



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Marine Park Alliance assists NYC Parks with a mission to provide cultural, environmental and volunteer programming in Marine Park for the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES



[Facebook.com/marineparkalliance](https://www.facebook.com/marineparkalliance)



[Instagram.com/marineparkalliance](https://www.instagram.com/marineparkalliance)

Marine Park Alliance Annual Report 2023

Dear Friends,

2023 was the year for Marine Park Alliance to open wide the lines of communication and listen to you. Columbia University's graduate students in Sustainability Management implemented an extensive user study on our behalf, which received 2,250 responses about the park and our programs. With stakeholder feedback followed by a new strategic plan, we were able to more confidently leverage new partnerships, collaborate with longstanding partners, secure additional resources, and advocate for Marine Park in 2023. This planning empowered us to add three influential members to our Board of Directors: Yamin Krumm whose entire family has been extremely active volunteering with us and the Boy Scouts; Adeel Rouf - one of the experts in the Columbia graduate cohort with an extensive background in business; and Margot Perron, who was the Marine Park Director for NYC Parks until she retired in 2022.

The growing board aims to build upon this year's work to further enhance the park experience for everyone, so keep an eye out for new programs, partnerships, and possibilities in 2024.

Please read on for highlights of Marine Park Alliance's programs in this report that recaps a year that concludes our first full decade as a nonprofit organization!



Sincerely,

Maria Carro-D'Alessandro
Chair

Stephanie Samaroo-Martinez
Vice Chair

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Marine Park Alliance programs served 3,258 people, an increase of 23% from the previous year. Many people giving feedback described the delight in being able to come together as a community to enjoy the park since the pandemic. Read on to learn of the many ways our programs brought people together.



WINTER SERIES

Heartwarming cultural activities helped beat weekend winter chills over the first few months of the year. For the **Lunar New Year** in January, Marine Park Alliance invited the Sunrise Glow Chinese Dancers and the Southern Mantis Lion Team to perform before a crowd of 275 people at the Carro Community Center. With standing room only, the popular program also featured activities such as crafting oriental lanterns, gifting traditional red envelopes for good luck, and tasting Lunar New Year treats.

In February, the Alliance introduced its very first program in celebration of **Black History Month**. Through the universal language of music, local Marine Park resident and renowned musician Ronnie Burrage shared the story of the Black struggle for civil rights in America through sound. Mr. Burrage, a professor at Brooklyn College, expertly guided his audience through jazz pieces from that turbulent era in the country's past.

Women's History Month in March brought an Academy Awards-themed event. Volunteer Kristy Di Cario hosted an insightful look into the real women whose lives inspired a number of films. NYC Councilwoman Mercedes Narcisse was in attendance and spoke about the need to continue the push for women's equity and equal pay. One of our most passionate supporters (and newest board member), Yamin Krumm, was honored for her service and dedication with the Rosemarie Carro Annual Woman of the Year Award.

When cold weather returned in November, local native Mark Chiusano shared excerpts from his book, "Marine Park," in **Author's Reading**, describing his experiences growing up in and around the park as well as his writing process.



NATURE WALKS

Results of the Columbia University user study showed that you wanted more guided opportunities to see and learn from live animals. In response, we expanded our collaborative introductory birding program with NYC Bird Alliance (formerly NYC Audubon) and engaged specialists familiar with other animals across the park. We offered two public walks with Gotham Bat Conservancy and learned of their study on Marine Park's bats; the retired Chief Naturalist from NYC Parks demonstrated how to catch and tag butterflies; the American Littoral Society led a walk in search of nesting diamondback terrapins; and NYS Department of Conservation provided rods and reels to teach fishing at Gerritsen Inlet.

Some of these introductory programs specifically encouraged citizen science. For example, we asked birders to document what they see in Marine Park on eBird.com, and introduced families to the Kansas University butterfly study and its Monarch Watch kits.



Photos:
Middle: William King
Bottom: Heidi Lopes

ENCOURAGING KIDS

All Marine Park Alliance programs are family-friendly and some are particularly geared for children. Inspiring children to enjoy the park is especially important to guarantee future generations of stewardship. A variety of leaders combine fun and learning for age-appropriate activities. Local educators, artists, musicians, firefighters and the Urban Park Rangers lent their respective expertise and talents to reach this critical audience.

Celebrations like *National Poem in Your Pocket Day* provide opportunities to engage youth and promote greenspace appreciation. In 2023 we challenged local students to write musings about Marine Park. They could write about their favorite places or activities in the park, or just a favorite plant or animal. The winning poem by fourth grader Sophia Hans of P.S. 249 was shared at the end of April on all of our social platforms and in our newsletter.

