

Most everyone who loves birds and the natural world remembers their spark moment—a moment when an encounter with nature sets in motion a lifetime of passion and joy.

For me it was a spark day decades ago—a summertime ramble with my husband through coastal impoundments at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, with binoculars and a field guide borrowed from a generous friend. There were birds everywhere. Hundreds upon hundreds of terns, gulls, sandpipers, and dozens I couldn't name at the time, flying and feeding at close range, seemingly inviting us into their realm.

Sadly, this experience of abundance that helped spark my love of the natural world is harder to come by today. As the loss of 3 billion birds in North America shows, the Earth is losing its biodiversity losing both the richness and the abundance of life that signal the health of the planet.

The urgency and scale of the loss of biodiversity can seem daunting, but it's also motivating. This year, we've made technological leaps in the sound identification capabilities of Merlin and BirdNET and in our understanding of bird migration through BirdCast Migration Dashboard. It all adds up to inspiring people from all walks of life to come together to be a part of the solution to the biodiversity crisis.

Four key strategies guide our efforts to reverse the declining curve of birds and biodiversity and amplify the impact of each individual who connects with nature through the Cornell Lab. Together, we're:

- using the results of science to inform and guide actions that benefit biodiversity.
- that are just now becoming possible.
- fostering an interdisciplinary approach by bringing together scientists and other professionals from diverse backgrounds to collaborate in myriad ways.
- biodiversity.

Central to all of this is you. Your support and participation make our work possible, strengthening the available scientific knowledge, expanding our ability to work globally, and helping train the science and conservation leaders of tomorrow.

The Cornell Lab has a world's-eye view of birds—and birds are sounding the alarm. Thank you for helping us spark a global movement to protect the future of birds and biodiversity.

SPARKING Action E CUR

- developing innovative technology so people can see, hear, and study the natural world in ways
- engaging people from around the world to learn about, record, and take action to help birds and

Linda R. Macaulay

Linda Macaulay Chair, Board of Directors Cornell Lab of Ornithology

SCIENCE TO ACTION

Producing groundbreaking science and technologies are only part of the equation for addressing the threats facing wildlife. It's important to get Lab resources —from eBird to BirdCast to Raven—into the hands of the people who need them. We're therefore working to share our science and tools with researchers, conservationists, communities, and policy-makers to better inform decision-making that benefits the natural world.

SOLVING MIGRATION MYSTERIES

Scientists at BirdCast are advancing the field of aeroecology, using weather radar to answer broad questions about the nighttime journeys of billions of birds. Now they're homing in on the details—where, when, and how many birds undertake their grand migrations in the spring and fall.

This spring, BirdCast released a free tool that allows anyone in the contiguous U.S. to track the birds flying over their own county or state in near real-time, and in detail: the number of birds, the direction they're traveling, and their average speed and altitude. What's more, eBird data helps predict which species are most likely to be winging their way above your head on a given night.

Knowing the who, where, and when of migration allows scientists to answer questions like: What are the best nights for turning off lights to prevent building collisions? And how have migration patterns changed over time? By sharing the tools to gather this information, and by working with partners around the country in key migration corridors, we're sparking action in all the places that can help birds most.

BirdCast took to the airwaves during spring migration 2022. A meteorologist with WTSP in Tampa Bay, Florida, presented migration forecast maps on the evening news.

Yellow-breasted Chat by Tom Johnson

During our Spring NatureFest, we were able to share with [hundreds of] guests that over 2,385,300 birds had crossed our county the previous night -mind-blowing and educational for our park visitors!

—Laura Cook, Bird Research Coordinator, Warner Park Nature Center, Nashville, Tennessee



SCALING UP BIRD CONSERVATION

More than 1,400 land trusts across the U.S. protect nearly 100,000 square miles of land—an area the size of Wyoming. Since 2017, the Cornell Lab's Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative (LTBCI) has awarded \$734,000 to 58 projects that impact more than a half-million acres across 25 states.

Five years into the project, the LTBCI connects with even more of these local conservation allies through work with regional conservation collaboratives. One of these is Ag Allies, which brings together land trusts, local preserves, landowners, and farmers in central and southern Maine to preserve grassland habitat for at-risk species across the region.

