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Audubon Society of Rhode Island

REPORT



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VOLUME 51, NO. 4

NOVEMBER 2017

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

*Fighting Climate
Change with
Smart Siting for
Renewable Energy*

THE BALANCING ACT

Renewable Energy and Wildlife

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

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From the Desk of the Executive Director



Action at the Local Level is More Critical Than Ever

Last year about this time, we decided to devote all four of our 2017 quarterly newsletters to climate change. With the myriad of topics relating to this critical environmental concern, we knew there was enough material to spread it out over several issues – and then some.

Our education and conservation staff had collaborated with neighboring Audubon Societies to apply for a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for training on how to educate the public on this important topic in a proactive (and non-fatalistic) way.

When we made these decisions, we had no way of knowing that our newly elected President would follow up on his campaign rhetoric and continue to regard climate change as a hoax (perpetrated by the Chinese government no less.) He has gone on to ban the EPA from communicating about the topic at all.

In October at our Annual Meeting, Curt Spaulding, former Regional Administrator of EPA New England, (appointed during the Obama administration) gave a very enlightening and encouraging talk to our membership about climate change. He talked about how despite the new administration's attempt to undermine and reverse progress in this area at the Federal policy level, many states, including RI, are still determined to adhere to the goals and principals of the Paris Agreement. Additionally, many of the major players in the business community are on board and are already making changes in the way they do business and invest their resources.

The very next day, I heard that three current EPA scientists had to withdraw at the last minute from speaking on the topic at a conference that was held in Providence.

I feel very fortunate to live in the Ocean State and work for the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. It is here, at the local level, that we can stand up for science, educate the public on the challenges ahead from climate change, and fight at the statehouse for sound environmental policy.

Thanks again for your continued and steadfast support of our work.

Lawrence J. F. Taft, Executive Director

The Wall of Superheroes

Audubon Unveils Hand-carved Centerpiece for Invincible Audubon Recognition

Looking for something as impressive as the Hall of Justice to recognize their superheroes, Audubon unveiled a hand-carved centerpiece of its logo that will list contributors to Audubon's \$6-million dollar endowment campaign.

Designed and carved by master bird carver Eric Kaiser, of Cotuit, MA, the logo depicts two terns flying in opposite directions centered in blue and green stained glass. It is encased in a polished poplar frame sitting atop a four-foot pedestal. The piece will hold a plaque listing Invincible Audubon contributors that have donated, pledged or left the Society \$10,000 or more.

"Impressive is an understatement," said Jeff Hall, Audubon Senior Director of Advancement who worked with Mr. Kaiser for over a year on the centerpiece. "This is the largest endowment campaign Audubon has ever attempted and we wanted something incredible to recognize the superheroes who will make this important endeavor successful."

Board Chairperson Cynthia Warren announced at the Annual Meeting that the campaign had just crossed the \$5 million mark after one-year. "The last million is always the toughest," said Warren, "but we have tremendous support among our members and we are confident that we will reach this goal."

The sculpture will reside at the award-winning Audubon Environmental Education Center.



Audubon Senior Director of Advancement Jeff Hall (left) and master carver Eric Kaiser with the new donor recognition centerpiece after the unveiling at the Annual Meeting on October 22, 2017.

Location, Location, Location

Fighting Climate Change with Smart Siting for Renewable Energy

By Todd McLeish

Part Four of the Audubon Report 2017 Series on Climate Change

Rhode Island has been recognized for more than a decade as a national leader in efforts to use energy as efficiently as possible. The 2017 scorecard released by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy ranked the Ocean State third best in the United States for its energy efficiency programs and policies, which encourage homeowners and businesses to upgrade their insulation, install efficient heating and cooling systems, and replace energy-wasting appliances, among other things. As a result, the state has one of the lowest per capita electricity consumption rates in the nation.

Yet despite how efficiently we use electricity and how conscientious we are at conserving energy, the state still requires large quantities of electricity, oil, natural gas and other fuels to support its economy and the standard of living of its residents.

“We’ve had the luxury of living a fossil fuel lifestyle in New England without having to bear any of the downsides of it,” said Meg Kerr, Audubon’s senior director of policy. “We don’t have strip mines or big power plants or lots of industrial infrastructure that goes with it in our backyards. But we can’t say no to everything.”

That is especially true as the climate warms and it becomes increasingly necessary to shift away from that fossil fuel lifestyle. Rhode Island was ranked fourth among the 50 states in shifting to renewable energy, according to a Clean Energy Momentum progress report by the Union of Concerned Scientists, but the state still has a long way to go.

“Climate change is the existential threat, and we need to be doing everything we can to address it,” Kerr said. “The state has developed goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and if we’re going to be serious about meeting those goals, we need to aggressively shift from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy.”

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island is a strong supporter of the Resilient Rhode Island Act of 2014, which aims to reduce the state’s greenhouse gas emissions to 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, to 45 percent below 1990 levels by 2035 and to 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

“To get there, we need to move as quickly as we can to renewable energy. We don’t want any more fossil fuel-based electricity generation in the state,” said Kerr. “But the conversation we’re trying to foster is this: How do we encourage renewable energy facilities in already-built areas? Let’s be as aggressive as possible to get renewable energy sited so as to reduce the impact on forested areas, which are important for carbon sequestration and for wildlife habitat.”

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Audubon believes Rhode Island should begin the siting process by identifying how much renewable energy development is possible in urban areas and other places that are already developed.

Location Continued from page 3

Kerr acknowledges that it's a challenging notion, since existing policies and the economics of renewable energy development now strongly favor siting them in undeveloped areas where land is relatively inexpensive.

"We don't necessarily oppose that, because we recognize that we need to have a lot of renewable energy," she said. "But we are working with developers and state agencies on how to incentivize construction of solar and land-based wind as much as possible in areas already developed."

