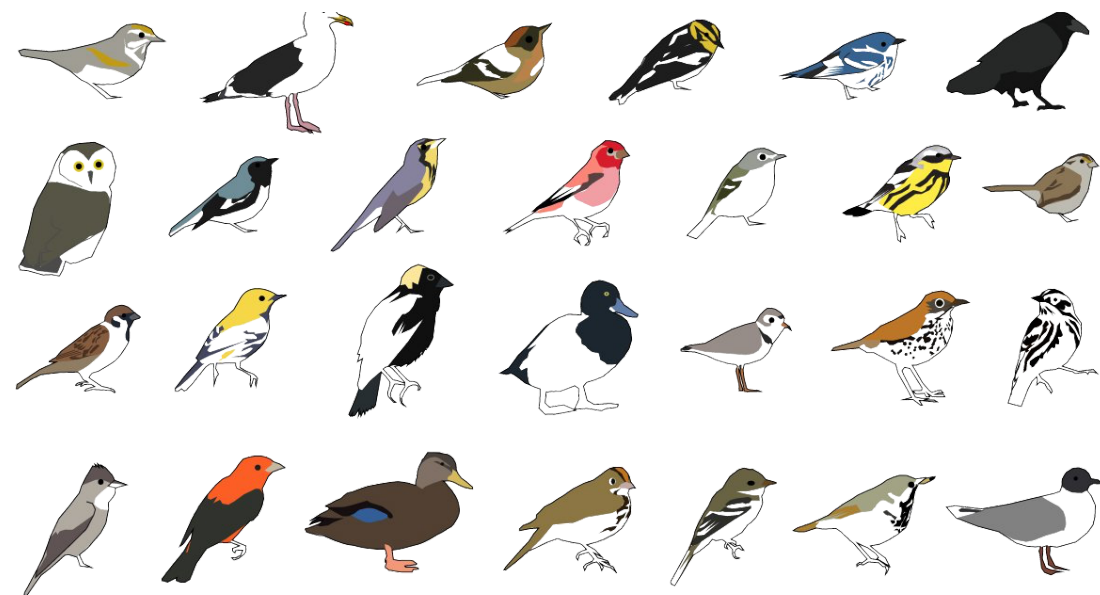


Illustration of New York Birds by Clarisa Diaz

So you may know now I have a passion for animals, and indeed, when I made my inspiration mood board, I immediately did something against wildlife hunting and fur using. But in the end, my thesis topic is to better coexist with urban wildlife by raising awareness and educating New Yorkers about the rich diversity of the city's nature and how to help it thrive.

Before coming to New York and learning more about social design appliances in every area, I have obsessed with cats. On the street, I take pictures of them at friends' homes, searching online to capture a glimpse of their beauty. My phone storage had already been taken up when I realized it.

After coming to DSI, I was lucky to do my disruptive project of nature. This project is about how nature would improve both physical and mental health for stressed workers in NYC. We designed different prototypes to integrate nature into New Yorker's daily life, their existing environment, and schedule.

At that time, I felt not only cats but also other beautiful, cunning, gracious, curious, unhurried, fantastic, wonderful creatures are so lovely. I don't want to observe them through the fence or behind the glass in the zoo. Soon I conducted a survey and have intercepted people in the park or on the street and realized that we passed by. We took the photos we shared on social media, but we never pay enough attention to those creatures around us.

Therefore, all the above is about urban wildlife and human relationships, which is the core problem. City, whatever city, initially is designed as human-created habitats. But a city will never shut its door to animals, and there's a whole ecosystem that exists. There are always conflicts between wildlife and human beings, and if people know more about them, the problem can be solved little by little.

As a designer, I want to argue for the application of design to benefit all species. My thesis approach now is more "nature-centered design," taking into account the needs of humans along with the needs of nature. I hope my thesis will shift the perspective from egocentric to biocentric, ultimately helping to envision and create a sustainable and more environmental future.

SPECIAL THANKS

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SHERRIE SHAO

Best co-prototyper in 2021!

2021 COHORT

We survived online classes together!

MY PARENT

Thank MOM and DAD for all the love and encouragement!



____ **AROUND**

INS: @URBAN____AROUND

EMAIL: JBA02@SVA.EDU

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