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Audubon Society of Rhode Island

REPORT



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CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE



AWE-INSPIRING 125 YEARS OF TEACHING THE WONDERS OF NATURE

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

We Owe a Great Deal to Environmental Educators



Providing educational experiences in nature, especially for children, is rooted in the very core of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. The focus on educating about the natural world and encouraging an appreciation of birds and wildlife has been around since the very beginning of the conservation movement in the late 19th Century. When the first state Audubon Societies were formed, including here in Rhode Island, they knew that education would lead to the protection of nature. It still is that way today.

Thanks to over 125 years of dedicated staff, volunteers and contributors, Audubon has a long and proud legacy of introducing generations of children to nature, leading to the protection of habitat, birds, and other wildlife. Our work today in conservation and advocacy depends so much on the education of not just children, but of all Rhode Islanders.

History has it that George Bird Grinnell founded the first Audubon Society in New York City in 1886. He had been inspired by his childhood tutor, Lucy Blackwell Audubon (the widow of John James Audubon) who had taught him about birds. (Elizabeth Dickens is credited with having a similar influence in the early-to-mid 1900s with many children on Block Island.) So ó from the very beginning, future activists were inspired by their teachers.

Grinnell named this conservation movement after the well-known wildlife artist John James Audubon, who had passed away 30 years before. While recent light cast on the artist has greatly diminished his legacy, the name Audubon has become synonymous with birds, wildlife, and their protection. We owe a great deal to environmental educators, the lasting impression they have left on children, and the activism they have inspired.

Thanks again for your ongoing support,

Lawrence J. F. Taft

Lawrence J. F. Taft
Executive Director

Give for the Next 125 Years

As Audubon s 125th Anniversary celebration continues, there is much reflection on our history, rich land holdings, and encompassing educational programs. Every day there are reminders of the visionary donors who left Audubon in their estate and wills, and the gifts they continue to provide.

The Audubon endowment, which is the foundation from which all the organization s work is driven, reached \$20 million when the books closed the at the end of 2021. As one would expect, it has decreased with the decline in stock and bond markets since the beginning of the year. However, it remains very significant. Even in uncertain economic times, the Audubon endowment provides the financial strength the organization needs to steward protected land and advocate for a cleaner environment.

Audubon legacy donors are true visionaries. They looked to the future and understood that Audubon would need resources and funding to keep the organization moving forward. They provided gifts that now give in perpetuity.

This spring Audubon offered several planned giving workshops with Carol Golden of Golden Philanthropy Advisors. Carol has years of experience working at the Rhode Island Foundation as part of a team that raised over a billion dollars. In 2020 she started her new firm providing guidance to individuals to reach their charitable goals.

If you were unable to join the webinars, you can view one by visiting this link: <https://youtu.be/PBos5ACp9RY>
For more information on leaving the Audubon Society of Rhode Island in your will or estate plan, please reach out to Jeff Hall, Senior Director of Advancement at jhall@asri.org or by phone at 401-949-5454 ext. 3017. No one knows what environmental challenges the next 125 years will bring to Rhode Island, but what we do know is that because of donors and estate gifts, Audubon will always be prepared to protect the nature of Rhode Island.



**AWE-INSPIRING
125 YEARS OF TEACHING
THE WONDERS OF NATURE**

By Betsy Sherman Walker

Audubon Educator Lisa Maloney with students on a shore exploration program. Inset: Camp counselor Haley Ramos gives a lesson in turtles to campers in Bristol.

You are a ladybug whisperer! Lisa Maloney declares, when a young naturalist and avid wildlife tracker has brought her one of the tiny spotted red beetles he has plucked from a leaf. Maloney, in her position as Audubon Community Education Coordinator, is at the Woonsocket Public Library leading a group of children for an hour of nature discovery on the library grounds. She is there due to a partnership between Audubon and the library and is helping to connect outdoor exploration with the Rhode Island public libraries summer theme of Read Beyond the Beaten Path . A passionate educator, Maloney is quick to encourage such enthusiasm.

Woonsocket is a community we have been working with through after school programs, summer enrichment initiatives, library programs and teacher workshops for over ten years, she says. This library program highlights a partnership we began during Covid, when [the library] wanted to do a series of programs but needed it to be outside. During the school year, this partnership with the library also allows us to reach home-school families in the area.

The story of Audubon is the story of its educators. In A Century of Dedication, Ken Weber s account of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island s first one hundred years, the late Rhode Island journalist and nature writer paints a lively portrait of the organization in its infancy. At the time, its founding board of directors an environmental think

tank of prominent educators, philanthropists, and businessmen wasted no time in laying out the society s mission. Promoting and protecting bird life notwithstanding, it is striking that in 1897 this group had the forethought and the vision to fortify its bylaws with the line: and above all, to awaken the interest in children in bird life and thus educate them to humane and gentle sentiments.

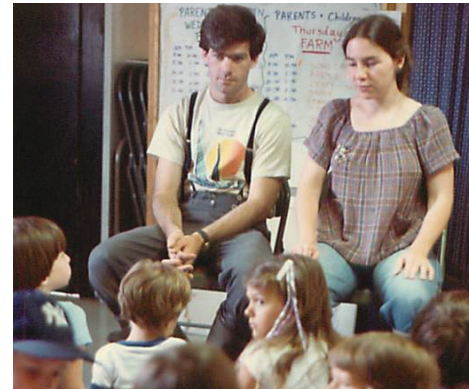
It is a spectacular post-Fourth of July morning in Woonsocket, and the children about eight total have come for the first of Maloney s three visits. The topic today: trees and plants how they live and grow, interact with their surroundings, and what they can teach us. She hands out magnifying lenses and draws the children in as they walk about, stopping mid-sentence to identify the call, overhead, of a Northern Mockingbird. She moves on to a cluster of hosta and asks, what might visit a flower? And answers her own question: Bees! She promotes the importance and wonder of the natural world; how we need it and it needs us. Protecting nature that s our job, she tells the children, letting them know that this is a responsibility shared by all. Maloney encourages curiosity and is a skilled educator when it comes to engaging the children. She is a frequent visitor at schools, community centers, and libraries like this across the state. In Audubon parlance, Maloney is an imbuer, or one who inspires a passion for nature.

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“That program was a joy to teach. The kids were so interested. They wanted to learn; they asked so many questions. The city kids, if anything, were even more interested, more enthusiastic. The country kids might have known a little more about animals and plants to start, and they usually had more things to bring in.”

– Al Hawkes, Audubon Education Director 1955-58;
Executive Director 1985-1993;
from Ken Weber’s “A Century of Dedication”



Top left: Elizabeth Dickens was hired by Audubon in 1914 to teach bird study on Block Island and she educated generations of children. Bottom from left: Former Audubon Educator and Executive Director Al Hawkes, leading a nature program in Charlestown in 1956. In 1983, Audubon Executive Director Larry Taft (left) was a camp counselor at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk (pictured with camp counselor Carol Entin). Scouts install bluebird boxes at Fisherville Brook in the 90s with Refuge Manager Tara Nelson and Education Director Bill Tyler.

