



COMMUNITY REPORT

# AUDUBON SOCIETY of Rhode Island

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CRANSTON AND WARWICK

GREAT BLUE HERON



Audubon Society of Rhode Island

# NATURE IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

**T**hrough land conservation, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island will always protect critical habitat for birds and wildlife in Cranston and Warwick. 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 Cranston and Warwick, 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](https://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, 13 acres in Warwick and 66 acres in Cranston.
- Coordinates the state-wide Osprey monitoring program, including 9 sites in Warwick and 1 site in West Warwick.
- Protects large areas of forest and coastal habitats that are critical in the face of climate change and sea-level rise.

## 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.
- 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.



## 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.

### CRANSTON

- Eden Park Elementary School fifth graders combined art and science in a watershed program with Audubon and the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center. They also participated in the Providence Rain Harvest Arts Festival in Roger Williams Park.
- Visited classrooms at William Dutemple School, Edgewood Highland School, Woodridge School, and Orchard Farms School to bring hands-on nature activities, animals and biofacts.
- Third graders from Woodridge School participated in a pond and stream exploration at the Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seunkonk.
- Cadence Learning Academy preschoolers went on a discovery walk this summer at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol.

### WARWICK

- Girl Scouts of Southern New England, headquartered in Warwick, brought scouts to the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol for several programs that enhanced their work on nature-related badges.
- Continued partnership with EnrichRI, a homeschool group headquartered in Warwick, to offer nature-related programs for students and their families.
- Visited the Stork's Nest Child Academy with nature stories, animals, and activities for young children.
- Led a Bird Walk on the grounds of the Warwick Public Library.
- Presented a Hawks of Rhode Island program with live hawk at Tamarrisk Assisted Living.
- Brought a program on beneficial insects to the Gentian Garden Club.
- The Pontiac Free Library invited Audubon to bring a Raptor Encounter program with live birds of prey.



Hope Foley



## 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

The properties below are permanently protected and remain undisturbed for wildlife. Audubon has wildlife refuges across the state with trails that are open to the public.

Please visit [asri.org/hike](https://asri.org/hike) for trail maps and directions.

## CRANSTON 66 acres

### 1. FENNER'S POND POINT WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1985; Approximately 0.6 acre

This small piece of land offers protection for wildlife in an urban environment.

### 2. MARGARET ROBINSON KNIGHT WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1966; Approximately 51 acres

A flat and large forest piece is intersected with several streams along Hope Road.

### 3. ZAINO SWAMP WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1995; Approximately 15 acres

This thicket of shrubs and forest sits along Hope Road and provides habitat for many wildlife species.

## WARWICK 13 acres

### 4. JOHN FRANCIS BROWN WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1961; Approximately 6 acres

Tucked in a residential neighborhood, this beautiful strip of forest protects a stream and habitat for many songbirds.

### 5. LITTLE SWAMP WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1990; Approximately 2 acres

This small, forested oasis is welcome habitat within a densely settled neighborhood.

### 6. OCCUPESSATUXET COVE MARSH WILDLIFE REFUGE

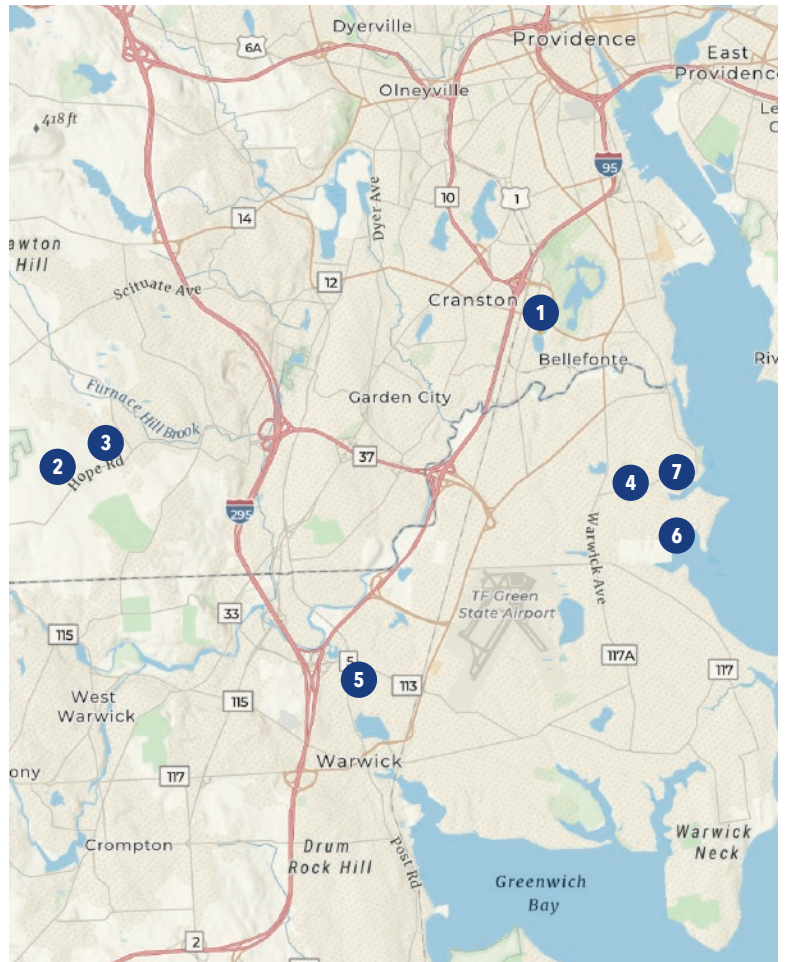
Protected since 1969; Approximately 4 acres

Waterfowl and shorebirds use this spot to rest, feed and nest.

### 7. PASSEONKQUIS COVE WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1985; Approximately 0.5 acre

A quiet shelter from the waves and storms of Narragansett Bay.



**SUPPORT NATURE IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND DONATE TO AUDUBON TODAY.**  
VISIT [WWW.ASRI.ORG/DONATE](https://www.asri.org/donate) OR CALL (401) 949-5454 EXT. 3017.