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Audubon Society of Rhode Island

REPORT



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VOLUME 50, NO. 1

WINTER 2016

Flight of the Osprey *Audubon Citizen Scientist Documents Rare Osprey Behavior*



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From the Desk of the Executive Director



With Citizen Science and Audubon, YOU can make a difference!

Founded in 1897 for the protection of birds, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island is one of the oldest conservation organizations in the country. Our longevity is not accidental – it is due in large part to the steadfast support over the years of our members and volunteers who have shared our common concern for birds, wildlife and the health of our environment.

Audubon's concern for the Osprey population dates back to the early 1960s, when the organization lobbied to stop the broadcast spraying of DDT – this was shortly after the publishing of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring." The impact of DDT on the bird population, particularly Osprey and other raptors, had become significant. The use of DDT was banned in 1972, but damage had been done. In 2010 Audubon took the reins of the Osprey Monitoring program from the RI Department of Environmental Management in order to continue monitoring the comeback of these birds. The program continues to expand each year as monitors closely document the growing Osprey population along our shores.

This issue of the REPORT features one volunteer's commitment to Osprey monitoring, and how his efforts led to uncovering new information and increased understanding of the species behavior.

Volunteers not only contribute to the knowledge base of what is happening to our local wildlife populations, but also help guide our management priorities going forward.

We encourage you to get involved in citizen scientist projects such as Osprey Monitoring or the Rhode Island Bird Atlas. Not only are these projects a great way to help protect birds but also offer a terrific excuse to get out and enjoy the wonderful nature that can be found in our little state.

Thank you for your continued support.

Lawrence J. F. Taft
Executive Director



Ed Hughes

Carve Your Name in "Stone"

Endowment funds are like blocks of granite. They last. And last. And one way you can extend your influence into the future is by carving your name in an Audubon endowment fund.

Generations from now, the leadership and staff at the Audubon Society of Rhode Island – and the people they serve – will benefit from your foresight and generosity. They will see your name on your endowment and know that you cared enough about our state's environment to support the ongoing mission of Audubon. You can create an endowment in your own name or you can memorialize a loved one or someone else who has strongly impacted your life.

Endowments can be established with Audubon now, during your lifetime. You can use cash, securities, real estate – almost anything of value. Or you can arrange for an endowment to be established through your will at the time of death. One reason for establishing an endowment now is to have in place a means whereby friends and loved ones can tangibly express their thoughtfulness during bereavement. Being able to give to something permanent that represents your ongoing influence can mean a lot to them.

When you establish an endowment, you accomplish several things: You express confidence in the future of Audubon ... so others will do the same; you create a lasting legacy ... for you and you family; you support areas of Audubon's work that is important to you; and you make a difference!

To find out more about creating your own endowment fund, contact our Senior Director of Advancement, Jeff Hall at 401-949-5454 ext 3017 or email at jhall@asri.org.

Carving your name in "stone" at Audubon may be one of the most important things you do for yourself, your family and for future generations.

An Osprey Named Lizzie

Osprey Behavior Documented by Audubon Monitor

By Hugh Markey | Photographs by Butch Lombardi

IN THE SUMMER OF 2015, A YOUNGSTER PULLED UP STAKES FROM HER New Hampshire home and made her way to Rhode Island. She was a hungry juvenile whose story captivated hundreds of Facebook followers across the country. She would at turns fascinate, delight, and sadden people who became personally involved in her adventures. Her behavior would surprise scientists and add to the base of knowledge on her kind.

This youngster was not a person, but an Osprey named Lizzie. Audubon Osprey Monitor Butch Lombardi had the rare opportunity to keep scientists and the general public up to date on her journey.

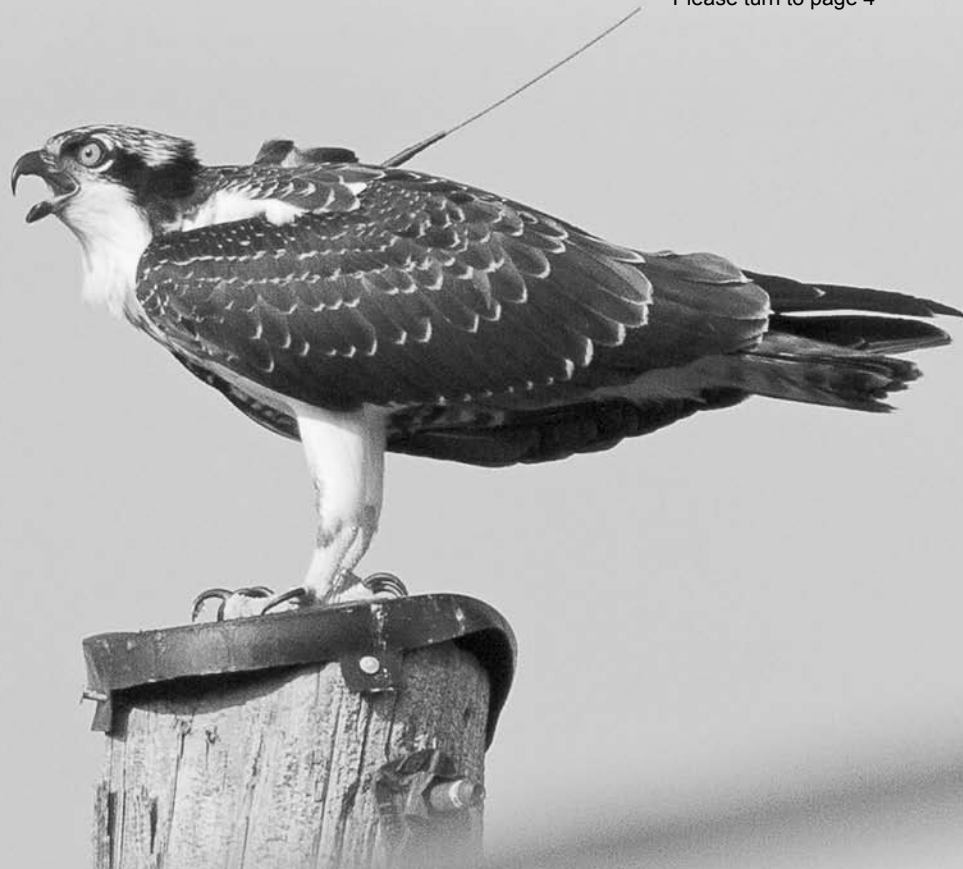
LIZZIE LANDING IN RHODE ISLAND

Last August in New Hampshire, Rob Bierregaard placed a nanotransmitter on a newly fledged Osprey that they named Lizzie. The device featured an antenna roughly the width of a human hair, which sent out a pulse that allowed scientists to track its movements. Bierregaard, a research associate with the Academy of Natural Science at Drexel University, has tagged 95 Ospreys since 2000 as part of his research on this raptor's behavior and population. Two days after being tagged, Lizzie left the nest. Her signals indicated that she was headed towards Rhode Island.

