



COMMUNITY REPORT

AUDUBON SOCIETY of Rhode Island

NORTH SMITHFIELD, BURRILLVILLE, CUMBERLAND,
LINCOLN, AND WOONSOCKET



WOOD DUCKLINGS



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 Northern Rhode Island. 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 Northern Rhode Island, 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

Audubon Society of Rhode Island • 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI 02917 • (401) 949-5454 • www.asri.org

CONSERVATION

- Protects approximately 9,500 acres of habitat in Rhode Island, including approximately 71 acres in Burrillville, 218 acres in North Smithfield, and 27 acres in Cumberland.
- Coordinates the state-wide Osprey monitoring program at more than 250 sites in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
- Protects large areas of forest habitat in Northern Rhode Island that are critical in the face of climate change.
- Manages the Youth Conservation League, employing high school and college students in summer to gain experience in conservation; completed work in Burrillville at the Vock Conservation Area.



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 the Fort Wildlife Refuge in North Smithfield.
- 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

NORTH SMITHFIELD

- Leads year-round birding walks, nature programs, and hikes for all ages at the Audubon Fort Wildlife Refuge.

WOONSOCKET

- Long-time partnership with Connecting Children and Families in Woonsocket, offering life science programming in after school settings at Coleman School in 2021/2022. Each child participates for 6 to 10 weeks.
- Ongoing partnership with Woonsocket Kids Klub offering a series of life science programs for elementary students.
- Brought Owls of Rhode Island program to 80 Leo A. Savoie Elementary School students.
- On-going partnership with Woonsocket Public Library, bringing nature programs and animal ambassadors to families in the community.

LINCOLN

- Long-standing relationship with Saylesville Elementary School. Kindergarten, first and second graders explored animal senses and met a snake. First graders learned all about birds in their classroom and then visited Audubon Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge to meet an owl and go for a nature walk. Second graders met an owl and investigated pollinators on school grounds. Third graders studied life cycles and met a frog up-close. Fourth graders learned about ecosystems and observed insects up-close.
- Brought an Audubon Raptor Encounter to 150 Lonsdale Elementary students with live birds of prey.
- Presented a Life Cycles program to Lincoln Central Elementary third graders with hands-on activities and games. They also met a frog up-close.
- Northern Lincoln Elementary third graders also explored life cycles. Pre-K students learned about owls through stories, activities, and met a live owl. First graders met birds of prey up-close through an Audubon Raptor Encounter.
- Lincoln Public Library invited Audubon to present a story program for young children about dinosaurs and a nature exploration on library grounds.
- Brought an Owls of New England program with two live owls to the MacColl YMCA.

CUMBERLAND

- Brought Inflatable Whale program for the Northern Rhode Island Boys and Girls Club.
- Provided a Peregrine Falcon program for the Chapel Hill Assisted Living Community.
- Presented a Raptor Encounter for Arnolds Mills Scout Troop.

BURRILLVILLE

- Provided a Raptor Encounter with live birds of prey for families at the Jesse M. Smith Memorial Library.

ADVOCACY

- Audubon co-led 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.



AUDUBON PROTECTED LAND



NORTH SMITHFIELD 218 acres

1. FLORENCE AND RICHARD K. FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE *

Protected since 1996; Approximately 218 acres

Large, mature forest, three ponds plus streams support animals such as heron, ducks and beaver; protects headwaters of the Woonasquacket River. The rolling, rocky landscape is a scenic destination for hikers, birders, and nature enthusiasts.

BURRIVILLE 71 acres

2. FAYETTE E. BARTLETT WOODLAND WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1966; approximately 71 acres

This large mixed forest is home to many northern Rhode Island birds and wildlife.

CUMBERLAND 27 acres

3. LONESOME SWAMP

Protected since 1967; Approximately 1 acre

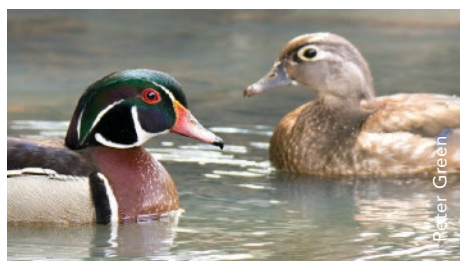
Small wildlife refuge in suburbia offers wetland protection and habitat for birds.

4. MCKENZIE WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1984; Approximately 26 acres

The mature forest in this wildlife refuge protects the Abbott Run River.

* Wildlife refuge with trails open to the public. Visit asri.org/hike for details.



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