The scenario could have been frozen in time, lifted from the early years when the Society’s first educators hit the road with books, pamphlets, essay contests, traveling libraries, traveling exhibits, and Arbor Day activities. With one major exception. Today, the goals of diversity and inclusivity have been securely woven into its mission.

Weber refers to the hiring of Audubon’s first bird-study teacher in 1914 as a shining moment in Audubon’s formative years. The new hire, Elizabeth Dickens, was a young Block Islander. Dickens’ bird knowledge and passion was transformational. She faithfully kept a daily birding journal and had famously amassed a collection of mounted birds—172 of them—which she used as teaching tools. By all accounts she must have been a memorable figure at the front of the class, the consummate schoolmarm in her naturalist’s hat, black stockings and high-top sneakers. Dickens taught bird-study until her death in 1963. Weber quoted another Audubon historian (there are many), Joseph Kastner, who in 1986 devoted a chapter in his book, *A World of Watchers*, to what he called “The Imbuers”—the early generations of Audubon educators committed to imbuing their passion for birds in children. And while there were other, equally dynamic teachers who came after, Elizabeth Dickens was, according to Kastner, the imbuer par excellence.

From Dickens to Maloney and Senior Director of Education Lauren Parmelee and the current dedicated education staff at Audubon, the thread of that commitment has continued unbroken. Dickens talked about the joy and value of teaching birds; Parmelee often refers to instilling students with the joy of it. What to teach and how, to whom

and why, has kept in step with the evolution of Audubon—which, akin to the rest of the country, experienced a mid-century identity shift. In 1950 the Board hired its first full-time executive director, Roland Clement, a local naturalist with degrees from Brown and Cornell. Clement’s tenure was pivotal. Intrepid in both vision and character, among his many contributions was that he was an avid documentarian of his nature rambles around the state and loved to share his discoveries. He also implemented a schedule of well-organized field trips; thanks to Clement, the Block Island Birding Weekend became a traditional annual outing for serious birders, and to this day remains a signature event.

Clement believed that adults had just as much to learn about birds and the environment as children. He would later tell Weber that Audubon has a tremendous potential that it has not yet begun to realize at all. It has placed most of its emphasis on educating children. Of course, we need to do that, but children do not make economic and political decisions. The most important investment the Society could make, he added, would be to design an adult education program to make people understand why we have conservation problems.

Another shining moment for Audubon came in 1955, when Clement hired Al Hawkes away from Rhode Island College (RIC) as the Society’s first full-time environmental educa-



tion teacher. Hawkes, a naturalist who had taught high-school biology before joining the faculty at RIC, shared Clement’s sentiments. Three years later, Hawkes would be handed Clement’s baton as Executive Director. Entering the sixties, Hawkes stepped—literally and figuratively—into a harsh new world shaped by concerns about DDT and pesticides. The board platform also began to evolve from an energetic and vocal group of bird and wildlife lovers to environmental activism. In 1969—a year before Earth Day was launched, Hawkes would present a manifesto of sorts at a National Science Teachers Association conference in Providence: Conservation, or environmental education, he told them, is not a science. It is a moral concept—but it is in no sense of the word science. And it should not be taught as a science.

Along those lines, Hawkes also proposed a revamp of what college education majors were being taught to use as a curriculum in their classrooms—in short, to focus on more relevant courses that would prepare their students for the world the student will face when he [sic] leaves school. He also developed an integrated, K-12 curriculum, beginning with the introduction to plants and animals (similar to what Maloney has put together at the Woonsocket Public Library) and moving into college preparatory courses. When he presented a pared-down version to Rhode Island schools for fifth and sixth graders about 30 schools signed on.

From both sides, it got rave reviews. That program was a joy to teach, he said.

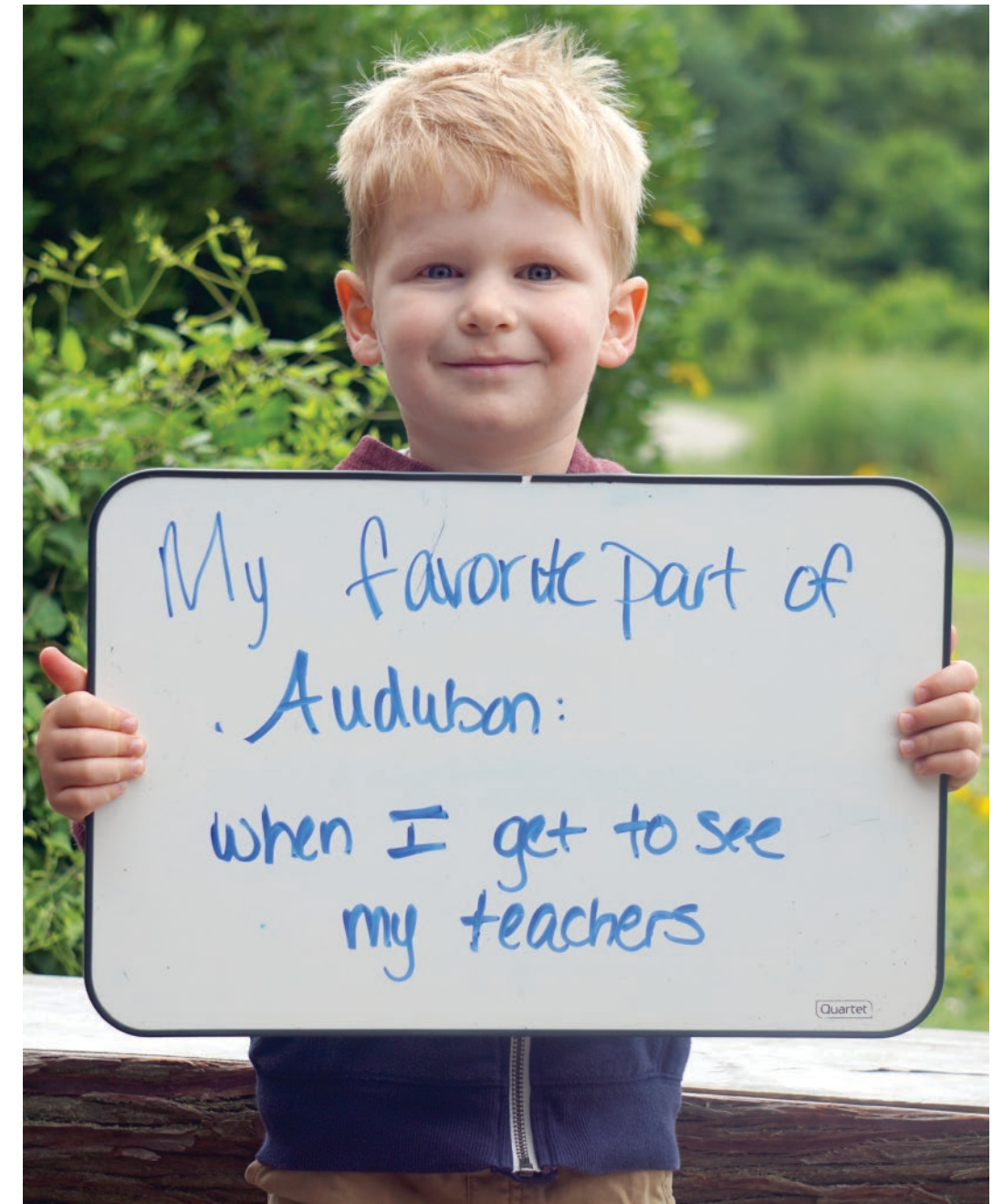
Hawkes had also overseen the growth of Audubon’s first summer camp program at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk. By 1996, with 318 children enrolled (in 33 week-long camp sessions), the venue had already outgrown itself and camps had been offered at other wildlife refuges. A new camp location opened at the Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol in 2001, it now serves approximately 330 campers each summer.

