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Audubon Society of Rhode Island

REPORT



VOLUME 57 • NO. 1 • SPRING 2023

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE



IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY

**Audubon Releases the First State of Our Birds Report
at the 2023 Regional Conservation Symposium**

**Nine Species Chosen as Responsibility Birds
to Focus Efforts on Local Population Growth**

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From the Desk of the Executive Director Science is Our Common Ground



Dear Members of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island,

I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for the outpouring of support I have received since becoming the Executive Director of this historic organization. Your kind words and well wishes have given me a renewed sense of energy as I take on this new challenge. It is an exciting time at Audubon. I am honored to be given the chance to shape the direction of this dynamic conservation organization into a new era of science-based advocacy and outreach.

My goal is to reach people of all ages, backgrounds, and in communities throughout the state to promote our mission of protecting birds and wildlife and preserving Rhode Island's natural environment. One of my key priorities is to support and advance our new Avian Research Initiative, which is the cover story in this issue of the Report. Our ongoing work will involve collaborating with leading experts in the field and utilizing the latest technologies to further our understanding of the birds that call Rhode Island home.

Additionally, I am committed to increasing our protected land holdings that are vital to the rich biodiversity of our state and critical to mitigating the effects of climate change. I look to strengthen our partnerships with other environmental groups in the region and build upon the important and forward-thinking legislative successes Audubon has helped pass over the past two years.

Once again, I extend my sincere thanks to all who reached out with cards, calls, and emails. Your support means the world to me, and I am truly grateful to be a part of this wonderful community.

Good birding,

Jeffrey C. Hall,
Executive Director

How to Make a Good Gift Even Better

We celebrate the thousands of 2022 Audubon donors in this issue of the Report. Those who generously contributed last year so that Audubon could protect more land, educate more children, and advocate for strong environmental policies in the context of climate change.

More and more of our donors are now taking advantage of the many gift-planning options available. These include bequests by will, giving through your IRA (if you are over 70), gift annuities, charitable trusts, gifts of securities and real estate, in-kind gifts, endowment giving and other options.

Some gifts can be made to benefit Audubon today (annual giving) and others can be made now to benefit Audubon in the future. Some gift arrangements are revocable (you can change your mind); others are irrevocable.

A planned gift usually requires more planning, hence the name, than writing an immediate check. These gifts often come out of estate assets and require consideration of what the impact will be your overall financial condition. Can you afford a sizable gift at this time, or should you make it later through your will? Do you need temporary or lifetime income from your gift arrangement? What are the tax implications?

We are here to help.

Audubon can help you make a good gift even better. We can explain various options and create tailor-made illustrations of your gift. Be assured that we will always be sensitive to your financial needs and objectives and will protect your confidentiality.

If you would like more information about charitable gift planning, contact our development office at 401-949-5454 ext. 3017 or by email at rxiong@asri.org.

Consider these potential benefits of planned giving:

- Maximize the size of your gift.
- Obtain life income from your gift.
- Optimize the tax-related benefits.
- Tailor your gift to a specific need.
- Leave a lasting legacy that supports a priority most meaningful to you.

THE STATE OF OUR BIRDS

Nearly every group of birds is declining.

Audubon is working to bring them back.

By Betsy Sherman Walker

RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Prairie Warbler rate of decline:
2.7% per year*

Audubon's inaugural Regional Conservation Symposium, held on Saturday, January 28 at the Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol, drew over 100 participants—scientists, the public, and passionate birders—from around New England. Spearheading the event was a welcome from Dr. Charles Clarkson, Audubon's Director of Avian Research, and the debut of the 97-page report, "The State of Our Birds"—a year-long undertaking involving more than 80 volunteers who ventured out to collect data and monitor birds in the countless nooks and crannies of Audubon's wild refuges. The Symposium was an opportunity for colleagues from neighboring states to present their corresponding (and corroborating) research on the causes and effects of the alarming decline—close to 50% in some regions—in the bird population in the past 50 years.

It was not so much a symposium as it was a communion—a chorus of committed scientists. In his opening remarks about the report, Clarkson began with a nod to the 2020 Audubon Strategic Plan and its mission of getting the message out. One of the goals of the initiative, he said, was to create a holistic picture of the birds based on their use of Audubon's Refuges. He explained the three-tiered approach collecting data, monitoring species, and implementing management plans and spoke in birding parlance of bird guilds, umbrella species, and responsibility birds. He also promised that this was just the first step, and that on the data front there would be more to come. He also urged those in the room, if not bird activists, to begin to advocate.

After today, he told them, you can go forth and become better stewards.

From Clarkson, the torch was passed to keynote speaker Dr. Chris Elphick from the University of Connecticut, who presented the research on the SHARP project (Saltmarsh Habitat & Avian Research Program.) Elphick and his team have studied the impact of sea level rise, tidal flooding and development on saltmarsh birds for years. He noted that the Saltmarsh Sparrow population had declined by 75% in the past twenty years. That is a decline of around nine percent each year, he explained.

Think of what it would be like for you, he said, if your stock portfolio declined at nine percent a year.

Other speakers offered their own research, and similar conclusions. No one came expecting a debate. Around here you're talking to the choir, said Pam Hunt, Biodiversity Coordinator at New Hampshire Audubon. Hunt said that in the Granite State some species were half as common as they were fifty years ago. The biggest threat to them all she said, is development.

But even with all the sobering data presented at the symposium, there is no end to Clarkson's reservoir of hope. Earlier in January, he had walked the wooded loops of the Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge in Smithfield, with this writer in tow. As he walked, he talked. He discussed the recently completed first year of the Avian Research Initiative, looked ahead to the symposium, and bravely peered into the great beyond: how to manage the data collected, how to implement the findings, and how to effectively communicate the message.

Clarkson touched upon the irrefutable facts. There has been a precipitous decline in the local bird population in Rhode Island and across the globe, brought on by the devastating impacts of climate change on what birds need to breed and thrive.

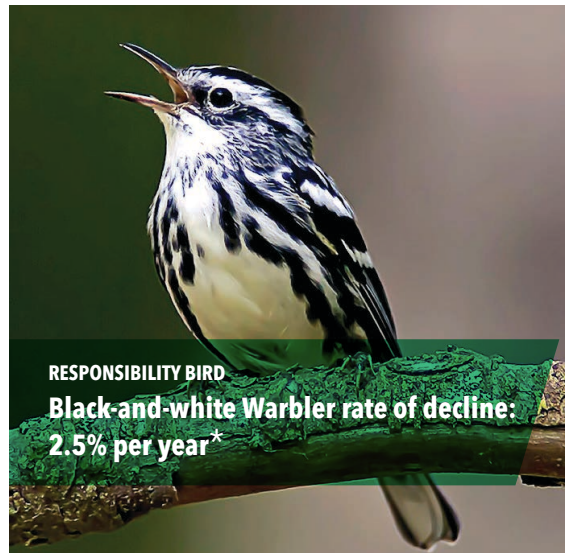
*Rate of decline for the past 50 years.



RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Common Yellowthroat rate of decline:
1.5% per year*



RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Eastern Towhee rate of decline:
4.2% per year*



RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Black-and-white Warbler rate of decline:
2.5% per year*

WHAT ARE RESPONSIBILITY BIRDS?

Audubon has identified nine common bird species that are still relatively abundant but have declined in numbers. These species are being called "Responsibility Birds" because it is crucial that we begin to address their decline now and work to manage and acquire habitat for their survival.

In the midst of all these unsettling data, Clarkson manages to see the glass as half-full. For him an alarming statistic represents something into which he can sink his teeth. We are wading through the muck, he said towards the end of the walkabout, to find out the things we can do. He elaborated. I came into the position knowing things were not good, they haven't been good for quite some time he said. But hope is essential. This doesn't work if we don't have hope.

It is the current fragile state of the avian population in Rhode Island and elsewhere (as high as 50 percent decline in relative abundance along the mid-Atlantic coast for some species), and the sense of alarm felt by all observant conservationists. Birds are flighty. They migrate, fly around, are always on the hunt for the ideal habitat in which to breed, raise their young; stop for a day or overwinter. Because many species share similar habitats, diets and resources throughout the year, birds can be grouped into guilds to better identify where conservation needs are greatest. Generalists, forest specialists, wetland inhabitants these groupings help to separate birds for analysis, but one truth is cross-cutting: birds are all linked by increasing resource insecurity.

Clarkson came to Audubon by way of having coordinated the five-year Rhode Island Bird Atlas Project, which he used as a prequel to Audubon's 2022 research initiative. The goal was to document the year-round populations of every species in the state. The methodology, data analysis and results of the five-year study set the tone for Audubon's research.

Prior to becoming involved in the Initiative, Clarkson served on the Audubon Board of Directors. Among his fellow board members was Jameson Chace, Associate Professor of Biology and Chair of Cultural, Environmental and Global Studies at Salve Regina University in Newport. Chace was among the presenters at the Symposium. From his perspective, he saw it as a success for two reasons. It was an opportunity to bring people together to focus on the local bird population. You [rarely] get people in a room talking about southern New England birds, he said.

All the right people were in the room that day.

The second reason is the chance it gave the organization to step up

*Rate of decline for the past 50 years.

and present Clarkson's report as a model of research and data management. Audubon is arguably the leading environmental organization in the state, in size and longevity, Chace said. It plays a pivotal role in promoting human interaction with the environment. The strength of the Initiative as a research piece to be shared exported was his word places Audubon in the same orbit as the other New England conservation organizations. We needed to get back out in front, he added.

To get the muck to reveal its secrets, Clarkson and an army of more than 80 volunteers and other trained ornithologists spent the better part of a year performing crucial tasks. From the volunteers, he says he obtained invaluable citizen science data from passionate birdwatchers. Exhaustively studied were 142 point counts (each visited twice) across the fourteen wildlife refuges during peak periods of detectability, night and day, at the height of the breeding season and at the height of overwintering. When out on the trails, Clarkson said that he records every single bird I hear, the total number of birds I see, with which he compares habitat variables. The habitat data allows him to zero in on a species' most important habitat.

"Conservation is a lengthy process. Stopping the decline is not going to happen overnight. I sincerely hope there are enough people open to receive the messaging."

– Dr. Charles Clarkson

From the start, the decline in the bird population (a reveal from multiple international studies) was a given. From there, the Audubon initiative was launched as a fact-finding mission, to go in and find out more about how to help species in decline. Factors included habitat loss, climate change, window strikes the number of bird stressors is astronomically high.

We wanted to create a holistic picture on a per-species basis, he explained. Ultimately, to allow the birds to speak for themselves. To

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The Audubon Avian Research Initiative

A three-step management plan to mitigate local decline and contribute to regional population growth of our birds.



Step 1

Baseline Data Collection and Identification of "Responsibility Birds"

- Collection of baseline data on distribution, abundance, habitat associations and long-term population trends for all species breeding, overwintering and migrating through Audubon Society of Rhode Island properties.
- Identification of "Responsibility Birds" that are in need of additional monitoring and management recommendations.

Step 2

Detailed Monitoring of "Responsibility Birds"

- Monitoring schemes will be implemented for all "Responsibility Birds" to collect detailed data on habitat-use, productivity and phenology (timing of important biological events, such as nest-building, egg-laying, chick-fledging, molting and migration).

Step 3

Implementation of Management Plans

- Management plans informed by baseline data collection and targeted monitoring will be implemented to mitigate local declines and contribute to state and regional population growth.



