



COMMUNITY REPORT

# AUDUBON SOCIETY of Rhode Island

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NORTH KINGSTOWN AND EXETER

MARION EPPLEY WILDLIFE REFUGE, EXETER





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 North Kingstown and Exeter. 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 North Kingstown and Exeter, 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 180 acres in North Kingstown and 1,969 acres in Exeter.
- The new Drummond Wildlife Refuge in North Kingstown was donated to Audubon in 2021. It contains 24 acres of forest on former farmland.
- Protects large tracts of forested land in Exeter and North Kingstown, natural areas that are critical in the face of climate change.
- Coordinates the state-wide Osprey monitoring program, including 18 sites in North Kingstown.



## 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 Audubon wildlife refuges in North Kingstown and Exeter.
- 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.

### AUDUBON AT HOME

Audubon offers a free online environmental education resource for teachers and parents of children in Pre-K through Grade 4. Featuring more than 25 nature themes, Audubon at Home offers online activities, animal videos, stories, crafts, fact sheets, and behind-the-scenes tours. Visit [asri.org/audubon-at-home](https://asri.org/audubon-at-home).

### NORTH KINGSTOWN

- Third graders at Forest Park Elementary School participated in Audubon's Owls of Rhode Island program, meeting a Barred Owl up-close.
- Facilitated Sensory Safari program for families at the Davisville Free Library.
- Families at the Willett Free Library in Saundertown enjoyed an Owls of Rhode Island program.
- Lead numerous bird and nature walks in the North Kingstown area highlighting the beautiful open space found within its borders.
- Brought an Owls of New England with live raptors to the Plum Beach Garden Club.

### EXETER

- Third graders at Metcalf School learned about the Owls of Rhode Island and met live owls up-close.
- Lead year-round birding walks, nature programs, and hikes for all ages at the Audubon Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge.
- Assists community scout troops with nature-related badge programs at the Audubon Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge.



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





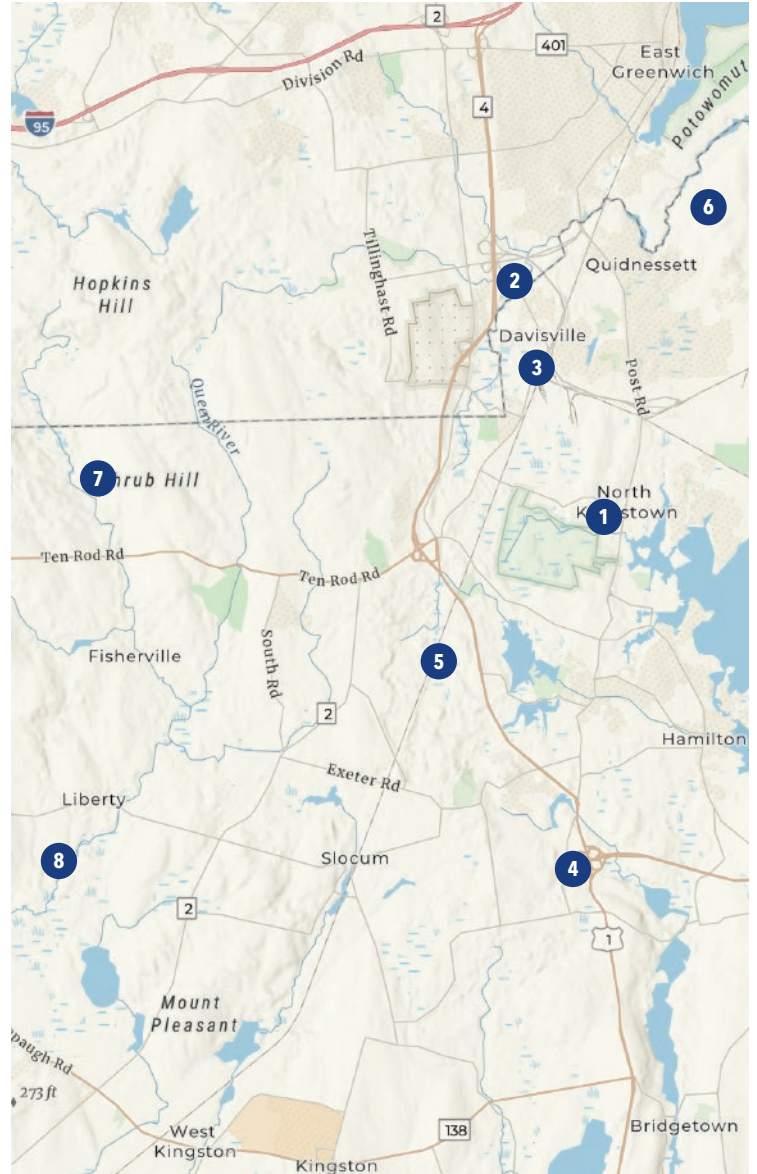
# AUDUBON PROTECTED LAND

## NORTH KINGSTOWN 180 acres

1. **COCUMSCUSSOC BROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Protected since 1964; Approximately 16 acres  
Mature woodland habitat within a larger protected forest.
2. **DAVIS MEMORIAL WILDLIFE REFUGE \***  
Protected since 1965; Approximately 41 acres  
With forested hills and swampy shorelines, this property protects miles of the Hunt River.
3. **HUNT RIVER SWAMP WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Protected since 1966; Approximately 41 acres  
Dense and diverse swampy forest.
4. **ISABEL BRIGHT STEARNS MEMORIAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Protected since 1982; Approximately 45 acres  
Rolling hills with hardwood forest between Pendar Road and Route 1.
5. **LAFAYETTE CEDAR SWAMP WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Protected since 1986; Approximately 13 acres  
Protected forest in a suburban landscape.
6. **DRUMMOND WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Protected since 2021; 24 acres  
Valuable forest on former farmland.

## EXETER 1,969 acres

7. **FISHERVILLE BROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE \***  
Protected since 1988; Approximately 934 acres in Exeter, plus 75 acres in West Greenwich. The second-largest Audubon wildlife refuge is in two towns; rolling hills, mature forests, large grasslands, ponds and streams are an oasis for birds, wildlife and nature enthusiasts.
8. **MARION EPPLEY WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Protected since 1979; Approximately 1035 acres in Exeter, plus 65 acres in South Kingstown. The largest Audubon refuge crosses borders into two towns. It protects the regionally diverse Queen River and surrounding wetlands including white cedar swamps.



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



Pam Marsden



Glen Osmund



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