In its second year, the **Just for Kids** summer series offered a mix of returning events and engaging new experiences. Like in its inaugural year, events were held at two playgrounds. The series kicked off with *Rhythms & You*, led by percussionist Ronnie Burrage (who also led our Black History Month celebration), and on Father's Day, Gerritsen Beach Volunteer Firefighters gave children guidance in the proper care of minor injuries along with a tour of their new ambulance at *Daddy Does First Aid*.



At *Read a Book, Make a Book*, Gerritsen Beach Library's children's librarian Melissa McCarthy read aloud books teaching ways to respect the park, then kids made their own books about flowers. A new addition, *Looney Louie* brought to youngsters and adults with learning disabilities special magic and silliness in Playground 278. Fatima Sambo Schoenfelder, a new leader and author of *Dandelion's Wish*, shared her original story through puppetry of a dandelion exploring the world. Her beautifully designed puppets captivated a large audience, which was also invited to create their own puppets with Fatima after the show. Wrapping up the series, the Urban Park Rangers introduced a variety of live animals, including a diamondback terrapin, a praying mantis, and a walking stick at *Meet Your Animal Neighbors*. This was a great chance for children in attendance to become acquainted with small local fauna.

Patagonia sponsored our wintertime family workshop in their Brooklyn store – making sunprints with leaves, pine needles and doilies.



In partnership with NYS Assembly Member Jaime Williams, the Alliance was instrumental in two large-scale events for families in the summer and fall. Young children had a blast wiggling and jiggling their stuff to the lively tunes of the Fuzzy Lemons at an evening concert in the park, and at the *Autumn Festival* in October, families enjoyed playing games, strutting Halloween costumes, and picking pumpkins from the Carro Center lawn. We also engaged the *Bklyn Elite Jumpers* (a group returning from the 2022 Just for Kids lineup) to teach double Dutch jump roping to attendees. Fall leaf studies completed the excitement of this fall event.



FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Marine Park Alliance's signature year-end series, **Festival of Lights**, returned in 2023 with familiar seasonal favorites including a *Diwali* celebration, Santa in the Park, Astronomy on the Solstice, and a *Kwanzaa* celebration.

The series kicked off with a beautiful honoring of *Diwali* featuring prayers, vibrant traditional garb, traditional Diwali foods to sample and festive songs to mark the occasion.

Santa in the Park brought the magic of Christmas to Marine Park with the jolly old gent himself on hand to greet attendees and plenty of fun activities like craft-making for children and tasty Christmas treats to share with friends.



The Urban Park Rangers brought high-powered telescopes and their knowledge of the skies to *Astronomy on the Solstice*, just in time for the Geminid meteor shower. Families got to search for familiar constellations with a great chance to see a shooting star or two, and to spice up the evening a bit more, the Alliance provided glow-in-the-dark chalk for kids to make the ground as brilliant as the stars above.

Festival of Lights concluded with a fabulous *Kwanzaa* ceremony led by Professor Simanique Moody of Brooklyn College. Guests learned about the African community values integral to the holiday, lit a kinara, enjoyed musical performances with traditional African instruments, and listened to stories of the rich culture and traditions of Kwanzaa.



VOLUNTEERS & INTERNS

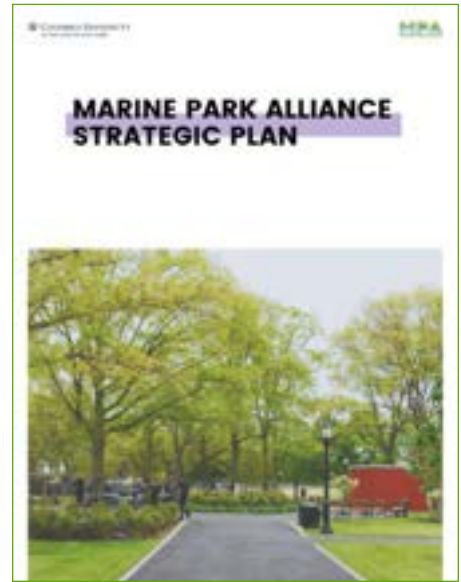
Before the Covid pandemic, New York Road Runners would send hundreds of volunteers to help clean the park; however, they were unable to organize volunteer events from 2020 to 2022. During the NYRR hiatus, high school students from across Brooklyn and local Boy Scout troops picked up the slack. By 2023 the Road Runners' volunteers returned, while the high school students continued to gain community service hours required for graduation. All three groups have proven themselves as some of the most stalwart stewards of the park.

Aside from participating in our cleanup sessions across the park, volunteers also helped out at many of our cultural events throughout the year. Two of them, long-time teenage volunteers with an interest in becoming more deeply involved with the Alliance, became our first high school interns. In this capacity, they helped with tasks such as tabling at events, processing surveys, and tracking statistics.