Carol Grant, the commissioner of the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources, recognizes the challenges the state faces in achieving what she calls the "very ambitious goals" of the Resilient Rhode Island Act. But she believes that the state is on the right path.

"First, we have to be sure we're not using more energy than is needed, and Rhode Island is already recognized as one of the leaders in the country in energy efficiency programs," she said. "The next thing is to de-carbonize the electricity generation system. That's where we're now being ambitious in our goals."

Grant said that Governor Gina Raimondo has established a goal of generating 1,000 megawatts of renewable energy in the state by 2020. (According to the Office of Energy Resources, 1000 MW is roughly the equivalent of between 25-50% of Rhode Island's energy needs over the course of a year.)

"Once we have a cleaner electricity grid, then the transportation and heating sectors can become cleaner by shifting to electric vehicles and other technologies that use clean electricity," she said. "That path is a thoughtful and hopefully successful way of reaching those ambitious goals."

"Once we have a cleaner electricity grid, then the transportation and heating sectors can become cleaner,"

- Carol Grant, the commissioner of the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources

While many people have argued that renewable energy cannot compete with the cost of fossil fuels or that it will not be able to have a significant impact on the state's energy mix, Grant believes that solar and wind power can make an achievable difference.

"We're seeing across the country that it can be done, and it's more and more realistic that it can be done in an affordable way," she said. "Our mandate is to have a clean, affordable energy system for Rhode Islanders. What's encouraging is that we're seeing the cost of alternative energy coming down dramatically."

She agrees with Kerr that the appropriate siting of renewable energy facilities can be difficult, but she notes that Rhode Island has an excellent track record.

"Siting requires a lot of thoughtful problem solving," Grant said. "No matter what source of energy, the siting has some impact. The challenge is to recognize that and figure out how to work with all the stakeholders to manage the impact so it's addressed, managed, dealt with thoughtfully, and taken seriously.

"We can point to offshore wind as an area where Rhode Island has taken a leadership position in dealing with complex siting issues, by working with stakeholders and listening carefully," she added. "The fact that Block Island was sited as the first offshore wind facility in the Western Hemisphere is a signal to the world that we can

I can do it!

Lower the Water Heater

One significant way to reduce energy consumption if you're away over the holidays is to simply lower the water heater. If you'll be gone three or more days, set the water heater to the lowest or 'vacation' setting if there is one.



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Check into telecommuting, carpooling, public transit and active transportation like bicycling or walking to save on fuel and car maintenance costs. If you are purchasing a new vehicle, consider fuel efficiency or an electric or hybrid option.



Eat Local Foods and Less Meat

A tremendous amount of energy goes into growing, processing, packaging and shipping food. Purchase locally grown and produced foods - support RI farms and eat healthier too! Meat products are among the most resource-intensive, so eating less meat can make a difference.



bring people together to solve these issues."

It won't be easy, however. No one wants an energy facility in their backyard, regardless of how clean it may be. Neighbors in North Smithfield are fighting a proposed wind turbine, others are opposing a solar installation in western Cranston and another in Richmond. Wind developers expect opposition regardless of what site they select.

"The first thing we have to do is acknowledge the concerns of the neighbors and get people around the table and get them talking about it," Grant said. "We do need energy to continue to support our lives and economy. Let's start from that position and figure out how to do that thoughtfully. Not reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and not encouraging renewable energy is going to have consequences as well."

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The Balancing Act

Renewable Energy and Wildlife

By Todd McLeish

If Chicago-based power plant developer Invenergy has its way, the Clear River Energy Center – a 1,000-megawatt natural gas-fired power plant – will soon begin construction amid the quiet forests of northwest Rhode Island. The site, bordered by thousands of acres of state, local and private conservation lands, is home to hundreds of species of wildlife, including such rarities as the Cerulean Warbler, wood turtle, arrowhead spiketail dragonfly, Pileated Woodpecker and bobcat.

While the company claims the footprint of the facility will only be 67 acres, its impact will be significantly larger as it disrupts an important wildlife corridor the state considers one of the most important in the region. The power plant will also spew massive quantities of greenhouse gases that will affect global climate, regional air quality and human health.

As opponents, including Audubon, work to fight the project and advocate for clean, renewable energy alternatives, it's easy to ignore that the alternatives also have drawbacks and negative implications for wildlife that must be addressed with proper planning and siting. And as hard as it is to accept, most agree that there will be consequences for wildlife no matter what energy source provides our electricity.

Audubon Executive Director Larry Taft is among the state's leaders in working to mitigate the impacts on wildlife from renewable energy installations in Rhode Island. A member of the state's Wind Energy Scientific Working Group, he helped to design guidelines municipal officials can use when considering proposals for wind turbines in their communities.

"We are supportive of the idea of alternative energy, but we also want to be wise about it and locate it where it would have minimal impact on wildlife," he said. "Yes, wind turbines are a concern for migratory birds and bats, but there are a lot of misconceptions about their impact as well, based largely on a wind farm built decades ago in Altamont Pass in California. Those were turbines of an earlier design with fast-moving blades and sited in a hawk migration corridor. We want to learn from those mistakes and not replicate them here in Rhode Island."

Taft and the working group modeled their recommendations in part on federal guidelines for siting wind turbines near

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Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) by Peter Green

The Balancing Act

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national wildlife refuges. For land-based turbines in Rhode Island, for example, they recommend avoiding the south-facing coastal beach areas near where endangered Piping Plovers and Roseate Terns breed and congregate.

For turbines sited around upper Narragansett Bay and at inland locations, the group suggested that turbine operators pay close attention during bird and bat migration season and temporarily shut down the turbines when it's foggy and the birds can't see the turbines or when large numbers of birds are on the move.

"Songbirds are a concern because they migrate at night," Taft said, "but weather radar can show when there is a mass movement of migrants. On those nights, the operators should arrange to stop the blades from spinning."