When Lizzie reached the Ocean State her signal indicated that her migration south had stalled. The data Bierregaard saw on Lizzie pinpointed the Palmer River in Warren as the location where she had stopped. Bierregaard was concerned, but he knew where to go for help. He'd worked with the Audubon Society of Rhode Island before, and hoped that one of their Osprey Monitors could solve the mystery.

Audubon's Director of Volunteer Services and the Osprey Monitoring Program Jon Scoones received the first contact from Bierregaard regarding Lizzie. "I got the call on Sunday, and luckily the coordinates put Lizzie in Butch Lombardi's area. Butch is one of our go-to guys,

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An Osprey Named Lizzie

Continued from page 3

and he just took the ball and ran with it.” Lombardi has logged some of the greatest number of observation hours with the program, and had a long history of working with Audubon to monitor birds, conduct training sessions, and rebuild nests. He is also an award-winning photographer, and uses his camera for recording observations. “So this was just a perfect, perfect fit.”

THE NEST HOPPER

Butch took the assignment on immediately. “I was thrilled to do it. The nest was easily accessible to me; I could literally drive to it in five minutes. The only request they had was for me to verify she was there.” Despite having been a long time Audubon Osprey monitor, this particular opportunity was unique. “I was so interested in this thing. I see a lot of Osprey, but once the chicks fledge, there’s no way to know which ones they are. They had a tracker on Lizzie, and when she left Rhode Island I would actually be able to follow the journey all the way down to South America.”

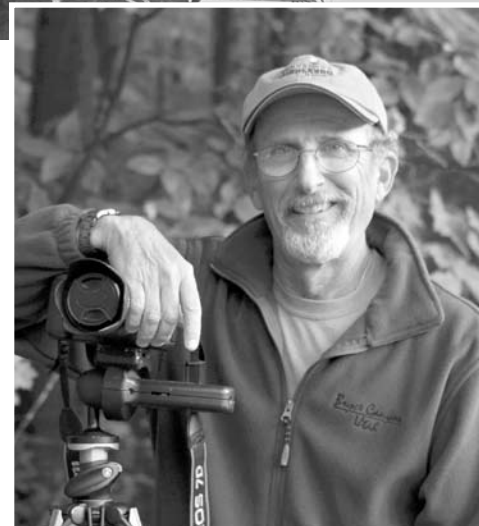
On August 17, immediately after receiving an email from Scoones, Lombardi drove out to the location. In short order, he was able to spot Lizzie. The setting sun reflected off the nanotransmitter attached to the center of her back, which let Lombardi identify her even before getting his equipment set up. After verifying that she seemed in good condition, Lombardi left with a plan to begin what would become multiple visits each day.

During this time, Butch kept a record of his visits to see Lizzie. His notes provide a detailed record of her behavior as he observed from the first day out. “Aug. 18, 2015: I returned to the nest just after sunrise. First thing I did was verify that Lizzie was still in her adopted nest – she was.” Immediately after arriving, Lombardi heard Lizzie calling to be fed. He wondered how the request would be received, since the juvenile was a long way from home. About 100 yards distant, an adult appeared to be paying attention to the newcomer without actually moving. For a time, the pair seemed in a kind of stalemate, with Lizzie calling and the adult sitting and watching. As if she were intent on making her point crystal clear, Lizzie flew to a perch quite close to the adult, continuing her plaintive cries to be fed. Still nothing. Frustrated at the lack of response, Lizzie took flight, made a close pass over the head of the adult, and returned to her adopted nest once more. This time, however, the adult seemed to get the message and followed close behind Lizzie. In short order, the adult landed in the nest,



Lizzie is shown at left, in her adopted nest. She had just driven off another young Osprey (possibly one that had fledged from that nest) after an aerial skirmish over a fish, resulting in Lizzie keeping her meal.

*An accomplished
photographer, Lombardi's
pictures would help followers
bond with Lizzie as more and
more people began to eagerly
await the next update.*



dropped off a fish, and left. The deal was done.

Except, that is, for the resident chick, the actual offspring of the generous adult. Lombardi describes the encounter in the journal entry of August 18: “Immediately, a chick – one I assume was a resident chick from Lizzie’s adopted nest – flew in and tried to claim the fish. This resulted in a brief aerial skirmish over the nest between the two chicks, with Lizzie keeping her fish. I have photographs of this encounter.”

This behavior, known as nest hopping, has been observed in youngsters moving around nearby nests, according to Bierregaard, but this phenomenon was something new for an Osprey not hatched in the location. “It’s completely normal for an Osprey to visit another nest, but it’s usually done in the immediate neighborhood. This is the first time that anyone has ever documented a long distance mooching event like this. It made total sense, but I was amazed that it was such a

long distance occurrence. It was fascinating, and I couldn’t wait to see how it all played out.”

SOCIAL MEDIA: FOR THE BIRDS?