STRATEGIC PLAN

Just in time for our 10th anniversary, Alliance board members collaborated with graduate students from Columbia University's Sustainability Management Program to develop a five-year strategic plan. The keystone of this project was an extensive survey which collected critical data about park users' opinions of Marine Park and the Alliance's programs. It received over 2,250 responses which informed the recommendations that became core goals of the plan. Highlights of the plan, currently in progress, can be viewed in its entirety on the Marine Park Alliance website.



POSITIVE CHANGES FROM NYC PARKS

Garden Beds Revived

In 2023 Brooklyn Parks administration finally dedicated a supervisor to focus solely on Marine Park. Since the retirement of the former Park Director in 2022, rotating Park Supervisors pulled from other parks changed frequently, causing frustration. By 2023 a stable new Supervisor, Tamiko Vereen, was anchored just to Marine Park and has proven to be an exceptional gardener and leader. She has added trained gardening staff, reconstructed many of the timeworn garden beds and installed new ones. Her colorful flowers greet walkers daily on the paths, putting smiles on their faces.

Nature Center Re-Opens

Delightedly, the Salt Marsh Nature Center finally re-opened in spring of 2023 after two years of renovations. The building is a base of operations for the Urban Park Rangers and therefore plays an important role in facilitating public engagement with the natural areas of Marine Park.

Much-Needed Capital Project

The oval path across the street from the Nature Center had decaying asphalt that caused many trip hazards and mature tree roots had become severely constricted. This year a welcomed capital project started construction to fix these issues. With over \$10 million of government funding, the oval path is being replaced with an improved design. The first third of the oval nearest to the south parking lot is completed, and work has continued on to the western third near Stuart Avenue. The final third of the oval (the busiest part) will hopefully be completed by winter of 2024. Disruption is expected to take 1-3 years and the resulting smoother, safer paths will be well worth the wait. During the interim, we ask for your patience when certain entrances will be closed and detours required.

BOARD MEMBERS

Maria Carro-D'Alessandro, Founder & Chair

MIT National Land Services, LLC

Stephanie Samaroo-Martinez, Vice Chair & Treasurer

Gerard Napolitano, CPA, PC

Karen Eichel, Secretary

CRECAP Inc.

Members at Large

Yamin Krumm

Citigroup

Todd Lichtman

Citigroup

Margot Perron

NYC Parks (retired)

Adeel Rouf

Northern Revival Acquisition Corp.; Altitude Acquisition Corp.



DONORS

We couldn't have this impact without your financial assistance. We are tremendously grateful to the generous donors listed below as well as our partners.

Achelis and Bodman Foundation

All is Well Coaching

Amazon Smile

Francine Benjamin

Ryan Brenner

City Parks Foundation/Green Fund

City of New York/Brooklyn Borough President

Con Edison

Maria & Charles D'Alessandro

Al & Peggy Dematteis Family Foundation

Karen Eichel

Alison Ettinger-DeLong

Beth Evans

John Faciano

Michael Feller

Frontstream

Victoria Furman

GITSolutions

Beth Gueller

Bernadette Hokai

Carrienne Knorr

Leslie Levy

Todd Lichtman

Antonia Little

Macerich/Kings Plaza

Christine Marchese

Danielle McCauley

Rogeli Molina

Eileen Moore

New York City Council

New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

New York Community Trust

New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation

Network for Good

Faith & Jerry Oland

Michelle Oliveira

Pamela Perron

Wendy Perron & Jim Siegel

Yvette Pomerantz

Research Foundation/CUNY

Anne Richards

Jessica Rodriguez

Michael Rogak

William Russo

Laura Scarfogliero

Alan Taylor

Tribeca Healthcare

Stacy Strobel

Richard Wagner

Audrey Wolfe

Windy Yu Wu

Yusuf Zengin



Photo: William D. King

PARTNERS

Marine Park Alliance coalesces many nonprofit groups that care deeply about the park. Our partners are listed below alphabetically:

American Littoral Society
Brooklyn Cricket League
Brooklyn Public Library/
Gerritsen Beach Branch
Brooklyn Technical High School/
Asian American Club
CUNY Brooklyn College/
Africana Studies & Linguistics
Departments
Gerritsen Beach
Property Owners Association
Gotham Bat Conservancy
Historic Hendrick I. Lott House
International Lions Club/Marine
Park Chapter
Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks
Conservancy
Madison-Marine Homecrest
Civic Association
Marine Park Community
Association
Millennium Development
New York Nonprofit
New York Road Runners
New Yorkers for Parks
NY Lawyers Alliance
NYC Bird Alliance
NYC Parks/Natural Resources
Division
NYC Parks/Urban Park Rangers
Partnerships for Parks/
City Parks Foundation
Salt Marsh Alliance
Urban Glass
World Rhythm Academy



FINANCES

The Alliance raised a substantial reserve fund to achieve a top priority from the strategic plan — hire an inaugural Executive Director in 2024. This change will be transformative for the organization next year.