Download Audubon's 'The State of Our Birds' report and support the Avian Research Initiative at asri.org/AvianResearchInitiative

Learn more through FREE lectures with Dr. Charles Clarkson. See page 6 for details.

NO REST FOR THE WEARY

Highlights from Birds Across New England: The Audubon Regional Conservation Symposium

By Dr. Charles Clarkson, Director of Avian Research

On January 28, 2023, Audubon hosted the highly successful Birds Across New England: The Audubon Regional Conservation Symposium in Bristol, RI. Attendees were treated to talks by preeminent researchers in New England on the work they have done for decades to understand our regional bird populations and how they have devoted their careers to assisting many of these beleaguered species.

If there was a central theme to all of these talks, which covered species including Piping Plovers, Roseate Terns, Semipalmated Sandpipers, American Woodcock, Whimbrel, American Bitterns, multiple warbler species, and many others, it was that the state of our birds is not great. And, in some instances, it is downright disheartening. Talk after talk displayed similar-looking graphs illustrating bird population trends over decades of survey work. And, the trendlines for all of the graphs went in the same direction: down.

For many birds, the annual cycle involves migration, attracting partners, building nests, laying eggs, defending those eggs, hatching eggs, defending chicks, feeding chicks, fledging chicks, teaching fledges, molting feathers, migrating again, and replenishing reserves during the non-breeding season so they can do it all over again the following year. Indeed, there is no rest for the weary for the birds or for us as their stewards. If we want to save our birds, from the countless threats they face at our hands, we need to devote ourselves as fully to their conservation as they devote themselves to their annual cycles.

While the messaging from the myriad researchers presenting at the symposium may seem bleak, there is always the possibility of change where there is hope. And, I can say most assuredly, that the symposium served up hope in ample quantities. Over 100 people came together, absorbed an amazing amount of information on our birds, and are now out in our communities where they will serve as ambassadors.

You see, hope is infectious and it is the very thing that is so desperately needed at a time like this. Throughout the symposium, I witnessed so many signs of hope: researchers presenting to rooms filled with the general public, eager to better understand the issues and how to help; symposium attendees dining side-by-side with conservationists, engaged in meaningful conversations; reporters covering the event with plans to broadcast the contents of the symposium to as wide an audience as possible. Hope was everywhere.

With your support, we will continue to do the science and bring that work to you in the form of reports, public talks, and annual symposia. Our resolve will not wane until our work is done. Hope is the contagion and we are the vectors of transmission.



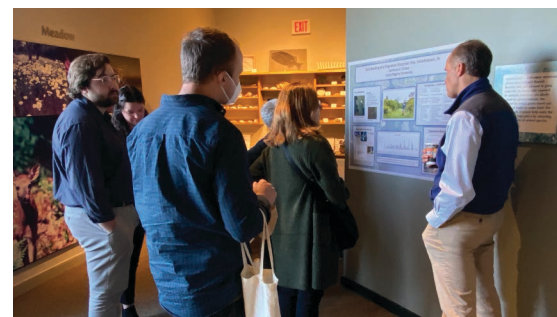
Dr. Charles Clarkson welcomes guests to the Audubon Regional Conservation Symposium.



From left: Audubon Board Members John Woulfe, Tina Duhaime, Shawen Williams.



From left: Audubon Council of Advisor Members Dave Gumbley and Steve Reinert with Board Member Donald Heitzmann.



Audubon Board Member Dr. Jameson Chace (right) speaks to guests about long-term bird banding on Aquidneck Island.

Presentations from the AUDUBON REGIONAL CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM are now online.

To watch the recorded programs, please visit:
asri.org/birdsacrossne/2023.html
or youtube.com/audubonri

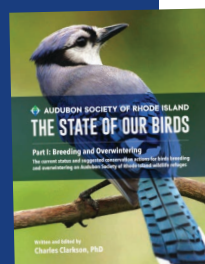
Shown Right: Dr. Charles Clarkson (left) with Keynote Speaker Dr. Chris Elphick, Professor of Conservation Biology at University of Connecticut.



Audubon 'State of Our Birds' Report: FREE LECTURES WITH DR. CHARLES CLARKSON

Visit asri.org/calendar to register

- March 8, 2023; 6:00 pm
Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk MA
- March 9, 2023; 7:00 pm
Rogers's Free Library, Bristol, RI
- March 15, 2023; 6:00 pm
Virtual Lecture via ZOOM



AUDUBON'S 'MOMENT IN TIME'

Newly appointed Executive Director Jeff Hall talks about keeping the forests— and the Audubon spirit—alive

By Betsy Sherman Walker



Audubon Executive Director Jeff Hall on the trails at Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge in Smithfield, RI.

When Jeff Hall walked into the Starbucks coffee shop in North Kingstown in early January to talk about his recent segue into the position of Audubon Executive Director, he had a smile on his face: the telltale grin of a fundraiser with a good story to tell. And it was not just any tale. He had landed in a story that was quintessentially Audubon.

On his way to our meeting, Hall had stopped in Saunterstown to visit a longtime supporter—someone he had come to know well in his 20 years as the organization's Senior Director of Advancement. In the course of their visit, she told him that she collected dollar bills—specifically, the ones with the bold capital letter A on the front. It is known as the district seal; an A on the face of the bill means it originated in Boston—but for her it meant A for Audubon. At the end of their visit, she presented him with a tidy handful of her rainy-day bills to support the organization. There were more than 500 of them.

Throughout our conversation he would circle back to the importance of supporters as the organization's lifeblood—as donors, activists, and advocates.

If you don't have the fuel of supporters, he said at one point, you don't have the rocket ship.

Hall had been Senior Director of Advancement at Audubon since 2003, moving into his office in Smithfield after three years as the inaugural director of the Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol. He was in middle school when his father and mother developed a love for birdwatching at the Norman Bird Sanctuary (NBS) in Middletown—and they brought their young son right along with them, literally and figuratively. I got the hook, Hall says. NBS became a second home; he volunteered there for a number of summers; and recalls being there—morning, noon, and night. Hall received his undergraduate degree from the University of Rhode Island in wildlife management, and eventually earned a Master's from Antioch University.

Hall doesn't need an agenda to promote. After more than 20 years with Audubon, there is most likely no one with more of a sixth sense

about how things interconnect, and what lies ahead for the 125-year-old organization. Much of the discussion that afternoon focused on what he sees as the two most important natural resources on his chessboard—one endangered; one not: land and people—and how the former urgently needs the latter.

In no particular order, we talked about carrying on Audubon's mission—its issues, goals and challenges, which became his to oversee in December. Hall is proud of how diversity and inclusivity have become an integral part of the organization's mantra, how the environmental education program has become an Audubon life force; how the Stormwater Innovation Center at Roger Williams Park in Providence will broaden Audubon's reach into communities across the state with nature-based solutions to climate resiliency, and how the work being done through the new Avian Research Initiative will affect conservation efforts throughout Rhode Island and New England. All part of the Audubon Strategic Plan, which was approved in 2020 and then temporarily derailed by the pandemic.

On balance, in Hall's eyes the abundance of topics—forest protection, the health and survival of Rhode Island's bird community, the future of wildlife, butterfly highways (a real thing), regulating pesticides, addressing climate change, solar development, property stewardship—all can be tied to one thing: land—how it is used, how it is preserved, how it is being threatened; how it can be saved.

Audubon has a large footprint in the state, he says. Protecting the land right now is crucial. If you look at night photos of western Rhode Island, the dark spots show where the forests are. Everything falls under the umbrella of keeping the forests thriving. Forests are critical to bird species and other wildlife. They are a haven for biodiversity, clean the air we breathe, improve water quality, absorb carbon from the atmosphere, and more. They are critical in the face of climate change. But forests are not protected like saltmarshes or wetlands.

At the moment Hall sees the greatest threat to those verdant swaths

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Threats To Rhode Island Tree and Forest Health

Hiking along the orange trail at Audubon's Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, you can see dead beech trees with dry bark splitting open. Many beeches at Parker Woodland and Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuges also exhibit the telltale black-streaked leaves of a new disease. Our American beeches are threatened by beech leaf disease and beech bark disease.

Beech leaf disease is becoming more common in southern and western Rhode Island forests. The black streaks are created by nematodes, tiny worms living inside the leaves. Currently the disease is considered untreatable and fatal for infected beeches. Sooty mold fungus of beeches is a bizarre-looking creature linked to beech-blight aphids. The fungus grows in large black masses on the honeydew of aphids. Luckily this does not seem to affect beech health, but in combination with other diseases and the stress of warmer and drier summers, the outcome could be worse. It is becoming difficult to not encounter one of these beech diseases in Rhode Island forests.

A forest with less beeches means many things. Beech nuts are an important part of the fall diet of Rhode Island birds including Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Blue Jays, Tufted Titmice, Ruffed Grouse and even Wood Ducks. Gray and red squirrels and eastern chipmunks consume and cache countless beech nuts underground.

This forest story is not new. Forests have always had their share of natural biological threats. Parasites and pathogens have a long history with trees. Through time these interactions become more benign, and the impacts may go unnoticed, particularly when trees are healthy and unstressed and the pests are a natural part of the community. This has changed over the past 50 years. Introduced tree pests have altered the forest landscape and led to near extinction of several North American tree species. New forest pests with no



Dogwood anthracnose symptoms. Photo: Mary Ann Hansen, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bugwood.org. University of Maryland Extension.

local history often render native host trees defenseless. American chestnut is the most infamous example, with this tree's disappearance leading to change in hardwood forests in eastern North America.

The list of newer forest threats is long. Flowering dogwoods have been stricken with anthracnose, a fungus, and dogwoods have declined in many forests of southern New England.

Emerald ash borer, a bright green beetle introduced from Asia, has been found recently in Rhode Island and is predicted to affect native ash species.

Southern pine beetles are making their way north. This is a native species whose range expansion is aided by warmer winters. Several cold winters years ago slowed their march toward New England, but milder winters have been a climate trend in Rhode Island.

Asian long-horned beetles, mostly a threat to native maple trees, is a current concern. This beetle has been on Audubon's watch list for a decade. It is realistic to assume that the species will affect Rhode Island maples.

Oaks, a dominant member of local forests, are critical for the survival of many species including insects, birds and deer. Many oaks are faced with leaf wilt fungi, root rot diseases and bacteria that affect the wood. Though one disease in a healthy tree may not cause immediate harm, a combination of pests and environmental stress, like we see today, could be devastating. Spongy moths caused countless oak deaths in Rhode Island.

Climate change will likely exacerbate the effects of forest pests. Trees struggle harder to fend off disease, insects and parasites when they are compromised by lack of water. Some of the die-off of trees from spongy moth is likely linked to drought during record-high summer temperatures.

Audubon monitors forest health and is on the lookout for forest pests that may arrive, such as sudden oak death. We also support the work of State and Federal scientists tracking the insects and diseases. Some simple helpful practices for forest landowners and visitors include not transporting firewood and forest products across state lines and reporting sightings of new forest pest insects and diseases.

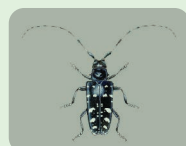
Resistant cultivars and hybrids of some tree species have allowed for replanting but mostly in residential settings. Treating forests with fungicides or insecticides is not always practical or safe.

What will forests look like for our future generations? Will resistant varieties emerge with protection, habitat management, and monitoring by Audubon? We remain hopeful that forests will remain diverse and resilient. With major roles in climate mitigation, clean air quality, water filtration, and critical habitat for birds and wildlife the value of forests continues to rise.

