



COMMUNITY REPORT

# AUDUBON SOCIETY of Rhode Island

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FOSTER, JOHNSTON, AND SCITUATE

PILEATED WOODPECKER





Audubon Society of Rhode Island

# NATURE IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

**T**hrough land conservation, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island will always protect critical habitat for birds and wildlife in Foster and Scituate. 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 Foster, Johnston, and Scituate, and provides nature with a voice at the State House. With your help, along with our members and other supporters, we will continue our work to protect our state's natural heritage – resulting in greener, healthier communities for all.

Please give as if nature depends on you... because it does. Donate to Audubon today at [asri.org/donate](https://asri.org/donate).

Thank you for your support!



Jeffrey C. Hall  
Executive Director

*Connecting People With Nature*

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

## CONSERVATION

- Protects approximately 9,500 acres of habitat in Rhode Island, including approximately 787 acres in Foster and 116 acres in Scituate.
- Wildlife refuges in Foster and Scituate protect valuable forest habitats and freshwater wetlands, so important for wildlife and natural resources.
- Coordinates the Osprey monitoring program at more than 250 sites in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
- Protects large areas of forest that are critical in the face of climate change.
- Advised owners and helped manage over 600 acres of forest habitat across the state in a "Forestry for the Birds" program, including 431 acres in Foster and 147 acres in Scituate.



## 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 George B. Parker Woodland Wildlife Refuge in Foster and Coventry.
- Over 400 volunteer hours were spent collecting data.
- Audubon partnered with an analytical chemistry lab at URI to process soil and water samples from our properties to determine the presence of dangerous neonicotinoid (neonics) pesticides. Presence of neonics in soil or water will prompt the collection and analysis of bird feathers to determine the extent to which these chemicals may be impacting our local bird communities.
- A final "State of Our Birds" report will be released in early 2023 summarizing the results from the year-long baseline data collection and the first-round of neonicotinoid analysis.
- Partnering with an international effort to track migratory species using the MOTUS Wildlife Tracking System to aid researchers throughout North America in tracking birds, insects and bats. This will allow Audubon to perform in-house research on the movement dynamics of birds using our refuges for breeding, wintering or as migration stopover habitat.



## EDUCATION

### SCHOOLYARD HABITAT RESOURCE GUIDE

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

### JOHNSTON

- Guided a habitat field trip for fourth-grade students at Sarah Dyer Barnes Elementary School.
- Cherry Hill preschool students met Audubon's Screech Owl this fall as part of a nature story program.

### FOSTER

- Pre-K students at Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School enjoyed a nature story and activities all about insects.
- Clayville Elementary School second graders participated in a Field Geology investigation at Audubon Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge in June.

### SCITUATE

- North Scituate Elementary School invited Audubon to bring the large Inflatable Whale for a Kindergarten program.
- First graders from North Scituate Elementary visited the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol for a guided nature walk through the Palmieri Pollinator Garden and along the trails.
- Second graders from Hope Elementary School visited the Audubon Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge for a Field Geology program.
- Fogarty Memorial fourth graders went to the Audubon Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge for a Field Geology program.
- Presented a "Beneficial Insects" program at the Gention Garden Club at the North Scituate Community House.
- Brought a Raptor Encounter program with a live hawk and owl to the Hope Public Library.



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

## FOSTER 787 acres

### 1. ADAM BALWIERCZAK WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 2001; approximately 125 acres

Adjacent to Audubon's DeCurtis Wildlife Refuge and Foster Land Trust, this is part of a large tract of protected forest.

### 2. CARDI SWAMP WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1994; approximately 130 acres

This land is part of a larger protected area and offers forest, open water, and swamp habitat.

### 3. DECURTIS WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 2003; approximately 80 acres

Next to Audubon's Balwierczak Wildlife Refuge and Foster Land Trust, this is part of a large tract of protected forest.

### 4. DOUGLAS & MARY THOMAN WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1996; approximately 36 acres

Large hardwood forest.

### 5. GEORGE B. PARKER WOODLAND \*

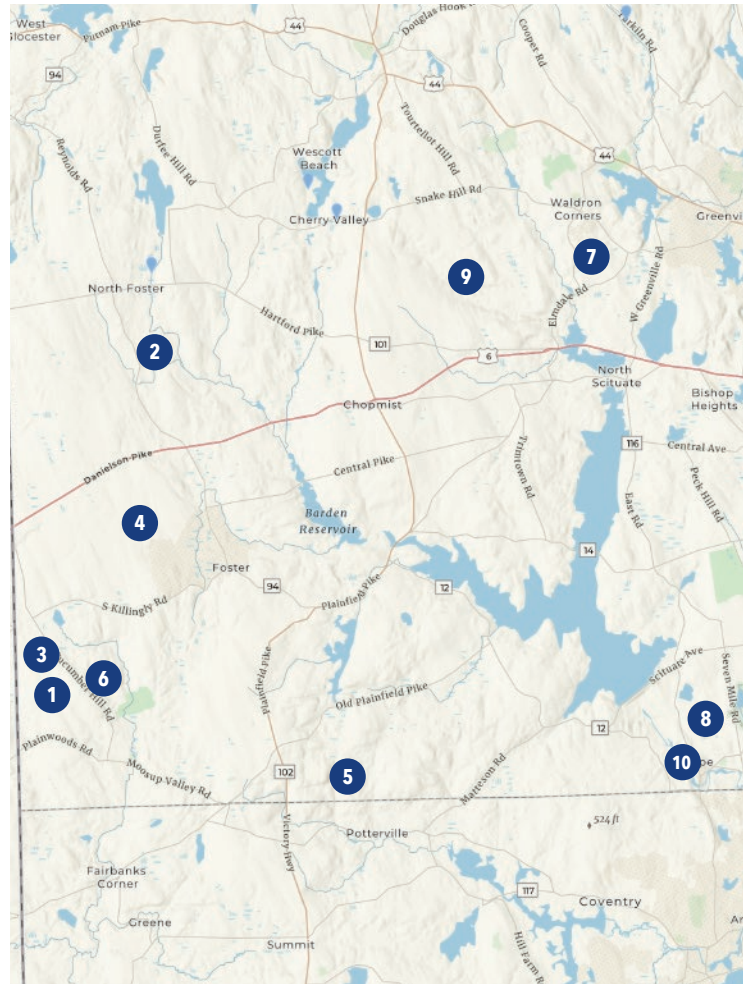
Protected since 1956; approx. 376 acres, part in Coventry

This large wildlife refuge straddles the border of two towns; it contains extensive and rigorous hiking trails.

### 6. HARRINGTON WOODS WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1993; approximately 40 acres

Vital forest and swamp habitats are found here.



## SCITUATE 116 acres

### 7. ALICE O. HARRIS MEMORIAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 1976; approximately 44 acres

This property contains mature forest and rolling terrain, habitat for many species of wildlife.

### 8. CRANBERRY BROOK PRESERVE

Protected since 1981; approximately 30 acres

Contains streams and forest.

### 9. HUNTINGHOUSE BROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protected since 2004; approximately 30 acres

This rolling landscape of mature forest and extensive wetlands is important bird habitat.

### 10. OTTER POINT PRESERVE

Protected since 1974; approximately 12 acres

South of Scituate reservoir, this property protects fresh-water wetlands.

\* Wildlife refuge with trails open to the public. Visit [asri.org/hike](http://asri.org/hike) for details.



Scott Sisarski



Karen Johnson-Nieuwendijk



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