In 2020, the LTBCI awarded Ag Allies a grant that enabled "a bare-bones operation to bloom" into an effective regional effort, according to Laura Lecker, who manages the program. "The Cornell Lab's funds, expertise, and network helped us connect with people who manage significant grasslands within the land-trust community."

Through community walks, workshops, and incentive programs, Ag Allies is helping landowners throughout the state protect and increase habitat for birds, with tangible results. For example, fields enrolled in the program in 2021 enabled the successful fledging of thousands of birds, including 1,450 Bobolinks and 590 Savannah Sparrows.

> As of 2022, landowners have enrolled more than 1,400 acres in the Ag Allies program. The group works with 14 land trusts and more than 50 landowners across central and southern Maine to improve bird habitat.





The Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative works in 25 states helping leaders prioritize lands for conservation, monitor birds, manage and restore habitats, and reach out to communities.

Savannah Sparrow by Jennifer Brockway

SCIENCE TO ACTION



Helping States Get RAWA-Ready

If the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) passes, it will trigger a windfall for state wildlife conservation-and require all 50 states to update their State Wildlife Action Plans.

In July, state and federal wildlife agency representatives attended a webinar on using eBird Status and Trends to help guide these updates. A brand-new website now allows state agencies to download finegrained information for any bird species in their state, including abundance maps that capture key breeding, wintering, and migration areas, plus population trend summaries. This unprecedented access to the very latest bird data through Status and Trends will allow agency leaders to make the best possible conservation decisions for the new funds that the act would make available.

CHANGING THE WORLD BY **OPENING HEARTS AND MINDS**

To bend the curve of declining biodiversity in a positive direction, the Cornell Lab works at scales that impact entire ecosystems. Once such ecosystem is the alpine forests of the western U.S., where the whitebark pine thrives at high elevations as few other species can.

However, disease, forest pests, and changing vegetation are rapidly turning

these once lush forests of green into ghostly graveyards of gray (see story, p. 28). This grim transformation puts the landscape in double jeopardy by also threatening the Clark's Nutcracker, the bird that serves as the whitebark's primary seed disperser.

These intertwined and troubled species are the subjects of a new film from the Cornell Lab's Center for Conservation Media that aims to catalyze action across the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Hope and Restoration: Saving the Whitebark Pine depicts the dire reality of whitebark pine decline while highlighting the human commitment at the core of the plan

The value of Hope and *Restoration* cannot be overstated. The film lends the whitebark pine restoration effort an unprecedented and comprehensive set of stunning visuals of a species that most Americans will never get to witness in person.

—Brian Kittler, VP of Forest Restoration, American Forests

to protect and restore this iconic landscape. Produced in partnership with the Ricketts Conservation Foundation, the film is a key component of an awareness campaign aimed at the local communities, government agencies, and nonprofits that are working together to make this immense project a reality.

The Center for Conservation Media's award-winning films help conservation leaders and partners broaden the impact and reach of landscape-scale work, such as the efforts by the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Restoration Foundation and American Forests to protect and restore the whitebark pine forests of the western U.S. states.

To read more about this project and watch the film, see "A BFF Recovery Strategy," page 28.

al diffusion in the second s **A GROWING NETWORK OF PROBLEM-SOLVERS**



Two dozen Coastal Solutions fellows are now spread throughout Latin America engaging in projects that directly benefit the birds that use the Pacific Americas Flyway. Read about all 24 projects at:

globally important region at risk.

Ariadna Isabel Araúz Ponce, an urban planner who earned a Coastal Solutions Fellowship in 2021, and waters.

www.solucionescosteras.org/en/fellows/.

Eighty percent of the millions of shorebirds that migrate between the Arctic and southern South America each year rely on the wetlands in and around Panama Bay. A diversity of habitats—estuaries, mangroves, and forests—also provide flood control and food for the millions of people who live near the coast. But rapid coastal development is putting this

This includes preventing sprawl by putting new projects in areas within the urban core, and ensuring that new construction includes permeable surfaces, biofilters, and other techniques that protect the surrounding natural areas from harmful runoff.

