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Audubon Society of Rhode Island



WHAT WOULD  
AUDUBON DO  
WITHOUT YOU?

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# REPORT

VOLUME 55 • NO. 4 • NOVEMBER 2021

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

## STATE OF THE BIRDS

*Audubon Begins  
a New Chapter in  
Avian Research  
and Conservation*



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From the Desk of the Executive Director



## The Canary in the Coal Mine

The changing climate is having a dramatic impact on wildlife populations and their habitats. The birds that Audubon was founded to protect are now disappearing at an alarming rate. A study published last year found that since the 1970s, nearly one in every three birds is gone. Even common species like sparrows and blackbirds are in decline. Much of this loss is due to alterations in habitat, food webs, and species interactions resulting from climate change. And this problem is likely to get worse without immediate action.

In response to these threats, Audubon's new strategic plan is focused on addressing climate change. It is the complicating factor affecting people and wildlife around the world: damage from extreme and more frequent flooding, heat waves, fire and drought.

One of our goals is to protect birds and their habitats to support species survival and adaptation through climate changes, with the ultimate outcome of ensuring that critical habitat on private and public lands is also protected, expanded and managed for species diversity and human health. Audubon plans to support and encourage Rhode Island landowners and managers to adopt climate resilience practices using Audubon refuges as potential models for species and habitat protection strategies. To provide solid on-the-ground science for this effort, we have appointed Dr. Charles Clarkson as Director of Avian Research. His work in the upcoming years will be vital in studying and enhancing habitat for key species.

Birds are the proverbial canaries in the coal mine. We are looking to science to guide our conservation efforts and share successful strategies with other landowners. The time to act is now.

Lawrence J. F. Taft

Executive Director

## In this Season of Giving, Please Consider a Gift to Nature

Your gift to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island improves the quality of life in our state for generations to come by conserving waters, forests, and grasslands through stewardship and education. What are your goals for charitable giving and what arrangement can help you achieve them? Please call Jeff Hall, Audubon senior director of advancement at (401) 949-5454 ext. 3017, to discuss the many ways you can support Audubon.

YOUR GOAL	TYPE OF GIFT	HOW TO MAKE THE GIFT	BENEFITS
Increase your income	Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)	Establish a contract between you and Audubon that provides a fixed, guaranteed income for life	Receive a fixed income for life with immediate tax savings
Avoid double taxation on retirement assets at death	Retirement Plan Assets	Name Audubon as a residual beneficiary of your IRA	Avoid income and estate tax on unused portion
Make an immediate gift to charity	Outright Gift	Contribute cash, securities or other personal property to Audubon	Obtain an income tax deduction and avoid capital gains tax
Leave a Legacy	Bequest	Name Audubon as a beneficiary of your will or trust	Control assets until death
Avoid capital gains tax on the sale of a home or other appropriate property	Real Estate	Give the property to Audubon or sell it to the Society at a bargain price	Receive an immediate income tax deduction and avoid capital gains tax
Make a significant gift at little cost to you	Life Insurance Policy	Transfer a policy or name Audubon as a partial beneficiary	Obtain a potential income tax deduction
Donating from your IRA	Retirement Assets	Give directly from your IRA	Reduce taxable income from Required Minimum Distributions (RMD)
Donate Stock	Investments	Donate appreciated stock	Avoid capital gains tax and receive a deduction for full amount of stock sold

Cover photo by Ed Hughes





# STATE OF THE BIRDS

## AUDUBON BEGINS A NEW CHAPTER IN AVIAN RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

By Todd McLeish

Deirdre Robinson

*Audubon Director of Avian Research Charles Clarkson (right) discusses field data with Audubon Council of Advisors member Steve Reinert.*

Much has been reported in the news in the last two years about the tremendous decline in bird populations around North America. Scientists say that the continent has about 3 billion fewer breeding birds than it did in 1970, and every ecosystem has been affected. Even species we consider to be common, like the popular Dark-eyed Junco, has had an estimated loss of about 175 million individuals from its population.

These statistics signal a broad crisis occurring throughout the natural world. If birds are in trouble, then so are many other groups of wildlife. And Rhode Island is not immune.

But the news is not all bad. The results of the Rhode Island Breeding Bird Atlas, a five-year project to document the breeding distribution of every bird species that nests in the Ocean State, confirmed that 150 species breed here, just slightly less than were found during a similar effort in the 1980s. Led by Dr. Charles Clarkson, Audubon's newly-appointed director of avian research, and with the help of 240 volunteers, the atlas divided the state into 165 blocks, each 10 square miles in size, to search every nook and cranny of Rhode Island and document what bird species breed in the state and where. It also collected data on wintering and migrating bird populations.

Among the most notable results, several species were found to be breeding in Rhode Island that were not documented during the previous atlas,

including the Bald Eagle, Common Raven, Kentucky Warbler and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. In addition, a number of other species have expanded their distribution in Rhode Island dramatically. Red-bellied Woodpeckers, for instance, expanded from 4 blocks to 149, an increase of more than 3,600 percent. Carolina Wrens and Pileated Woodpeckers also experienced significant expansions of their breeding range in the state since the first atlas.

The data on fall migration confirmed that large numbers of birds funnel through Rhode Island every autumn, mostly through the forested regions of the western part of the state. It also concluded that migrants amass along the coast and quickly move on. The winter atlas similarly documented the large populations of birds that are dependent on local habitats during the colder months.

The good news is that Rhode Island has a wealth of avian diversity still. For a small state with a high human population density, Audubon and other land trusts and conservation groups have done an exceptional job of conserving open space, said Clarkson. What's wonderful about that is that it presents an opportunity to utilize the data from the atlas to effectively manage those populations.

Now we know where the birds are, the habitats they prefer, roughly how many individuals are breeding, and which species are wintering and

Please turn to page 5





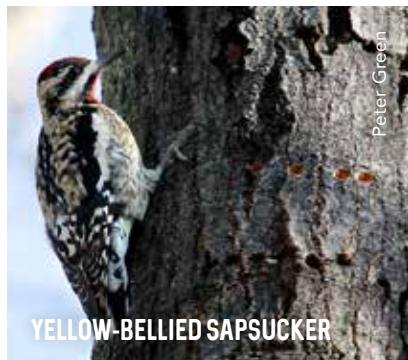
# RI BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

Species found to be breeding in Rhode Island that were not documented during the previous Atlas (1982 -1987) include the Bald Eagle, Common Raven, Kentucky Warbler, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Early successional specialists species that prefer shrubby areas with young trees are threatened due to habitat loss. Birds include Blue-winged and Prairie Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Eastern Towhees and Gray Catbirds.

Bird species dependent on grassland habitat continue to face difficulties as that habitat declines. Birds include Bobolinks, meadowlarks, Savannah Sparrows and bobwhites.

Among those species that are in decline both locally and nationally are the aerial insectivore. Birds include swallows and swifts that feed exclusively on insects that they catch while they are flying.



Peter Green

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER



Ed Hughes

INDIGO BUNTING



Tom Younkin

SAVANNAH SPARROW



Geoff Thompson

BARN SWALLOW



BALD EAGLE



Peter Green

GRAY CATBIRD



Ed Hughes

PRAIRIE WARBLER



EASTERN MEADOWLARK

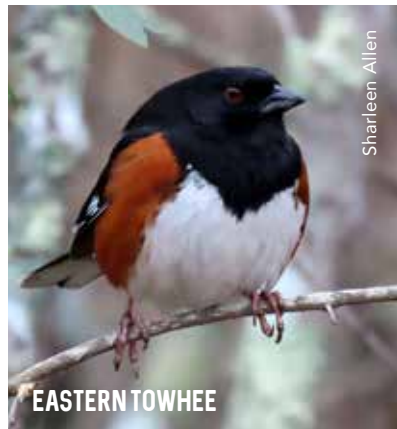


Kevin Bernard

TREE SWALLOW

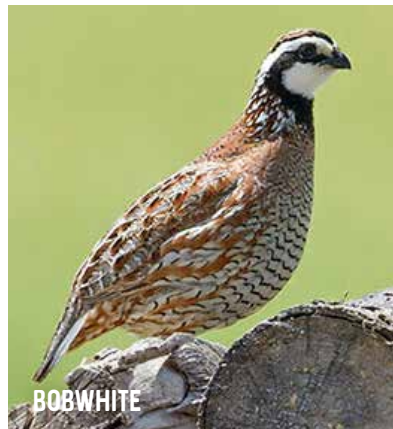


COMMON RAVEN

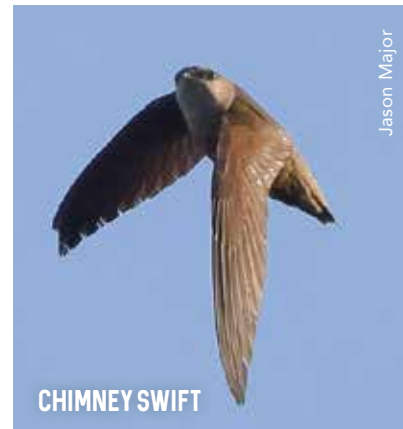


Sharleen Allen

EASTERN TOWHEE



BOBWHITE



Jason Major

CHIMNEY SWIFT



migrating here, he added. Now we can apply what we know in the most effective way possible. We can ask additional questions on some species and focus conservation and land management on other species that are not doing so well.