In 1993 the baton passed yet again, from Hawkes to Lee Schisler, an environmental educator from New Jersey and a fellow champion of the holistic approach to environmental education. I found the three arms of Audubon’s mission—education, advocacy, and land preservation—very attractive, he said at the time, and education has always been my first love. Schisler developed a birds-and-mammals program for seventh and eighth grade science programs (funded by the Rhode Island Foundation); and began to bring programs to elementary school students statewide, as well as into Fall River, MA. Under his guidance, these environmental education programs grew to serve an estimated 15,000 children.

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Students in an education program on the Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge trails with Audubon Educator Tracey Hall.



A young camper in Bristol shared his favorite part of Audubon: his teachers.





THE LESSONS BIRDS CAN TEACH US

AUDUBON PARTNERS WITH BROWN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO BRING THE WONDER OF BIRDS TO PROVIDENCE YOUTH

By Betsy Sherman Walker

Audubon Senior Director of Education Lauren Parmelee shares her knowledge and passion for birding with students at Brown University.

On a cloudy morning in late April, Senior Director of Education Lauren Parmelee is leading a bird walk through the historic Swan Point Cemetery in Providence. Following her, equipped with cameras and binoculars, is an attentive flock of undergrads from Brown University. As she walks, eyes trained on the treetops, Parmelee maintains a running dialogue, both talking about and to the birds.

A goldfinch has a lemony head, she announces. Really lemony. And a bill like a triangle. She mimics a Tufted Titmouse: peter-peter-peter! and offers five dollars to the first person who spots a woodpecker. And then, identifying the call of a Northern Flicker, answers back with an ah-ah-ah-ah! She spots two Blue Jays, one with a caterpillar in its mouth. Their color doesn't pop on an overcast day, she says wistfully. She watches and narrates the perfect landing of an Egret at the edge of the Seekonk River (aaaand thank you!). Moments later, the find of a perfect, lush feather of a Turkey Vulture begets a lesson in quill aerodynamics.

When Parmelee talks about birds and birding, not only does her face light up, but her commentary is accented by such words as joy, delight, magic, gem and fun. She takes joy in the presence of birds, and finds great delight in the happenstance of birding. Case in point: a moment last year at the Neutaconkanut Hill Conservancy in Providence. Standing at the base of a tree with a group of students, ears tuned for the call of a woodpecker, Parmelee pointed out a series of small drill holes telltale marks of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, the woodpecker's more migratory cousin. And then, as if on cue, one flew in and landed in front of them. I could not have made that up, she says. It was magic.

Yet there is a more purposeful side to the magic and what Parmelee calls the joy of it. Audubon provides after-school and summer camp programs to more than 12,000 Rhode Island schoolchildren—one of

“Birding enables anyone—regardless of age, experience, ability, or location—to feel tied to a place. Anyone can bird.”

— Adam Gendreau, Brown Class of 2024

the largest environmental educators in the state. She has been at this job for six years, working as liaison between schools, educators, cities and towns on one side, and state and government agencies on the other. Recipients of her attention include the Rhode Island Department of Education, the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association, the Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as a pool of donors and like-minded non-profits wherever she sees a potential resource. A large part of her focus is the elementary-school Audubon Explorers and the middle-school Urban Naturalists who participate in the after-school programs around the state. As many kids as we can serve, is how she puts it.

Parmelee's goal is to reach out to public schools in urban areas, and to serve those students who don't always have access to the outside. In that spirit, she has been keeping a watchful eye on the No Child Left Inside Act (H.R. 3036), introduced last April, with R.I. Sen. Jack Reed among the three sponsors).

Also on hand at Swan Point that April morning is Nancy Jacobs, an environmental and social historian at Brown, and kindred spirit since 2016 to Parmelee's exuberant bird talk. The students are enrolled in ENVS 1577: Birding Communities, Professor Jacobs' seminar explor-

ing the cultural, socioeconomic, and gender-identity universe of birdwatching. Parmelee introduces Jacobs' nestlings to birding, and readies them for heading out into the community as bird-savvy educators.

The partnership is one of Audubon's more interesting pairings.

Walking along are the twenty students enrolled in Jacobs' course, plus a handful of curious friends. Officially added to the Environmental Studies curriculum in 2019, Birding Communities has created a bit of a buzz. With the precision of a jeweler, Jacobs places her 21st-century loupe over a decidedly 20th-century figure: the old white male birdwatcher. It was while studying birds twenty years ago as a grad student in South Africa that she discovered an all-inclusive birding culture in stark contrast to her experience on this side of the Atlantic. Since then, she emailed from Uganda in June, I've done research on vernacular bird knowledge in Zambia, Cameroon, Ghana, and now Uganda.

Jacobs touches on everything from white privilege (the politics of knowledge), gender politics and cultural distinctions (the vernacular of birding) to gender identity and economic inequity; and access for all to the out-of-doors. Students keep a journal and complete a final project.

For reading assignments she gets good backup from the national Audubon magazine, including a 2018 article on the comfort zone of birding for the LGBTQ community, and one written in 2019 featuring the Birdpunk culture. Both prompted Thomas Patti, who was in the April group, to write in his journal of seeing both a sprig of hope in learning the diverse stories of underrepresented groups' love affairs with birds and nature, but also wariness. How can we scale up inclusivity? From what I've gathered from this course, he concludes, there is no easy answer.

The word communities Jacobs incorporates into the course title has its own narrative. Her students are learning not just the basics of ornithology. They are also being made privy to the universality of birding, and are being instructed to take what they have learned back into the communities—to after-school programs, many of them within walking distance of Brown's doorstep. These are also, to use Thomas Patti's words, underrepresented communities: Many of the children they encounter do not have access to back yards, or even to the out-of-doors. Sometimes it just might not be in the family culture, Parmelee says.

It's just not a part of their lives. For her, the thought of a child not having easy access to the out-of-doors is unfathomable. My father was an old Yankee soul, she explains. He was frugal and felt that being outside was good entertainment.

In previous years, as part of a mentorship program, one Brown University student created a Spanish-English birding guide for the parks and woodlands of Providence—something that not only the children, but family members could use as well. Another, while presenting the concept of bird migration to children whose families had come from Mexico and other Central American countries, came up with the brilliant idea of working with them to share their families' own personal experiences with migration.