To make this happen, Araúz Ponce is building public- and private-sector

It's hard for people to see the danger, hard for them to imagine what could happen. For now, the risk is invisible.

partnerships to focus attention on the nature that surrounds and weaves through the city, and to instill a sense of urgency about

<u>—Ariadna Isabel A</u>raúz Ponce

is leading the effort to green the infrastructure of this bustling coastal city so it improves rather than harms the health of the surrounding lands

Her goal is to push the booming real estate sector in the region to adopt nature-based solutions going forward.

the threats of poorly planned development and rising sea levels that could put the entire region at risk. Her team also is working on creating incentives that will demonstrate what is possible when people have both the information and the resources to undertake nature-friendly urban planning.

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

Since developing the world's first bird-sound-recording device 90 years ago, the Cornell Lab has been committed to technology and innovation that support discovery. Today we are decoding the sounds of the natural world—from apps that can identify bird songs, to recorders that can reveal the soundscapes of an entire ecosystem. By combining our expertise in the biological world with world-leading big-data analyses and machine learning, we are expanding the scope and scale of what's possible in conservation.

SOUND PLANNING FOR A NEW CITY

How do you create a new city while minimizing impacts to the communities already living in the area?

Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, is sinking into the sea. With a population of over 10 million, Jakarta is a hub of economic and social activity in the region. But the city is rapidly losing livable land due to sea-level rise and subsidence. Indonesia's central government is in the first stages of relocating the capital to East Kalimantan on Borneo, in an area rich in both biological and cultural diversity—including endangered Irrawaddy dolphins, orangutans, over 600 species of birds, and dozens of human communities.

To understand the impacts, a team of biological and social scientistsincluding Cornell Lab Postdoctoral Fellow Wendy Erb-was awarded a grant from Cornell University's Migrations Global Grand Challenge to help local communities prepare for the migration. The team will work collaboratively to set up acoustic monitoring across the region to better understand both the ecological and the cultural effects of the new urban center. This will include training for local residents so they can eventually lead the monitoring and analysis efforts.

Scaling Up **Acoustic Monitoring**

Thanks to the work of scientists in the K. Lisa Yang Center for Conservation Bioacoustics, the Sierra Nevada region now hosts one of the largest passive acoustic wildlife-monitoring arrays in the world.

What started as a project to monitor California Spotted Owls and Barred Owls has blossomed into a complex operation that demonstrates the possibilities of passive acoustic monitoring when done at scale. Nearly 2,000 autonomous recording units are now spread throughout the Sierra Nevada, an area encompassing 7,000 square miles. Using a custom version of the citizen-science-powered soundanalysis algorithm BirdNET, this array continuously detects and identifies virtually every bird species in the region, plus a host of other kinds of animals.

The array records over a million hours of soundscape every summer and has opened up a world of research possibilities. Research associate Connor Wood currently leads a project that uses the array to compare sounds in the landscape from before and after two of the largest fires in California history. Wood also is collaborating with biologists from other fields to utilize the power of the array and BirdNET beyond the avian world. Now underway: a project to monitor gray wolves, which naturally recolonized the area nearly a century after they were wiped out, and another to detect populations of the endangered Yosemite toad.





The latest devices being installed in the Sierra Nevada can give real-time feedback to researchers via text messages and audio clips. Previously the data were only accessible via a data card that had to be retrieved from each recorder.

Images courtesy Connor Wood

Merlin Is Surging

Since 2014, Lab staff have worked continually to improve ID, with the goal of making birds and birding accessible anywhere. Merlin now covers more than 90% of the work across 223 countries and is available in over a dozen lang

In summer 2021, Merlin took a quantum leap forward with the addition of Sound ID, identifying singing birds in real time in the U.S. and Canada. Throughout spring and summer 2022, more than 3 million people opened Merlin to identify birds, and the number of daily users tripled compared to the previous year.

The latest version of Sound ID can identify the calls of 685 species, including more than 250 European species. Sound ID for India, Mexico, and the entire Neotropics is in the works. Your support, and the tireless efforts of dozens of international partners, allows us to continue to offer this indispensable app for free to birdwatchers around the world.

"This model of conservation recognizes people are important to any conservation initiative—people are part of the ecosystem," says Erb. "By working with communities, giving them the tools of science, which are the tools of policy, people are empowered to monitor places that are culturally and environmentally important to them."

