



Wave Hill **A public garden & cultural center**

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## ***Wave Hill's Spring Exhibition Explores Birds and Their Habitat***

***Avifauna: Birds + Habitat, April 7–June 24***

Bronx, NY, March 22, 2018— New York City provides a wide array of habitats for birds. Numerous species of birds migrate along the Hudson River or make Wave Hill's gardens and woodlands their home. This spring, we highlight the avian inhabitants of Wave Hill's landscape in ***Avifauna: Birds + Habitat***, an exhibition in Wave Hill's **Glyndor Gallery**. Diverse nature and other programs will enrich the experience of the exhibition and the gardens all season long. The photography, video, artist books, wall painting, installation, drawing and sound in the show delve into the dynamic interplay between birds and their habitats, from birdsong to the ways that human interaction with the natural and built environment affect migration patterns.

Artists in the show are **Tatiana Arocha**, **Tanya Chaly**, **Marna Chester**, **Nina Katchadourian**, **Paula McCartney**, **Jeff Mertz**, **Peter Morgan**, **Sarah Nicholls**, **James Prosek**, **Jenna Spevack** and **Fred Tomaselli**. Many are avid birders; several have participated in bird walks led by naturalist and artist **Gabriel Willow**, whose monthly bird walks at Wave Hill give a sense of Wave Hill's habitat and avian life.

Some work in the exhibition is tied directly to Wave Hill's habitat and the views from the gallery's windows. On the walls facing the Hudson River, **James Prosek's** wall painting uses a silhouette technique reminiscent of that found in birding guides, referencing both resident and migratory species with an emphasis on spring warblers. **Marna Chester** focuses on the interdependence of birds and habitat, using compost and natural materials found at Wave Hill to create three frames—exploring natural habitat, the built environment and birds and their migration patterns. Peter Morgan populates the galleries with colorful, larger-than-life, ceramic



*James Prosek, Study for Spring at Wave Hill, 2018.  
Courtesy of the artist and Singer/Wajahat, New York City.*



*Tatiana Arocha, Perpetual Flight, 2016 – ongoing,  
digital painting and collage printed on paper wheat  
pasted onto MDF with gold acrylic paint. Courtesy of  
the artist.*

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sculptures of birds found in the region, including the double-crested cormorant, barn swallow and northern flicker.

Video and sound are important components of two projects developed for the exhibition. **Jeff Mertz** and his team underscore NYC's diverse and thriving ecology with an installation that includes a two-channel video by Mertz and a stereo-sound environment comprising a score composed, recorded and mixed by Finnegan Shanahan and performed by Shanahan (guitar and vocals), Robby Bowen (percussion and vocals) and Mertz (vocals). *Wind on the Wing*, **Jenna Spevack**'s new audio installation in a window in the North Gallery samples birdsongs commonly heard in the Bronx. Wind-driven pinwheels installed outside the windowpane power and define the sound.

Some works explore the effects of a changing climate on avian populations. **Tatiana Arocha**'s work is rooted in her relationship to her native Columbian landscape, with particular concern about its vulnerable rainforests. Using a digital-painting process that references old engravings and depicts birds in context, she locates a number of "tropical" birds in the trees surrounding Glyndor Gallery, evoking changing migration patterns. **Tanya Chaly** has mined naturalist Eugene Bicknell's historical records of the Riverdale neighborhood. Bicknell's Thrush, now range-restricted, is the focus of *The Future is History*, a new drawing installation created for the show. Rendered in graphite and colored pencil on parchment, the drawings are presented in a Victorian-style oval frame under context glass, enhancing their character as specimens.

Artists also share an interest in the triangulation between humans, birds and their habitats. Returning artist **Fred Tomaselli** exhibits both a recent (2017) and an earlier (1994) work celebrating the parallel reality of birds that becomes apparent when one starts observing them through binoculars. The artist was introduced to birding by his brother in the early 1990's; and has frequently depicted birds ever since. **Nina Katchadourian**'s photograph *Too Late*, one of her "uninvited collaborations with nature," can be read as a warning—or perhaps a sly dig—concerning anthropomorphic interpretations of nature. In 2006, Katchadourian created *Please, Please, Pleased to Meet'cha*, an outdoor installation at Wave Hill that stemmed from her interest in the elusive ways we describe birdsong. **Paula McCartney** creates idealized landscapes through photography. In her *Bird Watching* series, she places craft-store songbirds in the landscape, creating a novel environmental



*Fred Tomaselli, Untitled (For Laura), 2017, photo collage, acrylic and gouache on paper. Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY.*



*Tanya Chaly, Nature's Syntax (Superb Fairy Wren With Habitat Fragmentation Maps), 2018, graphite, colored pencil and punctured drawing on parchment. Courtesy of the artist.*

experience that questions what is natural and what is fabricated. **Sarah Nicholls** has created a new limited-edition pamphlet focusing on the adaptation and survival tactics of urban birds, specifically the rock pigeon, red-tailed hawk and European starling. Her broadsides pair bold drawings and texts with a true desire to report.

Artists and curators will be available to discuss the exhibition at **Gallery Drop-Ins** Saturday and Sunday, May 19 and 20, from 2 to 4PM, on **Feathers and Flora Weekend**, when naturalists, artists, educators and other experts will inform and enlighten about the amazing diversity of plants and animals surrounding us. Children ages 8 and older are welcome with an adult. A listing of other bird-related programs offered this spring may be found at <https://www.wavehill.org/events/categories/birds/>.

*Avifauna: Birds + Habitat is organized by Wave Hill's curatorial team, **Jennifer McGregor, Eileen Jeng Lynch and Natika Soward**, with valued advice and guidance from naturalist and artist Gabriel Willow. Willow's work is on view in *Ecolgiac: Missing Birds of NYC*, in Wave Hill House.*

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