



COMMUNITY REPORT

AUDUBON SOCIETY of Rhode Island

PROVIDENCE, EAST PROVIDENCE, PAWTUCKET, RI
AND SEEKONK, MA

PEREGRINE FALCON



Audubon Society of Rhode Island

NATURE IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

Through land conservation, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island will always protect critical habitat for birds and wildlife in Greater Providence. We advocate locally and at the state-level on environmental issues impacting your community, our educators bring nature-related programs to school children and the public in your area, and we look to connect you and people of all ages with nature. With your support, our work will continue to have a lasting impact.

This year, our advocacy efforts resulted in a series of legislative victories. Most significantly, the use of deadly neonicotinoid pesticides in our neighborhoods and parks has been restricted. These toxic chemicals not only kill birds, bees, and other pollinating species, they also seep into our ground water. This legislation is only the beginning. We will continue the fight to ban these and other toxic chemicals that harm our ecosystems.

Audubon's award-winning environmental education programs reach thousands of Rhode Islanders of all ages each year in schools, libraries, community centers, and on our wildlife refuges. Our educators bring hands-on science and nature programs to school children across the state, providing experiences that support classroom learning and foster a connection with the natural world.

A \$100,000 federal grant was recently awarded to Audubon to ensure that children in city communities have access to experiential learning opportunities in schoolyards, classrooms, local parks, and on Audubon wildlife refuges.

We protect nearly 9,500 acres of conservation land in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts, including fourteen wildlife refuges that are open to the public for hiking and wildlife observation. Through a new avian research initiative, Audubon properties have been identified as being significant habitats for threatened bird species as well as important resting areas for migrating birds. Additional details about this new initiative are included in this community report.

Your support of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island directly impacts environmental education and conservation initiatives in Greater Providence, and provides nature with a voice at the State House. With your help, along with our members and other supporters, we will continue our work to protect our state's natural heritage – resulting in greener, healthier communities for all.

Please give as if nature depends on you... because it does. Donate to Audubon today at asri.org/donate.

Thank you for your support!



Jeffrey C. Hall
Executive Director

Connecting People With Nature

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CONSERVATION

- Protects approximately 9,500 acres of habitat in Rhode Island and 196 acres in Seekonk, Massachusetts.
- Coordinates the state-wide Osprey monitoring program, including 3 sites in Providence, 3 sites in East Providence, 5 sites in Pawtucket, and 8 sites in Seekonk and Swansea, MA.
- Protects large areas of forest habitat in Northern Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts that are critical in the face of climate change.
- Caratunk Wildlife Refuge is one of Audubon's most visited properties, offering numerous birding walks, nature programs, camps and events.



AVIAN RESEARCH

The Audubon Avian Research Initiative has engaged numerous volunteers to monitor the current abundance and distribution of birds in Rhode Island. This research will guide habitat management plans to enhance long-term biodiversity and minimize the impacts of climate change on birds utilizing Audubon wildlife refuges and properties throughout New England.

- First comprehensive baseline data survey was conducted on breeding, nonbreeding and migratory birds on 14 Audubon wildlife refuges to understand the needs of birds over their full annual cycle.
- Surveys were completed at Caratunk Wildlife refuge in Seekonk, MA.
- Over 400 volunteer hours were spent collecting data.
- Audubon partnered with an analytical chemistry lab at URI to process soil and water samples from our properties to determine the presence of dangerous neonicotinoid (neonics) pesticides. Presence of neonics in soil or water will prompt the collection and analysis of bird feathers to determine the extent to which these chemicals may be impacting our local bird communities.
- A final "State of Our Birds" report will be released in early 2023 summarizing the results from the year-long baseline data collection and the first-round of neonicotinoid analysis.
- Partnering with an international effort to track migratory species using the MOTUS Wildlife Tracking System to aid researchers throughout North America in tracking birds, insects and bats. This will allow Audubon to perform in-house research on the movement dynamics of birds using our refuges for breeding, wintering or as migration stopover habitat.



Audubon Summer Nature Camp at Neutaconkanut Park; a collaboration with the Providence Parks Department. Photo by Hugh Markey.



EDUCATION

SCHOOLYARD HABITAT RESOURCE GUIDE

Audubon encourages schools to create natural spaces on their grounds for outdoor learning and nature exploration. The Schoolyard Habitat Resource Guide, produced in 2020, provides age-appropriate activities linked to core subjects with tips for outdoor teaching and safety. It complements the national Schoolyard Habitat Program led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

