

CHRISTIAN COOPER

b. 1963

WRITER &
NYC BIRDER

“As long as [it] helps move the ball forward in terms of finally addressing racial bias ... I’ll keep talking.”

**He is a pioneering
Black comic book writer
and avid birdwatcher.**

Christian Cooper is a pioneering comic book and science writer, an LGBTQ activist, and an avid New York City birder. He came to prominence after he was falsely accused of threatening a woman in Central Park, where he was birdwatching.

Born on Long Island, New York, Cooper grew up as a self-described closeted gay nerd, passionate about birds and superheroes. He studied government at Harvard University and served as president of the Harvard Ornithological Club.

Cooper came out at Harvard and became an LGBTQ activist. Shortly thereafter, he served as a board co-chair of GLAAD.

In 1990 Cooper landed a dream job at Marvel Comics. He worked on numerous series, including Marvel Comics Presents and X-Men Excalibur. One of Marvel’s earliest gay writer-editors, Cooper helped introduce Marvel’s first LGBT characters: Northstar in the Alpha Flight series; the first gay human in Star Trek history in Starfleet Academy; and the first lesbian character in the Marvel Universe. Starfleet Academy was later nominated for a GLAAD Media Award.

Cooper left Marvel in 1996. He authored the satirical webcomic Queer Nation, as online comics surged in popularity, and worked as a biomedical editor at a science publication for the next 20 years.

On May 25, 2020, when Cooper was birdwatching in Central Park, he asked a white woman if she would kindly leash her dog to protect the plants and wildlife (unleashed dogs are prohibited in that area of the park). She refused. When Cooper began filming the interaction on his phone, the woman called the police, claiming an African American man was threatening her. She was charged with filing a false report and publicly excoriated. On that same day in Minneapolis, police murdered George Floyd. The coinciding incidents sparked national outrage and served as a flashpoint for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

After the Central Park incident, DC Comics approached Cooper to create “It’s a Bird.” Cooper’s script featured a Black birder whose magic binoculars illuminate BLM headlines: the police slayings of George Floyd, Breona Taylor, and Amadou Diallo. The year before his own infamous encounter, Cooper was arrested for protesting Diallo’s murder.

Penguin Random House published Cooper’s memoir, “Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World” in 2023. The same year, he became the host and consulting producer of the National Geographic documentary series “Extraordinary Birder.”

Cooper lives in New York City with his partner, John Zaia. He is a board member of NYC Audubon, a bird conservation organization.



© GETTY IMAGES

lgbt[™]
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright © 2024 – A Project of Equality Forum