Thus Lizzie found a new home. Butch would continue to visit multiple times a day for the next two weeks, keeping a journal of his visits and transmitting his information to Scoones and Bierregaard. In addition, he would begin posting his finds on Facebook. An accomplished photographer, Lombardi’s pictures would help followers bond with Lizzie as more and more people began to eagerly await the next update. Four days after his first encounter with Lizzie, Butch posted this on Facebook:

“August 21: I have witnessed the adult female feed her regularly. Of the 9 visits I’ve made I have witnessed Lizzie being fed by her Palmer River mother several times. Also just about every time I’ve been there, if Lizzie isn’t being fed she already

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REFUGE SPOTLIGHT

By Scott Ruhren, Senior Director of Conservation

Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge

Home of the Audubon Environmental Education Center

A BEAUTY BY THE BAY



The Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge in Bristol is unique among Audubon's many public properties. Truthfully, most visitors, staff and neighbors refer to this land and the inviting natural history museum built on it as the Environmental Education Center (EEC). The Center is open year round and is home to wonderful exhibits of natural history, live marine life in recently renovated aquarium tanks, and much more. It is also the site of countless environmental education classes, family programs, lectures and summer camp.

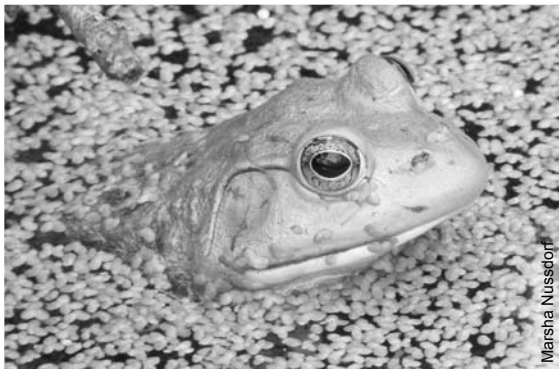
The bulk of the McIntosh land was acquired in 1992 and a small addition was made in 1998. The property once belonged to the DesLauriers family, who were well known in Bristol in the early 1900s. At that time, most of it was a family farm where corn and other crops were grown. Early on, the refuge was known as Jacob's Point Wildlife Refuge. (Jacob's Point is the large salt marsh and shore line just north of McIntosh.)

Today the refuge is officially named in honor of the last owner

and property donor Claire D. McIntosh. Claire was born in 1915 and grew up in the family home at 1389 Hope Street. She spent most of her adult life there. (The house is still in its original location, but does not belong to Audubon).

Much of the dry upland of the McIntosh refuge and neighboring land had been farmed for many generations prior to Audubon's acquisition and briefly afterward. In fact, the grasslands that stretch below the Environmental Education Center reflect the agricultural history of the region and provide valuable habitat for birds, other animals and plants. Audubon still occasionally cultivates corn in a section of the field, but no commercial agriculture has occurred since the last farmer worked the land in the early days of the refuge. To maintain the current grasslands, Audubon mows half of the fields every year to reduce the amount of woody shrubs and trees. Pheasant and Bobwhite once nested here but have not been seen for many years. Red-tailed Hawks are

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Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge

Continued from page 5

frequently seen perched in the tree line or soaring overhead.

An easy walk starts at the Center and heads west toward Narragansett Bay for nearly a mile. From the lawn you can turn right on the wood chip trail or left on the trail recently renovated for better access for visitors with strollers or wheel chairs. Both forks of the grassland trail head down into the shade of a red maple swamp. The wide and sturdy boardwalk keeps visitors out of the sensitive wetlands while allowing up-close views of plants and wildlife year round. Large trees attract spring and fall migrating birds as well as summer nesters. On the drier sites, woodland shrubs and herbs flourish. A huge population of trout lily dots the forest floor with dainty yellow flowers in spring. In late summer wild grapes are abundant in this section.

The East Bay Bicycle Path passes through the lower half of the refuge where the terrain transitions into marsh. Many bicyclists stop here to visit the Center or walk down for a view of the bay. Along the bike path, the small freshwater pond, covered with duckweed during summer, is a great spot to watch green frogs and bullfrogs, turtles, green heron and occasionally snakes. Look both ways as you cross the bike path and continue to head west down

the boardwalk. From this point freshwater swamp species such as red maple and black gum trees start to give way to marsh grasses and shrubs. The water is fresh along the McIntosh boardwalk but north into Warren and the expansive Jacob's Point landscape, conditions are brackish or salty.

Common reed, best known as Phragmites, is an obvious dominant feature of the open marsh along the McIntosh boardwalk. Though dense stands of Phragmites are not hospitable to ducks and most wading birds, Red-winged Blackbirds and Marsh Wrens nest amongst the tall stems of this invasive plant. In winter you can hear the tap-tap of Downy Woodpeckers hunting for insects hiding in the hollow stems. Yellow Warblers, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Yellow-billed Cuckoos and many other native birds can be seen or heard in the wet woodlands and forest edges. Muskrat and otter explore the marsh. In warmer weather, look for floating, chewed stems of aquatic plants, a sure sign of muskrats. Droppings full of fish scales are a sign that otter have been there. Occasionally, Sora, a type of native rail, are heard or seen in the marsh near the bay. Canada Geese nest in open sections of the marsh.

It is hard to tell now, but much of the marsh burned in 2008. A wind-driven fire, originating in Jacob's Point, sped south along the coast burning much of the dry vegetation. Firefighters met the flames near the boardwalk where the fire was finally stopped. Habitats are resilient to such disturbance. Plants come back and the habitat shows little change after years of recovery. Red-tailed Hawks often use the dead trees as perches and volunteers erected an Osprey platform using one of them. If you keep an eye out, you can still see the occasional blackened tree.

Unfortunately, man-made structures are not as resilient as nature. Sections of the boardwalk were not so lucky and Audubon had to replace deck and railings in some areas after the fire. Look for a few small burn scars on the beams as you head west.

The boardwalk ends at the shore. From here you have a spectacular 180-degree view of the bay. It is a short, comfortable walk back to the bike path or the Environmental Education Center.



An Osprey Named Lizzie

Continued from page 4

has a fish and is eating. How long will this go on? Not sure. At some point Mom will migrate. Whether Lizzie leaves before or after only time will tell.”