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INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE

We bring together scientists with a diversity of perspectives to practice alongside artists, data scientists, engineers, and archivists. Using this interdisciplinary, tech-forward approach we train and equip the next generation of science leaders.



Photo by Tim Briggs/NH Sea Gran

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING GRANTS PAVE THE WAY FOR FUTURE PROFESSIONALS

Since 2020, more than 80 students have enhanced their learning experience and sharpened valuable skills through Experiential Learning Grants. These grants give Cornell undergraduates the opportunity to receive hands-on training and mentorship from professionals working in diverse fields, elevating their ability to make a difference for birds and the natural world.

Climate change is altering ocean temperatures and habitat, with consequences for forage fish, such as herring, and the birds that feed on them. Grace Guo ('25) spent much of last year reviewing hundreds of hours of film of Common and Roseate Terns nesting at the Shoals Marine Lab in New Hampshire as they brought fish to their nestlings. Under the guidance of postdoctoral fellow Gemma Clucas, Guo recorded prey species, feeding rates, and other facets of tern behavior. This summer she learned how to separate and analyze DNA from fecal samples to help develop a detailed picture of how these birds' diets are changing with warming waters. This summer she built on that experience by traveling to Shoals Marine Lab to collect more samples for this multi-year project.



Photo by Theresa Rizza

I loved learning all of these new techniques, but what really excited me was the application of the knowledge.... Results of this project will become a part of reports that fisheries managers will use to help maintain forage fish populations as oceans warm.

—Grace Guo, '25

A SCORECARD FOR SAVING THE PLANET

Our planet, our society, and all living species depend on biodiversity and environmental health. But most regions and countries across the globe lack the funds to sustain national biodiversity monitoring efforts. In the past decade, the potential of citizen-science programs to paint a detailed picture of ecosystem health has grown exponentially.

Courtney Davis, a former Rose Postdoctoral Fellow who became a full-time research associate with the Cornell Lab in 2022, is working with researchers at Cornell's Institute for Computational Sustainability to develop the Biodiversity Progress Index (BPI), a new tool that uses cutting-edge big-data analysis to measure species richness at unprecedented levels of detail. The BPI is made possible in part by millions of citizen-science observations in eBird.

The BPI shows community completeness—a measure of how many species are actually present given how many species should be there using an easily understood, 1–100 scale. Community completeness is the most accurate metric for assessing how bird diversity is affected by environmental restoration and conservation efforts, providing clear feedback and direction for planners and policy-makers to steer societies toward a healthier world.

Rufous-capped Warbler by Isaias Morataya/Macaulay Library

WHERE ART AND SCIENCE HELP EACH OTHER THRIVE



A sampling of students' final projects for the undergraduate course The Art and Science of Birds.

Through the Bartels Science Illustration Residency, the Cornell Lab has welcomed more than 30 early-career professional artists over the past two decades. Each illustrator has an opportunity to expand their skills and gain valuable experience while working on dedicated projects that create impactful media for Lab programs, research, and publications.

A suite of courses known as Ars Aviaria embeds artistic training into classes where students explore science and art in tandem. Bartels alumna and Cornell Lab illustrator Jillian Ditner designed and teaches the flagship undergraduate course, *The Art and Science of Birds*. Students work with current Bartels Illustrators, who in turn gain valuable teaching experience as instructors.

Performance evaluation of all coffee farms in Costa Rica using the BPI metric of community completeness.



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Anyone who has ever loved a field quide knows that without visual representations of our natural world, our understanding would suffer.

—John Fitzpatrick, Director Emeritus, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

PEOPLE POWER

Every time you go outside and see or hear a bird is a moment of wonder and discovery. But those moments mean even more thanks to the power of eBird, Merlin, and the Macaulay Library. Every bird observation, photograph, or sound recording submitted through eBird enhances the scientific value and global reach of these free resources, used by millions of recreational birdwatchers and researchers alike

What Good Is One Person's **Bird Observation?**

Tiny Hawk by Jean Bonilla/Macaulay Library

Photos and audio clips uploaded to the Macaulay Library via an eBird submission improve the Merlin identification algorithms. Every new piece of media—from a professional-quality photo to a smartphone recording—adds to Merlin's understanding of the variations in species appearance and vocalizations and allows Merlin to identify birds with even greater accuracy.