Among those that are not doing so well both locally and nationally are the aerial insectivores, those species like swallows and swifts that feed exclusively on insects that they catch while they are flying. Although some species of aerial insectivores remain common, they aren't nearly as common as they used to be. Bank Swallows, for example, have declined about 3.7 percent per year in Rhode Island since 1966, when Breeding Bird Surveys began, and Barn Swallow numbers have dropped 1.4 percent per year.

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**“The key is to make sure that Audubon’s management and conservation efforts for all species are multi-faceted. There’s no one thing you can do to help bird populations. Management plans have to be multi-disciplinary and spread across various realms of research.”**

– Dr. Charles Clarkson

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There's lots of conjecture about what's causing these declines, said Clarkson. It could be the large-scale applications of pesticides, and climate change is probably adding to the problem as well.

The changing climate is raising the prospect of a what scientists call a phenological mismatch, when birds arrive either before or after the food they depend on is available in the quantities they require. The impact of this mismatch is affecting birds differently, depending on how far they migrate.

If we experience warming earlier in a given year, the short-distance migrants are capable of detecting that signal and adjusting their arrival dates to coincide with the changes in the weather, explained Clarkson. But the long-distance migrants—the neotropical migrants like warblers, vireos and orioles—don't recognize those changes and so are unable to adjust their arrival times, and they're the ones that will experience the largest declines due to this phenological mismatch.

Clarkson said that numerous studies have shown that the aerial insectivores are capable of beginning their migration early in response to the changing climate and arriving in the Northeast to initiate breeding earlier than usual. But that early arrival brings risks as well.

We're also experiencing a more aberrant climate, with abnormal cold snaps early in the year, and even a single cold snap in spring can be enough to reduce the overall nesting success of a breeding swallow colony by a huge amount, he said. So, when the birds show up a little early, they're more likely to experience a cold snap, which means that there will likely be no aerial insects available to them during those cold days. A single day without enough food to feed their nestlings is enough to have a dramatically negative effect on these birds.

Clarkson also noted that bird species dependent on grassland habitat continue to face difficulties as that habitat declines. Grassland birds include such species as Bobolinks, meadowlarks, Savannah Sparrows and bobwhites, the latter of which appears to have been extirpated from Rhode Island as a breeding species. Early successional specialists—species that prefer shrubby areas with young trees before they mature into dense forest—are also threatened due to habitat loss. These species include Blue-winged and Prairie Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Eastern Towhees and Gray Catbirds.

Just like has happened across most of eastern North America, declining agriculture tends to turn farm fields into mature forest, said Clarkson. The

## RED-EYED VIREO

Not every species of bird in the region is experiencing population declines. Red-eyed Vireos, in particular, are bucking the trend, even though no one can say why.



The Red-eyed Vireo is an insect-eating species, and while we've seen declines among the bulk of other insect-eating birds, its population trend is increasing across most of its range in eastern North America, said Clarkson. The question is why and we don't know. It's one of those species for which more data needs to be collected.

Data from the national Breeding Bird Survey, collected every year since 1966, has found no change in their abundance. And the Rhode Island Breeding Bird Atlas indicates that densities of Red-eyed Vireos in the Ocean State are as high as 277 individuals per square kilometer, meaning the state's population is greater than 188,000. The bird was confirmed breeding in 73 of 166 atlas blocks in the state, up from 39 blocks in the first atlas.

One potential explanation for why the vireos have not declined—even though most species that eat the same food and live in the same habitat are in trouble—has to do with mercury.

Small songbirds that eat insects accumulate mercury in their tissues, and mercury has a detrimental effect on their physiology, said Clarkson. But Red-eyed Vireos haven't experienced a change in their mercury levels over time. Rusty Blackbirds, for instance, had a 17-fold increase in mercury, but Red-eyed Vireos have had no change. That leads us to think that there must be some kind of relationship between mercury accumulation and overall decline.

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# HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

By Deirdre Robinson  
Saltmarsh Sparrow Research Initiative

*Saltmarsh Sparrows demonstrate high fidelity to their breeding marsh and return from their wintering grounds to construct nests that are usually quite close to nest locations from previous years.*

Rare events in the natural world can inspire awe and offer hope. Such is the case with one particular Saltmarsh Sparrow (*Ammospiza caudacutis*) that hatched on July 7, 2019 at Jacob's Point in Warren, RI. Its story is representative of the struggle of the species, which has survived as an obligate salt marsh specialist for millennia. With climate change upon us, rising tides are flooding coastal marshes with greater frequency and sparrow nests and populations are being negatively impacted.

The Saltmarsh Sparrow nests on the ground, and escapes from predators by running rather than flying. The species has only a rudimentary "song," does not defend territories, and breeds nowhere else in the world except in healthy coastal marshes from Virginia to Maine. The female sparrow is among the hardest working of birds. She alone constructs the nest, incubates the eggs, and feeds and defends the chicks while they are nestlings and even after they fledge. Her perseverance is rewarded only when the nesting cycle is not impacted by a period of flooding.

The female sparrow mentioned above offered a rare glimmer of hope for me and other members of the Saltmarsh Sparrow Research Initiative (SSRI). We are bearing witness to the extinction of an extraordinary spe-

cies and have committed to document the breeding ecology of this sparrow over a five-year period. The SSRI is a small team of volunteers and student interns who arrive before sunrise from May through August to set up mist nets in the marsh to safely capture these sparrows for the purpose of banding and recording measurements. Much of our time is spent searching for their teacup-size nests within the 35-acre marsh at Jacob's Point in Warren, which abuts the boardwalk at the Audubon Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge in Bristol.

On June 25, 2019, members flushed a female from her nest. It was camouflaged by a dome that she had woven of living marsh grasses. She was incubating five eggs, rather than the usual two to four eggs per nest, perhaps hedging her bets despite the energy costs of feeding more nestlings.

The female continued to incubate her nest for the next nine days, until a flooding tide washed three eggs out of the nest. On July 7, only one chick and one egg remained in the flattened nest.

Our field notes on July 11th recorded that the hatchling was "alive... but not as robust as yesterday." The remaining egg was cold and never hatched. We took pictures of the chick "hugging" the egg in her nest for the next two



days, and described her as "alive, but weak".

On day 6, we were concerned that the hatchling's mother had not been seen for several days; perhaps she had been killed by a predator or had abandoned her disheveled nest? We debated whether to apply any leg bands at all to the nestling, since it was unlikely that she would live through the summer. We made the decision to adhere to our research protocol, and proceeded to band the chick.

On her right leg, we applied a Purple color band above a uniquely numbered aluminum ID band (designated as X by banding convention). On her left leg, we applied one Orange color band. Her banding code thus became PuX O and her USGS band number was 2811-22106.

Any optimism faded the next day when we found the chick shivering outside of her protective nest, two to three days earlier than expected. Two days after that, we could not locate her. My mind explored the competing concepts of attachment and scientific objectivity. One cannot study Saltmarsh Sparrows without developing tremendous respect for their struggle to survive against great odds. There is no switch within their DNA that can be flipped to allow them to adapt to an environment that is changing at warp speed. Documenting the declining status of an endangered species can water seeds of pessimism.

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**“Bird banders live for this moment. It’s exhilarating to receive a message from hundreds of miles away conveying that a bird banded years ago has been re-sighted or re-captured, and is alive and well.”**

– Deirdre Robinson

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My thoughts were interrupted by the unmistakable chipping sound of a female Saltmarsh Sparrow communicating to her fledgling. I quietly backed away and crouched behind a high-tide bush to watch through binoculars. She perched on a branch with larvae in her bill, disappeared into the underbrush briefly, then flew out with an empty beak, revealing the chick's location. Eureka! (So much for scientific detachment.)

At nine days old and well-feathered, the fledgling successfully launched on the 50th Anniversary of the first manned Apollo 11 launch to the moon. These two feats seem equally impressive to me, and we named her Apollo.