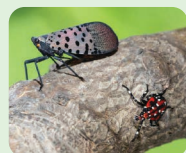


STOP INVASIVE FOREST INSECTS

Help Prevent the Spread of Invasive Forest Pests



Asian Long-horned Beetle



Spotted Lanternfly



Emerald Ash Borer

UNH Cooperative Extension

If you spot these insects, record your location, take clear close-up photos, and report to RI Department of Environmental Management at <https://appengine.egov.com/apps/ri/dem/demcaps>

Beech Leaf Disease: MA Bureau of Forest Control and Forestry



The Elusive Brown Creeper

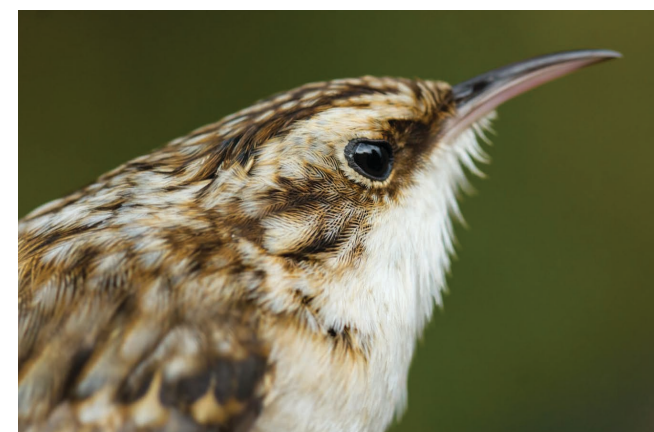
As I walk through the quiet winter woods of Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, I hear several high pitch song notes. I stop to listen and watch. First I find several Golden-crowned Kinglets fluttering low in the brush. But I keep listening and I hear a longer note and search the trees around me. There! It is as if the tree bark came alive. A tiny bird, feathered in browns, grays and white starts to creep, spiraling up a tree. The Brown Creeper. This spectacular small songbird lives in Rhode Island all year long, but rarely gets noticed due to its amazing camouflage ability and high pitch call notes that are out of range for some.



Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*)

Brown Creepers are found in areas with large trees such as hardwood and coniferous forests. Their camouflaged bodies resemble the color of bark. They have a downward curved bill for gleaning insects off the bark that hide in the grooves where most birds cannot reach. These birds place their short legs on either side of their bodies and use their stiff tails to secure themselves as they creep along the trunk. Because of their position, it is easier for them to hop up the tree versus going down like nuthatches. You will often see these birds fly down to the bottom of a tree and spiral up toward the top before they drop back down to a nearby tree to continue the process of looking for insects. When a Brown Creeper is alarmed it can flatten its body and spread its wings to camouflage itself with the trunk of the tree.

In early spring, males set up territories by singing a beautiful high-pitched song defending a territory that is 5 to 15 acres in size. Both the male and female search for a nest site that is under the loose bark of a tree. Here, the female builds a nest with twigs and bark that she glues together with spider webs. The male helps by bringing her materials. During one of my May birding walks last year, our group was lucky enough to witness a pair bringing nesting material to a tree.



Once the basic structure is made, the female makes a cup with hair, feathers, moss, and lichen. She then lays five to six eggs, which she incubates for 13-17 days. Then both the male and female will feed the young for about a month. Shortly after, the pair leaves its territory and forms loose flocks with other species.

In winter, you can often find Brown Creepers with Golden-crowned Kinglets, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and Nuthatches. If you see small mixed flocks, search the nearby trees for the creepers. It is believed that Brown Creepers will communally roost with other creepers in the winter for extra warmth. So remember to leave some of those dead trees standing for creepers to nest and roost in. Some folks have also had success with Brown Creepers coming to their suet feeders.

Remember to watch carefully when you are walking through the woods - if you see the bark come alive, I would bet that you have just spotted a Brown Creeper! Happy birding!

BECOME AN EASTERN BLUEBIRD MONITOR



Three Training Sessions in April

Are you charmed by Eastern Bluebirds? Consider volunteering with Audubon to monitor their populations this spring and summer. Although the Eastern Bluebird is a staple of our local ecosystem, these birds have historically been threatened by invasive species, pesticide use, and reforestation of previously open areas. To help conserve this species, Audubon is monitoring their abundance on our wildlife refuges from April to August.

The outdoor workshops listed below provide volunteers with natural history on Bluebirds and training on how to collect data in the field. Volunteers need to attend one workshop only. For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at www.asri.org/calendar.

Schedule:

- **April 1, 2023; 2:00–3:00 pm;**
Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield, RI
- **April 1, 2023; 2:00–3:00 pm;**
Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA
- **April 16, 2023; 2:00–3:00 pm;**
Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI

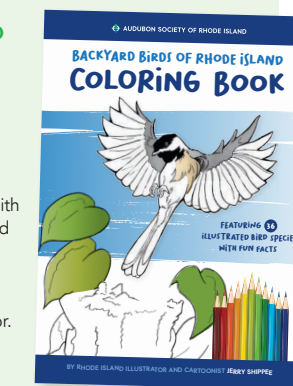
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND

BACKYARD BIRDS COLORING BOOK

Featuring 36 beautifully illustrated bird species with fun facts by West Warwick, Rhode Island artist and cartoonist Jerry Shippee.

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Only \$9.99. Size 8.5" x 11" with 36 pages to color.

ORDER ONLINE: ASRI.ORG/NATURESHOP



Audubon 2024 Bird & Wildlife Calendar

Visit asri.org/audubon-calendar for details and to submit photos. Deadline is September 15, 2023.

Winter Sport Remains Alive and Well at Caratunk in Seekonk

By Don Doucette (Written in 2022)
 "Ten Mile River Rambles", Friends of the Ten Mile and Bucklin Brook,
 Runnins River Watershed Alliance, Citizens of the Narragansett Basin

The following piece was written by long-time Audubon member and volunteer Don Doucette in February 2022. It is a gentle reminder of the positive impact that nature can have on all of us – even when viewed from a distance with a warm cup of tea.

Following this past week's blizzard, we have been taking our afternoon Seven Stars tea to the car park at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk. We sit in our Subaru, sip our tea and listen to Simply Sinatra on Sirius Radio - we find these moments relaxing during our advanced years.

We are unable to move around Caratunk property as we once did, so we sit in the car park by the white barn and enjoy the beautiful vista of the back fields and woods. Nature comes to us occasionally for observation and...truly does if one is patient and has the time to invest. We are fat cats in this regard.

We have been enjoying and observing the snowshoe and cross country ski activities as enthusiasts enjoy the physical winter sport exercise in one of nature's finest settings within the Ten Mile River Watershed. The winter beauty of the Coles Brook tributary babbles and curves through the unique Caratunk property.

It seems spontaneous local winter sports for the majority appear to be a thing of the past when ponds and slopes years ago once filled with the fun and sounds of local winter activities. As kids, we could not wait to get home after school in the afternoon to grab our ice skates for a few hours of fun on Caroufel's Pond off Thurber Avenue in Attleboro, a portion of Twin Village Brook. The pond is gone now, the casualty of a quick drainage project for housing development in Dodgeville - progress you know.

Since the advent of the electronic craze, afternoon school buses empty and students seem to disappear into themselves and scatter into isolated homes and online - late afternoon winter activities on local slopes and ponds seem as a past social ritual.

So it's pleasing for these old codgers who remember the fun times of our youth while a few others more limber actually enjoy the snow fields of Caratunk - as eternal Coles Brook faithfully as by magic beautifully flows with its dark sparkling pools and frigid ice crusts.

Winter sport remains alive and well at Caratunk in Seekonk & a Ten Mile River Watershed open space winter gem.



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Birds and Robots Providence's Croft School Second Graders Learn Birding...and Robotics!

A group of 22 second grade students from the Croft School in Providence visited the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium on December 2, 2022, to participate in a new STEAM* collaborative program between Roger Williams University (RWU) and Audubon called Birds and Robots.

The young students began by making their own binoculars from toilet paper tubes and yarn and heading outside with Audubon educators to look for birds and investigate where our feathered friends might find food, water and shelter. Then back inside a classroom, the RWU team challenged the students to turn KIBO robots into birds and program them to move, dance and sing. In the final challenge, the students used their birds to carry sticks and create a large, cooperative group nest.

RWU pre-service teachers and their professor Katie Blagden worked with Audubon to facilitate this unique program, which was received with much enthusiasm from Croft School students and teachers alike.

"The Audubon Society isn't just somewhere to visit, or people who help you learn about the community around us - it's a member of our community as well and it's been so lovely to get to know the members of that community through hands on work with our 2nd graders. Thank you for supporting our young minds and their connection to the greater world around them!" Croft School Teacher Jami Witherell

* STEAM Education is an approach to learning that uses Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics as access points for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking.



the Audubon Nature shop
 This shop is for the birds!

Support Our Native Pollinators
BOOKS ON NATIVE PLANTS FOR NORTHEAST GARDENS ARE NOW IN STOCK!

- The Living Landscape** by Rick Darke and Douglas Tallamy
- Native Groundcovers for Northeast Landscapes** A Wild Seed Project Guide
- Bringing Nature Home** How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants by Douglas W. Tallamy with a foreword by Rick Darke

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Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, 1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI asri.org/natureshop

AUDUBON NATURE TOURS & PROGRAMS

March - May 2023 For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at asri.org/calendar

BIRDING WITH AUDUBON

Advance registration is required for all programs.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS
Locations across Rhode Island. Locations will be sent to registered participants. *Every Wednesday through June 2023; 9:00-11:00 am.*



EAGLE CRUISE ON THE CONNECTICUT RIVER
Departs from Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI; *March 4, 2023; 9:30 am-3:30 pm.*

OWLING VAN TRIP
Departs from Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; *March 10, 2023; 4:00-8:00 pm.*

TIMBERDOODLE TALK AND WALK
Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; *March 24, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.*

BEGINNING BIRDING SERIES
Choose one walk or register for all!
• Audubon McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, Bristol, RI; *April 2, 2023; 8:30-9:30 am.*
• Mount Hope Farm, Bristol, RI; *April 15, 2023; 8:30-9:30 am.*
• Hunt's Mills, Rumford, RI; *April 29, 2023; 8:30-9:30 am.*

WATCHING WOODCOCKS: SUPPER AND SAUNTER
Departs from Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI; *April 7, 2023; 6:00-9:00 pm.*

WOODCOCKS AND WINE
Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; *April 21, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.*

BIRD BANDING IN MAY
Two Dates and Locations
• Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, 1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI; *May 6, 2023; 9:15-11:15 am.*
• Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; *May 27, 2023; 9:15-11:15 am.*

BIRDING CONNECTICUT HOT SPOTS: AUDUBON VAN TRIP
Explore a large diversity of habitats in nearby Connecticut – forest roads, open fields, a fish hatchery, ponds, and more. Departs from Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI; *June 8, 2023; 7:30 am-5:00 pm.*

AUDUBON NATURE CENTER AND AQUARIUM

1401 Hope Street (Route 114), Bristol, RI

PROGRAMS, LECTURES & WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

LIFE ON THE WING: PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT BY RYAN MCASSEY
March 5 through April 28, 2023; 9:30 am-4:30 pm.

NATIVE SEED WORKSHOP
March 11, 2023; 1:00-2:30 pm.

SEA GLASS JEWELRY WORKSHOP
Three Dates Offered
March 18, April 22, May 20, 2023; 1:00-2:30 pm.

PYSANKY WORKSHOP
March 25, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.

BEGINNING BIRDING WALK
April 2, 2023; 8:30-9:30 am.