Your observations become part of a global database that drives

science and conservation: By combining your observations with highresolution satellite imagery and using the power of statistical modeling and machine learning, we build state-of-the-art visualizations of bird abundance and distribution that we call eBird Status and Trends. The extraordinary results improve our understanding of bird biology and migration ecology, and guide conservation actions.

Your observations contribute to groundbreaking research: Hundreds of scientific studies that inform our understanding of everything from bird migration to endangered species conservation have used eBird data. Recently, researchers used eBird data to confirm important locations for endangered vultures in Ethiopia, and discovered that only one-fifth of vulture priority areas are currently protectedfindings that can help inform decisions to protect more land.

Merlin

Your observations make Merlin smarter: Along with the app's groundbreaking Sound ID and Photo ID features, Merlin also synthesizes local eBird observations to learn which species you are most likely to encounter. With identification help for over 90% of the world's birds, translated into over a dozen languages, Merlin continues to make it easier to identify and connect with birds wherever you are.

Your observations lead to answers about the *natural world:* The vast trove of photos and recordings collected by sound recordists and photographers has made it possible for researchers to make new and sometimes surprising discoveries about bird biology. Until last year, the diet of the Tiny Hawka petite, hard-to-find raptor in Central and South America—remained poorly understood. Ornithologists pored over hundreds of photos in the Macaulay Library and found that Tiny Hawks consume a wide range of small bird species, not just hummingbirds as was previously thought.

The Macaulay Library's sound recordings have also proved instrumental to new scientific discoveries. It was long suspected that the Rufous Antpitta, a resident of Andean forests, was more than one species. Despite visual similarities, observers noted that antpittas in different mountain ranges sounded different. Ornithologists analyzed song recordings in the Macaulay Library to confirm that what was once known as the Rufous Antpitta is actually 16 different species!

Your observations enhance useful resources like Birds of the World:

Media submitted by eBird users help the world's most comprehensive bird information resource fulfill its mission: to tell every bird's story. We are continually improving Birds of the World by adding beautiful photos and pristine recordings from the Macaulay Library, and improving the range maps for the 10,824 species accounts, so that researchers and students around the world have the latest and best information for any species in the world.

Your observations help Merlin improve its IDs:

PEOPLE POWER

What does it take to rally millions of people around birds and nature? One way is to help people learn about the natural world. Our globe-spanning, people-centered programs help grow the ranks of bird lovers and people who care about protecting the natural world. Tens of millions of people have engaged with the Lab's programs, projects, and people, and the ranks are growing.



Margaret Castillo/Great Backyard Bird Count





Great Backyard Bird Count: The GBBC is a globally accessible entry point for people around the world to deepen their involvement with birds and the Cornell Lab. Some 386,000 people from 192 countries participated in the 2022 GBBC in February.



NestWatch: NestWatch participants monitored more than 31,000 nests for science in 2021. The NestWatch team also digitized tens of thousands of historic nest records, which are being added to its openaccess database. This long-running dataset, driven by thousands of volunteers, enables the research community to ask new and meaningful questions about nesting birds.



FeederWatch: Over 15,000 people in the U.S. counted nearly 9.5 million birds during the 2021–2022 FeederWatch season, including, for the first time, people without bird feeders. The new protocol will enable researchers to better assess how feeders impact bird communities on a continental scale.



Bird Academy: Bird Academy's online courses have enabled hundreds of thousands of people to plug into and learn from the Lab's deep and broad expertise. This spring Bird Academy released its first Spanishlanguage offering, *Fundamentos de eBird (eBird Essentials)*, a free course that will be used to support outreach and research efforts across Latin America.

Bird Cams for Science

Last year, Bird Cams were viewed 5 million times as people around the world tuned in for intimate views of birds in nests and at feeders. Starting in 2018 and running through 2021, Bird Cams was funded by the National Science Foundation to enable an even deeper experience for cam watchers, creating a virtual space called Bird Cams Lab that hosted six co-created scientific investigations.