Fast-forward to 2021: Marae Coxe Lindquist, a Ph.D. student at University of North Carolina, Wilmington, captured a bird with PuX O bands on February 6, 2021, at Hammocks Beach State Park in Onslow County, NC. This is approximately 700 miles from where this sparrow hatched in Warren, RI. Lindquist and her research partner, Evangeline Buckland, have been studying Seaside and Saltmarsh Sparrows on their wintering grounds in Southeast North Carolina since 2019.

Bird banders live for this moment. It is exhilarating to receive a message from hundreds of miles away conveying that a bird banded years ago has been re-sighted or re-captured, and is alive and well. This is a rare event, made more remarkable since this bird was banded as a nestling, whose early history was well known. Marae sent a picture of Apollo and shared measurements of her weight, wing chord, and bill length. Apollo was apparently thriving in her wintering grounds.

Just how rare is this recapture? Based upon the historical records of banded birds acquired from the federal Bird Banding Laboratory, a total of 20,211 Saltmarsh Sparrows have been banded since 1960. How many of these were banded as nestlings and recaptured as adults hundreds of miles south on their wintering grounds? Exactly 3 out of 20,211.

We have won the lottery twice at Jacob's Point. In 2016, while down-

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- a. Hatchling recorded as alive, but weak. The remaining egg never hatched.
- b. Young Saltmarsh Sparrow at nine days and well-feathered.
- c. From left, Jim O'Neill, Deirdre Robinson, and Audubon Council of Advisors Member Steve Reinert in the field.
- d. Audubon Educator Ianna Szewczok volunteers with the initiative.
- e. Jim O'Neill behind the lens.
- f. Joel Eckerson in the field during Saltmarsh Sparrow research.



# WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP PROTECT BIRDS?

By Dr. Charles Clarkson, Audubon Director of Avian Research

Your actions at home and in your community can make a difference in bird conservation. The list below can get you started on making smart choices and taking simple actions to help protect our feathered friends.

## Simple with Immediate Results:

- Put UV decals on your windows. An estimated one billion birds die each year from window strikes in the U.S. alone. Decals can be purchased at the Audubon Nature Shop in Bristol.
- Keep your cats indoors. Domestic and feral cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds each year in the U.S. alone. Cat predation is close to habitat loss as a main driver in bird population declines.
- Provide foraging and nesting habitat. Providing stocked feeders, native plants, nest boxes, and ample shrub-habitat will allow your local birds to feed more efficiently, avoid predation, and nest successfully.
- If you feed birds, it is better to continue doing so during inclement weather events to provide extra nourishment for birds that may become stressed. Stocked feeders may also be used by migratory birds en route to breeding and wintering grounds. Visit the Audubon Nature Shop in Bristol for a wide selection of feeders and seed.



## Easy and Effective:

- Purchase certified bird friendly coffee. Purchase coffee that has been certified “bird friendly” by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Institute. This coffee is produced without the removal of rainforest habitat, which is critically important for migratory birds.
- Avoid the use of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides in your yard. The vast majority of birds consume insects, particularly during the breeding season. Applying pesticides to your lawn can have severe negative impacts on birds, including death.
- Contribute to long-term, citizen science projects. Cornell Lab of Ornithology collects data from citizen scientists all over the world and uses these data to create maps depicting bird abundance, distribution, and climate-change driven population fluctuations. Collecting and reporting data is easy. Visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website for more info.
- Instill a sense of awe in a child. Do you have children? ...grandchildren? ...neighborhood kids? Take a child birding or for a simple nature walk. Kids are the next generation of conservationists. Getting them excited about nature and birds will pay dividends as they come into positions of power later in life.



## Purposeful and Very Effective:

- Donate to Audubon to conserve birds and habitats. Donating money to Audubon can go a long way towards the conservation of habitats and declining bird populations in Rhode Island. Audubon makes it easy to donate online. Visit [asri.org/donate](http://asri.org/donate).
- Talk to your neighbors about managing their yards. Consider planning with neighbors to provide birds with continuous habitat across both of your properties. Encourage them to plant native vegetation, keep their trees standing, avoid mowing fields until after breeding season has ended, and provide feeders for birds.
- Stop using plastics. Avoiding plastics is very difficult to do in modern society, but look for alternatives that are made from glass and aluminum. They are far more recyclable and don't cause as much harm to the environment.





# Whooo is Making All That Racket? Owls on the Refuge

By Laura Carberry

Last night while walking my dog, I could hear a chorus of Barred Owls calling back and forth. Tonight, it sounded more like a party with three owls whooping it up. They made monkey-like sounds along with the traditional call Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all? The owls continued for over 20 minutes before they flew off, most likely in search of food. Soon those owls will be looking for mates or renewing the bonds with their life-long partners. They will be setting up territories for their nesting sites and defending them vigorously with those hoots. But in early fall we often hear Barred Owls living it up, as this year's young are getting ready to head out on their own.

The most common reason we hear owls hooting is that they are defending territories and searching for mates. But owls make a lot of other calls and sounds. Young owlets cry and beg for food with whines and clatters. Some owls let out blood-curdling screams when they feel threatened. And often you can hear the clack of a beak if you are too close to the bird or the nest.

The three most commonly found owls in Rhode Island and our neighboring states are the Great Horned Owl, the Barred Owl and the Eastern Screech Owl. The Great Horned Owl's song is the most recognized as it is commonly heard in our favorite TV shows and in movies. The traditional hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo can be heard in almost every habitat in Rhode Island, including cities. These owls are known for their duet call where both the male and female sing back and forth to each other. Even though the male is smaller than his female partner, his voice is deeper because of his large voice box. The smaller Eastern Screech Owl is known for its horse-like whinny song or its rattle call when it feels threatened. The Barred Owl has a wide variety of hoots and songs. They are the most vocal of the group and can even be heard singing during the day.

These three owls start setting up their territory and finding mates in late January through March. The Great Horned Owl starts the earliest and the Eastern Screech is last. Each species lays one to four eggs, although the Screech Owl can lay up to six! The female owl will sit on the eggs for approximately 30 days and the male will bring her food during this time. Once the young hatch, both parents will hunt and feed the owlets. Young owls will fledge anywhere between 26 to 42 days, depending on the species. Great Horned Owls take much longer to mature due to their size. All owlets continue to be cared for after they fledge, with parents bringing them food away from the nest. Screech owls will stay with their parents 8 to 10 weeks after fledging, while Barred Owls can stay with their families for up to 4 months.

Interested in helping these raptors? If you have Eastern Screech Owls in your area, try putting up a nesting box. Barred Owls are often attracted to hollowed out trees for nesting, so leaving these in place might offer them a home. And remember never to poison mice or other wildlife as these may end up as dinner for owls and could possibly kill the birds and their young.

Interested in learning more about the owls in our area? Please join Audubon for one of the many owl programs that we offer around the state. Happy owling!



Andrea King



Ed Hughes



Peter Green

## A Year of Nature in Newport

Audubon Partners with Newport's Martin Luther King Community Center

Audubon has partnered with the Martin Luther King Community Center (MLKCC) in Newport for a year to bring nature stories, science programs, outdoor explorations, and animal ambassadors to Pre-K classrooms, summer camps, and after-school sessions for older children. These children also receive an Audubon Nature Kit of their own to use for outdoor explorations with family and friends. Kits include magnifiers, bug boxes, field guides and other exploration tools.



We look forward to another year of partnership and nature in the city with children at the MLKCC. More nature walks, animal ambassadors, science programs and outdoor explorations await!

*Audubon would like to thank Mary Ann Cofrin for her generous support of this partnership.*



*Audubon educator Mark Saunders introduces a snake to students at MLKCC.*



# NATURE PLAY

**Member Double Discount Days:**  
**December 4 & 5, 2021**  
 Audubon Nature Gift Shop, Bristol.  
 Please present your membership card for discount. Offer does not apply to our online store, sale items, or binoculars.

Sometimes you can't go outside to explore nature, but you can still learn about plants and animals through indoor play. Nature-themed puzzles, games, books and building projects make wonderful gifts for the holiday season and bring families and friends together for hours of fun! The toys and books listed below are available at the Audubon Nature Shop in Bristol. Stop in and browse, shop online at [asri.org/natureshop](http://asri.org/natureshop) or call 401-949-5454 ext.3118.

## PUZZLES

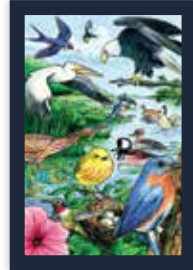
Put the pieces together to make colorful pictures of animals and habitats.



A bear-shaped woodland puzzle provides hours of fun.  
 Ages 7+



The Towering Tree Puzzle highlights woodland wildlife.  
 Ages 4+



Learn fun facts about birds with this 35-piece tray puzzle.  
 Ages 3+

## GAMES

Always fun to play, engaging games bring friends and families together to learn about nature!