BLUEBIRD MONITORING WORKSHOP
April 16, 2023; 2:00-3:00 pm.

LECTURE: THERE SHE BLOWS, AGAIN! A WHALE SHIP JOURNEY AND MARINE CONSERVATION
April 27, 2023; 7:00-8:00 pm.

BIRD BANDING IN MAY
May 6, 2023; 9:15-11:15 am.

CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE ART EXHIBIT BY MELANIE DAI MEDEIROS
May 7 through June 24, 2023; 9:30 am-4:30 pm.

SPRING MUSHROOM HUNTING IN RHODE ISLAND
Two-Part Series. *May 24, 2023; 7:00-8:00 pm.*
May 27, 2023; 1:00-2:30 pm.



FAMILY PROGRAMS AND CLASSES FOR CHILDREN

CITIZENS FREE FAMILY FUN DAY
Thanks to Citizens, the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium is open free to the public on the first Saturday of every month. Join Audubon for nature stories, animal discoveries, hikes, and more. No need to register!
March 4, April 8, May 6, 2023; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.

APRIL SCHOOL VACATION WEEK
Bring the kids for spring walks, animal visits, turtle races, owl pellet dissections and more!
Visit asri.org/calendar for details on daily activities.
April 10-14, 2023; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.

LI'L PEEPS
This popular program introduces children ages 18 months to 2 years to the delights of nature.
March 23, 30, April 6, 20, 27, and May 4, 2023. 10:00-11:00 am.

CAMOUFLAGED EGG HUNT
April 1, 2023; 9:30-11:00 am.

MOTHER'S DAY PAPER-CRAFTING WORKSHOP
May 6, 2023; 1:00-3:30 pm.

MEMORIAL DAY NATURE ACTIVITIES
May 29, 2023; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.



CARATUNK WILDLIFE REFUGE

301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA

WILD LIVES AT CARATUNK
Six-Week Wildlife Class for Children
March 11, 18, 25, April 1, 15, 22, 2023; Ages 6-10: 12:00-1:30 pm; Ages 11-14: 2:00-3:30 pm.

SPRING SCAVENGER HUNT
March 12, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.

SIGNS OF SPRING WALK
March 19, 2023; 8:00-10:00 am.

TIMBERDOODLE TALK AND WALK
March 24, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.

CAMOUFLAGED EGG HUNT
April 1, 2023; 9:30-11:00 am.

SPRING PAPER-CRAFTING WORKSHOP
April 1, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.

BLUEBIRD MONITORING WORKSHOP
April 1, 2023; 2:00-3:00 pm.

NEEDLE FELTED OWLS
April 8, 2023; 2:00-3:30 pm.

BIRDING FOR KIDS
April 15, 2023; 9:30-11:00 am.

BLUEBIRDS OF CARATUNK
April 23, 2023; 9:00 am-10:30 am.

FROGGY NIGHT AT CARATUNK
April 25, 2023; 7:00-9:00 pm.

FREE MAY BIRDING WALKS
May 7, 14, 21, 28, 2023; 7:30-9:30 am.

TURTLE TIME!
May 21, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.

BIRD BANDING IN MAY
May 27, 2023; 9:15-11:15 am.

FISHERVILLE BROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE

99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI

OWLING VAN TRIP
Departs from Fisherville Brook.
March 10, 2023; 4:00-8:00 pm.

CAMOUFLAGED EGG HUNT
April 1, 2023; 9:30-11:00 am.

WOODCOCKS AND WINE
April 21, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.

FREE MAY BIRDING WALKS
May 5, 12, 19, 26, 2023; 8:30-10:30 am.

AUDUBON NATURE TOURS & PROGRAMS

March - May 2023 For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at asri.org/calendar

POWDER MILL LEDGES WILDLIFE REFUGE

12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI

PYSANKY WORKSHOP
March 11, 2023; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

LECTURE: CREATING SPACES FOR POLLINATORS
March 15, 2023; 7:00-8:30 pm.

CAMOUFLAGED EGG HUNT
April 1, 2023; 9:30-11:00 am.

BLUEBIRD MONITORING WORKSHOP
April 1, 2023; 2:00-3:00 pm.

WATCHING WOODCOCKS: SUPPER AND SAUNTER
April 7, 2023; 6:00-9:00 pm.

APRIL SCHOOL VACATION WEEK
April 11-14, 2023; Bring the kids to meet cool critters, make birdfeeders, go ponding and more!
Visit asri.org/calendar for details on daily activities.

FREE MAY BIRDING WALK
May 6, 2023; 9:00-11:00 am.

FREE BIRDING WITH KIDS
May 13, 2023; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

AUDUBON SPRING CRAFT FAIR
June 3, 2023; 10:00 am-4:00 pm.

PRUDENCE ISLAND

Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Prudence Island, RI

SPRING HIKING ON PRUDENCE
April 6, 2023; 1:30-6:30 pm.

'SPRING' ON OVER TO PRUDENCE ISLAND!
April 19, 2023; 9:45 am-4:45 pm.

SPRING BIRDING ON PRUDENCE ISLAND
May 18, 2023; 7:30 am-3:00 pm.



SPRING WALKS ON AUDUBON WILDLIFE REFUGES

See Locations Below

SPRING ARRIVES AT MAXWELL MAYS WILDLIFE REFUGE
Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge, 2082 Victory Highway, Coventry, RI; *March 24, 2023; 9:30 am-12:00 pm.*

EMERGING SPRINGTIME WALK AT FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE
Fort Wildlife Refuge, (Rt. 5), 1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI; *March 25, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.*

WELCOME SPRING
Parker Woodland Wildlife Refuge, Maple Valley Road, Coventry, RI; *April 14, 2023; 9:30 am-12:00 pm.*

FROGGY NIGHT AT FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE
Fort Wildlife Refuge, (Rt. 5), 1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI; *April 26, 2023; 7:00-9:00 pm.*



BEGINNING BIRDING SERIES

Get a jump on spring migration and learn how to bird with Audubon

- Audubon McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, Bristol, RI
April 2, 2023; 8:30-9:30 am.
- Mount Hope Farm, Bristol, RI
April 15, 2023; 8:30-9:30 am.
- Hunt's Mills, Rumford, RI
April 29, 2023; 8:30-9:30 am.

AMERICAN WOODCOCKS

Observe the unique and enchanting courtship display of the American Woodcock.

- Timberdoodle Talk and Walk
Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; *March 24, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.*
- Watching Woodcocks: Supper and Saunter
Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI; *April 7, 2023; 6:00-9:00 pm.*
- Woodcocks and Wine
Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; *April 21, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.*

EVERY DAY IN MAY FREE BIRD WALKS

Join the fun – beginners welcome!

For details and a full schedule of May birding walks, visit asri.org/calendar

GROUNDHOGS

AMAZING UNDERGROUND ARCHITECTS

In early February, another six weeks of winter was predicted by a groundhog who saw its shadow. Contrary to this popular myth, groundhogs in Rhode Island don't tend to wake up on February 2nd to assess the chance of spring. They generally hibernate between October and March and lose about half their body weight doing so.



Groundhogs are remarkable underground architects, and they have long claws that are perfect for digging. The entrance to their dens is made in a way that prevents flooding, and there are separate rooms for sleeping, raising young, and even going to the bathroom. When their waste chamber is full, they block it up and dig a new one! All this digging helps aerate the soil and provides homes for other wildlife including rabbits, skunks, turtles, and snakes.

These mammals are solitary homebodies that live most of their life underground and usually do not wander more than 150 feet from their den. However, groundhogs do like to sunbathe and their summer den is usually in open areas. Come winter, dens will be found in brushy or wooded habitats.

Also known as woodchucks and whistle pigs, groundhogs are large rodents belonging to a group of ground squirrels called marmots. An adult groundhog can be close to 2 feet in length and weigh up to 13 pounds. Fruit, grasses, tree bark and other vegetation are all part of their diet that helps to fatten them up during the summer and fall before hibernating in winter.

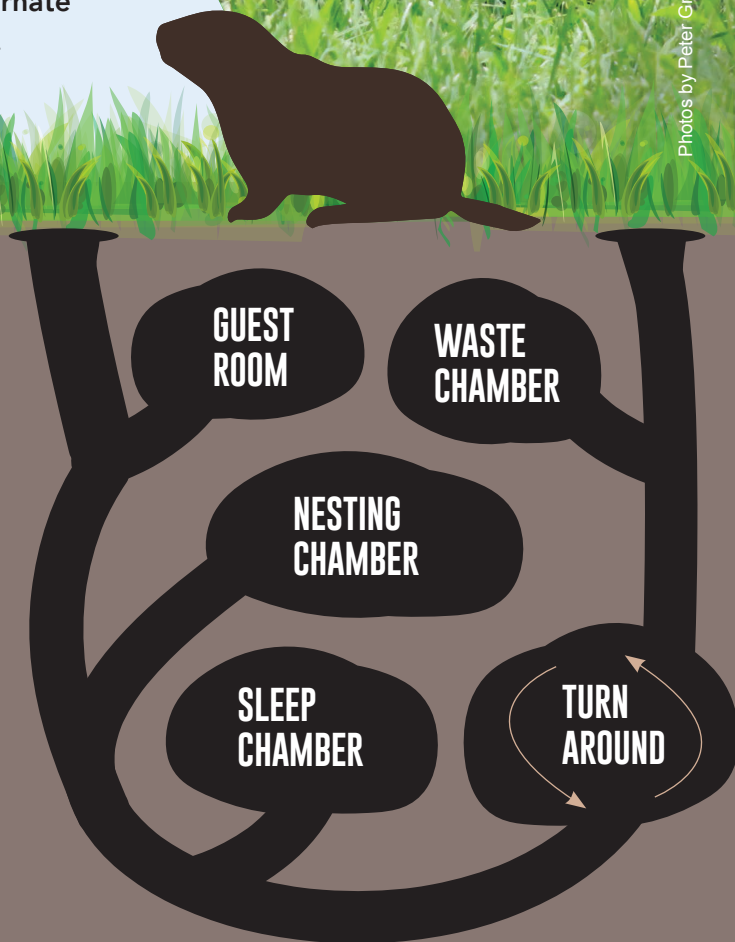
When they emerge from their winter dens, there is a brief mating period and then the young are born after 30 days. Groundhogs are born blind, without fur, and stay in the den for about six weeks before they are ready to emerge and feed on plants.

FUN FACTS:

- Groundhogs whistle when they are frightened.
- These animals can climb trees and swim.
- Baby groundhogs are called pups, kits, or chucklings.



Photos by Peter Green



GET OUTSIDE!

Winter is a good time to search for the entrances to summer groundhog dens. Look for holes 10 to 12 inches in diameter along the base of stone walls, in fields, and under sheds and hedges. Groundhogs always have several entrances to their den... Can you find more than one hole?



WILD KIDS CLUB AT CARATUNK

Students from the Paul Cuffee School in Providence Test Their Naturalist Skills at Caratunk

By April Alix, Conservation Program Coordinator, Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership

It was a special outing for these fourth and fifth-grade students, and the moment they hopped off the bus at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, they could not contain their excitement: Are we going to see some birds out here? Can we pick what trail we take? I brought my bug catcher from home in case we see any bugs!

The students were members of the Wild Kid's Club, a nature-focused Providence afterschool program led by Paul Cuffee Elementary School teacher Stacy Gale and the Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership. Usually, the kids spend their time at Neutaconkanut Hill Park in Providence, hiking, birding, and learning naturalist skills. This early November visit to Caratunk was special - an opportunity to put their skills to use on a refuge and celebrate all they had learned last fall.