Bird Cams Lab reached more than 16,000 people, with approximately 4,000 participants collaborating in one or more phases of a scientific investigation using Bird Cams livestreamed and recorded footage—from developing research questions, to data collection and analyses, to publication online. Results showed that these 4,000 participants ended the project with increased bird knowledge, increased understanding of the scientific process, and greater confidence in their own ability to contribute to scientific research. These results point to future opportunities to work with the millions-strong Bird Cams audience to contribute to scientific research in new ways, and to help cam viewers develop observation and communication skills.



Mini-Grants + Workshops Help Local Organizatons

In addition to the millions of people who turn to our programs and online resources, Celebrate Urban Birds works directly with communities throughout the Western Hemisphere. Last year the Tom Cade Memorial Fund awarded 32 mini-grants to local conservation and education organizations in 15 countries and 3 U.S. states, helping 14,500 people enhance their appreciation of and investment in the natural world.

The Rio Grande Valley is a destination for birders from across the U.S., yet many of the residents living in the area do not know about the unique character of the region as a migration route for birds. Minigrant awardee Proyecto Juan Diego, a community-based organization in Brownsville, Texas, worked with local youth to make art inspired by their local avian life, and with senior citizens to reflect on memories and experiences with birds. Both groups also engaged in group "birdnoticing" and learning to identify the birds around them.



Most people who birdwatch in this area are from out of town. This project seeks to educate...the youth and senior citizens about the birds in their own communities. The arts allow for both groups to express the Mexican culture through the visual arts and the Spanish language.



Photo by Charlein Gracia

FREE RESOURCES

For more than 100 years the Cornell Lab has been committed to the idea of feeding the innate fascination and connection that people have with birds. Your support is key to sustaining our free online resources, which help some 35 million deepen that connection.

We've seen how one bird, at one moment on a single day in a single place, can help spark a person's connection with nature. With a world of free resources and friendly expertise, we help nurture a love of birds that spreads throughout the world, helping countless individuals become voices in their communities advocating for science, nature, and conservation.

This past year, 24 million people used our free All About Birds website, and bird lovers ticked off more than 6 million hours of bird observations via Bird Cams. Merlin now has over 1.1 million active users, and

Birds of the World, the most comprehensive resource for bird information ever created, reaches 600 academic and scientific institutions. It all adds up to more people having the chance to fall in love with birds and to understand the value of a deep connection with the natural world.



FINANCIAL REPORT

2022 FISCAL YEAR: JULY 1, 2021 TO JUNE 30, 2022

Thank you for supporting the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. In fiscal year 2022, thousands of members and donors provided more than 70% of our annual revenue, a total of \$30.8 million that expands our capacity to promote global conservation through research, education, and citizen science. As it was for many people and organizations, fiscal year 2022 was again unusual for the Lab: we saw an increase in charitable giving, combined with a minimal increase in expenses (in part driven by a tight labor market and continued reduction in travel due to the pandemic). As a result, the Lab ended the year with an uncommon surplus of funds. As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, this surplus will allow us to grow in strategic ways as quickly as possible in fiscal year 2023 and beyond, particularly given that the threats facing birds and biodiversity are immediate and significant. Thank you for making it possible for us to invest in our vital research, education, and conservation efforts.



SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS AND DONORS

We are deeply grateful to our more than 150,000 supporters at every level, all of whom make it possible for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to advance the understanding of nature and engage people of all ages in learning about birds and protecting the planet. We're also pleased to include a list of Sapsucker Woods Society members and honor and memorial tributes online at birds.cornell.edu/donors.

Belted Kingfisher by k bartels/Macaulay Library



Operating Revenue



If you have questions, comments, or requests for the Cornell Lab's membership and development team, please contact Bramble Klipple at 607-254-1105, bck42@cornell.edu, or Mary Guthrie at 607-254-2157, msg21@cornell.edu.

THANK YOU, SPONSORS!

Through these partnerships we reached out to new audiences to improve the understanding and protection of birds in backyards and around the world.

The Cornell Lab thanks these sponsors for their support in 2022.

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For information about partnership opportunities, contact Justin Cleveland, manager of corporate partnerships, at jbc258@cornell.edu.

CALL: 607-254-2471 EMAIL: labgifts@cornell.edu VISIT: birds.cornell.giftplans.org

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