Try your hand at animal or leaf Memory Games!  
 Ages 4+



Play Bird Bingo with the whole family.  
 All ages



Go fishing with magnets to catch creatures of the sea.  
 Ages 3+



Help bees make honey in the Hanna Honeybee game!  
 Ages 3-4

## BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Practice stacking, balancing, and designing while you play!



The Foxy Meadow stacking game can be used for free play or as a game.  
 Ages 2+



Terra Kids provides connectors to build with natural objects.  
 Ages 8+



Build and hang this insect hotel and watch for visitors!  
 Ages 8+

## BOOKS FOR YOUNG NATURALISTS



Discover the backyard birds of Rhode Island with Audubon's Coloring Book by Jerry Shippee.



Learn how insects help the environment by following a busy bee in this peek-through picture book for young children.



A wonderful tale of a girl heading out to find an owl in the light of the moon.



# AUDUBON NATURE TOURS & PROGRAMS

December 2021 – February 2022 For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at [www.asri.org](http://www.asri.org).

## SAFETY NOTICE:

Masks are required during indoor programs and van trips for those who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19, including children.



## BIRDING WITH AUDUBON

### WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS

Advance registration is required. Locations determined weekly and will be sent to registered participants in advance.  
*Every Wednesday through June 2022.*

### DUCKS AND WATERFOWL ID CLASS: VIRTUAL PROGRAM

A great class to pair with the Winter Birding Van Trip on December 11, 2021.  
*December 9, 2021; 6:30–7:30 pm.*

### WINTER BIRDING VAN TRIP: WATERFOWL AND SEABIRDS AT THE SHORE

Van trip to coastal habitats in search of winter waterfowl and seabirds. Departs from Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; *December 11, 2021; 8:00 am–4:00 pm.*

### WINTER BIG DAY 2022

How many species can we find? This popular program has become a Rhode Island tradition. Departs from Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; *January 8, 2022; 8:00 am–5:00 pm.*

### WINTER WALK ON MOONSTONE BEACH

Moonstone Beach Road, South Kingstown, RI;  
*January 15, 2022; 12:30–2:30 pm.*

### WINTER BIRDING AT FORT REFUGE

Fort Wildlife Refuge, (Rt. 5), 1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI;  
*January 22, 2022; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.*

### WINTER BIRDING AT CARATUNK

Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA;  
*February 23, 2022; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.*



## DECEMBER SCHOOL VACATION WEEK

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI  
*December 27-30, 2021; 10:00 am–3:00 pm.*

Bring the kids and discover how animals survive in winter, dissect an owl pellet, or try your hand at cartooning! Visit the events calendar at [www.asri.org](http://www.asri.org) for details and to register for special programs.

## OWL PROWL AND PROGRAMS



Ed Hughes

### OWLING AT FISHERVILLE BROOK

Two Dates Offered. Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI;  
*December 3, 2021, January 21, 2022; 7:00–9:00 pm.*

### OWLS OF NEW ENGLAND LECTURE

Learn about our native owls, hear their calls, and meet a live owl. Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI;  
*December 9, 2021; 6:30–8:00 pm.*

### PROWL FOR OWLS AT FORT REFUGE

Two Dates Offered. Fort Nature Refuge, (Rt. 5), 1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI; *December 16, 2021, January 13, 2022; 7:00–9:00 pm.*

### PROWL FOR OWLS AT CARATUNK

Two Dates Offered. Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA;  
*December 29, 2021, January 28, February 25, 2022; 6:30 pm–8:30 pm.*

### OWLS AND ALES

Two Dates Offered. Learn about owls, enjoy local brews, and take a guided walk on the trails. Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, 1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI; *January 15, February 26, 2022; 6:30–8:30 pm.*

### OWL PROWL AT POWDER MILL LEDGES

Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI;  
*February 17, 2022; 7:00–9:00 pm.*

## CELEBRATE THE SEASON!

### AUDUBON HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

Find the perfect gifts for the nature enthusiast on your list! Jewelry, photography, ornaments, stationery and other locally made treats will be available. Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield, RI;  
*December 4, 2021; 10:00 am–4:00 pm.*

### WINTER FAIRY DECORATIONS

Create a winter fairy scene inside of an air plant hanger! Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI;  
*December 11, 2021; 6:00–7:30 pm.*

### WILDLIFE WREATH MAKING

Make a winter wreath that is attractive and edible to birds. Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield, RI;  
*December 18, 2021; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.*



# AUDUBON NATURE CENTER AND AQUARIUM

1401 Hope Street (Route 114), Bristol, RI

## PROGRAMS, LECTURES & WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

### NATURAL LIP BALM WORKSHOP

December 5, 2021; 11:00 am–12:00 pm.

### WINTER FAIRY DECORATIONS

December 11, 2021; 6:00–7:30 pm.

### NATURAL JEWELRY WORKSHOP

December 12, 2021; 1:00–3:00 pm.

### SEA GLASS JEWELRY WORKSHOP

Two Dates Offered.

December 18, 2021, February 12, 2022; 1:00–2:30 pm.

### TENACIOUS WOMEN: A HISTORY OF PRESERVATION IN NEW ENGLAND

Lecture by Leigh Schoberth, Senior Preservation Services Manager at Historic New England.

January 23, 2022; 1:00–2:00 pm.

### OWLS AND ALES

Two Dates Offered.

January 15, February 26, 2022; 6:30–8:30 pm.

### AUDUBON TRIVIA NIGHT

Join an evening of bird-themed trivia!

January 29, 2022; 7:00–8:00 pm.

### VALENTINE CARD CRAFTING WORKSHOP

February 6, 2022; 1:00–3:00 pm.

### OSPREY MONITOR TRAINING

February 13, 2022;

12:00–3:00 pm.

### FAMILY GAME NIGHT WITH AUDUBON

An evening of games, snacks, and fun prizes!

February 18, 2022; 7:00–9:00 pm.

### WORKSHOP: MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR NATIVE POLLINATORS

February 20, 2022; 1:00–2:00 pm.



## FAMILY PROGRAMS & CLASSES FOR CHILDREN

### CITIZENS BANK FREE FAMILY FUN DAY

December 4, 2021, January 8, February 5, 2022; 10:00 am–3:00 pm.

Thanks to Citizens Bank, the Nature Center and Aquarium is open free to the public the first Saturday of every month. No need to register!

10:00 am–3:00 pm: Take-home Craft Bags

10:00 am: Nature Story

11:00 am and 2:00 pm: Animal Interviews

1:00 pm: Special Programs

### CARTOONING WITH JERRY SHIPPEE

December 29, 2021; 1:00–1:45 pm.

### LI'L PEEPS

This popular program introduces children ages 18 months to 2 years to the delights of nature.

January 13, 20, 27, February 2, 10, 2022; 10:00–10:45 am.

### STORIES IN THE STARS

February 10, 2022; 7:00–8:00 pm.

### FEBRUARY SCHOOL VACATION WEEK

Cook up treats for our feathered friends, learn all about animal tracks, and more! Visit the events calendar at [www.asri.org](http://www.asri.org) for details.

February 21–25, 2022; 10:00 am–3:00 pm

### FAMILY GAME NIGHT WITH AUDUBON

Join Audubon for an evening of games, snacks, and prizes! February 18, 2022; 7:00–9:00 pm.



# CARATUNK WILDLIFE REFUGE

301 Brown Avenue,  
Seekonk, MA

### FULL MOON HIKE

Two Dates Offered.

December 18, 2021, February 16, 2022; 4:30–6:30 pm.

### MEET A RAPTOR

Come learn all about raptors, explore biofacts, and meet a live raptor.

January 8, 2022; 1:00–3:00 pm.

### MUSKRATS, OTTERS, AND MORE!

January 23, 2022; 4:30–6:30 pm.

### FELTING WORKSHOP: MAKE AN OWL!

January 23, 2022; 1:00–2:30 pm.

### PROWL FOR OWLS AT CARATUNK

Three Dates Offered.

December 29, 2021, January 28, February 25, 2022; 6:30–8:30 pm.

### OSPREY MONITOR TRAINING

February 6, 2022, 12:00–3:00 pm.

### WHITE BARN STORY TIME WITH A LIVE OWL

February 19, 2022; 11:00 am–12:00 pm.

### TRACKING ANIMALS IN WINTER

February 22, 2022; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

### WINTER BIRDING AT CARATUNK

February 23, 2022; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

### HERBAL TEA BLENDING

February 26, 2022; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.



Jason Major

Register online through the events calendar at [www.asri.org](http://www.asri.org) or call (401) 949-5454 ext. 3014.



## FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

1443 Providence Pike (Route 5), North Smithfield, RI

### PROWL FOR OWLS

Two Dates Offered.

December 16, 2021, January 13, 2022; 7:00–9:00 pm.