Gradually, the issues Jacobs and her students are exploring—and have often experienced—are being brought into the sharper focus of Jacobs' loupe. Audubon, in fact, answered that challenge with a statement issued in late May from the Board, recognizing that there is much work to be done to become the welcoming, inclusive, and diverse organization we wish to be.

With the face of the birding community becoming ever more diverse, Parmelee continues to reach out and to teach the universal wonder of birds—in Jacobs' parlance, a charismatic and conspicuous class of animals.

There is a lot to learn from birds. Adam Gendreau, also in the group that day, wrote an article for Brown's online environmental magazine, The Forager Zine, chronicling his experience. When I registered for the course Birding Communities, he began, I could count on two hands the birds I could identify, and I had never even heard of the phrase birding community. The young birders from Brown who come to make haste and fulfill a course requirement end up, in Gendreau's words, undergoing a gradual, yet powerful, transformation. Birding enables anyone—regardless of age, experience, ability, or location—to feel tied to a place. Anyone can bird.



Professor Nancy Jacobs (right) is an environmental and social historian at Brown University who engages her students in the cultural, socioeconomic, and gender-identity universe of birdwatching.



Jacobs and her students birding in Swan Point Cemetery in Providence.



American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*)



Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*)

The Case for Open Space

I've worked as an ornithologist and more broadly as a conservation biologist for over 20 years. Some of the species that I studied extensively include Gray Catbirds, Prothonotary Warblers, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Tricolored Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, Glossy Ibis, and Double-crested Cormorants. I've run banding stations where hundreds of individuals of multiple species were tagged each season. I've studied birds on the open ocean, in the deepest rainforests and in the most urban places on Earth.

The issues of habitat loss and climate change are not new and they have been dictating our approach to conservation for decades. In almost all cases, successful conservation occurs through habitat preservation and restoration. Nest boxes installed along the James River in Virginia provided an essential resource for Prothonotary Warblers and, to date, over 600 nest boxes have recruited more than 26,000 warblers to the Virginia breeding population. To conserve Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, we focused on maintaining the pine-wiregrass savannah habitat of the southeast by removing deciduous trees and performing controlled burns across the landscape. The nonbreeding season was spent managing these habitats and drilling nesting and roosting cavities for the endangered woodpecker population. Along the coast of Virginia, where 42 percent of tidal wetlands will be lost by 2100 due to climate change induced sea level rise, habitat restoration projects aim to ensure that predator-free nesting sites for colonial waterbirds remain (the waterbird populations in Virginia have been in decline since the 1970s and the loss of suitable breeding habitat has been identified as a major contributing factor).

Despite the good work that is taking place across our globe to restore habitats and the bird populations that rely on them, it is easy to get discouraged by the growing urgency of the situation. Our global environ-



Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) and Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)

mental report card does not show much to be proud of. Despite the Paris Climate Agreement's goal of limiting global temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, we are currently on-track to experience a warming of 2.7°C. This degree of warming will have devastating impacts, increasing poverty levels, habitat loss and sea level rise (source: NRDC). The human population is still growing, with projections that we will reach 9.7 billion people by 2050 and 11.7 billion by 2100 (source: United Nations). Obviously, this growth means that the per capita availability of resources will continue to shrink, affecting the most impoverished first and most intensely and leaving little natural habitat for the wildlife populations that

remain (wildlife populations across the globe have declined by 68% since 1970 (source: World Wildlife Fund)).

The more I do this job, the more it rings true that birds are living in a man-made world and the amount of wild is disappearing before our eyes.

When these feelings of discouragement or hopelessness seep in, I head for the woods. A few hours spent walking the trails of one of our refuges has a way of refilling my well. I spend quality time watching a Scarlet Tanager preen in the sun, I watch an Indigo Bunting singing incessantly from a branch or I locate a slinking Yellow-billed Cuckoo and become a one-man audience for a few minutes of cryptic theater.

When I spend time on our refuges, I am reminded of an undeniable truth that you don't need science to substantiate: conserving open space is a massive benefit for birds. Species found rarely on the outside of a refuge are often common and even abundant within its boundaries. Wildlife Refuges serve as oases and even the smallest plot of land can provide essential resources for a bird. My role at Audubon is not to provide the data to show that birds use our refuges (although it will), but rather to better understand what species are present throughout the year and what MORE we can do to protect them.

If we stopped emitting greenhouse gases and ended our rampant consumption of natural resources tomorrow, it would still take decades for the effects of these long-standing drivers of decline to release their grip on our wildlife populations. There is hope that, at some point in our future, we will not have to focus so much of our attention on conservation and restoration. In this utopian future, birds and other wildlife will flourish once again and we will finally coexist with nature instead of stripping it from our daily lives.

Until that day arrives, our refuges provide resilient strongholds where birds can ride out the effects of climate change, habitat loss, house cats and other threats. And, the more land we protect, the more breathing room we provide for beleaguered wildlife populations. So, while science is a strict discipline that can provide data and a wealth of data-driven products useful for conservation, sometimes the simple solutions are indeed the most impactful.

The war for our future rages on, and it remains to be seen whether biodiversity will be a winner or loser in the long run. But, be assured, the protection of even the smallest amount of land from development and industry is a win in the battle to rewild our planet.

6 Dr. Charles Clarkson
Audubon Director of Avian Research

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

New Law Restricts the use of Harmful Neonicotinoid Pesticides



Environmental groups, legislators, and supporters gathered on Wednesday, May 11, 2022, at the Roger Williams Botanical Center in Providence for a legislative breakfast and speaking event to rally support of RI House Bill 7129 (Representative Kislak, D - District 4) and RI Senate Bill 2299 (Senator Miller, D 6 District 28) that would restrict the use of harmful neonicotinoid insecticides (neonics) in Rhode Island. These bills take these dangerous chemicals out of the hands of untrained users.

Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation RI, The Nature Conservancy, and the Office of Sustainability for the City of Providence partnered to bring experts to speak of the dangers of neonics and why this legislation is so critical.

On June 27, 2022 Governor McKee signed this bill into law. Thank you to all our members, supporters and partners who contacted their legislators and fought alongside Audubon to restrict neonicotinoid pesticides.



Group photo from left: CLF Foundation Sr. Attorney Meg Curran, TNC Climate and Energy Program Manager Sue AnderBois, State Representative Mary Ann Shallcross Smith, State Representative Arthur Handy, State Representative Rebecca Kislak, Audubon Sr. Director of Government Affairs Priscilla De La Cruz, City of Providence Director of Sustainability Emily Koo, Former Audubon Sr. Director of Policy Meg Kerr. At right: Audubon Director of Avian Research Charles Clarkson speaks at the event.

Audubon at Providence Farmer's Markets

Thanks to Farm Fresh Rhode Island, Audubon was out and about in Providence communities in June and July at both the Broad Street and Neutaconkanut Park farmers markets. Staff and volunteers shared information on the benefits of nature, invited people to join our programs, and encouraged Audubon memberships.



Left: Rene Bartos holds some fresh chamomile that she picked up from the Broad Street farmers market in Providence. She was part of the Audubon farmers market volunteer team this summer.