This was also the only day Lombardi saw the Osprey leave the nest. During a morning visit, he saw Lizzie receive a fish from an adult, make several loops around the area, and leave his line of sight. She was gone for most of the day, but by the time Butch returned for his evening check-in, Lizzie was back once more. Butch had received a message saying that it looked like the Osprey had begun its migration south, but Lizzie’s presence on the Palmer proved that she was not yet ready to leave her easy lifestyle.

NOT ALL KITTENS AND PUPPIES

“People tend to look at wildlife like it’s all kittens and puppies, but the wild world is much more brutal than people want to think about.” In a phone interview, Butch Lombardi recalls the rapid evolution of his feelings for Lizzie, along with those following her story on Facebook (FB). “I was really attached to her. I posted it on FB, I got emotionally invested. I thought she was spunky. She would not let other chicks from that nest back in once they fledged. Right after she got delivered a fish, another fledged chick showed up but she drove them off. I got followers from all over the country while I was posting about her.” On August 25, Butch came by for an afternoon visit. As usual, while he was there, he took pictures of the famous bird. They turned out to be the last he would take of her while she was alive.

Butch would search the area multiple times a day for the next six days with no Lizzie in sight. On August 28, he received word that there had been no movement on her tracking device for several days. He continued to patrol the area, alone or with his grandson in tow, in his kayak or on foot. No Lizzie.

“I would post each time I went out looking for her. Some people said they didn’t want to know how it turned out. I warned them that things were not looking good.” Lombardi’s years of working with Audubon’s monitoring program told him that the odds of Lizzie’s being found alive were not good. “Eighty percent of fledglings will not survive migration. So Lizzie was not the exception, she was the rule.”

On Monday, August 31, Butch took his kayak out on the Palmer River. He had learned from Bierregaard the coordinates of where the Lizzie’s signals were coming. After pulling his kayak up near the supposed location, he walked about fifteen feet when he spotted her lying in a bed of eel grass. Scavengers had already begun the process of reclaiming her, so he was unable to determine a cause of death, only that there seemed to be no signs of burns from power lines or broken bones. After removing the transmitter and a leg band, he thought of bringing her home to give her a burial. He decided against the idea. “I decided to leave her out in the marsh where she had taken up residence.”

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Get Involved!

It may seem far away, but spring will eventually return to New England and with it will come the Ospreys!

Audubon is always looking for new Osprey monitors – citizen scientists who enjoy observing wildlife and are interested in making a valuable contribution to the knowledge of the species.

Jon Scoones, Audubon director of volunteer services, organizes the training for this program as well as compiles data obtained from nest observations across the state. He explains that during the program’s one-day training session, volunteers learn how to identify Ospreys by sex and age, and are taught what to look for in Osprey behavior such as recognizing when incubation is occurring. Watching what the birds are up to is more than a matter of curiosity, according to Scoones. “Ospreys are an indicator species. That means that their activities are an indication of how healthy the habitat is in which they live. With a diet consisting of about 98% fish, if there is something wrong with an Osprey’s health, it means that there’s something wrong with their habitat.”

If you are interested in joining this network of volunteer observers, please visit www.riosprey.info for more information.

All new monitors are requested to participate in one of the following training sessions. Please register with Jon Scoones at jscoones@asri.org or 401-245-7500 ext. 3044.

- March 13, 2016; 2:00 pm – Audubon Environmental Education Center, Bristol, RI
- March 20, 2016; 2:00 pm – Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield, RI
- April 3, 2016; 2:00 pm - RI National Wildlife Refuge at Kettle Pond, Charlestown, RI



Ed Hughes

A Little History....

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island has a long history of supporting healthy habitat and monitoring the local Osprey population as it rebounded from the effects of DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane).

Originally initiated in 1977 by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), and managed since 2010 by Audubon, the Osprey Monitoring Program was established to carefully follow the state Osprey population as it recovered from the effects of DDT, a pesticide used in the 40s, 50s and 60s. In 1978, the future looked grim for these raptors, as DDT had taken a major toll on the population of this fish-eating bird. The poison had worked its way through the food chain and resulted in very thin and weak eggshells, which easily broke when incubated. The chemical had been legally banned in 1972, thanks to efforts by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and other environmental groups across the country, but its impact was still felt in raptor populations for years.

Since 1978 the Osprey Monitoring program has been made possible due to the efforts of biologists and volunteers who have diligently observed all known nests in Rhode Island and carefully recorded data on how many chicks fledged each year.

Audubon staff and volunteers have also worked with Rob Bierregaard many times over the years. In 2005 Audubon funded a nanotransmitter banded on the first Rhode Island Osprey to have its migration route tracked. Named Conanicus, it was fledged from a nest site in Audubon’s Marsh Meadows Wildlife Refuge in Jamestown.

Learn more about the Osprey Monitoring program at www.riosprey.info.

LET'S GO BIRDING

By Laura Carberry

Big Year in a Little State!

It's cold and dark this time of year. It can be hard to get moving. But we have all heard it a million times: to beat the winter blues we should head outside, get exercise, and be with others! So sign up now for Audubon's "Big Year in a Little State" and let's go birding!

Audubon holds this annual contest to help support the conservation of bird and wildlife habitat - and to promote birding in the state. A "Big Year" is an informal competition among birders to see who can spot the largest number of bird species in a calendar year. This tradition began in the 1930s when a traveling businessman named Guy Emerson recorded seeing 497 bird species in one year. Since then, folks have been tallying birds every year - trying to increase their own numbers or competing with the record of others.

But this doesn't have to be a competition unless you want it to be. I participate simply to observe birds, seek out new destinations and meet new friends. In other words, just to have fun!

If you are a beginner birder and you want to learn how to identify species, join an Audubon program. I offer free Wednesday morning bird walks throughout the year that will help you discover new species and explore some great birding destinations. Bring your binoculars and get ready to meet some new friends!

Perhaps you are an experienced birder or joined us last year....why not see if you can beat your personal record or add to your species list? Or try to be the best in your category?

Audubon has designated categories for all levels, from first time birders to experts. You can even join as a family and decide how much or little time and effort you can spend birding. There is no deadline to begin and we will have special walks and a bird banding demonstration for those that join. And at the end of the year celebrate with friends and compare notes.