Taft believes that the lengthy planning and study that went into siting the offshore wind farm off Block Island means those turbines will likely have a negligible impact on wildlife. And recent monitoring suggests that they may actually be a boon to marine life.

According to David Beutel, a former fisheries scientist who now works at the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, the concrete foundations supporting the Deepwater Wind turbines are attracting a wide variety of fish and other creatures.

"Recreational fishing out there has really increased, and their success is very high," he said, noting that black sea bass, scup and bluefish appear especially plentiful around the structures.

Seaweeds and blue mussels were among the first species to be observed clinging to the turbine foundations, which extend about 90 feet from the seafloor to the water's surface. Those early colonizers then attracted other species, including baitfish, which then attracted even larger species.

Beutel said that the turbines have not had a similarly positive effect on commercial fishing, largely because the commercial trawlers can't tow their nets close enough to the turbine foundations to reap the benefit. On the other hand, a monthly trawl survey in the vicinity of the turbines has found that the structures have not had any measurable negative impacts on commercial fisheries either.

Studies of the electromagnetic fields coming from the underwater cables transmitting the electricity to Block Island have also found no negative effects on marine life.

While the high visibility of wind turbines makes them an easy target of wildlife advocates, solar installations face far less scrutiny. Yet they, too, can have significant wildlife implications if not sited appropriately. Solar panels require far more cleared land to generate the same amount of elec-



It is reported that the foundations supporting the wind turbines off Block Island are attracting a wide variety of fish and other creatures.

tricity as one wind turbine. And construction of a solar farm in undeveloped areas could result in a sizeable loss of wildlife habitat.

Scott Comings, associate director of the Rhode Island office of The Nature Conservancy, testified before the state's Energy Facilities Siting Board about the wildlife impact of cutting down forests to build the Clear River Energy Center. He said there are both wildlife reasons and climate change reasons to avoid siting large solar installations in forests or other pristine habitat.

"Forest fragmentation is a huge issue for wildlife," he said. "A large forest with corridors for wildlife equals a healthier forest with healthier animals and plants. The more you reduce the size and connectivity of the forest, the less certain plants and animals can move as they need to now and in the future."

He also sees folly in cutting down forests – thereby eliminating their ability to sequester carbon – to build a solar installation as a way of reducing the greenhouse gases emitted by fossil fuel-burning power plants.

"The climate benefit of cutting down 50 acres of trees to put up solar panels is far less than putting 50 acres of solar panels on a parking lot or industrial site," Comings said.

Despite the challenges of siting renewable energy facilities in such a way as to limit their impact on wildlife, Audubon is committed to helping the state do just that.

"There's still a lot we don't know about some of the implications," concluded Taft. "But we have to find a place for alternative energy in Rhode Island. We need to reduce carbon emissions if we are going to be serious about addressing climate change."

*Todd McLeish is a life-long birder, freelance science writer and author of several books about wildlife, including **Narnhals: Arctic Whales in a Melting World.***

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Change the Bulbs

LED bulbs use 80% less energy and last up to 25 times longer than traditional incandescent lights. LED holiday lights look just as festive!



Combine Errands

Several short trips, each one taken from a cold start, can use twice as much fuel as one trip covering the same distance when the engine is warm.



Unplug Appliances

Televisions, computers, cordless vacuums, power tools and other small appliances use electricity even on standby. Unplug rarely used devices or plug them into power strips and timers. Set computers to automatically power down to the lowest power mode when not in use.



Use a Programmable Thermostat

You can reduce your waste heat by using a programmable thermostat. Reduce the heat at a specific time when you're away, and set the thermostat to increase the heat before you get back.



Gold Wash and Line Dry Laundry

Wash your laundry in cold water using cold-water detergents and line dry your clothes whenever possible.



Heading in the Right Direction

Board Members Team Up to Improve Trails at Audubon's Caratunk Wildlife Refuge

From the big white barn to the meandering trails and crystal-clear brooks, the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk is a place beloved by nature enthusiasts and wildlife alike. It is one of Audubon's most popular properties.

To better accommodate visitors, Audubon has begun a series of upgrades at Caratunk. First, the trail system has been redesigned and new signage installed to make it easier for hikers to navigate. Future plans include the construction of a more conveniently located kiosk, an improved parking area, landscaping for pollinators, and rain gardens to collect storm water run off.

Over the past year Audubon Board Members Nate Chace and Terry Meyer have teamed with Senior Director of Conservation Scott Ruhren to tackle the first part of the plan. As they revised the trail system and reviewed signage requirements, they also took into consideration the important balance between visitors and the needs of wildlife. Chace, an avid outdoorsman, is actively involved in the future planning and management of Caratunk. His support was key to the development and installation of the new signage. Meyer is a professional cartographer. Her skills were put to good use as the new trail routes were mapped and installed.



Board Member Nate Chace (left) and Senior Director of Conservation Scott Ruhren near some of the new signage at Caratunk.



Board Member Terry Meyer hiked Caratunk last winter to map the new trails.

As you head over to Caratunk this autumn, be sure to download the new trail map from our website and take advantage of the new signage that directs hikers at many trail intersections.

We extend our appreciation to Nate Chace and

Terry Meyer for their ongoing support of the Caratunk rejuvenation project and look forward to additional improvements as this effort moves forward.

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Partnering Today with the Leaders of Tomorrow *Audubon and the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society*

Audubon has established an exciting partnership with the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society (IBES). During the summer of 2017, IBES undergraduate student Caroline Jones interned with Audubon Senior Director of Policy Meg Kerr, focusing on pollinator projects. Caroline researched pollinator protection legislation and policies, helped with pollinator education programs and assisted with pollinator conservation on Audubon properties. Her extraordinary work was entirely paid for by IBES, a real gift to Audubon.