Right: Audubon Donor Engagement Coordinator Robin Xiong at the Broad Street farmers market. Along with sharing information on Audubon, she spoke about the mental health benefits of being outside and conducted an interactive survey of market attendees.

THANK YOU! Nature Center & Aquarium Volunteers Recognized at May Event

Master beekeeper Jon Nelson shared a tasting of his impressive collection of honey varieties as part of Audubon's Nature Center & Aquarium volunteer appreciation event on May 20, 2022. The afternoon included a light lunch and door prizes. Volunteers were also given blooming petunias to plant at home as a thank you for their support and commitment to Audubon.



Legislative Victories

By Priscilla De La Cruz, Senior Director of Government Affairs



When I last wrote this column in spring, I was cautiously optimistic that Audubon's legislative priorities on climate action and the protection of pollinators and forests could advance in the legislature and in fact, we achieved significant progress.

Legislation to Regulate Neonicotinoid Pesticides

For years we have pushed for a critical step in pesticide management and regulating Neonicotinoids (neonics) for the health of pollinators and people. With your support, we did it! Governor McKee has signed legislation into law on June 27, 2022 (S 2299 sponsored by Senator Josh Miller and H 7129 sponsored by Representative Rebecca Kislak) that will help keep neonics out of the hands of untrained users.



Governor McKee, elected officials, and advocates gathered at the bill signing ceremony for offshore wind legislation.

Protection of Core Forests

Forest protection is a priority that progressed with robust collaboration among conservation and clean energy advocates and engagement of legislators in H 7531, sponsored by Representative June Speakman. Although the bill was not voted out of committee, we have built consensus and momentum to enable the protection of core forests and better align renewable energy program incentives with the state's climate goals. This will aid our efforts to broaden stakeholder engagement and support the passage of legislative solutions to address our solar development and deforestation challenges.

Other legislative victories for the environment and Rhode Islanders

A top priority of both the Environment Council of RI (ECRI) and Climate Jobs RI (a partnership between labor and environmental groups) was 100% Renewable Electricity by 2033. This goal was recently signed into law, making Rhode Island a national leader and carving out a path for the State to meet the mandatory carbon reduction goals set by the 2021 Act On Climate. Also of significance is the passage of legislation requiring the utility to solicit proposals for 60061,000 megawatt hours of offshore wind.

Additions to the list of significant victories:

PFAS known as toxic forever chemicals in food packaging and drinking water will be banned and capped respectively.

A statewide single-use plastic bag ban became a reality after years of advocacy.

We prevented the advancement of a toxic plastics incineration plant legislative proposal to not only build such a facility, most likely in the Port of Providence, but also bypass state oversight.

Also noteworthy was this year's state budget that began to leverage federal funding to scale up resources for climate adaptation and resilience projects, investments to critical infrastructure for ports and offshore wind, and the largest staffing expansion for the RI Department of Environmental Management in 20 years.

We cannot thank you enough for our members for supporting Audubon's efforts to achieve these victories. We also wish to recognize the collaboration of our partners and legislative champions. Follow these victories and hear about the work ahead of us, by subscribing to the Eagle Eye newsletter. Visit asri.org/lead to sign up today!

LAND + WATER CONSERVATION SUMMIT

2022: A SUCCESSFUL RETURN!

By Priscilla De La Cruz, Senior Director of Government Affairs

Hundreds of guests attended the 19th Annual Land and Water Conservation Summit in July. This multi-day event was filled with social and networking hours, plenary sessions, and field trips. The main event took place in person at the URI Memorial Union on July 14 with conservation and watershed leaders, government staff, elected officials, nonprofit and academic colleagues, sponsors, exhibitors and more in attendance. The group gathered to explore the theme for this year's Summit: Sustaining and Conserving in Unprecedented Times.

Lorén M. Spears, Narragansett citizen and executive director of Tomaquag Museum was the distinguished keynote speaker. Her first-person lens on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), environmental justice, and Indigenous rights inspired the gathering. A video recording of Lorén's presentation, resources on environmental justice and Indigenous rights, along with other memorable moments from the Summit will be shared on www.landandwater-partnership.org.

We were honored to welcome back U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse as he discussed both the woes and optimism of advancing climate action and environmental protection in Congress. Newly confirmed Director of the RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM) Terry Gray also shared remarks, including the state leadership in place to tackle the climate challenge, and the sixteen DEM positions passed by the legislature in the Governor's budget.

Critical topics such as climate change resiliency, shoreline access, environmental justice, solar and deforestation, land stewardship and protection, and challenges and opportunities in watersheds were explored throughout the summit. Kate Sayles, the executive director of the RI Land Trust Council, and I were honored to take the torch passed by our predecessors Meg Kerr and Rupert Friday, and we look forward to expanding the Land & Water Conservation Summit in the years to come.



Lorén M. Spears, Narragansett citizen and executive director of Tomaquag Museum, was the keynote speaker.

125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Over 90 guests joined the celebration on August 6, 2022 at the Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol. The party included live music, passed hors d'oeuvres, and delicious food stations. Guests enjoyed owl and raven presentations - and even witnessed two Red-tailed Hawks swoop in during the owl talk and try to crash the party!

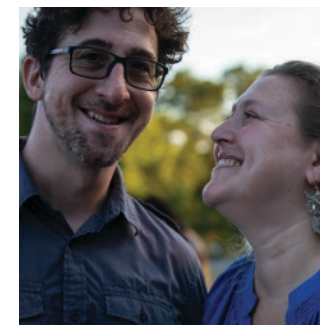
Council of Advisors Members Dave Gumbley, Sam Hallowell and Candy Powell were recognized for being long-term members and active supporters of Audubon.

To end the evening, guests mingled in the garden and enjoyed drinks around fire pit stations. Thank you to all who (endured the heat and humidity) and celebrated this festive occasion!

Audubon also wishes to thank our sponsors UNFI, Marcum LLP, Partridge, Snow and Hann, NEC Solar, Fidelity, along with our friends David Spencer, Sam and Tuitte Hallowell, Adoniram and Kara Sides.



Kara and Adoniram Sides at the celebration.



Dana Goodman and her husband Shaemus.



Audubon Executive Director Larry Taft greets the guests.



Top group: From left: Emily Boenning, Tuitte Hallowell, Council of Advisors Member Sam Hallowell, Council of Advisors Member Dick Boenning, Council of Advisors Member Candy Powell, Chris Powell. Below: Audubon Educator Ianna Szcwczok presents Zachariah the Raven.



Tina Caldwell with Board Member David Caldwell



Mary Gumbley and Council of Advisors Member David Gumbley



Ben Simpson (right) from United Natural Foods enjoys the evening.



Julia Califano and Council of Advisors Member Nick Califano



Liz Paquette (left) and Jackie Proulx sign the big Audubon birthday card.



Tom Seider with sons Theo and Damien.



From left: Paul Gricus, Donna Cameron, and Frank DiGregorio enjoy the party.



Audubon Senior Director of Advancement Jeff Hall with Soraya Pierre-Louis (center) and Claudia Ferro.