PROVIDENCE

- Taught watershed and water quality programs to students at Sophia Academy charter school and New Urban Arts students from Central High School as part of an art and science partnership with the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center in Roger Williams Park. This partnership will continue in 2023.
- Brought hands-on science and nature programming to 9 public and charter schools and 7 private and parochial schools in Providence.
- Continued collaboration with The Met School in Providence to offer an eight-week series of environmental programs for tenth graders.
- Presented life science programs for families at both Rochambeau Library and Mt. Pleasant Library.
- In a new collaboration, Providence Promise students explored the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge this summer.
- Provided beginning birding programs and walks in conjunction with Professor Nancy Jacobs in her environmental class at Brown University. The Brown University students then took D'Abate Elementary and Community Prep students birding in local parks.
- Partner annually with Providence Parks and US Fish & Wildlife to provide free "Providence Birding Adventures" in city parks every month.
- Manages the Providence Peregrine Webcam, allowing the public an up-close look as Peregrine Falcons nest each year atop the Superman Building. Organizes the annual banding of the young falcons, so that scientists may follow their movements to learn more about the species.
- Brought nature programs on birding, owls and insects to Laurelmead Senior Living Community.

AUDUBON AT HOME

Audubon offers a free online environmental education resource for teachers and parents of children in Pre-K through Grade 4. Featuring more than 25 nature themes, Audubon at Home offers online activities, animal videos, stories, crafts, fact sheets, and behind-the-scenes tours. Visit asri.org/audubon-at-home.

PAWTUCKET

- Long-term partnership (since 2012) with Pawtucket Public Schools, serving 600 to 700 third graders annually by providing in-school science programs and field trips.
- Provided science and nature-related educational programs to students at St. Cecilia's School.
- Provided Raptor presentation for the Blackstone River Valley Historical Park.

NORTH PROVIDENCE

- Brought nature programs and animal visits to families at the North Providence Library.
- Provides in-school science programming to students at Greystone Elementary School and Dr. Joseph A. Whelan Elementary School.

SEEKONK, MA

- Provides science programs and bus transportation scholarships so students from George R. Martin and Mildred Aitken Schools can participate in field investigations at Caratunk Wildlife Refuge.
- Summer Camp at Caratunk Wildlife Refuge has been a long-standing community tradition for children.
- Holds numerous guided birding walks, nature programs, and events at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge.
- Local scout troop meets at Caratunk Wildlife Refuge.



Glenn Osmundson



ADVOCACY

- Audubon co-lead efforts to once again position Rhode Island as a national leader in its response to the climate change crisis. Climate change is the biggest threat to birds, wildlife, and people as it brings flooding, hurricanes, and fires. With the passage of 100% renewable electricity by 2033 and up to 1,000 megawatts of additional offshore wind, there is a path for the State to meet the mandatory carbon emission reduction goals set by the Act on Climate law. Audubon partners with fellow environmental organizations, labor coalitions and policymakers in this critical work.
- Continues to co-lead advocacy for legislation and state and local policies to prioritize the protection of forests and drive the siting of renewable energy on already disturbed land.
- Serves on the Forest Conservation Commission, advising the RI Department of Environmental Management on how to promote forest values and pursue strategies to preserve private forestland. Also serves on the House Commission on Land Use, studying land use and zoning issues from preservation to housing.
- After years of leading legislative campaigns to protect pollinators that support our ecosystem and food supply chain, a critical step in managing the impacts of harmful pesticides was achieved in 2022 with the passage of the bill to regulate neonicotinoids.
- Working with partners, Audubon supported significant victories on long-time environmental issues with toxics and plastics: banning of PFAS known as “toxic forever chemicals” in food packaging and capping them in drinking water, and a statewide single-use plastic bag ban.
- Played a key role in preventing the advancement proposals for a toxic plastics incineration plant to be built, which would have bypassed state oversight.
- Provided leadership in advocating for the \$50 million Green Bond—Question No. 3 on the referendum ballot that passed with 66.9% voter approval in November 2022. This Green Bond will support investments in open space, outdoor recreation, land revitalization, green energy, climate resilience, forestland, habitat, wildlife conservation, water quality, and new facilities at Roger Williams Park and Zoo.
- As a member of the Green Infrastructure Coalition, Audubon advocates for sustainable funding for nature-based stormwater management. Stormwater pollution affects water quality throughout the state—especially with more extreme storms and flooding. Treating stormwater with green strategies like rain gardens and swales provides climate resilience and enhances wildlife habitats.
- Provides leadership for the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center, which showcases nature-based stormwater practices, engages communities in solutions to improve water quality, provides training on green infrastructure, and tests innovative treatment technologies.
- With the Rhode Island Land Trust Council, organizes and hosts the annual Land & Water Conservation Summit, Rhode Island’s premier gathering of over 300 conservation volunteers and professionals.



Glenn Osmundson



AUDUBON PROTECTED LAND

SEEKONK, MA 196 acres

CARATUNK WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1971; approximately 196 acres
Diverse habitats including wetlands, grasslands and forest; popular refuge for birding, hiking, Audubon programs and summer camp. Open to the public.

Visit asri.org/hike for trail maps and details.



SUPPORT NATURE IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND DONATE TO AUDUBON TODAY.
VISIT WWW.ASRI.ORG/DONATE OR CALL (401) 949-5454 EXT. 3017.