During the fall semester, Meg Kerr again partnered with IBES students as they researched renewable energy siting and explored challenges and opportunities for expanding project siting in Providence. Professor Dawn King and Teaching Assistant Brendan George are guiding the students as they develop recommendations for the state to consider.



On June 12, 2017 Governor Raimondo signs an Executive Order reaffirming Rhode Island's commitment to the principles of the Paris Climate Agreement. Intern Caroline Jones (center) and Audubon Senior Director of Policy Meg Kerr (to the right of Caroline) applaud.

Location Continued from page 4

Audubon believes the state should begin the siting process by identifying how much renewable energy development is possible in urban areas and other places that are already developed. Priorities should be on brownfields, parking lots, landfills, buildings and roadways.

“We’d like to have a good idea of what’s possible in our built areas, and then what additional generation do we need to get from outside those areas,” Kerr said. “We don’t really have siting guidelines yet, other than local planning and zoning ordinances. If we were really aggressive in our urban areas, how much additional land do we have to give up to meet the goals we have? We recognize that we will have to give up some.”

Grant said that some of the incentives Audubon has in mind are already in place. Rhode Island’s Renewable Energy Growth Program, which sets the electricity rates that small solar, wind and hydro operators will receive for the electricity they generate, already pays more for rooftop installations than for those sited on open land. And the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management just issued rules for the redevelopment of brownfields that provides incentives for development proposals that include renewable energy installations.

But she also said that the state doesn’t want to entirely discourage renewable energy facilities in Rhode Island’s rural areas because that is where the lowest cost facilities will be sited, and those lower costs benefit electricity customers.

“The costs of these programs are being supported by electricity users,” she said. “We don’t want to make it more expensive. We don’t want to add costs, because we’re looking for affordable energy.”

She also believes that offshore wind development will continue to play a major role in the state’s renewable energy efforts. The state of Massachusetts is in the process of procuring bids for offshore wind turbine installations, and Rhode Island is hoping to benefit from the process.

“There is huge potential in the Northeast for offshore wind,” Grant said. “If Massachusetts gets more than they can use in this bid, we may see that we can get some well-priced wind for Rhode Island, and we’re open to that.”

Farmlands have become the latest battleground over the siting of renewable energy facilities.

Farmlands have become the latest battleground over the siting of renewable energy facilities. Because they are already cleared of trees and most are generally flat, energy developers see them as easy and inexpensive sites on which to install solar panels and wind turbines. And because the payments farmers would receive for the electricity generated on their properties would help them avoid having to sell their land, many farmers welcome this new option for continuing their way of life. But the environmental community is concerned that turning farms into fields of solar panels would affect the needs of wildlife.

In a compromise that all sides appear to support, legislation was passed in the General Assembly this year that allows some farmers to avoid paying a “land use change tax” if they convert a maximum of 20 percent of their farmlands to renewable energy generation.

“Rhode Island has been losing farmland at a rapid clip for decades – we’ve lost 80 percent of our farmland since the 1940s, and it hasn’t slowed down,” said Max Greene, a staff attorney for the Conservation Law Foundation,



The environmental community is concerned that turning farms into fields of solar panels would affect the needs of wildlife.

who follows proposed policies and legislation related to renewable energy in the state. “Farmland in Rhode Island is the most expensive in the country because of its value as development. While we accelerate the development of renewables to prevent the worst effects of climate change, we don’t want to also accelerate the loss of our farms.”

Greene said the 20 percent limitation in the legislation is appropriate to benefit farmers while also ensuring the protection of as much undeveloped land as possible. He said that several other bills related to siting renewable energy facilities on farms and other properties were discussed in the legislature, though none passed.

Before too many more wind turbines and solar installations are constructed in rural regions of Rhode Island, Greene thinks the state should follow Vermont’s lead by creating a map that identifies the prime locations for renewable energy development overlaid with a map of the state’s existing open space.

“It allows you to see how much of that prime space you’d need to convert to renewable development for the state to meet its goals,” Greene said. “In Vermont’s case, the footprint for renewable development was very small compared to its overall amount of open space. We’re hoping to convince the state Office of Energy Resources to do something similar for Rhode Island so we can have a better understanding of how much open space we might have to give up.”

So what’s the next step for Rhode Island as it continues on its path toward a renewable energy future?

“We are bringing all the voices together,” said Kerr. “Audubon and other environmental groups have asked the Office of Energy Resources to formalize and provide staff support for this renewable energy siting stakeholder group. We want to find a way to make it work as best as possible for everyone. We have a lot more common ground than differences.”

Carol Grant agrees. “The downside of not taking these steps is huge,” she said. “But having said that, it’s still going to be hard. None of these decisions is easy. The challenge is to do it well and do it with an ongoing awareness of its impact on the environment while also being aware of the costs.”

Todd McLeish is a life-long birder, freelance science writer and author of several books about wildlife, including Narnhals: Arctic Whales in a Melting World.

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE OCEAN STATE

What Causes Climate Change?

Human activity such as transportation, energy production and manufacturing, burn fossil fuels that release carbon and other gases into the atmosphere. These gases form a heat-trapping blanket that warms our air and oceans.

What Are The Results?

Rising Sea Levels

Our shores will be impacted by melting ice and thermal expansion of warming water.



- Rhode Island has seen a 9-inch increase in sea level since 1930.
- Loss of salt marshes, habitat and shoreline erosion will result.

Unstable Climate Patterns

In Rhode Island, heavy storms with flooding are on the rise.



- Annual precipitation has increased 6% to 11% since 1970.
- Intense rainfall events have increased 71% since 1958.
- Between the years 2020 and 2099, expect 18% to 20% more precipitation and twice as many extreme weather events with severe flooding will occur.

Air & Water Temperatures Rise

Humans, birds, animals, fish and plants will all struggle with ecosystem change.