David Spenser watches as his meal is prepared.

AUDUBON NATURE TOURS & PROGRAMS

September – November 2022 For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at www.asri.org.

BIRDING WITH AUDUBON

Advance registration is required for all programs.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS

Locations determined weekly and will be sent to registered participants in advance. *Begins September 10, 2022. Every Wednesday through June 2023.*

SWALLOWS SPECTACULAR ON THE CONNECTICUT RIVER

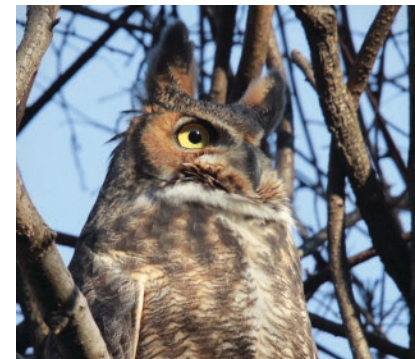
Join an autumn river journey see the amazing swallow display. Departs from Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI; September 17, 2022; 4:00-10:30 pm.

BIRD WALK AT HUNT'S MILLS

Two Dates Offered. Hunt's Mills, 65 Hunt's Mills Road, Rumford, RI; September 18, October 9, 2022; 8:30-9:30 am.

OWL PROWL AT POWDER MILL LEDGES

Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI; October 11, 2022; 6:30-8:30 pm.



HAWK WATCH AT NAPATREE POINT

Napatree Point Conservation Area, Westerly, RI (Watch Hill); October 22, 2022; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

OWL PROWL AT CARATUNK

Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; November 17, 2022; 6:30-8:30 pm.

OWL PROWL AT POWDER MILL LEDGES

Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Rd, Smithfield, RI; November 19, 2022; 7:00-9:00 pm.



AUDUBON NATURE CENTER AND AQUARIUM

1401 Hope Street (Route 114), Bristol, RI

PROGRAMS, LECTURES & WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

FLYING, WALKING, AND OTHER ODD CREATURES OF NEW ENGLAND AND BEYOND: PHOTOGRAPHY BY RON VALIQUETTE

September 4 – October 31, 2022; 9:30 am-4:30 pm.

RAPTOR WEEKEND

September 10 & 11, 2022; 10:00 am-4:00 pm.

BEEWAX WRAPS WORKSHOP

September 17, 2022; 1:00-2:30 pm.

LAST OF THE RIGHT WHALES: FILM SCREENING AND PANEL DISCUSSION

Join Audubon for this award-winning documentary followed by a Q&A panel discussion. September 22, 2022; 7:00-8:30 pm.

VENOMOUS SNAKE LECTURE

September 24, 2022; 10:30 am-12:00 pm.

HERBAL WALK

Learn to identify plants and their medicinal benefits. September 25, 2022; 1:00-2:00 pm.

AUDUBON USED NATURE BOOK SALE

October 1, 2022; 9:30 am-4:30 pm.

SAVING THE BIRDS WITH DR. CHARLES CLARKSON

October 25, 2022; 6:30-7:30 pm.

SEA GLASS JEWELRY WORKSHOP

Two Dates Offered. October 8, December 10, 2022; 1:00-2:30 pm.

FAIRY HOUSES FOR ADULTS

November 6, 2022; 1:00-2:30 pm.

WILDLIFE AND NATURE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY MITCHELL A. KAPLAN

November 6 – December 30, 2022; 9:30 am-4:30 pm.

BIRD AND WILDLIFE CARVING EXPOSITION

Award-winning wildlife artisans return to Audubon this fall! November 12 & 13, 2022; 10:00 am-4:00 pm.



FAMILY PROGRAMS AND CLASSES FOR CHILDREN

CITIZENS BANK FREE FAMILY FUN DAY

Thanks to Citizens Bank, the Nature Center and Aquarium is open free to the public the first Saturday of every month. Bring the kids for up-close animal encounters, nature programs, crafts and more. No registration required. September 3, October 1, November 5, 2022; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.

LABOR DAY NATURE ACTIVITIES

September 5, 2022; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.

LI'L PEEPS FALL SESSION

Introduce young children to the delights of nature. September 29, October 6, 13, 20, 27, November 3; 10:00-11:00 am.



MACRO/CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHY FOR KIDS

October 2, 2022; 1:00-2:30 pm.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY NATURE ACTIVITIES

October 10, 2022; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.

THE PERFECT PUMPKIN PARTY

Join Audubon for a pumpkin celebration! October 22, 2022; 10:00 am-4:00 pm.

BIRD ILLUSTRATION FOR KIDS

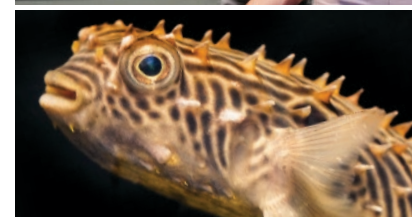
November 5, 2022; 1:00-4:00 pm.

VETERAN'S DAY NATURE PROGRAMS

November 11, 2022; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.

DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING ACTIVITIES

November 25, 2022; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.



AUDUBON NATURE TOURS & PROGRAMS

September – November 2022 For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at www.asri.org.

CARATUNK WILDLIFE REFUGE

301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA

BATS AND BEER

Join an evening of outdoor exploration and local brews! September 4, 2022; 7:00-8:30 pm.

AUTUMN EVENING WALK

September 29, 2022; 6:30-8:30 pm.

CARATUNK WHITE BARN STORY TIME: ESCARGOT BY DASHKA SLATER

October 1, 2022; 11:00 am-12:00 pm.

TOUCH-A-TURTLE!

October 16, 2022; 1:00-2:30 pm.

GLASS OF WINE & WALK IN THE WOODS

October 23, 2022; 6:00-8:00 pm.

OSPREY OF RHODE ISLAND

Come learn about the long-running Osprey monitor program. November 13, 2022; 1:00-3:00 pm.

OWL PROWL

November 17, 2022; 6:30-8:30 pm.

NESTS, DENS AND BURROWS

Search for birds, mammals, and insects preparing for winter. November 19, 2022; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

MUSKRAT, OTTERS AND ALE

November 27, 2022; 5:00-7:00 pm.



FISHERVILLE BROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE

99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI

BEAVERS OF FISHERVILLE

November 6, 2022; 5:00-6:30 pm.

FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI

FIRST DAY OF FALL EVENING WALK

September 22, 2022; 6:30-8:30 pm.

OWL PROWL

November 30, 2022; 7:00-9:00 pm.

POWDER MILL LEDGES WILDLIFE REFUGE

12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI

INSECT PHYLOGENY LECTURE: LEARNING ABOUT OUR SIX-LEGGED NEIGHBORS

September 14, 2022; 6:30-8:00 pm.

AUTUMNAL EQUINOX HIKE

September 22, 2022; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

OWL PROWL AT POWDER MILL LEDGES

Ages 9 and up. October 11, 2022; 6:30-8:30 pm.