Upon arrival, Caratunk Refuge Manager Jon Scoones shared a quick tip that Eastern Bluebirds might be spotted in one of the back fields, so students borrowed binoculars and headed out. As they hiked along the Muskrat Pond loop, they were ECSTATIC, sharing some of the knowledge they learned both at school and through the afterschool program. Ms. Gale! We found signs of weathering! Look at this - this log is being decomposed!

A highlight was spotting a familiar Harvestman (daddy-long-legs) on the trail. Everyone wanted to stop and observe it. We have these in Providence too!

But the real magic happened in the fields. As students stood along the edge, they spotted Eastern Bluebirds sitting on nest boxes. They all whipped out their binoculars to get a good look at these

charming, royal-blue birds. Their enthusiasm was simply contagious as they shared the natural history of Bluebirds and searched the sky for other species. One student also happened to spot a grasshopper and quickly pulled out a bug box. He showed the entire class and pointed out some of the key features and coloration on the insect. The students spent the last portion of the trip playing Camouflage in the tall trees by the stream - a kid-approved favorite game at Caratunk.

As an educator, it was so gratifying to see the students make connections between the wildlife at Caratunk and the birds and animals they see in the city, and to witness their wide-eyed wonder at the expanse of nature around them. However, the greatest reward was watching as the children become educators themselves, as they eagerly shared their knowledge, skills, and curiosities with Scoones, their teacher, and fellow students. For these children, Caratunk was simply a wonderland of nature.

Audubon is proud to team with Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership and Paul Cuffee 4th Grade Teacher Stacy Gale in this nature-focused afterschool program. We applaud their ongoing efforts to engage students in outdoor learning.

Several of the students in this program were recipients of binoculars collected in a 2022 donation program organized by Audubon and the Ocean State Birding Club. See page 19 for details on a 2023 initiative to collect field guides for young birders in city communities.



A student proudly points out the Bluebirds and shares her knowledge with Audubon Refuge Manager Jon Scoones.



Watching wildlife on the trail with Hispanic Access Foundation Intern Delia Martinez.



Examining a grasshopper in a bug box a student brought from home.



Students observing Eastern Bluebirds at Caratunk.



Planning a Celebration or Special Event?

Caratunk Barn

The big white barn at Caratunk provides the perfect rural setting for weddings, showers, family reunions or meetings. Birthday parties for children are also offered.

For availability and reservations regarding weddings and birthdays, visit asri.org and click on 'services.' For all other rental queries, contact Jon Scoones at jscoones@asri.org.

Legislative Update: Emerging 2023 Priorities

By Priscilla De La Cruz, Senior Director of Government Affairs

As the 2023 legislative session begins, Audubon is supporting all efforts to further the implementation of the Act on Climate law binding our state to reach significant reductions in carbon emissions, while also ensuring that Rhode Island can weather the impacts of climate change.

Top Priority: Conserving Forests While Deploying Renewables

Through the work of environmental groups, labor coalitions, and policymakers, Rhode Island is once again a national leader in its response to the climate crisis. The State has carved out a path to meet the mandatory goals set by the Act on Climate law, with the passage of 100% renewable electricity by 2033 and up to 1,000 megawatts of additional offshore wind.



In spite of the strides that have been made to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, an unmet challenge remains: how we navigate our land use. Climate resiliency calls for the protection of forestland, critical to mitigating the effects of climate change as they provide ecological benefits to wildlife, water filtration and so much more!

Progress is being made to shift the in-state program incentives through virtual net metering and renewable energy growth tariffs from clear cutting core forests to sites that are preferred for solar development. We will remain focused on how to maximize solar development on sites like rooftops, parking lots, landfills, and commercial and industrial development land. Audubon is certain that forests and renewables can co-exist.

Important Legislative Efforts

We must continue to support efforts to reduce emissions in transportation and buildings the top two contributors to Rhode Island's carbon emissions. This shift must begin in the communities that are most overburdened by pollution. These efforts include transforming our transportation system to include alternate modes of mobility and leveraging dollars to incentivize the shift to electric vehicles, including critical public transit infrastructure and school buses. Audubon is all in on the Green & Healthy Schools initiative, working with coalition partners to decarbonize public schools - improving the learning environment for current students and future generations!



Derived from fossil fuels, plastic pollution can be seen throughout our neighborhoods, green open spaces, rivers, bays, and oceans so detrimental to wildlife and people. Last year, a state-wide plastic bag ban was finally enacted after years of advocacy. We are pushing for a bottle bill this year to establish a container deposit system in Rhode Island. Massachusetts and Connecticut have passed similar laws, recognizing that bottles returned to a deposit system are more likely to be cleaned and properly sorted, increasing the chance that they will be properly recycled.

Audubon will also support the banning of pyrolysis, including so-called advanced recycling by the fossil fuel industry. The burning of plastics through a high-heat process undermines Rhode Island climate goals and climate justice efforts and can result in serious public health issues.

As a member-driven organization, we count on your support to amplify our advocacy. You can learn more about emerging priorities, track and engage in legislative progress, and subscribe to Audubon's Eagle Eye newsletter. Visit asri.org/advocacy-tracker.html

Audubon Society of Rhode Island Named Endowment Funds

The Audubon Endowment is a permanently restricted fund that, by law, exists in perpetuity.

Because the Audubon Endowment is invested, it allows for long-term stability, fiscal responsibility, and financial viability that keeps Audubon a vibrant and growing organization. It also enhances our credibility, relieves pressure on fund raising, allows program expansion, and provides independence.

Donations of \$10,000 or more to the Audubon Endowment can be recognized by a named designation, either for an individual, family, or a cause you believe in.

Audubon Society of Rhode Island Named Endowments

- Aust-Capron Memorial Fund
- Barter-Moore Fund
- Edith Becker Fund
- Mary Catherine Rogers Beckett Fund
- John Brezinski Memorial Fund
- Bristol Education Center Fund
- Caratunk Fund
- Mary B. Cottrell Fund
- Severyn Dana Fund
- Davis Memorial Wildlife Fund
- Norman A. Deslauriers Fund
- Dickens Farm Fund
- Patricia Meagher Dwyer Conservation Fund
- John Raleigh Eldred Fund
- Bayard Ewing Fund
- Fisherville Brook Fund
- Fort Nature Refuge Fund
- Groat Memorial Fund
- Alice O. Harris Fund
- Jonathan H. Harwood Fund
- Hicks-Borden Fund
- Priscilla J. Hollis Fund
- Mary C. Kellermann Endowment Fund
- Walter Hammond Kimball Fund
- Margaret Robinson Knight Fund
- Kimball Memorial Garden Stewardship Fund
- Kay Kinsey Fund
- Kraus Wildlife Fund
- Henry J. Larkin Wildlife Preserve Fund
- Lorraine Leaney Fund
- Little Rest Bird Club Fund
- Lonesome Swamp Fund
- Edward B. and Phoebe W. McAlpine Memorial Preserve Fund
- Constance McCarthy Fund
- McKenzie Wildlife Fund
- George B. Parker Fund
- Powder Mill Ledges Fund
- Prudence Island Fund
- Susan M. Romano Memorial Fund
- Elton Sanford Fund
- Alicia Perry Seavey Family Fund
- South County Fund
- Everett F. Southwick Fund
- Touisset Marsh Fund
- Viall Memorial Library Fund
- Mrs. and Mr. Dudley A. Williams Memorial Fund

For more information contact Jeff Hall at jhall@asri.org or (401)-949-5454 ext. 3017.

Learning Inside Out: The Outdoor Classroom Initiative

Outdoor education is a powerful tool that all schools can use to deliver for their students. That's why the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) launched the \$7.5 million Learning Inside Out: Outdoor Classroom Initiative in December 2022.

Rhode Island Governor Dan McKee, Commissioner Infante-Green, and US Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Region announced the RI Department of Education Learning Inside Out. This outdoor classroom initiative aims to create, enhance, and support access to natural resources for all students, while promoting environmental literacy and community connection. It also addresses problems such as inequitable access to the outdoors, habitat loss and degradation, and climate change.

The event was held in the outdoor classroom at the Cumberland Community School, a space that Audubon helped to create, and which Governor McKee describes as a shining example of what is possible for our schools when we commit to expanding hands-on, innovative environmental education.

Schools are encouraged to apply for project funding by April 3, 2023. Access the application and other important resources here:

<https://www.ride.ri.gov/FundingFinance/SchoolBuildingAuthority/LearningInsideOut.aspx>

Top right: Governor Daniel McKee announces \$7.5 million in funding for the Learning Inside Out Initiative to fund schoolyard habitats and outdoor classrooms at Community School in Cumberland, RI. From left: Governor McKee; Cumberland Mayor Jeffrey Mutter; U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Acting Regional Director, Northeast Region Kyla Hastie; RIDE's Chief of Operations Mario Carreño; U.S Fish & Wildlife Biologist and Schoolyard Habitat Coordinator Cindy Corsair.

Bottom right: Diane Boisvert (far left) and her 5th grade class in Community School's outdoor classroom. Boisvert led the team that developed the schoolyard habitat with support from USFW and Audubon. Audubon Senior Director of Education Lauren Parmelee is second from left. Shown far right is Kyla Hastie and Cindy Corsair (behind the student.)



The Perfect Gift for Nature Enthusiasts

AUDUBON NATURE PROGRAM GIFT CARDS

Give your friends and family the opportunity to select an Audubon adventure of their choice: from bird walks and crafting classes to lectures and more! Gift cards are valid for Audubon nature programs listed on the events calendar.

Note that these gift cards cannot be used for special event ticket purchases in Eventbrite, such as Raptor Weekend or Party for the Peregrines.

Visit asri.org/gift-cards and choose the amount for your special gift. All gift cards are electronic and will be sent to recipients by email.

NEW!

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 visit asri.org/leadership or contact Jeff Hall at 401-949-5454 ext. 3017.

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.

BRING NATURE TO CHILDREN

Help Audubon Expand Summer Outreach Programming




DONATE TODAY

Audubon offers a wide range of environmental education programs for community centers, summer camps, YMCAs and other sites for children. Experienced Audubon educators bring nature discovery activities and science programs for summer enrichment. Children go on outdoor explorations in their communities and neighborhoods, engage in interactive hands-on science programs, meet live animals, and learn about the natural world around them.

Many of the camps and child-care programs in cities and underserved communities do not have the funding to pay for these important summer enrichment programs. **Help us reach children in their communities this summer.**

Bring Nature to Children This Summer!

Cut here and return slip with your donation. 

Please accept my donation for summer outreach programs for children. Please charge my credit card.

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[You can also donate online at asri.org/donate](https://asri.org/donate)

Please make check payable to: Audubon Society of Rhode Island • Mail to: Audubon Summer Outreach, 12 Sanderson Rd., Smithfield, RI 02917



Hall joined Audubon in 2000, serving as the first director of the Nature Center and Aquarium and later as senior director of advancement. Shown here, Hall engages guests in his popular role as MC of the annual Party for the Peregrines.

AUDUBON'S 'MOMENT IN TIME'

Continued from page 7

of darkness as the lack of holistic solutions to land use and development decisions that put our natural resources and climate change solutions at odds. In the last two or three years the greatest threat to forests besides climate change, he explains, has been the proliferation of solar farms in forests. The problem, he says, is that it is more economical for developers to cut down trees to build solar fields on pristine woodlands than to repurpose unused and already disturbed properties such as parking lots and abandoned industrial sites. There is currently no incentive for developers, he adds, to look any further than the forest. Audubon is fighting to change that.