- The average annual air temperature in Rhode Island has risen 3.0°F over the past century.
- In Narragansett Bay, the average water temperature has risen 2.5°F over the past 50 years.
- Between the years 2020 and 2099 expect to see warmer winters with 22 to 45 fewer days below freezing and hotter summers with 13 to 44 more days above 90°F.

What Can You Do?

- Reduce energy use. Drive less (walk, bike and use public transportation) and create an energy-efficient home.
- Purchase green power to heat and cool your home and insulate it well.
- Support land conservation. Forests remove CO₂ from the atmosphere, provide shade to keep the landscape cooler, and are critical habitat for birds and wildlife.

- Landscape and garden with native plants that provide food, cover and nesting materials for birds and wildlife.
- Stay informed. Support legislation and community efforts that reduce carbon emissions. Sign up for advocacy emails by contacting Meg Kerr (mkerr@asri.org)



Audubon Opposes Construction of the Invenergy Power Plant

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island first publicly expressed opposition to the Invenergy Power Plant on September 21, 2016 at a public hearing at Toll Gate High School in Warwick. For over a year Audubon has continued its staunch opposition to the development of this fossil-fueled plant.

Audubon strongly opposes the construction of any new fossil fueled power plant in Rhode Island. Climate change poses real threats to birds, wildlife and people as this hurricane season and the October wild fires in California aptly demonstrate. Rhode Island must move forward with efforts to mitigate climate change by planning for and constructing renewable energy sources that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We believe that the state must meet the greenhouse gas reduction goals established in the 2014 Resilient Rhode Island Act; 10% below 1990 levels by 2020, 45% below 1990 levels by 2035 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. Building the Invenergy Power Plant in Rhode Island will make it impossible for the state to meet these goals. As discussed in this Report, instead of new fossil fueled energy facilities, we would like Rhode Island to accelerate the development of renewable energy sources like wind and solar.

The selected site of the plant also brings strong environmental concerns. Invenergy hopes to build in the midst of one of the most intact forested areas in the state. Although we would not support development of the Invenergy facility at any location in Rhode Island, the site in Burrillville has been identified as a regionally significant habitat corridor. Constructing the Invenergy Power Plant at this location will have significant and unacceptable ecological impacts.

Permitting of the Invenergy facility is in the hands of the Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB). The EFSB was established in Rhode

Island General Laws (42-98-1) to license and permit major energy facilities in the state. It is a part of state government and consists of three (3) members, the Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission (Meg Curran), the Director of the Department of Environmental Management (Janet Coit) and the Associate Director of Administration for Planning (Parag Agrawal).

The EFSB has been considering the Invenergy Thermal Development LLC's application to construct the Clear River Energy facility in Burrillville and the process is drawing to a close. The EFSB Final Hearing in the Invenergy case will be held on 20 non-consecutive days in December 2017 and early 2018. During these hearings, the members of the EFSB will question expert witnesses and will formulate their final decision.



Great Horned Owl

Peter Green

I can do it!

Buy Energy Efficient Appliances

When shopping for refrigerators, washing machines and other appliances, look for the Energy Star label. It will indicate which are the most efficient.



Power Your Home With Green Energy

Support clean energy and purchase your electricity from local renewable sources. Join Audubon and People's Power and Light and be part of the climate change solution. www.ripower.org/audubon



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Block Island Wind Farm

New Avian Ambassadors Have Joined Our Flock

For many decades, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island has dedicated both staff and resources to caring for raptors. Although Audubon is not licensed to rehabilitate wildlife, we work with rehabilitators across the Northeast to provide forever homes for previously injured birds.

Audubon has recently adopted a Common Raven, two Red-tailed Hawks and a Great Horned Owl from a retiring wildlife rehabilitator in Maine. The new additions make for a full nest over at Audubon.

All nine birds are shown below with the year that Audubon started caring for them. They are all unable to be released into the wild. These birds are provided with species-specific diets, training and enrichment. They live in custom aviaries that are designed according to federal regulations. Audubon's raptor handlers are trained and experienced in the care of birds of prey, and are extremely passionate about their work and the birds they care for.



Webster, Great Horned Owl, 1997



Lady Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, 2004



EEC, Barred Owl, 2006



Moxie, American Kestrel, 2008



Finn, Red-tailed Hawk, 2016



Atlanta, Red-tailed Hawk, 2017



Chaplin, Red-tailed Hawk, 2017



Queen Solomon (Sollie), Great Horned Owl, 2017



Zachariah, Common Raven, 2017

DOES IT HAVE TO BE
A PARTRIDGE IN THAT PEAR TREE?



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SUN AND WIND POWER HELP ANIMALS TOO!

Animals depend on the sun and wind for warmth, energy and even transportation!



Fish-eating cormorants have very little oil in their feathers so they dry their wet wings in the sun before taking flight. It's like hanging your clothes outside to dry!



Look for animals basking in the morning sun to warm themselves after a cool night. Reptiles, amphibians and insects need the sun's energy to raise their body temperature so they have the energy to go about their daily business.



Birds generate their body heat internally as humans do, but on chilly days they will stand in the sun and spread their feathers so the solar warmth reaches more of their body's surface. On cold winter days, every little bit of heat counts!



Stephen Tierney

Thermals are columns of rising air that form when the ground's surface is warmed by the sun. Hawks, eagles, vultures and other birds ride thermals up into the sky and then glide down in the direction they are heading. Thermal lift is a great way to save energy during migration.



Soaring takes a lot less energy than flapping your wings, so in addition to thermals, vultures and some raptors also take advantage of the updrafts created when the wind blows over hills and mountain ridges.



And let's not forget that all animals get their energy from eating food. The basis of all food webs are the plants and algae that are able to convert the sun's energy into matter through the process called photosynthesis. Try standing out in the sun when YOU get hungry and see how hard that is!

