

Cross Species Fountain. Water Infrastructures for Common Public Space

Urban environments, unexpectedly, are islands of diversity. This characteristic of our urban systems is perhaps the most critical in producing a healthy and resilient urban future that is robust to climate destabilization and ecological transformations.

The Cross Species Fountain project creates a social spectacle that facilitates the lifestyle and environmental services of these popular urban cohabitants and demonstrates how we might re-imagine our infrastructure to account for the diverse nonhumans with whom we share territorial resources.

The Duncan Dunbar Memorial Fountain on the corner of West Fourth St. and Thompson St was established to serve both “man and beast”, our proposal extends this cross species watering hole further to include the multitude of New York city dwellers (see diagram 1).

Our Cross Species Fountain project invites urbanites to re-imagine their relationship to city infrastructure. To explore the way water is channeled through the city: Who has the right to access water? Who is visible? Who can occupy a site? Who can speak for whom?

The fountain is designed to appeal to the varying heights and modes of transportation of multiple species and city dwellers. It invites them all to collectively drink from it. Prior to, during and/or post the action of drinking we hope a temporary informal parliament for cross species will occur around the fountain, a site to communicate matters of infrastructure concern - in this instance water concerns. As the political act of occupation and use no longer just occurs in a physical site, but also requires an online presence the fountain is set up with monitoring equipment for species to link into twitter to share their experiences. This is not a fixed and resolved public monument but an active experiment into how to design a site that will nourish a dense population of species. Will the humans, animals and organisms like this fountain? What works? What fails?

Not only is this mobile installation a meeting point to re-imagine urban infrastructure, but it is also a point from which biodiversity can spread. Installing spaces that encourage biodiversity is integral to the environmental health of a city, as these spaces promote cross-pollination to enable resilient and adaptive species.

By extending the fountain up we invite urbanites gazes to shift upwards following the flight paths of birds and other air borne species and organisms. Attentiveness to the sky space, the cloud formations, the direction of the wind... is it going to rain? expands our concern away from the concrete streets into the network of environmental interactions.

The fountain will be constructed out of an invisible tensegrity structure. It will perform as a resilient structural system, not as an optimized engineered assembly. It will provide complex spaces, most of them hung from the ground to capture the amount of SUN and WIND necessary for the performance of the fountain. Water circulation is designed to flow through the fountain to maximize the sun's ability to sterilize water, at the same time it offers different species access to the water.

It is designed in a way that will enable the materials to be reused after fabrication. Mylar will be used for the solar Balloons, recycled PET and metallic frames will create a Meccano like structure that can be easily disassembled.