Equally as prominent on Audubon's horizon is the outlook for birds living in a world vastly different from where they were feathering their nests when the organization was founded in 1897. Simply put, says Hall, their habitats are in crisis.

The Rhode Island Bird Atlas was a labor-intensive five-year state-wide bird survey completed in 2021. Led by Dr. Charles Clarkson, the atlas created a statewide inventory of birds and ultimately led to the appointment of Clarkson as Audubon Director of Avian Research in September 2021. Charles Clarkson is easily one of the most knowledgeable

individuals in Rhode Island when it comes to birds, Hall says. His new avian research on Audubon properties will provide comprehensive information on how birds are faring, adapting, and surviving (or not) in our small state and will be invaluable in providing data on the impact of climate change. This work will not just impact how we manage habitat in Rhode Island, but it will be shared with scientists throughout New England.

To enable all of this—the foundation upon which Audubon can carry on its mission, he says, is the people who support it. He sees the potential, given the motivation, for Audubon members to become even more powerful advocates and activists.

And while having no personal agenda, Hall does admit to a pet project. The Monarch butterfly is being wiped out because of chemical pesticides and loss of habitat, he explains. What Hall envisions to save it: a butterfly highway—a pesticide-free zone for pollinators formed by piecing together areas of conservation land in partnership with other land trust organizations and private landowners. Looking ahead, he says he can picture Nature at Work signs everywhere linked areas of conservation land, native plants used in yards and gardens to support pollinators, wild fields thriving, all without the use of dangerous pesticides.

Hall has a background as a publishing entrepreneur (the Mac came along at the right moment in time, is how he explains it) which has given him ample opportunity to put his strong creative abilities to use. He has always approached Audubon communications and solutions from a strong marketing perspective. His vision is clearly imprinted in Audubon publications, marketing materials, and other forms of communication. I've always thought that all the great environmentalists he says, had art as a component in their work. I always felt a connection to that.

The following day, this writer happened to be at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, taking in a roomful of 19th-Century American landscapes. The theme of the exhibit was how these great masters painted through the eyes of environmentalists. The introductory panel featured a quote from Thomas Cole (1801-1848) that resonated, not only with Hall's previous-day observations and concerns, but also clearly illustrated that, the more things change, we also might be frozen in time:

I cannot but express my sorrow, Cole wrote in 1836, that the beauty of such landscapes are quickly passing away—the ravages of the axe are daily increasing—the most noble scenes are made desolate, and oftentimes with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation. The wayside is becoming shadeless, and another generation will behold spots, now rife with beauty, desecrated by what is called improvement.

The arc seems to connect the two. I believe this is our moment in time, Hall says.

FIELD GUIDE DRIVE FOR CITY YOUTH

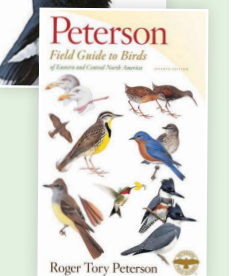
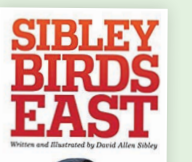
Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Ocean State Bird Club, and Wild Birds Unlimited

Partner to Collect Field Guides for Underserved Youth in Rhode Island

Do you have extra field guides on your shelves? Audubon, the Ocean State Bird Club (OSBC), and Wild Birds Unlimited in Warwick are looking for donations of new or gently used birding field guides to share with children in city communities. The Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership will partner with us to determine where donations will be best allocated.

Please drop off gently used field guides* (or purchase a new one) at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol, Wild Birds Unlimited in Warwick, or at Audubon Headquarters in Smithfield. Guides will also be collected at Audubon Wednesday Morning Bird Walks and any program with OSBC. **The deadline for field guide donations is March 31, 2023.**

* Note that due to changes in birds' names and classifications, guides that are over 30 years old cannot be accepted.



Spring Garden Inspiration: Restoring Habitat for Native Pollinators

By Katie Schortmann, Audubon Garden Coordinator / Environmental Educator

Watching juncos hop along the ground under the bird feeders leaves plenty of time to enjoy the stillness of January. This inner season is a built-in reflection period of the calendar year. New hobbies will start, and resolutions will be made and forgotten, but one thing that does not change is our reliance on nature to heal us year-round. Gardening is a kind of natural therapy for many, and it provides us with a chance to give back to nature in a unique way.

Seventy-eight percent of land in the United States is private property and over 40 million acres of that is lawn (Milesi et al. 2005). Lawns are ecological deserts, creating a monoculture with little to no food for wildlife. Every garden is an opportunity for us to rethink our manicured yards and consider restoring habitat for native plants and wildlife. But where to begin?

STEP 1: LEARN!

Educate yourself and those around you about the importance of wild pollinators. The Xerces Society website has many resources on managing land for pollinator conservation. Learn how to properly manage your garden for pollinators, protect overwintering insects, maintain hygienic bug hotels and more. Doug Tallamy's books *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature's Best Hope* - were sources of inspiration for the Palmieri Pollinator Garden at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium. They are a wonderful jumping off point for those new to gardening for wildlife.

STEP 2: DREAM BIG!

While turning a half-acre lawn into a pollinator garden is a worthwhile endeavor, not everyone has the resources for a project of that scale. Dreaming big could mean joining a local gardening group, talking to your neighbors about the danger of pesticides, or convincing your HOA to think differently about its landscaping practices. Even putting a pot of lavender on your front steps will help the bees.

STEP 3: MAKE A PLAN!

If you have space to garden, choose native plants with different bloom periods and include a variety of flower shapes. Focus on trees and shrubs that flower early in spring or late in the fall. This provides pollen and nectar for queen bumblebees when they need it most: coming out of hibernation in spring and just before they go back into hibernation in late autumn.

Selecting native plants that have evolved with native insects ensures that both continue to survive. The human species is a mostly visual one, but insects live in a chemical world. Avoid pesticides in your home gardens. Remember, evolution has created an unbreakable connection between certain species of insects and plants. If you want to raise a monarch egg into a butterfly, you must have milkweed plants. Native plants are resilient to climate changes and essential for our native pollinators and the health of our ecosystem.



Susie Dorr

Gardening books with a focus on native plants are now available in the Audubon Nature Shop in Bristol (see page 11.)

Learn more about gardening for pollinators!

NATIVE SEED WORKSHOP
March 11, 2023; 1:00-2:30 pm
Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI
Register at asri.org/calendar



Planning a Celebration or Special Event?

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For availability and reservations, visit asri.org and click on *services* or contact Anne DiMonti at (401) 949-5454 x3116 or adimonti@asri.org.

VOLUNTEERS ARE THE BACKBONE OF AUDUBON



Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences share their time and talent to support Audubon. From interns and educators to gardeners, trail monitors, office help and more, we depend on volunteers. Upcoming issues of the Report will highlight a number of Audubon volunteers and the many talents they share with us.

ANN BROUILLETTE

Palmieri Pollinator Garden Volunteer
 Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol



Ann Brouillette

Ann Brouillette is an Audubon volunteer, URI Master Gardener, and contributor to the RI Wild Plant Society newsletter *WildfloraRI*. She is a tenacious weed puller that is always discovering new ways to improve pollinator habitat. Ann demonstrates her dedication to preserving and creating habitat for wild bees and native plants through her position on the Pollinator Pathway committee within the Barrington Land Trust. She has been a volunteer in the Palmieri Pollinator Garden for several years and was part of the team that propagated native seeds at the Veterans Home Greenhouse last spring. Ann's intelligence, work ethic, and community mindset inspire all the garden volunteers in their work. Audubon is grateful to have her as a committed volunteer at the Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol.

By Katie Schortmann
 Audubon Garden Coordinator / Environmental Educator

BARBARA ZIMMER AND JIM MARSDEN

Animal Care Volunteers
 Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield



Barbara Zimmer and Jim Marsden

Barbara Zimmer and Jim Marsden are dedicated animal care volunteers in Smithfield and long-time Audubon supporters. They started volunteering for Audubon back in 2012, before they moved to Vermont for several years. We are thrilled to have them back!

Barbara and Jim are simply wonderful to work with, dedicated to the creatures they care for, and both have a passion for nature. Caring for Audubon animals is complicated and demanding, but I love doing it, explained Barbara. Jim and I mince fruits and vegetables for frogs, turtles, and cockroaches, thaw frozen lab mice for snakes, and more. They come to Audubon Headquarters once a week to look after their family of critters and feel that volunteering both fulfills a strong need to connect with nature and helps Audubon with the critical responsibility of animal care. When asked their favorite part of working with animals, Jim replied: "It's great to see how most of the animals recognize us as caretakers, and give us attention when we come in. It's a good feeling to prepare their food and give it to them. We appreciate their commitment to our animals and extend a huge thank you to both of them from everyone at Audubon!"

By Tracey Hall
 Audubon Camp Director and Education Coordinator

HELEN COPPLE AND CHRISTOPHER CLYNE

Frog Exhibit Volunteers
 Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA



Helen Copple Christopher Clyne

Last May I was contacted by two National Honors Society students from Barrington High School who were interested in volunteering on a project at Caratunk. I spoke with them about repairing and upgrading a new frog exhibit and they jumped in with both feet! Helen Copple and Christopher Clyne began in June by researching tree frogs: they were determined to provide an appropriate environment for the frogs ó from the substrate to plants, and even the isopods that clean up after them!

Throughout the summer Helen, Chris and I repaired the exhibit tank, ordered all the materials needed for construction, and started creating the exhibit. We built a misting system to replicate the humid rainforest environment and hung cork and moss for the frogs to climb on.

In early November, Audubon acquired two Borneo Eared Tree Frogs and introduced them to the exhibit tank. They have been adapting well and can be seen exploring their new home while often chasing crickets. A big thank you to Helen and Chris for their dedication to this wildlife project.

By Jon Scoones
 Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge Manager

BECOME AN AUDUBON VOLUNTEER

Share your time and talent with Audubon. Become a citizen scientist, trail monitor, or join our team of volunteers through a number of roles. To explore opportunities, please visit asri.org/volunteer





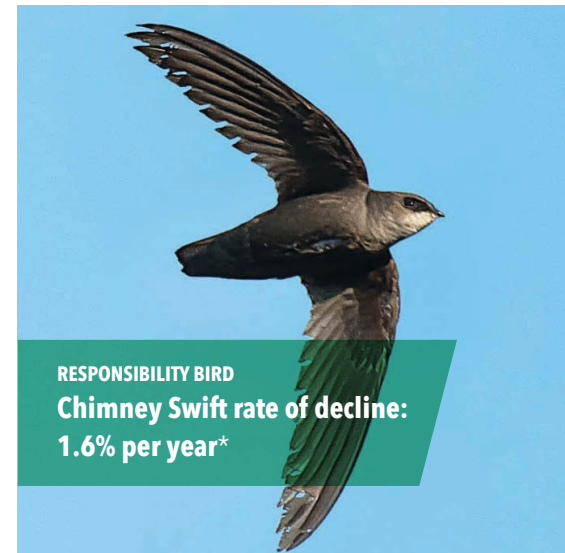
RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Wood Thrush rate of decline:
2.4% per year*



RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Scarlet Tanager rate of decline:
0.9% per year*



RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Red-winged Blackbird rate of decline:
1.3% per year*



RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Chimney Swift rate of decline:
1.6% per year*



RESPONSIBILITY BIRD
Barn Swallow rate of decline:
0.9% per year*



The greatest declines were seen in aerial insectivores and those species associated with early successional, grassland and urban habitats.