If you are looking for a reason to get out of the house, give "Big Year in a Little State" a try. You will be amazed at how many bird species are found in Little Rhody!

Please visit www.bigyearri.org for details and to register.



Birds First

for the ethical observation of birds and wildlife

Birding and wildlife photography might seem like benign endeavors but they sometimes stray from innocent to disruptive unless a basic understanding and respect for nature is maintained.

To provide guidance in ethical bird and wildlife observation, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island recommends the following:

- View wildlife from a safe distance. Respect the animal's spatial needs. If wildlife interrupts its behavior (resting, feeding, mating, etc.), then you are too close. When a bird flies away from you, it is because you are disturbing it. Research has also shown that in some instances human presence may cause a condition where a bird may become nearly paralyzed with fear, to a point that could injure or put the bird in peril.
 - Never crowd, pursue, prevent escape, or create deliberate noises to distract, startle or harass wildlife. Never disturb animals engaged in breeding, nesting, or caring for young.
 - Stay on roads, trails, and paths. Do not harm the natural habitat.
 - Respect the rights of others. Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission. Always be careful about where and how you park your car. Never park on someone's lawn or in anyone's driveway. Never block a gate, road, path, or other access.
 - Being quiet is a simple courtesy especially in residential areas before 9:00 a.m. Be careful not to point optics toward people or houses.
 - When there is an unusual bird in the state, we all want to hear about it and observe it. However, we must make certain that our conduct is above reproach. Evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area before spreading the word on its location. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.
 - It is best not to use bird recordings in the field. Using recordings may be harmful to birds during times of reproduction, or when weather conditions are difficult and they strive for survival. A bird disrupted by a recording will often expose itself by leaving cover, and its natural vigilance towards predators can be seriously affected.
 - Behavior by excited birders "anxious" to get a closer look or a better photograph can disturb not only the birds but also the other birders watching nearby. Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites.
 - Migratory birds are protected by federal law with fines as high as \$15,000 and prison. Those who see birders or photographers harassing or threatening birds in Rhode Island should report the incident to the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish and Wildlife at 401-222-6800 or after-hours at 401-222-3070.
- The thoughtless actions of one overzealous birder or photographer jeopardize the reputation of others. Be a role model and educate others through your actions.

Adapted from the America Birding Association's "Birding Code of Ethics."

Audubon Welcomes A New Avian Ambassador

Young Red-tailed Hawk Calls the Environmental Education Center Home

Don't be fooled by those fluffy white feathers. His golden eyes, white breast feathers and chocolate-brown streaked pattern on his back and wings do leave a stunning impression. But underneath those good looks he is a formidable bird of prey. A young male Red-tailed Hawk is the newest avian ambassador cared for by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. Visitors to the Environmental Education Center now have the opportunity to see this beautiful bird in a new and specially constructed hawk observation exhibit at the Audubon Environmental Education Center. Visitors will be able to observe him from both inside as well as outside of the building.

Less than a year old, it is believed that this hawk was injured by a fall as a fledgling, when he was approximately 12 weeks old, causing serious injury to his left wing. Because of this break and how it healed, he has limited ability for flight and is non-releasable into the wild.

Last August he was spotted hopping around the median of Route 8 in Shelton, Connecticut, obviously unable to take flight. He had been living and scavenging on the ground for over three weeks when rescued. Christine Peyreigne, a wildlife rehabilitator in Weston, Connecticut, cared for the hawk for over 5 months, hoping to see him recover completely. After a veterinarian determined that the bird was permanently injured, they reached out to Audubon.



Name the New Hawk!

If you love birds and are clever with words...join Audubon's celebration and enter a contest to name the new Red-tailed Hawk! Audubon encourages the community to choose a name and enter the contest during their visit to the Environmental Education Center or online at www.asri.org. Additional contest details will be available on the Audubon website on February 15, 2016.

Hand Carved...One Feather at a Time

Exquisitely carved and life-like songbirds, raptors, waterfowl and other wildlife were showcased at the Audubon Society of Rhode Island Bird and Wildlife Carving Exposition on November 7 and 8, 2015 at the Audubon Environmental Education Center.

Close to 800 visitors admired and purchased

the work of acclaimed and award-winning artists from throughout the Northeast. For many collectors, this exposition is one of the most admired in New England.

Mark your calendar for the 2016 Bird and Wildlife Carving Exposition, to be held on November 5 and 6, 2016.



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BIRD WATCHING



Rhode Island PBS  **Learn** 

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RIPBS.ORG

Spot the Beetle, Stop the Beetle

Help prevent the spread of Asian Longhorned Beetle. When hiking the trails, look for signs of the beetle.

For more information on how to detect this destructive invasive insect, visit www.asri.org and click on "conservation."



2015 PHOTO CONTEST

Congratulations to the following photographers whose images were selected as the winning photographs.

FIRST PLACE



Peter Green

Photo taken at Audubon Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, Bristol, RI

SECOND PLACE



Abeselom Zerit

Photo taken at Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA

THIRD PLACE



Butch Lombardi

Photo taken at Audubon Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, Bristol, RI

Many thanks to the many photographers who submitted such a wide range of wonderful images. Audubon received over 120 contest entries.

.....

Audubon thanks *Providence Journal* staff photographers Kris Craig and Glenn Osmundson for taking on the difficult task of judging the photo contest.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Let's Do It Again!
Look for details on the
2016 Audubon Photo
Contest in May.
www.asri.org



Kevin Bernard

Photo taken at Audubon Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, Bristol, RI



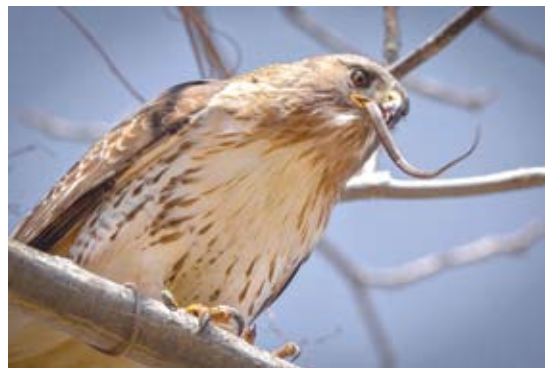
Stephen Tierney

Photo taken at Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA



Abeselom Zerit

Photo taken at Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA



Jason Major

Photo taken at Audubon Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, Bristol, RI



Abeselom Zerit

Photo taken at Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA



Stephen Tierney

Photo taken at Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA



Heidi Piccerelli

Photo taken at Audubon Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, Bristol, RI

Ducks

By Lauren Parmelee, Senior Director of Education

My name is Lauren Parmelee and I am Audubon's new director of education. One of my favorite things to do is to go birding. During the winter, ducks are the birds that motivate me to get outside to explore even when it is cold, windy and gray! Why duck birding?