### SNOWSHOEING

February 12, 2022; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

### WINTER BIRDING

January 22, 2022; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.



## FISHERVILLE BROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE

99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI

### OWLING AT FISHERVILLE BROOK

Two Dates Offered.

December 3, 2021, January 21, 2022; 7:00–9:00 pm.

### WINTER BIRDING VAN TRIP: WATERFOWL AND SEABIRDS AT THE SHORE

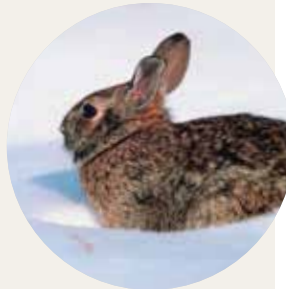
Departs from Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, December 11, 2021; 8:00 am–4:00 pm.

### WINTER BIG DAY 2022

How many bird species can we find? This popular program has become a Rhode Island tradition. Departs from Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge. January 8, 2022; 8:00 am–5:00 pm.

### SNOWSHOEING BY THE FULL MOON

February 16, 2022; 6:30–8:30 pm.



## PRUDENCE ISLAND

Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Prudence Island, RI

### WINTER WILDLIFE ON PRUDENCE ISLAND

Two Dates Offered. Observe harbor seals and search for waterfowl in the protected coves of Prudence.

December 4, 2021, March 2, 2022; 9:45 am–4:45 pm.

### PRUDENCE ISLAND PRIVATE ADVENTURE WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Spend the day exploring Prudence Island on a private tour. Contact: Maureen.Dewire@dem.ri.gov or by phone at 401.683.1478.



Ed Hughes

## POWDER MILL LEDGES WILDLIFE REFUGE

12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI

### AUDUBON HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

December 4, 2021; 10:00 am–4:00 pm.

### LET'S TAKE A WALK!

Monthly family program with varying nature themes.

December 7, 2021, January 4, February 1, 2022; 10:00–11:00 am.

### WILDLIFE WREATH MAKING

December 18, 2021; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

### ANIMAL TRACKS AND SIGNS FOR FAMILIES

January 8, 2022; 2:00–4:00 pm.

### OWLS OF NEW ENGLAND LECTURE

December 9, 2021; 6:30–8:00 pm

### INTRODUCTION TO ANIMAL TRACKING

January 8, 2022; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

### FAMILY WINTER WALK

January 15, 2022; 2:00–4:00 pm.

### OWL PROWL

February 17, 2022; 7:00–9:00 pm.

### HECTOR THE MISUNDERSTOOD SNAKE: \*

Story and Meet a Live Snake

February 22, 2022; 11:00 am–12:00 pm.

### TURTLES ARE TERRIFIC! \*

February 22, 2022; 2:00–3:30 pm.

### IN GRANDPA'S SUGARBUSH: STORY & MAPLE ACTIVITIES \*

February 23, 2022; 11:00 am–12:00 pm.

### COLONIAL CANDLEMAKING \*

February 23, 2022; 2:00–3:30 pm.

### GRANDMOTHER SPIDER BRINGS THE SUN \*

Story and Spider Craft

February 24, 2022; 11:00 am–12:00 pm.

### BUILD A BLUEBIRD HOUSE \*

February 24, 2022; 2:00–3:30 pm.

### HAWK ENCOUNTER \*

February 25, 2022; 11:00 am–12:00 pm.

### WHO'S BEEN HERE? ANIMAL SIGNS \*

February 25, 2022; 2:00–3:30 pm.



\* February School Vacation Week Programs.



Register online through the events calendar at [www.asri.org](http://www.asri.org) or call (401) 949-5454 ext. 3014.

# The State of Rhode Island's Birds

Continued from page 5

question is, do we manage lands for the creation and maintenance of grasslands and early successional habitats, or do we let them success into mature forest? We were a state that was nearly all forested prior to European settlement, and then much of Rhode Island was cleared for agriculture, and now it is trending back toward forest again. While grassland and early successional species are in decline in Rhode Island, we need to also pay attention to what is happening with them at a more regional scale.

Clarkson will be conducting research and providing recommendations for managing habitat on Audubon's properties—as well as other protected lands around the state—with a focus not just on Rhode Island birds but on the birds that are contributing to regional populations. In his new position at Audubon, he intends to also work with other birding and conservation groups around the Northeast to better understand how bird populations are trending throughout the region and focus efforts on supporting conservation efforts from a wider perspective.

I also want to borrow an idea from Vermont Audubon that they call responsibility birds, Clarkson said. We need to acknowledge that some species of migrants have 90 percent of their global breeding population in the Northeast, and it is 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 bad before we start to work toward making things better for those species. We need to pay attention to what they need, where their hotspots of abundance are, and make sure the resources they depend on are available in perpetuity.

The Great Crested Flycatcher is one example of a responsibility bird. It is a long-distance migrant and the only member of its genus that breeds in the Northeast. Its population is currently stable, and it is considered a low conservation concern. But there are aspects of its biology that make it an ideal candidate for proactive management, including the fact that it nests in tree cavities.

Anything we can do now to ensure its continued success in Rhode Island is likely to require minimal conservation effort, whereas waiting until the species is in decline would likely result in large-scale conservation plans and lots of money and manpower, said Clarkson.

The key is to make sure that Audubon's management and conservation efforts for all species are multi-faceted, he added. There is no one thing you can do to help bird populations. Management plans have to be multi-disciplinary and spread across various realms of research. You have to understand habitats, biochemistry, hydrology, climate change and other factors. All must be taken into consideration for every single species to achieve successful conservation.



## MYSTERIOUS BIRD DISEASE

When backyard birds like Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees and American Robins were found dead and dying in large numbers in the Mid-Atlantic States last May, wildlife officials up and down the Eastern Seaboard became alarmed. As the problem expanded to Pennsylvania, Illinois and elsewhere and no cause could be identified, Audubon and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management urged residents with bird feeders to temporarily remove their feeders so as not to exacerbate the problem.



If the disease is contagious, then bird feeders are places where birds congregate and can spread disease from one to another. Removing feeders eliminates that congregation and potential spread, explained John Herbert, a DEM wildlife biologist. It could be similar to the bacterial infection that frequently infects the eyes of house finches and that can easily spread. So, the first step when you see a disease like that is to take down feeders so the birds can spread out and don't congregate in one single location.

The disease appeared to dissipate as the summer progressed, and it never reached the New England states, but Herbert said that Rhode Islanders should remain alert for it, especially next spring.

We don't know enough about it to know whether it will return again, he said. But it mostly affected young birds—nestlings and fledglings—and slowed after the breeding season, so we need to be prepared for it next breeding season.

Whether or not this particular disease returns, Herbert advised that bird feeders be cleaned frequently throughout the year to reduce the potential spread of all diseases. He also said that one of the best ways to help local bird species is through the planting of native plants and shrubs.

When our chickadees are raising their young, the most beneficial food for them is caterpillars, and caterpillars are more abundant when they have native plants in the yard, Herbert said. Native plants also provide fruit throughout the summer and into the winter, and they attract insects. They get a healthy food web going.

To learn more about native plants appropriate for planting in Rhode Island, visit [audubon.org/plantsforbirds](http://audubon.org/plantsforbirds) or [web.uri.edu/rinativeplants](http://web.uri.edu/rinativeplants).



# Sponsor-a-Raptor: The PERFECT Holiday Gift.

Please consider sponsoring one of Audubon's avian ambassadors this holiday season. Your gift helps to feed, shelter, and provide veterinary care for these amazing raptors. Our staff expertise, diets and special care for these previously injured birds costs Audubon thousands of dollars each year.

Select a species you wish to sponsor and you will receive an official certificate and fact sheet on the bird you choose.



Peregrine Falcon



Great Horned Owl



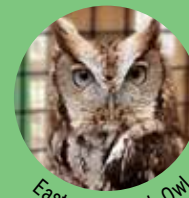
Barred Owl



Red-tailed Hawk



Common Raven



Eastern Screech-Owl



Visit [asri.org](http://asri.org) and click on "Learn" and "Audubon Ambassadors" or call (401) 949-5454 ext. 3018  
**Sponsorships make wonderful gifts for nature enthusiasts.**

## Thank You

### Summer Camp Scholarship Donors!

The generous donors noted below sent 12 children to summer camp through the Audubon Camp Scholarship Program. These campers explored field and shore habitats as well as Audubon's large pollinator garden. They made nature discoveries, hiked, visited with live animals, made messy crafts and much more. Thank you for allowing these children to experience nature this summer. Over \$3,000 in camp scholarships were awarded.

- Lavinia Connors
- Peter A. Tassia and Maija Lutz
- Timothy and Pat Maloney
- Walter and Eileen Jachna
- Maria Masse
- John Miller
- Rhode Island Parent Information Network, Inc.