ANIMAL CLOTHES

Discover how animals survive the seasons. October 15, 2022; 3:00-4:30 pm.

THE INS-AND-OUTS OF INVASIVE SPECIES

Lecture. October 20, 2022; 6:30-8:00 pm.

NATURE STORYTIME: HOODWINKED BY ARTHUR HOWARD

October 22, 2022; 11:00 am-12:00 pm.

TURKEY TALE

Come learn about beautiful and interesting Wild Turkeys! November 12, 2022; 2:00-3:30 pm.

BIRDFEEDING 101: STARTING A FEEDING STATION

November 12, 2022; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

CLIMATE REALITY PRESENTATION

Learn about climate change and both the troubling and promising trends being seen. November 17, 2022; 6:30-8:00 pm.

OWL PROWL AT POWDER MILL LEDGES

Ages 12 and up. November 19, 2022; 7:00-9:00 pm.

PRUDENCE ISLAND

Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Prudence Island, RI

MUSHROOMS FOR BEGINNERS

September 29, 2022; 1:30-6:30 pm.

FALL HIKING ON PRUDENCE ISLAND

October 13, 2022; 1:30-6:30 pm.

EXPLORE PRUDENCE ISLAND

November 23, 2022; 9:45 am-4:45 pm.



SAVING THE BIRDS WITH DR. CHARLES CLARKSON

October 25, 2022; 6:30-7:30 pm

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol

Learn about the biggest conservation concerns of our day, the potential impacts on our avian populations and what is being done to save our birds.



RAPTOR WEEKEND

September 10 & 11, 2022

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol

Purchase tickets online at www.asri.org

REGISTER NOW!

BLOCK ISLAND BIRDING WEEKEND

September 30 – October 2, 2022

Block Island in autumn becomes the resting place for thousands of migrating birds. More than 125 species of birds have been seen here on fall weekends! Field trips for both novice and advanced birders are featured. Register early, space is limited. Visit the events calendar at asri.org for details.



A Predator's Place

While hiking on an Audubon refuge, finding the remains of a cottontail rabbit or a piece of fur in a field are obvious signs that a predator has been nearby.

Predators are consumers within a food web. Most are true carnivores, only occasionally eating fruits and other plant parts. Predators help control the populations of the consumers below them such as rabbits, mice, voles and other small mammals. This is such a crucial role in ecosystems that predators and prey often cycle together, rising and falling with each population change.

Humans have a long history of persecuting predators, sometimes even eradicating species. Many native predators were eliminated from New England through hunting and trapping for furs, exaggerated fear, and habitat destruction over the past several centuries. The perils of removing predators from habitats are well known in the science community. Worldwide, in habitats where predators have been suppressed, the herbivores such as grazers and browsers, became overabundant. Luckily, key predators have been naturally reestablishing in many of these habitats.

Several mammal predators have been increasing in Rhode Island over the past couple of decades. These include coyotes, bobcats, and fishers.

Coyotes are probably the most well-known of the rising three. These animals and their signs (tracks and scat) can be found at most Audubon wildlife refuges. Coyotes are doing well in most areas of Rhode Island after moving back into New England by themselves and becoming common in the past 30 years. They were not moved here. These animals form loose packs that occasionally hunt in groups and can often be heard howling at night, often a signal that they have found food or during mating season in late winter. Our new coyotes may have mated with wolves in western states, as their populations moved back east. This could explain why eastern coyotes are so robust. Animals range from gray to various shades of brown, with coats getting thicker in winter.

Bobcats are quiet and more reclusive animals. Compact and muscular, male bobcats can weigh as much as 50 pounds. Solitary animals that come together only to mate or raise their young, bobcats prefer small mammals such as rabbits and mice. Though their numbers are much lower than coyotes, they are more common than expected. Their thick pelt allows them to be active even during the winter and the mottled fur pattern helps them camouflage. Their tracks are distinctive, since cats usually do not show their claws in mud and snow, compared to dogs, coyotes and fox. Bobcats also scrape soil and bury their scat like domestic cats and may even cover prey that they have caught.

Fishers, often called fisher cats, are native weasels still trapped for their thick fur. Like coyotes and bobcats, fisher moved back into Rhode



Clockwise from top left: Bobcats, coyotes, and fishers are all predators found on Audubon wildlife refuges and throughout Rhode Island's communities.

Island, seeking forested habitats. They are capable climbers often pursuing prey in trees and are legendary for being one of the few predators of porcupines. It is more accurate to call fishers omnivores because they will consume mushrooms, ferns, and fruits in addition to meat.

Perceptions of predators can cloud people's understanding. A long history of children's stories, movies and illustrations have made it difficult to separate legend and misinformation from scientific facts.

Today, people are told that fishers are bloodthirsty animals that will attack people. Coyotes too have often been implicated, but not verified, in attacks on humans. This is rare.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that these three species are wild animals. They should be kept at a distance and should not be fed human food. Wild animals that are fed tend to change their behavior and may not respect the boundaries needed to keep animals and people safely apart. Pets should not be let out to wander in their habitat. Predators do not discriminate between a small dog or cat and wild animal prey.

Observed from a safe distance, it is a reward to see these mammals in the wild. Their presence helps maintain the order and function of Rhode Island's ecosystems.



2022 BIOBLITZ SCIENCE CENTRAL

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium

The 2022 Rhode Island Natural History Survey BioBlitz was held on June 10 and 11, 2022 along the East Bay Bike Path between the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium / McIntosh Wildlife Refuge in Bristol and Brickyard Pond in Barrington. Volunteer teams worked for 24 hours and tallied as many species of animals and plants as possible.

The annual BioBlitz shows by example how field biologists and naturalists learn about species and the environment; encourages communication among people who care about the environment; and provides species surveys for the benefit of the landowner. Field biologists, botanists, families, and naturalists all joined together to celebrate the biodiversity found in the Ocean State.

VERNAL POOL SURVEYS

Conservation Staff Collect Data on Fragile Wetland Habitats

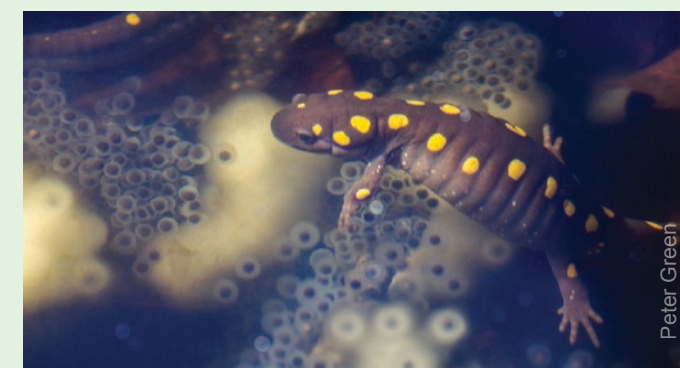
By Dr. Scott Ruhren, Senior Director of Conservation

They are large pools and small ponds in the forest that are deceiving and often over-looked habitat. This spring, Audubon Stewardship Specialist Mike Cavaliere and Senior Director of Conservation Scott Ruhren hiked many miles through Exeter and West Greenwich in search of these vernal pools in Audubon's Marion Eppley and Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuges. This effort contributed to regional data with partners including Rhode Island Natural History Survey (RINHS), Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), The University of Rhode Island, Save the Bay and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The goal of this group effort was to verify the locations of vernal pools and then evaluate key characteristics such as indicator species, hydrologic features including water depth and source, and surrounding habitat. Vernal pools and the species that need them are vulnerable to habitat disturbance, invasive species and changes in hydrology that could cause premature drying. Surprisingly, the mapping of these wetlands often needs field proof.