Migrating monarch butterflies and green darner dragonflies ride thermals too!



Good Days for Ducks

As the temperature drops, folks tend to spend less time outside and start to hunker down for the colder months. But here in Rhode Island, winter is one of the finest times to get outside and go birding. It's duck season in the Ocean State and there are over 28 species to find!

Ducks are a great way to get started with birding because they are relatively large and don't move too quickly. Yet they can be challenging when you are trying to iden-

For a great variety of ducks, Trustom Pond is always a sure bet. Trustom gets even better when ice starts to form and the ducks concentrate into small open pools. Redhead, Canvasback, Northern Pintails, Ring-neck Ducks and Scaup are all found here, as well as several other species. If the pond is clear of ice, a scope is very helpful.

Watchemoket Cove in East Providence and the Seekonk River are great places to find Eurasian Wigeon, Scaup and Barrow's



Harlequin Ducks (two males and one female) at Sachuest Point

tify females and the many different species that can commonly be found in our little state. Searching for ducks is fun for birding enthusiasts of all levels. You can find them on inland lakes and reservoirs as well as along the coast. If there is open water, you are likely to find them in the colder months.

Some great inland places to look for ducks are St Mary's and Sisson Pond in Portsmouth. You might find Northern Shovelers, Green-wing Teal, Greater White-fronted Geese, Common Mergansers and more. Another great spot to look is Tiogue Lake in Coventry, especially when there is ice forming. You can find American Wigeon, Green-wing Teal and Common Mergansers.

and Common Golden-eye. The Seekonk River has also been a place to find Tufted Ducks in the past.

Finally, the Rhode Island coast is a great place to search for sea ducks. Eider, Scoter and Harlequin Ducks can be found at both Sachuest Point and Beavertail.

Rhode Island always has birds to find, no matter the time of year.

Join Audubon on a guided program!

Waterfowl and Seabirds Van Trip

- December 2 (led by Laura Carberry)

Ducks at Trustom

- December 9 (led by Lauren Parmelee)

Register through the events calendar at www.asri.org.

Audubon's Meg Kerr is Featured Speaker at the Rhode Island Energy, Environmental and Oceans Leaders Day

Approximately 200 people were in attendance at Senator Whitehouse's Environmental Leaders Day on October 20, 2017 in which Audubon Senior Director of Policy Meg Kerr was a panelist. The event brought clean energy and environmental protection leaders from Rhode Island to Washington, D.C. together to learn more about key federal programs that can support their efforts.

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Saturday, March 10, 2018

7:30 am – 4:30 pm

University of RI Memorial Union
Kingston, RI

2017 ANNUAL MEETING

Audubon Society of Rhode Island • October 22, 2017

The Audubon Environmental Education Center in Bristol, Rhode Island was the setting for Audubon's 2017 Annual Meeting. Curt Spalding, Brown University professor and former Regional Administrator of EPA under President Obama was the keynote speaker and shared his perspective on environmental challenges facing Rhode Island.



From left: Board President Cynthia Warren, Board Member Michael Viveiros and Suzanne Dunkel



Curt Spalding speaks at the 2017 Annual Meeting



Students from St. Luke's School present their research



Board Member Owen Heleen (left) with Senior Director of Advancement Jeff Hall



From Left: Kathy Wattles, Donor Relations Manager Sharon Cresci and Council of Advisors Members Gurdon Wattles and Sam Hallowell



From left: Board Member Terry Meyer, Jana Hesser, David Caldwell, Board Member Donald Heitzmann and Ann Caldwell



Audubon Executive Director Lawrence Taft (left) congratulates master carver Eric Kaiser at the unveiling of the new Donor Recognition Centerpiece

NEWLY ELECTED TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jameson Chace (North Kingstown)

Jameson Chace is an Associate Professor with joint appointments in the Departments of Biology and Cultural, Environmental and Global Studies at Salve Regina University in Newport. He directs the environmental studies major, a hydroponics research station, and the avian ecology program. He earned a PhD in Ecology from the University of Colorado.

Dr. Chace has been awarded two National Science Foundation grants concerning marine response to climate change, a USDA National Institute of Food and Agricultural grant to bring hydroponic science and engineering concepts to middle and high schools in Rhode Island, and has developed a variety of avian ecology projects.

He is currently on the Aquidneck Land Trust's Board and also serves on the boards of the Wilson Ornithological Society and Ornithological Societies of North America. A Rhode Island native, he resides in North Kingstown with his family.



Peter Paton (Hope Valley)

Peter Paton is wildlife biologist and Professor at the University of Rhode Island in the Department of Natural Resources Science. Dr. Paton's research focuses on the conservation of vertebrate populations, with an emphasis on birds.

He earned a PhD. in Wildlife Biology from Utah State University. His recent avian research projects included helping to coordinate the Rhode Island Breeding Bird Atlas with Dr. Charles Clarkson (also on the Audubon Board of Directors), studies of the population ecology of neotropical migratory birds at the Kingston Wildlife Research Station (an Audubon property) during fall migration, and monitoring offshore movements of coastal birds to assess potential conflicts with offshore wind.

Dr. Paton currently resides in Hope Valley, Rhode Island with his wife Suzanne, who is a member of Audubon's Council of Advisors.



LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR

Rhode Island State Senator Susan Sosnowski and State Representative Arthur Handy were honored as Legislators of the Year for their long-standing dedication to Rhode Island's environment and the birds and wildlife we strive to protect. Audubon applauds them for their support of legislation that protects Rhode Island's natural resources.



State Senator Susan Sosnowski



State Representative Arthur Handy

Audubon Senior Director of Policy Meg Kerr with the Legislators of the Year: State Senator Susan Sosnowski (above) and State Representative Arthur Handy (below).