- If you sneak up quietly, ducks are big enough to see without binoculars.
- Ducks are pretty easy to find. In the winter, they are often paddling around on open water in ponds, marshes, coves and on the ocean.
- Many ducks come in beautiful colors and patterns. In the right light many "glow" with iridescence.
- Ducks are inspiring and comical! It can be 10°F outside and they are having a fine old time feeding, calling, preening and showing off for their friends.



Red-breasted Merganser

Grab your binoculars and go to these great spots to watch ducks!

- Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge in Middletown
- Beavertail State Park in Jamestown
- Truston Pond National Wildlife Refuge in South Kingstown
- The Mooshassuck, Woonasquatucket and Seekonk Rivers in Providence
- Apponaug Cove in Warwick



Common Eider



Hooded Merganser

Tips for duck birding:

- When learning to "duck" start by identifying the males. Most females are drab — great camouflage for sitting on the nest, but harder to identify.
- Learn the life history of ducks, www.allaboutbirds.org, to gather clues of where to look for them in different seasons. In Rhode Island, there are a lot of ducks who are just here for the winter because our coastal habitats provide food and shelter.
- Some ducks dive to find food, so be patient...they'll be back up in a minute. Some ducks are dabblers eating at or just under the surface... they often tip up to reach their food so get to know your duck tails!
- Also look for "duck-like" birds that spend the winter here — Common and Red-throated Loons, Horned Grebes, Brant and Great Cormorants too!
- Please enjoy, but do not feed tame ducks and geese. Bread and popcorn is not good for them!



AUDUBON BIRTHDAY PARTIES

Go Wild!

BIRTHDAY PARTIES WITH
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- 1 CHOOSE A LOCATION!
- 2 MAKE IT YOURS!
- 3 HAVE FUN!

For more information, visit www.audubonbirthdayparties.com



Audubon Welcomes New Directors

Lauren Parmelee, Senior Director of Education

Active in science and environmental education for many years, Lauren has worked at a number of museums, nature centers and research facilities around the country. Since moving to Rhode Island in 2002, she has been actively involved in the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association (RIEEA), a collaborative organization that promotes environmental literacy for all. Lauren is also an experienced birder who leads walks around the region and regularly teaches a popular *Beginning Birding* class for Audubon members.



Meg Kerr, Senior Director of Policy

An environmental scientist, advocate and policy analyst, Meg has expertise in water quality and watershed management and experience working for government, university and non-profit organizations. Before joining Audubon, she was the Director of RI Clean Water Action. In 2015 Meg was part of the advocacy team that developed and passed the Resilient Rhode Island Act, addressing climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation. Meg helped form the RI Blueways Alliance, to promote recreational use of Rhode Island's rivers, lakes and coastal waters, and currently serves as treasurer. She also currently serves as secretary of the Environment Council of Rhode Island.



Join the Best Team in the League! Audubon Seeks Youth Volunteers for Summer Conservation Projects

Often when you hear the words "summer league," it involves sports. Audubon invites teens to join a different type of league, one that focuses instead on environmental conservation.

Collaboratively managed through Audubon Society of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy, and the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, teens in the Youth Conservation League take on land stewardship projects and spend hours with conservation staff on Audubon wildlife refuges across the state.



If you are an interested teen or know of a youth that enjoys working outside, please contact Scott Ruhren, Audubon Senior Director of Conservation at sruhren@asri.org for more information.



WE BIRDS

RI Audubon Nature Shop: Your one-stop shopping-spot for all your backyard birding needs
FEEDERS, HOUSES, SEEDS AND SUET

Plus, birding/nature books for all ages; science/nature toys, games and puzzles; stuffed animals, puppets and jewelry.



Don't forget to have your next birthday party or private event with Audubon.

the Audubon Nature shop
This shop is for the birds!

Audubon Society of Rhode Island Environmental Education Center

1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI
401-949-5454 • www.asri.org

Hours: Tues-Sat 9am-5pm; Sun 12pm-5pm

Thank You!

Gifts in Honor

The people listed below 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: Susanne Archambault
From: Avery Marques

In Honor of: Dean Barnard
From: Ann Barnard

In Honor of: R. Keith Blackwell
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In Honor of: Martin & Charlotte Sornborger
From: Andrew Sornborger

In Honor of: Lawrence Taft
From: Alicia Taft

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: Peter Hans Aschaffenburg
From: Joseph and Kathleen Pezza

In Memory of: Peggy and Ben Billingham
From: Marilyn Newman

In Memory of: Andrew Boyes
From: Lloyd and Cille Griffith
Christopher Griffith and family
Lynley Novello
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Stephanie Stark
Paul Wood

In Memory of: Steven Brin, M.D.
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In Memory of: Philip Budlong
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In Memory of: Douglas Cory
From: Ralph and Gail Bliss
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In Memory of: Dan Elkins
From: Karen Elkins

In Memory of: Sophie Hawkes
From: Calvert and Joanne Hawkes

In Memory of: Frances Holmes
From: Barbara Barry

In Memory of: Miriam Rose Linsey and Martin Joseph Linsey
From: Herman H. Rose

In Memory of: Roland and Mary Mergener
From: Theresa Mergener

In Memory of: Linda Michaud
From: Anne Duhaime

In Memory of: Sylva Rhodes
From: Constance Costa

Audubon Receives \$3.4 Million Bequest for Habitat Preservation

Audubon Society of Rhode Island has received a \$3.4 million bequest from the estate of the late Carolyn E. Aust.