THE STATE OF OUR BIRDS

Continued from page 4

find out exactly what it is they are honing in on, he added. Baseline data collected during that year also included information gathered by ARUs, or Acoustic Recording Units (placed in three selected Audubon habitats to follow activity during spring migration and breeding season.) It is imperative, he wrote in an earlier Report, that we also understand whether habi-

tats that birds rely on are themselves degraded. Another goal was to determine how many species are using Audubon's refuges, why, and when a valuable first step towards developing a management plan. He uses as an example the Common Yellowthroat, which is not listed as a national species of concern. It's a large population, he explained. Yellowthroats are found across huge swaths of North America, but are declining across much of this range. From coastal Virginia to coastal Massachusetts, there has been a decline of 1.5 percent per year for the last 50 years. Just because it's not yet recognized on a state or federal scale, Clarkson explains, it doesn't mean it shouldn't be.

The new Audubon State of Our Birds report, he said, tells us what we have birds associate with and helps us identify our responsibility birds. Nine species have been selected as Responsibility Birds because it is crucial to begin to address their decline now, and work to manage and acquire habitat for their survival.

If there were any surprises from his first year of research, they were hidden in plain sight. The numbers, almost everywhere, were off worse than anticipated, even for such stalwarts as the American Robin, the Blue Jay, Common Yellowthroats, and Common Grackles. The Grackle is declining at an annual rate of more than two percent. We need to acknowledge that some species of migrants have 90 percent of their global breeding population in the Northeast, and it's our responsibility to ensure that conditions never get to the point where we have to be reactive in our conservation. We shouldn't wait until things get worse than they already are. Clarkson explains. There are now so many sources of decline there's no longer a single silver bullet for conservationists anymore.

Clarkson's mission is to sound the alarm without sounding alarming. With the first year

of research and analytics done (for now the data gathering never stops), he is now focusing on once again trying to communicate their needs. More people need to be connected to wildlife species, he said. Humans are so isolated, he said, far removed from the ebb and flow of nature.

A chasm exists between the work that scientists do to better understand climate change and its effects on wildlife populations and the communication of this information to the general public. A major goal of the recently completed strategic plan at Audubon is to more effectively communicate these important issues to the citizens of our state. Conservation is a collective issue and we need more people to understand the drivers of declines in bird populations and become ambassadors for our wildlife. The recent science symposium hosted by Audubon at its Nature Center in Bristol and the Report itself are designed to facilitate the exchange of this information in an easily digestible format that is accessible to all.

Chace also said that its reach beyond Rhode Island is key. Hopefully, he said, we can export this and cooperate with entities in other states.

And at the end, Clarkson remains realistically optimistic. We want to maximize the good we are doing, he said. His original goals for the January 28 Symposium were to create a conversation a loud, boisterous, and substantive conversation, a productive sharing of ideas so the volunteers, public in attendance, and contributing scientists can go home and be better stewards for the birds. I wanted the audience to come and learn all about the science and the species and to walk away with a better understanding of what we are witnessing. The Symposium was a sold-out event with presenters coming from throughout New England. I don't want our work to be insular, he explained. Conservation is a global issue.

*Rate of decline for the past 50 years.

Clarkson is also honing in on a management plan for the beleaguered bird populations utilizing Audubon's properties. He saw the January 28 symposium not as the end, but as the start of the next level of inquiry, using the knowledge gained. It's a form of power. Knowledge is power, he said. If you can get people to feel more empowered, they will act. Conservation, he added, is a lengthy process. Stopping the decline is not going to happen overnight. I sincerely hope there are enough people open to receive the messaging.

And if and when that happens, he believes, more is possible.

Betsy Sherman Walker is a Rhode Island native who writes for area nonprofits, news, and lifestyle publications, and who has recently discovered the joy and wonder of birding. Touch base at walkerbets@gmail.com.



Dr. Charles Clarkson in the field with volunteers.

*Rate of decline for the past 50 years.



Download Audubon's 'The State of our Birds' report at asri.org/AvianResearchInitiative



Greater than 1/3 of all birds found breeding on Audubon Wildlife Refuges are experiencing long-term population decline.

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As we work to protect birds, wildlife, and our communities from the impacts of climate change, we are committed to making the most of every donation we receive and are grateful for each and every one of our supporters.

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* = Deceased
^{HLC} = Hawkes's Legacy Circle

Audubon thanks the 2,189 donors who gave less than \$100 in 2022. We appreciate support in any amount to protect birds, wildlife, and their habitats. Thank you.



Rent the Perfect Summer Retreat!

Maxwell Mays Lakefront Cottage Coventry, RI

This charming cottage in western Coventry is on a secluded lake, part of the Audubon Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge. Head out each day to canoe, bird watch, or hike on the property's trails.

This beautifully furnished wood and field stone camp features fireplace heat, a full kitchen, screened porch, dock, large deck overlooking the pond, outdoor gas grill, indoor plumbing, two bedrooms, one bath. The cottage sleeps five.

Perfect for an affordable weekend get-a-way or a family vacation. Kids love it here! The cottage comes with a canoe and kayak. Available from May 1 to October 30th.

For details, visit asri.org and click on the *services* link.

RHODE ISLAND LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION SUMMIT

New Schedule – Save the Dates!

Land and Water Conservation Mini-Summit
 April 8, 2023 - URI Center for Biotechnology & Life Science

Featuring many popular highlights from the annual event – a keynote speaker, panel discussion, networking and more – but kept to a morning schedule. For details and to register, visit landandwaterpartnership.org

20th Anniversary Land and Water Conservation Summit
 March 9, 2024 - URI Memorial Union

Next year marks the 20th Anniversary of the Land and Water Conservation Summit in Rhode Island. The celebration will include the traditional full-day event. Please mark your calendar!

GENEROUS IN NATURE 12 Field Guides Donated to City Youth at Audubon Birthday Party

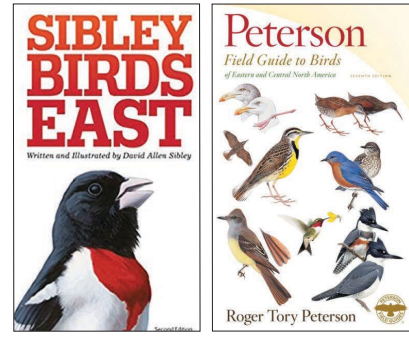
Luna Roberts, age 8, is into birds. And plants, and hikes, and everything to do with nature. So, when her Mom suggested Audubon as a birthday party destination, she was all in.

They celebrated with a small low-waste, nature-themed party at Powder Mill Ledges in Smithfield. Starting at the Audubon Nature Shop, Luna selected reusable owl-themed bags as favors and owl pellets for guests to dissect at the party. They played wildflower bingo, enjoyed home-made treats on cloth napkins, hiked the trails with an Audubon naturalist, and got up-close with a cool corn snake.

And because Luna enjoys her field guides so much, instead of gifts she asked her guests to donate field guides for youth in underserved communities*.

Her mom, Kate Roberts, explained that Walking in the woods is so grounding for us. I think in our current society it's easy to forget how much we need that. Being able to recognize and identify a few of your favorite birds is a beautiful and easy way to remember this sacred connection that lives in every one of us. Audubon thanks Luna for choosing Audubon for her celebration and applaud the thoughtful and generous choices she made on her special day.

* See page 19 for details on how you can donate field guides for youth in city communities.



For favors, Luna purchased reusable owl-themed tote bags from the Audubon Nature Shop in Bristol.

WILD LIVES AT CARATUNK WILDLIFE CLASS FOR CHILDREN

March 11, 18, 25, April 1, 15, 22, 2023

Wild Lives explores the secret lives of wild animals! Kids work outdoors, in the classroom, and the workshop. They learn the basics of animal tracking and how to build their own tools, film animals in their natural habitat, and use their own voices to share stories about what they found. Does your child have a powerful curiosity about the natural world? This is the class for them!

Nestling: Ages 4-6: 12:00-1:30 pm;
Yearling: Ages 7-11: 2:00-3:30 pm

For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at asri.org/calendar



Engaging The Community in Stormwater Science

By Rebecca Reeves, Stormwater Education and Outreach Coordinator

STORMWATER INNOVATION EXPO

Stormwater professionals from across Southeastern New England gathered to network, learn from vendors in the field, and view presentations at the Stormwater Innovation Expo on November 30, 2022. Keynote remarks via video came from US Senator Jack Reed and RI Governor Dan McKee. Kim Koriath from the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank presented on recent bipartisan infrastructure legislation, and Audubon Senior Director of Government Affairs Priscilla De La Cruz moderated a panel discussion on stormwater funding and financing opportunities and the growing need as the Ocean State weathers the impacts of climate change.

The Stormwater Innovation Center hosted afternoon field presentations as attendees braved wind and rain to learn more about green infrastructure. On the plus side, they were able to see the stormwater systems at Roger Williams Park in action!

Partners of the Innovation Center presented on a variety of topics including native plantings, green infrastructure wetland design, and monitoring and maintenance of stormwater systems. Attendees learned from those who have been directly involved with the green infrastructure work in Roger Williams Park, including Providence Parks Department staff members, engineers, product specialists, and those involved in community engagement at the park. Hearing about the lessons learned in the design, construction, and maintenance of green infrastructure from those directly involved in these projects was a valuable addition to the Expo programming.

The Stormwater Innovation Expo provides a rewarding opportunity to bring the Southeastern New England stormwater community together. We look forward to collaborating on the event in future years.



Stormwater Expo attendees braved wind and rain for field presentations on November 30.

RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES GRANT

After receiving a Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) Grant in 2022, the celebratory phase has passed and the real work has commenced. Part of the grant funds will go towards retrofitting existing green infrastructure sites at Roger Williams Park in Providence, and the balance will be dedicated to a community green infrastructure monitoring project.

Stormwater Manager Ryan Kopp, along with other partners, has already completed work to identify the sites at Roger Williams Park that most need retrofitting—namely those that have documented issues with their water intake areas, or inlets. Although there are many reasons green infrastructure might need restoration, one common issue is that the inlet structure is not functioning well. This prevents stormwater from being treated, and in most cases the water will flow directly into storm drains, where it returns to water bodies unfiltered.

The second component of the RAE grant is to engage community volunteers to monitor the amount of water that green infrastructure projects are capturing. Using a website called RainSnap, currently being developed with the help of consultant Bruce Hooke, volunteers around the state will take video or photos of projects during or shortly after storm events. These images will be used to assess how much water is entering green infrastructure projects. This information can be compared against community-sourced data on how much rain has fallen in the area. Although installing green infrastructure is exciting in and of itself, ensuring that water is being captured and filtered within these stormwater systems is key.

Our goal is to engage the public more actively through this project and increase community responsibility for the health of our local watersheds. We are grateful to the many partners who will be working with the Stormwater Innovation Center to help make these projects a success!



On November 4, 2022, Former Audubon Executive Director Larry Taft (far left) and Audubon Stormwater Manager Ryan Kopp (sixth from right) joined US Senator Jack Reed; US Congressman Jim Langevin, US Congressman David Cicilline; Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza; EPA Regional Administrator David Cash; Providence Parks Director Wendy Nilsson; RI Director of Environmental Management Terry Gray; grant recipients and local project advocates at the speaking event to announce the funding.



GET READY TO RUN WILD!

VIRTUAL 5K RUN/WALK

APRIL 10-14, 2023 ANYTIME, ANYWHERE!