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Bristol resident Karen Sylvia was honored for her dedication and strong commitment to Audubon. Since 2014, Ms. Sylvia has served in a number of volunteer roles including assistance with preschool programs and classes, development of educational plans, and organization of classroom materials. In the three years that Karen has volunteered with Audubon, she has accrued close to 500 hours of service and has brought with her many years of teaching experience in public school classrooms.



Karen Sylvia

Left to right: Audubon Educator Lisa Maloney, Audubon Director of Volunteer Services Jon Scoones, Volunteer of the Year Karen Sylvia, and Audubon Educator Stephanie Bongiovanni.



The Audubon Society of Rhode Island gratefully acknowledges the term of service of Loren Byrne who is stepping down from the board of directors this year. Dr. Byrne will continue his service to the organization as a member of the Environmental Education Center Committee.



YOUTH CONSERVATION AWARDS

Doreen Schiff and her eighth grade students at St. Luke's School in Barrington, and educators Melissa Guillet, Donna Long and students at the Waddington School in East Providence, share the Audubon 2017 Youth Conservation Award. They are being honored for their dedication and collaborative efforts in studying and

protecting the Annawamscutt Brook and raising awareness of local wildlife and the critical habitats that these animals depend on. Students and teachers from the Waddington School and St. Luke's School gather with Audubon educators after the Society's Annual Meeting on October 22, 2017.



Waddington School, East Providence

Waddington School from left: Trey DeCosta, Will Laroche, Dominic Gelfuso, Zachary Mendo, Teacher Donna Long, Audubon Senior Director of Education Lauren Parmelee, Teacher Melissa Guillet, Nick Capobianco (holding award), Sandra Wyatt of the Barrington Land Trust, Audubon Educator Ginger Brown, William Gillbeeny.



St. Luke's School, Barrington

Sam Warr (holding award), Amrit Kobli, Hailey Osmanski, Elizabeth Fitzhugh, Teacher Doreen Schiff, Audubon Senior Director of Education Lauren Parmelee, Audubon Educator Ginger Brown, Sandra Wyatt of the Barrington Land Trust.

1897 Society Members Gather for Bird Banding at Audubon's Kingston Wildlife Research Station, Kingston, RI

Several members of Audubon's 1897 Society gathered on an early October morning to observe bird banding. The rain held off just long enough at the Kingston Wildlife Research Station for the party to witness the banding and release of several species. They were joined by Audubon Board Member Dr. Peter Paton, who has managed the station for over 17 years with assistance from students at the University of Rhode Island.

The 1897 Society celebrates leadership donors that have significantly supported Audubon's efforts to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats. For more information on the 1897 Society, please contact Senior Director of Advancement Jeff Hall at jhall@asri.org.



From Left: Mary Chase, Kim Westcott, Meghan Frost, Assistant Bander Talvi Ansel, Lead Bander Julie Shiledcastle, and Sandra Saunders.



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- Case Construction Company
- Citizens Bank
- Dassault Systemes SIMULIA Corp.
- Lyons & Zaremba, Inc.
- New England GreenStart
- Pepsico Foundation
- Perfect Supplements
- R1 Rhode Island LLC
- Rhode Island PBS
- United Natural Foods
- X Wheaton

GIFTS IN HONOR

The people listed here have been honored by family and friends who found a gift to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island to be the most meaningful way to celebrate someone important in their lives.

In Honor of: Emily and Dickson Boenning

From: Evelyn Rhodes and Edward Long

In Honor of: Wendell Clough

From: Andie Corban

In Honor of: Marilyn Sullivan

From: Heidi Seddon

MEMORIALS

Memorials serve and support the conservation and protection of Rhode Island's environment. During the past quarter, the families and friends of people listed below have chosen to remember their loved ones through a gift to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

**In Memory of:
John C. "Andy" Anderson**

From: Kathy Rohrman

**In Memory of:
Eleanor Knowles Blakeslee**

*From: John Blakeslee
Richard and Susan Graefe*

**In Memory of:
Lloyd E. Broomhead**

*From: Charles Cardente
Clyde and Susan Craig
Melissa Wagner*

**In Memory of: Deborah E.
(DeSantis-Hannuksela) Chipman**

*From: Carol Agostini
Doris Alberg
Deborah Breisner
Norma Burnell
Karen and Donald Crossman
Matthew Craton
Joan and Bob Doering
Stephen Elmasian
David and Susan Hall
David and Jean Heden
Frederick and Patricia Hedenberg
Thomas and Janet Mueller
Carol and Debora Palmer
Ralf Richter*

In Memory of: Deborah E. (DeSantis-Hannuksela) Chipman continued
*Friends at the Secretary of State Office of RI
Barbara and James Segala
Denise and Peter Stetson
Scott and Leslie Summer
Edward and Ellen Walsh
Victoria and Michael Vona*

**In Memory of:
Carolyn Loew Engdahl**

From: Charles and Nola Watson

In Memory of: Romaine (Ash) Hass

From Sondra and Richard Reid

In Memory of: Jon J. Rotatori, Sr.

From: Lee Floyd

In Memory of: Lori Schumacher

*From: Nancy Allen
Patricia Burnham
Judith Doberty
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Lindsay Green
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Mary-Beth Kaeser – Horizon Wings
Pearl River Gun Club Inc.
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AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND 1897 SOCIETY

Named for the year of the Audubon's founding, the 1897 Society honors those whose leadership gifts enable the Audubon Society of Rhode Island to advance its mission of protecting birds, other wildlife and their habitats through conservation, education and advocacy. Our donors can take satisfaction that their contributions have an immediate and lasting impact on the people, wildlife and natural beauty of Rhode Island.