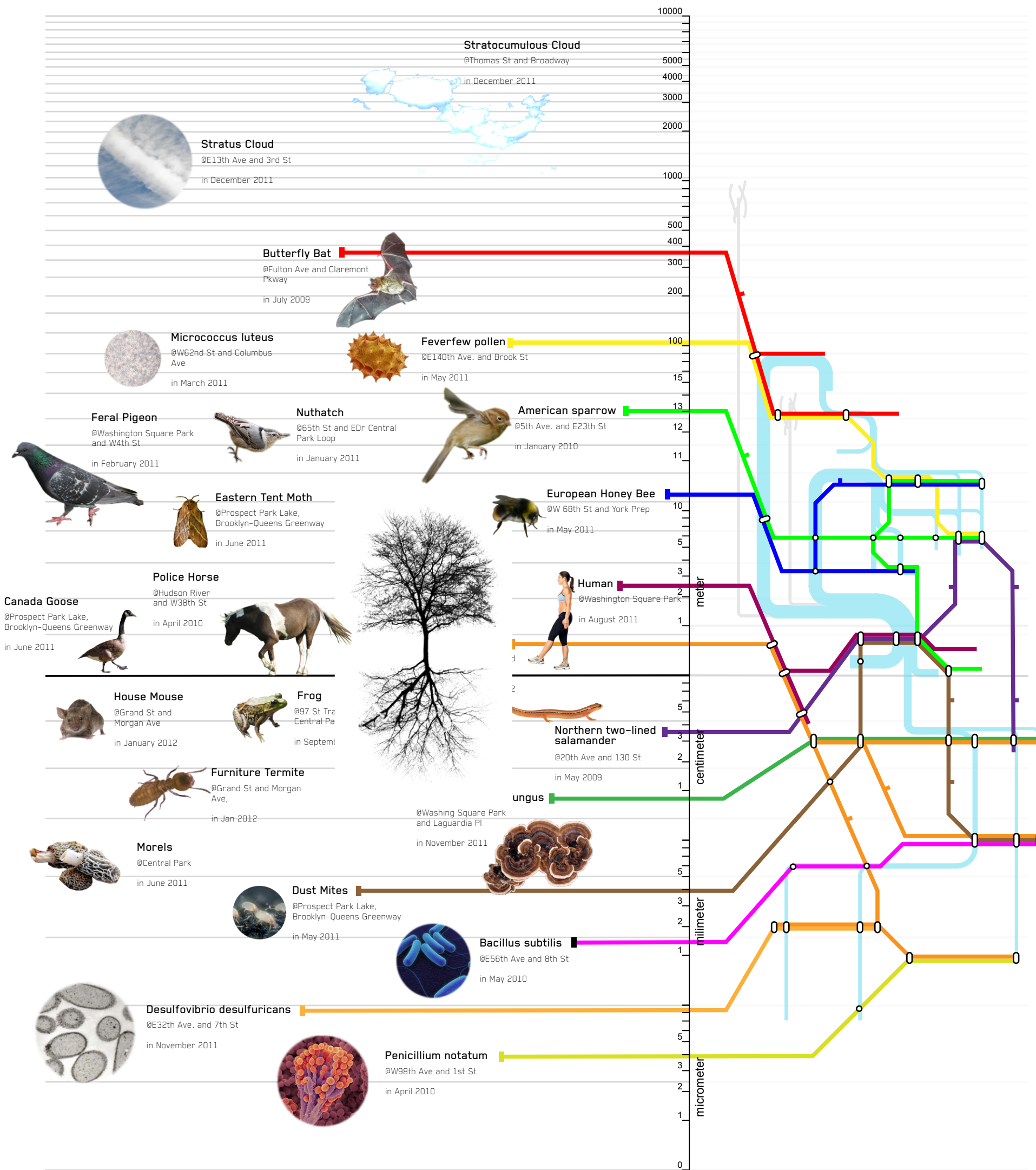


Diagram 1: Cross Species Map

The different species, represented in the diagram above, each access water in unique ways due to their size and drinking tastes. The scale on the right of the diagram represents the height at which these species typically inhabit an urban space. The coloured lines, like a subway map, depict the path and approximate location the urbanite will travel in order to access the drinking fountain - the light blue lines represents the water flow path of the drinking fountain - see daigram 2 for a detailed diagram of the Cross Species Drinking Fountain.

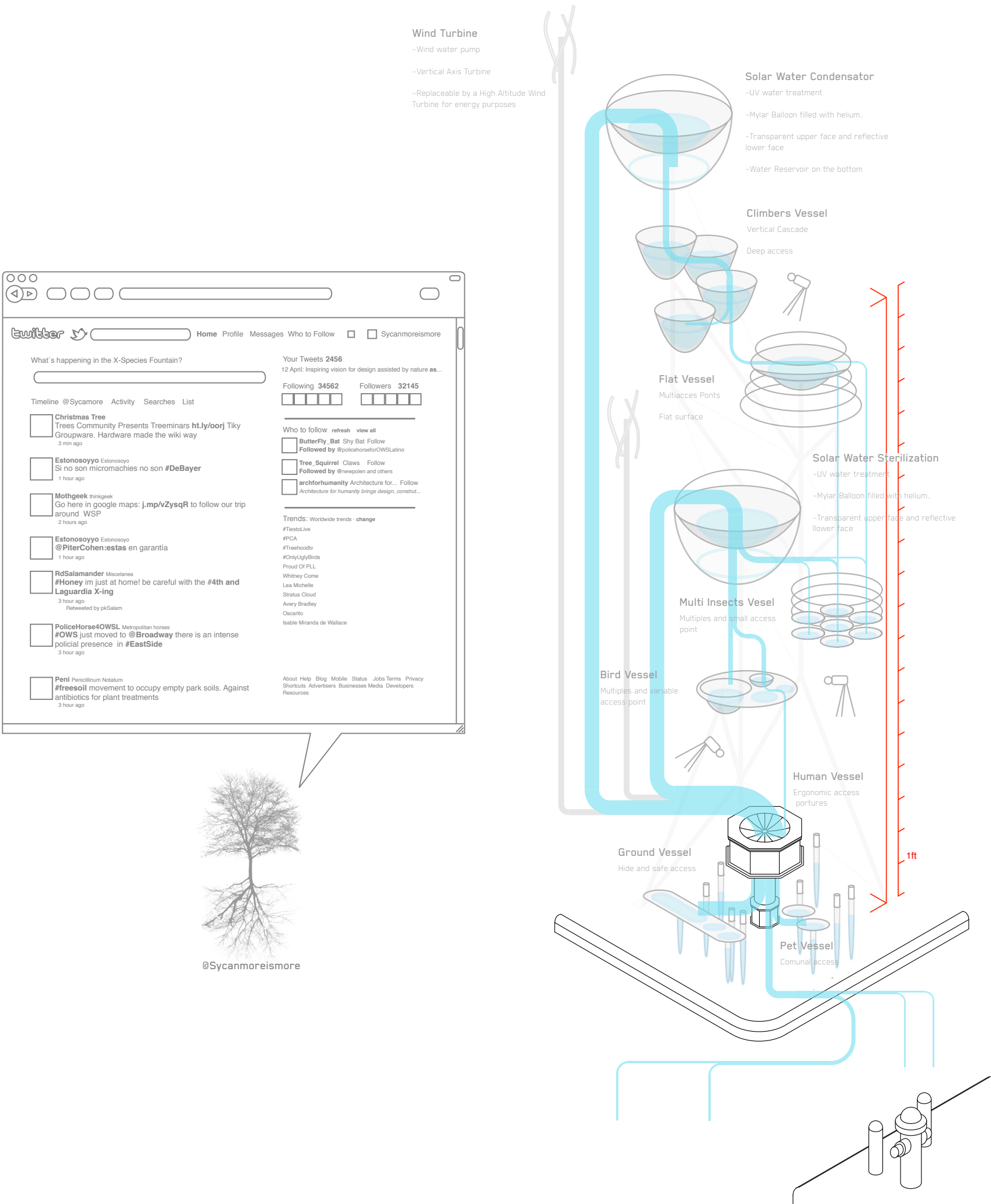


Diagram 2: Cross Species Drinking Fountain

Power generated from the wind turbines ensures the water is elevated along the fountains pipe network. Each vessel is specifically designed to meet the drinking needs of different species. Sterilization occurs inside the helium inflated mylar ballons which operate as Solar Water Condensators. One face of the ballon is transparent and one is reflective so that the sun can be concentrated onto the water to support sterillization. Attached to the fountain are cameras that are triggered each time an urbanite uses the fountain. The camera is linked to a twitter account causing “tweets’ to be sent out by the animals.