# WE CAN HELP WILDLIFE...

## WHEN YOU HELP US.



**AUDUBON RAPTOR CARE**

**DONATE TODAY:  
ASRI.ORG/RAPTORCARE**



## Refreshing the Fences at Caratunk

Audubon thanks the hard-working Scouts from Seekonk Troop #1 who meet weekly at the Audubon Caratunk Wildlife Refuge. They completed fence repair and painting in September as a community service project and a way to thank Audubon. The fence looks beautiful, and we send our appreciation to the Scouts for a job well done!



## Leave a Bequest to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island

Free Estate Planning Guide  
[asri.org/bequest](http://asri.org/bequest)

*Planning a  
Celebration  
or Special  
Event?*

## Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium

Located in historic Bristol, Rhode Island, just 30 minutes from Providence, Newport, and Fall River, the award-winning Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium is one of Rhode Island's most unique meeting venues. With beautiful trails, award-winning exhibits and aquarium, large meeting, reception, and outdoor patio space, the Nature Center provides a setting that will captivate guests.

**Ideal for weddings, showers, or the site of your next business meeting or off-site retreat.**

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







## 2021 ANNUAL MEETING:

VIRTUALLY BROADCAST TO MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

### Resilient Audubon

Audubon looked to the future at the 124th Annual Meeting, with senior directors of conservation, education and government affairs sharing their insight, accomplishments, and plans for 2022.



### Newly Elected Board Members



**Amy E. Moses, Esq.**

Amy Moses is General Counsel at Utilidata, Inc. She has been active in state environmental advocacy, most recently leading the Rhode Island team at the Conservation Law Foundation.



**Olinda L. Urizar-Mendez**

Olinda Urizar-Mendez is Assistant to Chief of Staff of the City of Providence and Director of Executive Operations under Mayor Jorge Elorza. She has over 20 years of experience working with Faith and Latinx communities.



**Emily W. Westcott**

With a 30-year career in marketing and advertising, Emily Westcott became a vital volunteer for Audubon. She was recognized for her outstanding leadership as the Audubon Volunteer of the Year in 2019.



**Shawen Williams**

Shawen Williams is a private financial manager and long-time supporter of land conservation. She has served on numerous boards of environmental organizations including the Prudence Conservancy, The Rhode Island Land Trust Council, and Preserve Rhode Island.



**Laura Landen, PhD**

Dr. Laura Landen is retired Chair of the Philosophy Department at Providence College. She is currently filling an unexpired term on the current board of directors.



The Audubon Society of Rhode Island gratefully acknowledges the terms of service of **Dr. Nicholas Califano, Everett Stuart, and Meghan Frost** who are stepping down from the board of directors this year.

### Volunteers of the Year



**Betsy and Richard Staples**

Honored for their dedication to Audubon, Betsy and Richard Staples have worked to nurture and improve the gardens at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium. They have been involved with the restoration of the Jack Doherty Bird Garden and have beautified nearly every section of the gardens and grounds around the Center.

### Partner of the Year



**Brian Byrnes**

Providence Deputy Superintendent of Parks Brian Byrnes was honored for his leadership in the planning and growth of the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center in Roger Williams Park. Byrnes has partnered with Audubon and other environmental organizations to share green infrastructure technologies with municipalities, engineers, and scientists across New England.

If you were not able to watch the Annual Meeting, it is available through this link: [youtube.com/audubonri](https://youtube.com/audubonri)

## Legislative Update:

### Significant Legislative Progress in 2021

By Priscilla De La Cruz, Senior Director of Government Affairs

Thanks to the efforts of our former senior policy director Meg Kerr, Audubon made incredible strides on our 2020-2021 legislative priorities. We had hoped for a special fall legislative session where we could resume our work on environmental bills that seemed close to passage. However, with the state's focus on pandemic recovery, a fall session most likely will not include our legislative priorities. We are looking to January 2022 and planning for the upcoming session.

#### Act On Climate (S0078/H5445) **PASSED** ✓

Sponsored by Sen. Euer and Rep. Carson

Made critical adjustments to the Resilient RI Act to increase Rhode Island's efficiency and effectiveness in responding to the climate crisis. The state's carbon reductions are now binding, the legislation provides a mechanism for enforcement, and requires the state to plan for an equitable transition for environmental justice communities and labor.



#### Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Fund (OSCAR, S0035/H5360) **PASSED** ✓

Sponsored by Sen. Pearson and Rep. Vella-Wilkinson

Although passed without the funding mechanism, this legislation establishes a policy and program to protect and strengthen the Rhode Island ecological water systems we all depend on and the public access sites that are threatened by rising seas and erosion. Lead advocates continue to work with legislation sponsors to identify the necessary funding for this climate adaptation work.

## Legislative Priorities for Protection of Forest Habitat and Solar Siting

#### Forest Conservation Act (S470/H5760) **PASSED** ✓

Sponsored by Sen. Ciccone and Rep. Speakman

Requires RI DEM to establish a commission that will look at ways to encourage forest conservation as a means to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change, promote forest values, and identify funding, incentives, and strategies to preserve private forest land.

#### Solar Siting Bill to Close The 10 MW Loophole (S474/H6169) - DID NOT ADVANCE

Sponsored by Sen. DiMario and Rep. Speakman

This bill prevents the co-location of 10 MW projects, except on preferred locations (gravel pits, landfills, commercially zoned property). Audubon will continue to prioritize solar siting and work with sponsors, legislators, and a variety of advocates toward a comprehensive approach. To limit the worst impacts of climate change, we need to move forward with the development of more offshore wind and onshore solar projects. However, it is of equal importance that we protect our natural ecosystems and environment. Maximizing building on already disturbed land and solar development on rooftops and parking lots is part of that balanced solution.

#### Manage Neonicotinoid Pesticides (H5641/S702) - ONLY PASSED IN THE HOUSE

Sponsored by Rep. Kislak and Sen. Miller

Audubon continues to work on issues related to pollinator health and habitat. Research is showing a link between pesticide use, particularly neonicotinoids (or neonics), and impacts on birds. Audubon will continue to work with RIDEM, legislators, and partners like the Pesticide Free PVD Campaign, to regulate the use of neonics, a class of insecticides that affect the central nervous system of insects and have been linked to pollinator decline worldwide.



## Other Legislative News

#### Protect bill-saving energy efficiency programs (S0634/H6144) **PASSED** ✓

Sponsored by Sen. Sosnowski and Rep. Ruggiero

Rhode Island's nation-leading energy efficiency programs were slated to expire in 2023 and needed an extension by statute.

#### “Ask-first” Law for Plastic Straws (S0155/H5131) **PASSED** ✓

Sponsored by Sen. McCaffrey and Rep. Bennett

#### Prohibit the intentional simultaneous release of 10 or more balloons inflated with lighter than air gas (S0038/H5376) **PASSED** ✓

Sponsored by Sen. Sosnowski and Rep. Donovan

There was progress made on other environmental and clean energy bills that did not pass in 2021, but we expect to support in 2022.

Sign up to get the Audubon Eagle Eye advocacy update at [asri.org/lead](http://asri.org/lead).



WHAT WOULD AUDUBON DO **WITHOUT YOU?**

**NOTHING.**

You make our work possible. The pages in this issue of the Report are full of accomplishments that Audubon has achieved with your support over the last three months. Without you...the other pages would be as blank as this one.

Please give to our year-end appeal so we can continue to support birds and wildlife. Help us protect critical habitat across the state and engage safely with schools and diverse communities with programs for all ages. As we face the ongoing challenges of climate change, your support gives nature, and all of us, a voice at the State House as we advocate for strong environmental policies.

**We need your support now more than ever.**

Please donate today. Visit [asri.org/donate](https://asri.org/donate) or use the enclosed envelope.

# TerraCorp Member Serves Audubon in Land Conservation Efforts

By Scott Ruhren, Senior Director of Conservation

Audubon welcomes Lincoln Dark, a TerraCorps member serving as a Land Stewardship Coordinator with our conservation staff. Lincoln will also assist our education staff in community engagement and programming. TerraCorps, a newer affiliation of AmeriCorps, was founded on the principles and practices of service with an emphasis on land conservation.

Lincoln graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a degree in Wildlife and Conservation Biology. As an undergrad, Lincoln worked on the Narragansett Bay Coyote Study and conducted soil and microbiology research. This past summer, he monitored a colony of Arctic and Common Terns in Maine with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Lincoln is applying his technical and natural history skills to many projects at Audubon, but his main focus will be improving the mapping of refuges and conservation easements using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Being able to use GIS technology in the field has revolutionized the way we can monitor Audubon properties and ensure that our boundaries are respected by neighboring properties Lincoln explained. My service with Audubon is a perfect complement to my current Masters coursework at URI in remote sensing and spatial analysis. I am able to take what I've learned in school and take it outside of the classroom to apply in the real world.