Interested in doing even more for wildlife?

Start an Audubon fundraiser!

You'll receive a personalized fundraising webpage to share with friends and family. Collect donations and help keep Audubon's beautiful wildlife refuges free and open to all.

Prizes awarded to the top fundraisers!

COMING SOON! WATCH FOR MORE INFO AND REGISTRATION DETAILS ON ASRI.ORG.

Five Audubon Wildlife Refuges will have marked trails for walkers to follow:

- Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk
- Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, Exeter
- Fort Wildlife Refuge, North Smithfield
- Parker Woodland Wildlife Refuge, Coventry
- Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield



All participants receive: exclusive tech t-shirt, embossed medal and numbered bib!

THANK YOU!



PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

The companies listed below have demonstrated their significant commitment to the quality of life in Rhode Island and to conserving natural habitats through stewardship and education.

Bank of America
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Citizens Bank
Cox Communications
CVS Health
DBVW Architects
National Education Association RI
NEC Solar
Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP
Rhode Island AFL-CIO
R.I. Beekeepers Association
United Natural Foods, Inc.
Utilidata
Van Liew Trust Company

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: Dianne Auld
From: Andrew Auld

In Honor of: James Buzzi
From: James and Tara Higgins

In Honor of: Jane Case
From: Donna Medeiros

In Honor of: Barry Cohen
From: Betsy and Richard Staples

In Honor of: Danikka Dillon
From: Katie Lessa

In Honor of: the Dillon Family
From: Danikka Dillon

In Honor of: the marriage of: Katie Ferrato and Pat Fogerty
From: United Way of: Rhode Island

In Honor of: Jeff Fischer
From: Lindsay Neagle

In Honor of: Carol Gerold
From: Christopher Lysik

In Honor of: Jeff Hall
From: Stan G. Dimock
Hope and John Foley
George and Joan Gardner

In Honor of: Lois Hartley
From: John Hartley

In Honor of: Nancy Hoogasian
From: Rebecca Rattey

In Honor of: Michael Lapides
From: Nate Lapide

In Honor of: Life Events & Marketplace Leadership Team
From: Danikka Dillon

In Honor of: Alex Martin
From: Alicia Blatchford

In Honor of: Liz and Kenny Mendez
From: Chandra Manning

In Honor of: Shana Metheny
From: Debbie Mathieu

In Honor of: Frederick Metters
From: Rick Metters

In Honor of: Dr. Lauren Noel
From: Sharon and Thomas Hegburg

In Honor of: Bill and Pam O'Neill
From: Mikaela Roterman

In Honor of: Todd Sabelli
From: Elizabeth A. Saunders

In Honor of: Ellen & Patrick Scavuzzo-Duggan
From: Molly Scavuzzo-Duggan

In Honor of: Joan Schaefer
From: The Schaefer Family

In Honor of: Barbara Sherman
From: Sandra Riis

In Honor of: Dan Silverman
From: Helmut and Nancy Waszkis

In Honor of: Barbara Walsh and Earle Simson
From: Gail A. Ginnetty

In Honor of: Joan Steere
From: Russell Steere

In Honor of: Larry Taft
From: Anthony Caparelli
Gertrude M. Coxe
Joan and George Gardner
Lisa L. Gould
John Gwynne and Mikel Folcarelli
Christine and Daniel Lilley

In Honor of: Tom and Julia Vanderslice and Deardon
From: Caroline Kerr

In Honor of: George Boyce
From: Lucy Brainerd

In Honor of: Anne Hird
From: Matthew and Anne Hird

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: Katrina Avery
From: Thomas Doeppner

In Memory of: George Bacon
From: Gail Stewart

In Memory of: Russell Chateaufeuf
From: Ms. Seta M. Ohanian-Chateaufeuf

In Memory of: Barbara Drain
From: James Drain

In Memory of: Daniel Elkins
From: Karen Elkins

In Memory of: Charles G. Greenhalgh
From: Larry D. and Jane G. Ransom

In Memory of: Jane Ferguson Griffin
From: George and Donna David

In Memory of: Michael Hadala
From: Wendy Braga

In Memory of: Doris Hanmer
From: Linda Ludvick
Jo-Ann Morra
McLaughlin Research Corporation

In Memory of: Frances Holmes
From: Leslie Deardorff

In Memory of: Betty Jane Impagliazzo
From: Mayor Scott Avedesian
Rep. Robert E. Flaherty
Yvette and Paul Mellin
Elena Pascarella
Senator John C. Revens, Jr.
Patricia Tilley
Mark and Nancy Van Eeghen
Dorothy Whatmough
Jennifer Wheelheon and Donald Osley

In Memory of: Mary Kollar
From: Norine Duncan
Mary Jane Flynn
Mary Frappier
Joan S. Galloway
Thomas Getz and Margaret Finn



Linda Larson
Angela Leone
Linda M. McEnery
Diane Patterson
Rebecca Schulte
Marylin Spitznagel
Cumberland Garden Club

In Memory of: Timothy and Patricia Maloney
From: Courtney Maloney

In Memory of: Juliette Mandeville
From: Charles Mandeville

In Memory of: Carrie Matteson
From: Alan and Ann McKenzie

In Memory of: David Merchant
From: Joanne Leary
Judy Snow
Ashley and Dave Tessmer

In Memory of: John Minichiello
From: Maureen O'Donnell

In Memory of: Christopher Moreau
From: Keith Moreau

In Memory of: Shawn O'Brien
From: Mallory and Michael Walsh

In Memory of: Dan Orfan
From: Debbie Blicher
Diane Landry
Dennis and Joanne LaVallee
Carole Meath
Sarah Milton
Roselyn Oliveira
Frank and Sandra Ricciotti
Susan Vadney

In Memory of: Genie Wild
From: Frances Bodell
Joan Ray

In Memory of: Giriacco Zizzari
Rep. Stephen Ucci, Esq.
Dina Ucci

Change Happens Slowly... Then All At Once

By Dr. Charles Clarkson, Director of Avian Research

Imagine trying to patch a leaking roof as both the number of leaks and the intensity of each increase faster than your ability to apply a single patch. There are many apt analogies to use when describing the difficulty of grappling with the myriad problems our bird populations face today. Climate change, cat predation, window strikes, pesticides, habitat loss each its own leak and each in need of its own targeted solution if it is to be fixed. If you wait too long before trying to mitigate the damage from these individual points of failure, their collective impact may just cause the entire roof to collapse.

Unfortunately, this is precisely the problem we are currently facing as the result of being such a reactive society. For far too long, our level of environmental action has lagged behind our consciousness. We are warned of pending environmental disaster and we wait. Increasingly dire warnings are met with even more inaction. This is how we lost the Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) from our skies and how we nearly lost the many species affected by DDT, including our own national symbol, the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

Take climate change as just one enormous example. Science has been fairly consistent with its messaging for decades: without changes to our consumption habits, we can expect our climate to become progressively more erratic. Not only will our climate be less predictable to us, it has already become less predictable to the other inhabitants of our world, causing many wildlife populations to decline precipitously due to increasingly mismatched predator-prey cycles.

A byproduct of living in developed countries has been the widening chasm between us and the natural world. We have largely removed ourselves from the ebb and flow of nature as we sit in our air-conditioned homes during the heat of the summer, or we crank our thermostat on a frosty winter morning. We spend a significant amount of our lives viewing our planet through a pane of glass, as we control our own environment. To a great degree, this separation between self and the natural world has fueled our ignorance to just how dire the situation has become. The average human has barely experienced the protracted but consistent changes that have occurred to our climate since we first flooded fields to plant agricultural crops and burned coal to generate electricity. To most of us, the alteration of our habitats as they become choked with invasive species, the rapidly dwindling freshwater supplies, the near crash in the ocean's productivity, or the countless other changes that have occurred to our planet in a geologic blink of an eye are issues known to us only from excerpts we digest from our digital devices as we sit in homes, offices, restaurants or coffee shops.

Recently, the first comprehensive report detailing the distribution, habitat-selection and population trends of the birds utilizing The Audubon Society of Rhode Island's wildlife refuges was released. This report, titled The State of Our Birds, represented the culmination of a year-long data collection scheme that involved over 80 volunteers, trained ornithologists, months of data entry and analysis, and a great deal of writing and editing. Putting together this report was, to be blunt, a very sobering experience. As the data came into focus only to show a nearly universal declining trend in species that breed or overwinter on our refuges, the task of conserving these natural resources seemed overwhelming. Every group



Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

of birds, from those found in shrubby habitats and grasslands to those that reside in wetlands or eat insects on the wing, are declining. Even birds most commonly associated with human-modified landscapes, such as pigeons and starlings, are experiencing steep reductions in population size.

And these are not declines that have taken lengthy periods to occur. Population trend data were calculated from the years of 1966-2019, a period of only 53 years. For reference, the average life expectancy in the United States is 77 years. In less than a single human lifetime, 34% of the bird species breeding in Rhode Island have declined, and some of these declines have been dramatic. Along the Mid-Atlantic, Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*), Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*), Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*), Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*) and Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) populations are less than half of what they were just 53 years ago to cite just a handful of examples.

The time to start patching the leaks in our roof is now. Placing buckets under each leak to simply catch the water will no longer do. Buckets only buy us time, they do nothing to stop the damage. They still fill and overflow. Many of the birds experiencing decline are still considered species of least concern as their global populations are large or they occupy expansive geographic ranges. However, make no mistake, inaction now will only lead to catastrophe. The pace of conservation is slow. Considering the time and effort it takes to bring species back from decline, a population that is half of what it was just five decades ago should very much be of great concern.

Armed with the knowledge from our recent baseline data gathering, Audubon will begin a monitoring and management scheme to reverse the declining trends in our birds. We will join forces with other entities in the state and region to increase our impact. We will not place species on a spectrum of conservation concern. If there are things we can do to positively impact our birds, regardless of their conservation status, we will do them. After all, the mission of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island is to protect all birds, not just those species that need help the most. I am not ok with having fewer birds in my life. You shouldn't be either.

REPORT

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Please pass this copy on to a friend 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.

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."



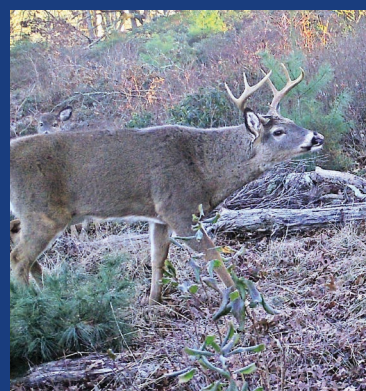
Because of you, the Osprey License Plate has provided hundreds of children with the opportunity to learn about nature. Thank you.



Order at www.asri.org

Wildlife Trail Cameras

Deer rutting season occurs during the mating season between mid-October and early December. Taken on November 20, 2022, at Audubon's Marion Eppley Wildlife Refuge in South Kingstown, this image shows classic behavior of a buck in rut. He is sniffing the air and sensing the receptive does in the area. Humans are one mammal that are poor olfactory communicators!



Mark Your Calendar!

Join the State-wide Day of Giving and Support the Audubon Avian Research Initiative.

asri.org/401gives

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April 1, 2023; 9:30–11:00 am

Children hunt for brown eggs in a natural setting and
quickly learn how well the eggs camouflage.

FOUR LOCATIONS

- Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol
- Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk
- Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, Exeter
- Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield

Register at asri.org/calendar



EVERY DAY IN MAY FREE BIRD WALKS

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Visit asri.org/calendar for the complete schedule.
Registration required.