The 1897 Society celebrates donors who give annually at the \$1,000 to \$10,000+ level as special contributors to our ongoing mission and shall be recognized at the following levels:

Leader — \$1,000 to \$2,499

Benefactor — \$7,500 to \$9,999

Advocate — \$2,500 to \$4,999

Visionary — \$10,000+

Conservator — \$5,000 to \$7,499

If you wish to join the 1897 Society and help promote the values and mission of Audubon, please contact Jeff Hall at 401-949-5454 ext. 5017.

In recognition of their philanthropic charity, members of the 1897 Society enjoy a variety of exclusive benefits, including invitations to member-only events and special communications.

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND
**BIG YEAR
IN A LITTLE STATE**

In the spirit of the famous competition, Audubon is hosting
BIG YEAR IN A LITTLE STATE
For details and registration visit www.bigyearri.org

Steps Taken at the Statehouse

Editorial by Meg Kerr, Senior Director of Policy

Audubon's 2017 legislative year was very successful, setting the stage for important work this fall and winter. Highlights include:



Passage of H 6256 (Representative Handy) – *House Resolution Respectfully Requesting the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to Continue Collaborating with the Pollinator Working Group Established to Make Findings and Recommendations with Regard to Maintaining, Protecting and Enhancing Pollinator Habitat and Health in Rhode Island.* This bill continues the work of the Pollinator Working Group that is staffed by Audubon and the RI Nursery and Landscape Association. Recommendations from year one include strengthening the state's pesticide program in RI DEM, working with state agencies including the Department of Transportation on enhancing pollinator habitats, and increasing public education programs.

Passage of S 0982 (Senators Sosnowski, Coyne, Calkin, Kettle, Conley) – *Senate Resolution Creating a Special Legislative Commission to Study Pesticide Control Regulations.* This study commission was a top priority recommendation of the Pollinator Working Group. The Commission has eleven members appointed by the President of the Senate, including one seat for the Environment Council of RI. The Commission will meet at the call of the Chair and will report by March 1, 2018.

Passage of H 5427 (Representatives Blazejewski, Edwards, Walsh, Marshall, Marszalkowski) / S 952 (Senators DiPalma, Sosnowski, Miller, Coyne, Seveney) – *Relating to Property and Works: The Green Buildings Act.* This bill amends the state's existing Green Buildings Act, adding metrics that promote additional development of green infrastructure on public properties. It was the Green Infrastructure Coalition's legislative priority. The bill phases in the new metrics with four pilot projects. We will be watching implementation closely. Stay tuned!



Water supply management was under discussion this session. More than 60% of the state relies on Providence Water's Scituate Reservoir for their drinking water supply. In 2012, Superstorm Sandy almost over-topped Newport's water supply reservoir. The July 2013 report from the Rhode Island Department of Health, "SafeWater RI, Ensuring Safe Water for Rhode Island's Future" identified 11 of the state's 34 water utilities as being at high risk from coastal flooding due to climate change.

To begin to address these concerns, we were pleased to see passage of **S 0887 (Senators Sosnowski, Coyne, and Conley)** – *Creating a Special Legislative Commission to Study the RI Water Resources Board.* This Senate Resolution creates a 15-member study commission to review the functions of the Water Resources Board and make recommendations to the Senate to strengthen the governance of the state's water supply.

There were also a number of bills related to renewable energy development on farms and on land in the Farm Forest and Open Space program. Audubon opposes the Invenergy plant, and we want to see rapid development of renewable energy. We believe it is important to protect the habitat and other ecosystem values provided by farms, nurseries, forests, and open space. We want to help farmers by protecting farmland and providing supplemental income from renewable development. And we want to ensure that renewable development considers social equity.

Meeting all these criteria is challenging. We are working with the Office of Energy Resources and other stakeholders to create a pathway to thoughtfully and strategically achieve the state renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals while promoting equity and minimizing detrimental environmental impacts.

It is already a busy fall. Sign up for advocacy updates and watch Audubon's Facebook page to follow the work!

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND REPORT

Volume 51, Number 4, November 2017

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or recycle. Thank you.

The Report is the Audubon Society's member newsletter and updates members on the current issues and actions of the Society, its staff and volunteers. We encourage your participation and you may send items that will be considered for publication to: Hope Foley, Managing Editor, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI 02917 or by email to hfoley@asri.org.

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JOIN OUR LEAGUE OF SUPERHEROES

Audubon is in need of superheroes – people who go above and beyond. Our current endowment provides only one-third of the necessary funds to keep our organization impactful and dynamic. The Invincible Audubon Campaign will provide needed funding to permanently advocate for nature, to educate children on the importance of our environment, and to protect and defend our nearly 9,500 acres of wildlife habitat. In short... to make Audubon INVINCIBLE.

The Invincible Audubon campaign is different than our annual fundraising. Invincible Audubon is meant to provide permanent funding. Funding that we can rely and plan on for decades to come.



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see page 11



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Fort Wildlife Refuge, North Smithfield, RI
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Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA
January 19, 2018; 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, Exeter, RI
January 26, 2018*; 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Owls and Ales*
Audubon Environmental Education Center, Bristol, RI
January 27 & February 17, 2018; 6:30 – 8:30 pm

* For ages 21+

OWLS OF NEW ENGLAND

Indoor Lecture with an
Owl Ambassador

Powder Mill Ledges
Wildlife Refuge,
Smithfield, RI
January 4, 2018;
6:30 – 8:00 pm



Holiday Happenings

Sea Glass Jewelry & Holiday Ornaments

Audubon Environmental Education Center, Bristol, RI
December 9, 2017; 11:00 am – 12:30 pm *Space is limited.*
Register through the events calendar at www.asri.org.

Christmas Tree Sale & Photos with Santa

Audubon Environmental Education Center, Bristol, RI
December 2, 2017; 9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Visit the events calendar at www.asri.org for details.

Audubon Holiday Craft Fair

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Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield, RI
December 2, 2017; 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

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Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield, RI
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