Mrs. Aust, a former Smithfield, Rhode Island resident was nearly 100 years old at the time of her death in May 2014. She is remembered as a nature enthusiast who enjoyed observing birds and other wildlife in the natural world around her.

"As Mrs. Aust wished, these funds will be used to preserve and steward the nearly 10,000 acres of wildlife habitat that Audubon permanently protects in Rhode Island," said Audubon Executive Director Lawrence Taft. "This gift represents the single largest donation to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island in the 117-year history of the organization. Audubon is honored to receive this generous bequest from Mrs. Aust and is appreciative of the confidence she placed in the Society. The Clifford R. Aust, Carolyn E. Aust, and Thomas B. Capron Fund will be established at Audubon in their memory."



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A Legacy Lives On

BAYARD EWING

Through a rare book auction in Boston, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island recently benefited from the sale of the *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*, illustrated by John James Audubon. Former Audubon Board President Mr. Bayard Ewing donated the books to the Society in 1962. The auction proceeds, which amounted to \$197,000, have been added to Audubon's permanent endowment. A special fund has been named in honor of Mr. Ewing as a lasting legacy for his extraordinary generosity to the Society. His five children unanimously consented to the sale of the books, and all proceeds from the investment of the Bayard Ewing Memorial Fund will support the mission of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

Bayard Ewing served on the Board of Directors of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island for many years, starting in 1968. He served as President of the Board from 1983 to 1987, during which time he spearheaded the planning and fundraising efforts to relocate Audubon headquarters from Providence to Smithfield. Mr. Ewing was truly the leadership force in fundraising to build these offices, the energizer for the entire project. Mr. Ewing passed away in 1991.

Over the years, the *Quadrupeds*, along with other rare books donated to the Society, had been held in special library collections to preserve their condition. These libraries included the Providence Public Library, the John Hay Library at Brown University, and since 2005, the Fleet Library at the Rhode Island School of Design.

If you have books, art, or antiques of value that you would like to donate to Audubon, please contact Jeff Hall at jhall@asri.org.



Join the Audubon Team...

VOLUNTEER!

Citizen Science: Become an Audubon Osprey Monitor! Sign up for March training. See page 7 for details.

Outdoor Conservation: Locate boundary markers, remove invasive plant species, monitor a refuge and more.

Special Events: Create crafts with kids or help with nature-based activities.

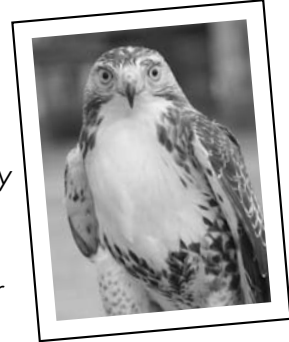
Audubon Center Volunteer: Opportunities include education, naturalists, administrative and special projects.

Administrative: Provide assistance in an office setting.

Internships & Community Service: Visit our website for details.

Visit www.asri.org for details on more fun opportunities!

For more information contact Jon Scoones at jscoones@asri.org or call (401) 245-7500 Ext. 3044.



An Osprey Named Lizzie

Continued from page 7

On Facebook, Lombardi received dozens of condolences from those who had delighted in Lizzie's life. Most were simple expressions of grief. Others spoke of their gratitude to Butch for taking time to teach them about the realities of nature:

"I'm sure that you became attached to Lizzie despite your knowledge of her chances. Thank you for sharing the journey. So many of us would never have had the chance to learn about the Ospreys among us."

"So sad. Please don't give up, your photos and posts have been fascinating. You do a great service to these birds."

"Sorry to hear her story has ended and thank you kindly for sharing her adventure with all of us, it was a good one even though it was short..."

Despite his knowledge that the odds are never good for wild animals, Butch Lombardi mourned for Lizzie's death as well. "I knew the statistics. I've built nest platforms and I have seen nests fail. I got a kick out of her, though, because she was really spunky. She bullied all the chicks out of the nest. She had a personality."

"Her life had value to the scientific community. I can take solace in that."

LIZZIE'S LEGACY

Lizzie's life did indeed contribute to scientific knowledge, according to Bierregaard. "This (observation period) was very exciting for all involved. It was such a dramatic event and unprecedented and sort of high drama. There was a certain soap opera element to it, with this hooligan teenager coming in and pretty much taking the nest hostage. It was so interesting and novel. We will write up a paper about her long-distance nest hopping behavior and publish it in the *Journal of Raptor Research* describing the events."

Bierregaard credits Butch Lombardi with playing an important role in advancing the knowledge base on Osprey behavior. "It was great having Butch as an enthusiastic spy on the ground. We were delighted to get such detail and get it back so quickly. If we had not had Butch there on the ground, we would not have been able to publish a paper about it."

Hugh Markey is a freelance writer, naturalist, and educator living in Richmond.

Read more of his stories on his blog, "Science and Nature for a Pie" at <http://scienceandnatureforapie.com> and follow him on Facebook at www.facebook.com/scienceandnatureforapie.

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Contributors to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island Annual Appeal provide vital funding to the organization's operations. We are pleased to acknowledge the following for their support.

