



COMMUNITY REPORT

AUDUBON SOCIETY of Rhode Island

MIDDLETOWN, NEWPORT, AND PORTSMOUTH

OCEAN DRIVE MARSH WILDLIFE REFUGE, NEWPORT



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 on Aquidneck 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 on Aquidneck 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!



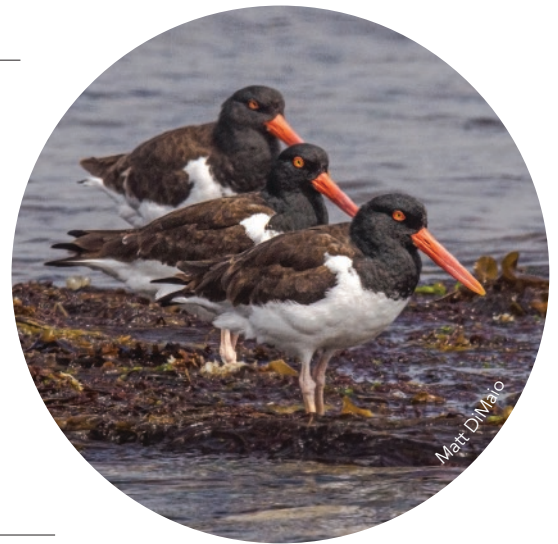
Jeffrey C. Hall
Executive Director

Connecting People With Nature

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CONSERVATION

- Protects approximately 9,500 acres of habitat in Rhode Island, including approximately 14 acres in Newport and 245 acres in Portsmouth.
- Coordinates the state-wide Osprey monitoring program, including three sites in Newport, 18 sites in Portsmouth, two sites on Prudence Island, and two sites in Middletown.
- Properties in Newport and Portsmouth protect valuable coastal habitats, natural areas that are critical in the face of climate change and sea-level rise.
- Administrative coordinator of the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve on Prudence Island since 2004.



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

NEWPORT

- Long-term relationship with St. Michael's Country Day School Pre-K and kindergarten classrooms. Audubon educators have brought nature stories, activities and animals into their classrooms for many years.
- Collaboration with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center was established in 2020. Audubon provides Pre-K classrooms with nature stories, animal visits and schoolyard explorations. Audubon also runs a nature exploration series after school for students in first to fifth grades and has brought science and nature programming to their summer camps.
- In 2022, Audubon was invited to speak at two of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center's "Lunch and Learn" events for seniors, presenting programs on Owls of Rhode Island and Birds of Spring. Both programs included a live bird of prey.
- Brought nature stories, activities and animals to the Newport Library and set-up Audubon's large Inflatable Whale for families to explore.
- Since July 2020, Senior Director of Education Lauren Parmelee has been writing nature articles for Newport This Week that highlight the wildlife and open spaces found on Aquidneck Island.
- Audubon naturalists often lead popular bird walks at outdoor green spaces such as Brenton Point State Park, Miantonomi Park, Ballard Park, Sachuest National Wildlife Refuge and Third Beach.

MIDDLETOWN

- Audubon was invited twice to Newport Restoration Foundation's Prescott Farm "Second Sunday Series" when the public can tour the historic grounds and buildings. Educators brought binoculars, field guides, and biofacts to teach about local wildlife.
- Led a nature walk at Aquidneck Land Trust's Spruce Acres as part of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island's "Wild Worship" series. More walks are scheduled.

PORTSMOUTH

- Brought nature stories, activities and a live owl to Countryside Children's Center for the past two summers.
- Aquidneck Club summer campers met several of Audubon's animal ambassadors over the past two summers. Turtles, snakes, owls and hawks have all delighted the young audiences.
- Works in partnership with Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve on Prudence Island.



Hope Foley



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.



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 for trail maps and directions.

NEWPORT 14 acres

1. OCEAN DRIVE MARSH WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1967; approximately 14 acres

Two parcels of tidal marsh and forested upland make up this wildlife refuge. It contains valuable habitat for birds and other wildlife and supports an active Osprey nest.

PORTSMOUTH 245 acres

2. CHIPAQUISSETT WILDLIFE REFUGE

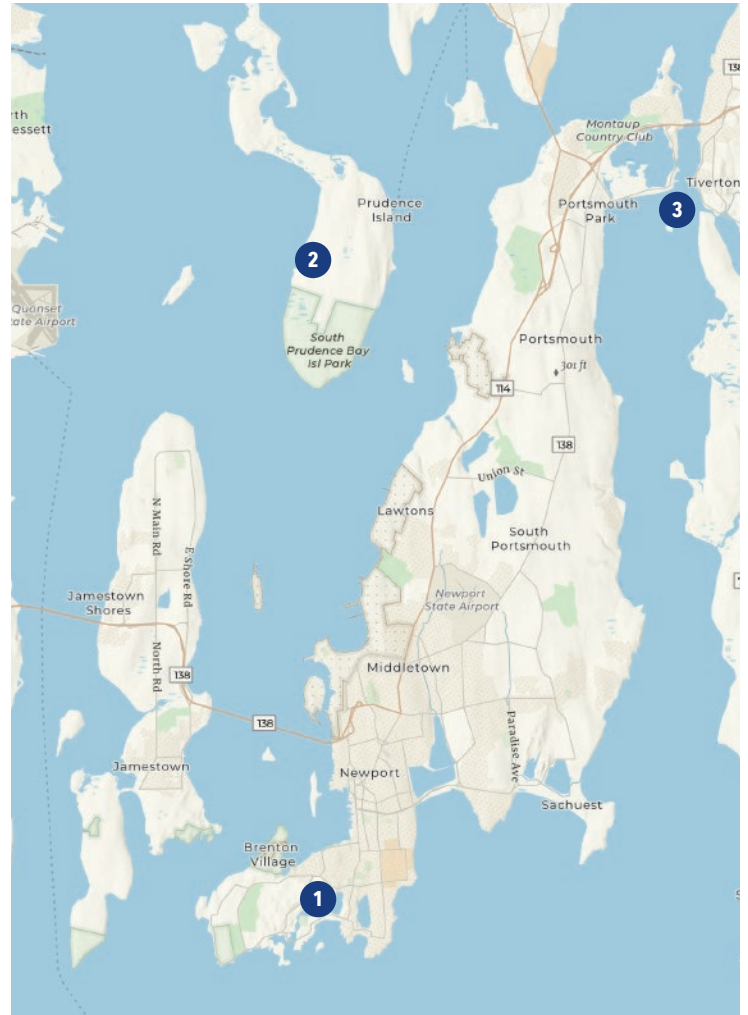
Protected since 1997; approximately 240 acres

This large forest in the center of Prudence Island offers year-round habitat for birds and other wildlife.

3. GOULD ISLAND ROOKERY WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1964; approximately 5 acres

This rocky island in Narragansett Bay contains active nesting sites for heron, egrets and cormorants.



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VISIT WWW.ASRI.ORG/DONATE OR CALL (401) 949-5454 EXT. 3017.