Lincoln is also currently collaborating with Audubon educators and RIDEM to develop a program where he will present lessons in the safe enjoyment of wildlife and the outdoors to classrooms, both in-person and virtually. We look forward to advancing our refuge management and environmental education with Lincoln's help, as he serves with Audubon through July 2022.



TerraCorps Member Lincoln Dark

## RAPTOR WEEKEND

Audubon was thrilled to bring back birds of prey from across New England for Raptor Weekend 2021. Over 1,200 people flocked to the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium on September 11 and 12 to get up-close with eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls. Visitors learned about these amazing creatures, their habitats, and conservation efforts. Thank you to all the visitors and volunteers who made this event such a huge success!





# Challenges and Solutions for Rare Plants

By Scott Ruhren, Senior Director of Conservation

An essential paradox of wilderness conservation is that we seek to preserve what must change. This quote from well-known ecologists Steward Pickett and Peter White underscores the scientific fact that habitats and populations are not constant. At times our management involves disturbing healthy habitats. This may seem surprising, but it is essential for some rare plants.

Audubon protects, monitors, and manages several native rare plants in our refuges. Our projects help slow the decline of these species. Although we cannot do much about natural rarity, Audubon can reduce the human-induced causes of habitat decline and invasive species.

Conservation science grew out of crises such as habitat destruction, mismanagement of natural resources and increasing species extinction. Rare and endangered species are threatened for many reasons.

Surprisingly, some species are always rare because they live in a specific place or have a specific food. Other species are rare because of slow reproduction rates.

Natural communities change and disturbance in the right amount is crucial for many habitats and species to survive. Fire can be regenerative. Trees falling in forests create sunny and warm patches.

For decades Audubon has collaborated with the Native Plant Trust (formerly New England Wildflower Society) tracking rare plants in Rhode Island. Locations of most of these rare plants are kept confidential to help protect their future.

One of these species, pale corydalis or rock harlequin (*Corydalis sempervirens*) is a Rhode Island native plant that thrives in seemingly inhospitable places. Dry rock outcrops and frequently disturbed utility rights-of-way are two such places where we find this beautiful plant on Audubon refuges. More stable communities become too shady or too competitive, conditions that reduce pale corydalis survival.

Almost ten years ago, at one known location where *Corydalis* was barely holding on, Audubon girdled a few nearby trees. Girdling kills the tree but keeps it standing to be used by nesting birds and other animals. For *Corydalis*, the benefit was increased sunlight. The species has flowered more since then and it looks like the populations are doing well. Still, every year is different, and the plants are vulnerable to hotter summers and droughts.

In a secluded bog in another Audubon wildlife refuge, we monitor dragon's mouth orchid (*Arethusa bulbosa*) a plant preferring bogs rich with sphagnum moss. Orchids in general tend to be rare. Most have small populations and low reproduction rates making them vulnerable to extinction. Sadly, for centuries orchids, including dragon's mouth, had been collected indiscriminately. At one time flower shops sold wild orchids, including dragon's mouth, in many cities in the Northeast.

Dragon's mouth thrives in sunny patches of bogs and swamps where it relies on bumblebees for pollination. Audubon has been tracking the orchid's population and the number of trees and shrubs growing nearby. Occasional, careful clipping of competing trees and shrubs help the orchids stay in the sunshine and does not harm the bog.

Simple, science-based solutions help these rare species survive. Still, the monitoring and care are perpetual.



Top: Pale corydalis or rock harlequin (*Corydalis sempervirens*) Bottom: Dragon's mouth orchid (*Arethusa bulbosa*)

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## 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: Akira Hall**  
From: Mary Aparicio

**In Honor of: Jed Mahoney**  
From: Margot Miller



## 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: The Brother of Dorothy Gilbert**  
From: Dorothy and Edward Gilbert

**In Memory of: Marc Trahan**  
From: Holly Flanagan

**In Memory of: Daniel J. McCombs, Jr.**  
From: William and Claire Chatto

**In Memory of: Patricia Meagher Dwyer**  
From: Catherine Cressy and Mike Russo

**In Memory of: Maureen Sousa**  
From: Joanne Correia  
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Russell and JoAnn Sousa  
Mary and John Medeiros  
Mary Lou Lael  
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**In Memory of: Virginia Siener**  
From: Virginia Raho



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## 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:

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If you wish to join the 1897 Society and help promote the values and mission of Audubon, please visit [asri.org/leadership](http://asri.org/leadership) or contact Jeff Hall at 401-949-5454 ext. 5017.

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.

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# Hope is the Thing With Feathers

Continued from page 7

loading photos to document breeding birds for the Rhode Island Bird Atlas 2.0, I was surprised to find this image of a Saltmarsh Sparrow with the banding code GR XO (Green over Red on the right leg; Aluminum over Orange on the left leg).

I called Steve Reinert, Audubon Council of Advisors member, who grabbed his banding kit and mist nets and met me at Jacob's Point to sleuth out the story of this bird.

We waited for her to feed her two nestlings before capturing her and reading her USGS band number which gave us access to her history. She had been captured on the west coast of Florida on Halloween of 2015, returning to Jacob's Point to breed the following summer. She holds the distance record for the longest migration recorded for her species, having flown between Warren, RI to Pinellas County, FL, a distance of 1,170 miles. This one bird was all the motivation that we needed to start the SSRI and commit to a five-year plan to document the status of Saltmarsh Sparrows breeding at Jacob's Point.


Typical of most salt marshes, Jacob's Point has experienced many disruptions over the centuries, degrading the health of the marsh. During colonial times, Jacob's Point was used for harvesting and storing salt hay. In 1915, a road-bed was constructed to provide access to a private seaplane that was moored in the Warren River, impounding the southern section and causing tidal restriction and significant invasion by *Phragmites australis*. Tidal flow has been partially restored under the dedicated stewardship of the Warren Land Conservation Trust, who collaborated with other stake-holders, spear-headed by Wenley Ferguson, Director of Habitat Restoration at Save the Bay. The integrity of the northern section of this salt marsh was rated as 2nd out of 31 marshes surveyed by Tom Kutcher, Wetland Scientist for the RI Natural History Survey. He notes that it is currently among the least degraded marshes in the state, worthy of protection from further disturbances.

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

- Emily Dickinson



Dierdre Robinson

The SSRI entered its final year of research in 2021. Learning that Apollo is now a healthy third year bird provides optimism, which can be a rare commodity these days - especially for young people. The next generation has lived through a pandemic and faces the existential climate crisis that they inherited from previous generations. While it is important to educate about climate and environmental challenges, we must be careful not to extinguish their hopes of making a positive difference in this world and encourage their efforts. I close with Emily Dickinson's poem (above) "Hope is the Thing with Feathers" written two centuries after Rhode Island adopted Hope as our state motto in 1664.

Learn more about the Saltmarsh Sparrow Research Initiative at [salsri.org](http://salsri.org).

*The author acknowledges Steve Reinert, Jim O'Neill, Matt Eckerson and Joel Eckerson for their dedication to the Saltmarsh Sparrow Research Initiative. She also thanks the Warren Land Conservation Trust for their commitment to conservation and permission to document the breeding ecology of Saltmarsh Sparrows at Jacob's Point.*

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**Suet & Bird Puddings**

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**Thistle**

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\* Times for seed pickup will be provided online when you order and in an email confirmation.



# AUDUBON FIRE

## Lit Up the Night!

Audubon took full advantage of a beautiful fall evening to host over 200 guests at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk for AuduBonfire 2021, our Member Appreciation Evening.

This annual event honors and thanks our members for their ongoing support. Guests enjoyed bonfires safely outdoors on the lawn of the refuge. They brought blankets and lawn chairs, enjoyed s'mores, games and live music. They also walked the trails to stations where they met live owls and learned about nature at night. Thank you to all who attended - we can't wait to do it again next year




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February 6, 2022, 12:00 - 3:00 pm:

Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Ave, Seekonk, MA.

February 13, 2022, 12:00 - 3:00 pm:

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, 1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI.

February 17, 2022, 5:30 - 8:00 pm:

Rhode Island Natural History Survey, 1 East Farm Road, Kingston, RI.