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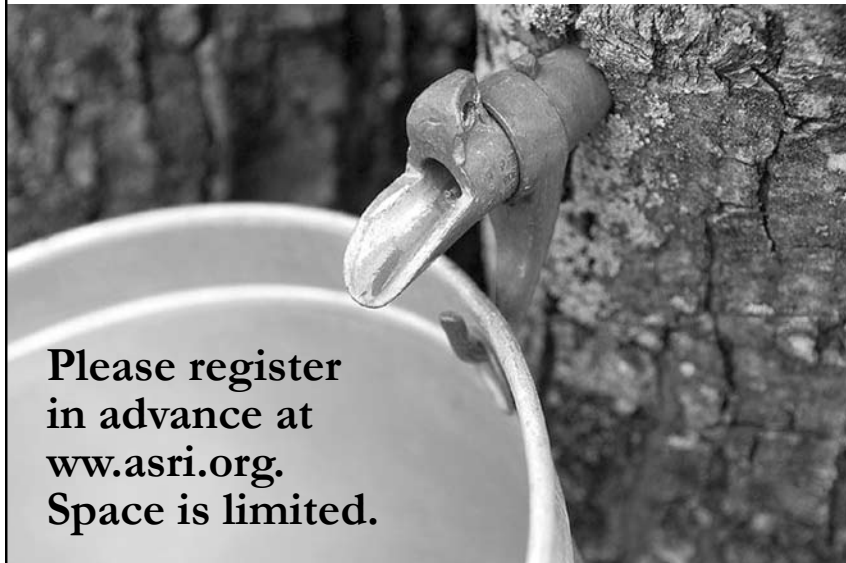
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The Audubon Society of Rhode Island gratefully acknowledges gifts of less than \$100 from 2,509 supporters. Audubon depends on the generosity and commitment of all its donors for the conservation and protection of Rhode Island's environment.

MAPLE SUGARING AND PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA
March 12, 2016; 9:00 am – 12:00 pm



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Audubon wants to learn more about you. We want to hear your stories and your reasons for supporting the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. Tell us how we are doing in key areas and what you think are important issues for us to address.

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We look forward to hearing from you!

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The primary purpose of the Eugenia S. Marks Fund for Environmental Advocacy is to provide financial support, through endowment, to ensure that the Audubon Society of Rhode Island will always have a strong and persuasive voice advocating for progressive and scientifically sound policies, laws and regulations to protect birds, wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of people and all other life.



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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

Advocate — \$2,500 to \$4,999

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Benefactor — \$7,500 to \$9,999

Visionary — \$10,000+

If you wish to join the 1897 Society and help promote the values and mission of Audubon, please contact Jill Felicio at 401-949-5454 ext. 3020.

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.

A Fond Farewell

Editorial by Eugenia Marks

The spicebush in bloom at Turkey Meadow Brook at the Parker Refuge, the red admirals on the nettle at Ruecker, the kestrels hovering at Caratunk, and the many other memorable flora and fauna that thrive in the habitats that Audubon protects – these represent many areas that your support of Audubon's advocacy program underwrites.

Thank you so much for your support of this great organization. Audubon Society of Rhode Island has a long tradition of concern for birds, habitat, and human interaction with the natural world. Without your generous support, the policy program could not exist. So, it is you who allow the natural world to have a voice. You make possible our attention to preventing broad-scale use of pesticides that exterminate the basic food for many birds. You underwrite our attention to rain-run-off carrying pollution into waters where dragonfly and other insect larvae, crayfish, freshwater mussels, and small fish form an ecosystem that Kingfishers, Osprey, Great Blue Heron and other wading birds rely on for sustenance. Your calls and letters sustained the long struggle – successful only in the spring of 2015 – to keep cesspool waste from contaminating streams and ponds.

Our policy positions have roots deep in Audubon Society of Rhode Island's traditions. Our first Executive Director Roland Clement wrote passionately about the destruction to ecosystems from pesticide use. Al Hawkes, our second executive director, worked with elected officials, and spoke and wrote eloquently to stop the dumping of waste in open pits across the state. He was also active in the effort to stop the aerial spraying of DDT – the pesticide that made large raptor eggs so fragile that incubation was impossible – the spraying of pesticides from trucks through neighborhoods, and spraying of pesticides from aircraft over forests that killed not only gypsy moths but luna moths, cecropias, and the Lepidoptera that feed birds. Al led the movement in Rhode Island to rationalize water supply to ensure that natural water flows year round. Al was the drummer for the state acquiring open space and providing funds for local land trusts. Lee Schisler, who took over as executive director after Al Hawkes, led in the development of our Environmental Education Center,

and our current Executive Director Larry Taft, with his focus on terrestrial habitat protection and organizational health, both added to Audubon's reputation as a leader in environmental protection.

It has been my privilege to work with our own leaders as well as leaders in government: U. S. Senators Sheldon Whitehouse and Jack Reed; U. S. Representatives David Cicilline and Jim Langevin; Director Janet Coit and the dedicated staff at DEM; state Senators Susan Sosnowski and the Environment and Agriculture Committee; and state Representatives Teresa Tanzi, Art Handy, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Acting on the knowledge that humans and the natural world are co-dependent, each of these leaders has wide vision and effect on institutional-scale maintenance, preservation, and restoration of an array of natural resources.

The staff at Audubon Society of Rhode Island bring amazing talents to serve education, conservation, and advocacy. The Board's generous and wise support has given leeway to explore and develop connections and policies that make Audubon such a valuable player in environmental policy in Rhode Island. Thank you each for your contribution to the enjoyment of my

career as we welcome Meg Kerr who will continue these great traditions.

One hundred years ago on October 18, 1915, Elizabeth Dickens, whose farm is our wildlife refuge on the southwestern lobe of Block Island, saw the following birds: 8 Herring Gulls, 50 Red-winged Blackbirds, 25 Meadowlarks, 20 Vesper Sparrows, 10 Juncos, 8 Song Sparrows, 12 Myrtle Warblers (Yellow-rumps), 2 Golden-crowned Kinglets, and 8 Robins. When have you seen 25 Meadowlarks or 20 Vesper Sparrows in one day? One hundred years from now, what will people be reminiscing about and asking for change to preserve what is left of the natural world? Thank you for your support that has allowed me to be a part of the Audubon tradition of policy implementation for the natural world, its support for us and all other life, and its intrinsic functioning and beauty.

Eugenia Marks retired on December 31, 2015 after serving as Audubon Society of Rhode Island Senior Director of Policy for 35 years.



AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND REPORT

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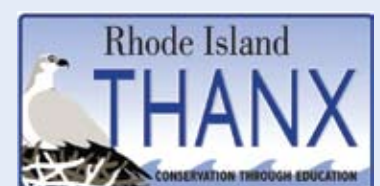
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The Report is the Audubon Society's member newsletter and updates members on the current issues and actions of the Society, its staff and volunteers. We encourage your participation and you may send items that will be considered for publication to: 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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