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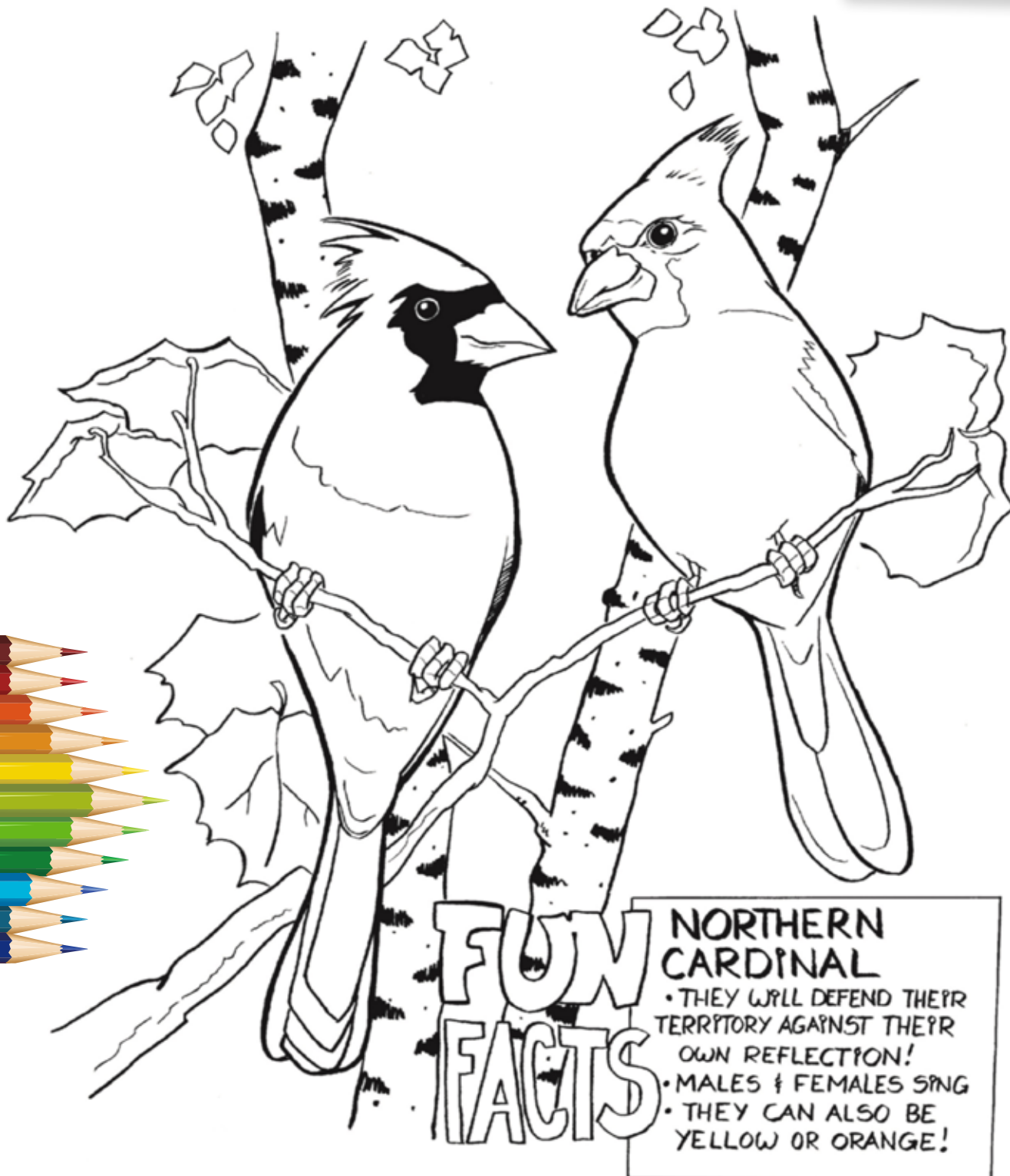
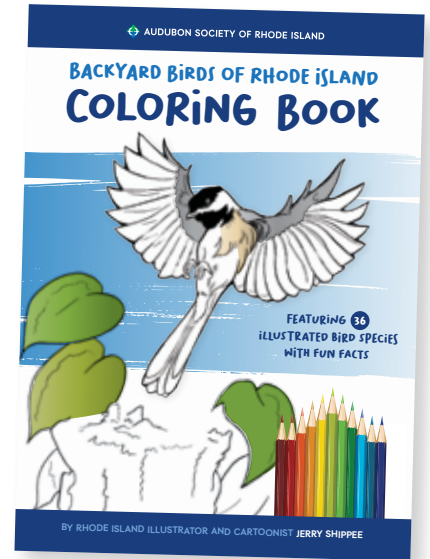


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# The Need to Act On Climate

Editorial by Priscilla De La Cruz, Senior Director of Government Affairs

We are already experiencing the climate crisis. It is intensifying and accelerating with increased temperatures, urban heat islands, extreme ocean changes, sea-level rise, and intense rainfall and flooding. We recently saw the remnants of Hurricane Ida cause a road to collapse in Portsmouth.

We see its impacts on birds - especially migratory species - right here in the Ocean State. A rapidly warming climate makes it challenging for migratory birds to adapt to the irreversible altering of habitat, food chains, pollinators and blooming seasons, and species interactions.

But there can be optimism - we know that we can transition away from fossil fuels and invest in climate; there is economic opportunity in facing this crisis and investing in a sustainable and resilient economy. And Audubon is pleased to report that the Rhode Island legislature passed several bills this year, including the landmark 2021 Act On Climate legislation, setting the framework our state needs to respond to the crisis and opportunities it presents. Audubon worked tirelessly with legislators, partner advocates, and Rhode Islanders mobilized for climate action in this multi-year effort.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report reinforced the need for immediate, sustained large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to limit the worst impacts. The 2021 Act On Climate requires Rhode Island to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 100% by 2050, with mandatory, binding, and enforceable interim targets - 45% carbon reductions by 2030 and 80% by 2040 - per the latest science to avert climate disaster, while centering environmental justice and labor voices in the planning process.

Massachusetts established similar legislation with binding and enforceable carbon reduction targets through a Global Warming Solutions Act back in 2008. This positioned the Massachusetts economy to support booming industries in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and electric vehicles. Rhode Island can do the same. We have the solutions to position our state as a leader in the clean energy future.

What is the next step? The state must successfully implement the Act On Climate legislation. Additional proposed legislation must be passed, and the necessary regulations implemented. There is no one solution, and the crisis calls for an all-hands-on-deck response.

In June, Audubon joined with several organizations and submitted a letter to Governor McKee and Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) members. The authors asked for:

- Justice and equity to be prioritized
- A robust stakeholder process
- The necessary State staff resources to enable success
- A clear timeline to immediately update the 2016 RI GHG Reduction Plan by December 2022 - the first milestone requirement of the new climate law.
- The development of a Strategic Implementation Plan for the December 2025 Plan.

The first EC4 meeting under the leadership of the Acting Director of RIDEM, Terrance Gray, was held in September and set an exciting precedent for the work ahead. Governor McKee was also in attendance for opening remarks. We heard commitment from the EC4 to prioritize the implementation of the Act On Climate legislation and from advocates about critical complementary policies, such as attaining 100% renewable electricity by 2030. Plus, they would also prioritize legislation to enable the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) to help reduce transportation emissions - a sector that accounts for nearly 36% of Rhode Island's carbon emissions - and generate \$20+ million annually for investment in clean, equitable transportation solutions.

Audubon will continue to prioritize the implementation of Act On Climate. Science is telling us that what we see happening in nature - with impacts on birds, wildlife, and plant species - is also happening to humans. The time is now to invest in climate and to tap into the endless opportunities it presents.

*Note to readers: Our advocacy department has successfully transitioned leadership to Senior Director of Government Affairs Priscilla De La Cruz after the retirement of Senior Director of Policy Meg Kerr.*



## AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND REPORT

Volume 55, Number 4, November 2021

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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](mailto:hfoley@asri.org).

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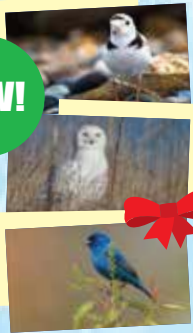
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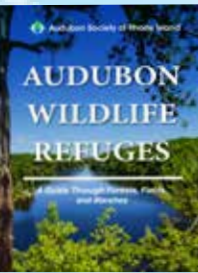
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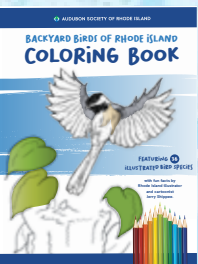
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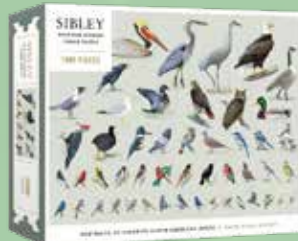
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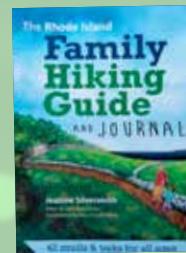
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