It is typical to find mostly egg masses of wood frogs and spotted salamanders, important indicators of vernal pool function. However, other species were also recorded including fairy shrimp, painted and snapping turtles, and aquatic insects.

In May, as we finished our last spring assessment of 11 pools, many newly emerged wood frog tadpoles swam around our waders. Our gathered information was added to a large database managed by RINHS and RIDEM, and we hope to do summer assessments of some of these vernal pools and plan for next spring's data collection.



Top: Audubon Stewardship Specialist Mike Cavaliere monitors a vernal pool at Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge. Bottom: Spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*) with egg mass.



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, 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 and click on *services* or contact Anne DiMonti at (401) 949-5454 x3116 or adimonti@asri.org.

SEAHORSES

GET UP-CLOSE WITH THESE DELICATE CREATURES AT THE AUDUBON NATURE CENTER & AQUARIUM

The shape of the seahorse head, combined with a long snout, is why these amazing marine animals are called the horses of the sea. Did you know that these delicate fish can be found off the shore of Rhode Island in Narragansett Bay?



FUN FACTS:



- These fish don't have scales and are not very good swimmers. They seem to float through the water and hold on to plants, coral, and even each other with their very flexible tail.
- Seahorses use gills to help them breathe and are covered with bony plates that protect them from predators.
- They don't have teeth or even a stomach, but they enjoy eating tiny fish and shrimp all day long.
- Seahorses choose a mate for life. Every morning the male and female dance together to strengthen their bond.
- Once they have mated, male seahorses carry the eggs in a "brood pouch" until they hatch. They can push a thousand or more babies out of the pouch, all at the same time!
- The Latin name for seahorses (*hippocampus*) comes from the Greek word *hippokampus*. *Hippo* means horse and *kampus* means sea monster.
- Seahorses need our help! They need clean oceans free of plastic and other pollution to thrive. Please always put your trash in a secure garbage can. Litter hurts our oceans and all the creatures that live there.

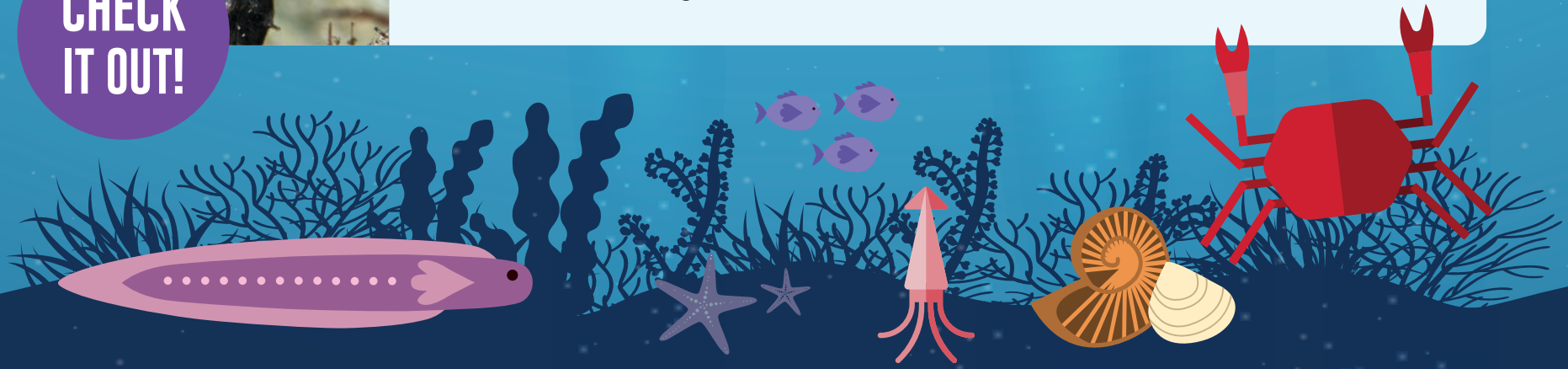


LINED SEAHORSES *HIPPOCAMPUS ERECTUS*



Lined seahorses (also known as northern seahorses) can now be viewed up-close in the marine tanks at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium. They were originally found at Fogland Beach in Tiverton by Roger Williams University students. These seahorses are usually found in deeper areas of the ocean, but in the warmer months they may be found attached to vegetation in shallow waters.

CHECK IT OUT!



AWE-INSPIRING Continued from page 5

During Schisler's tenure Audubon developed an even broader education platform and gave it a home. In 1997, as Audubon celebrated its 100th anniversary, it undertook a \$3.5 million capital campaign to build the Audubon Environmental Education Center (now the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium) on the 25-acre Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge in Bristol. The first of its kind in the state, the Center has become a magnet for birdwatchers, wildlife enthusiasts, summer campers, marine life and Right Whale aficionados, and master gardeners in the expansive pollinator garden.

Today, the Nature Center and Aquarium is the educational heartbeat of Audubon. In the midst of so many moving parts, it is the social and cultural heartbeat as well. It is where the education team keeps calm and carries on, overseeing a large array of environmental education projects and working in a very different social landscape than what 1897 had presented. The unsaid back then is today the oft-repeated: that the children and families of immigrants, or those of African-American descent—residents of inner-city neighborhoods in the early 1900s, with limited access to gardens, yards, fields or forest—were essentially not included in the effort to awaken and educate about birds and nature.

Hawkes grazed the issue when he described the difference between the city kids and the country kids. But the concept of bringing the latter into Audubon's orbit did not gain any sense of urgency until the 1990s. Weber quoted Bill Tyler, Audubon Director of Education at the time, as saying that some of those Fall River kids had never been to a wildlife refuge before. I remember one saying, I'd really like to live here.

In 2020 Audubon crafted an updated strategic plan to include a stronger commitment to the integration of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island into the fabric of the community. In late May of this year the Board issued a statement, saying We will continue to challenge ourselves to reach and engage all Rhode Islanders in our mission, particularly communities of color.

Parmelee's greatest joy, which is seeing young children discover the wonder of birds and wildlife, is constantly coming up against her greatest challenge, which is securing the funds that will allow Audubon to reach city children, whether through education, transportation, or access. She calls it the funding dance and seems to have mastered all the steps and figured out who she wants to take to the dance floor. In a small state like Rhode Island, she says, there are a limited number of resources. That's why we collaborate with like-minded donors and organizations, we need to work together. Newport's Martin Luther King Center, for example, fits her model of using donor-funded programming to reach city communities and encourage curiosity and appreciation of nature. MLK is in perfect sync with our education department's mission, she says. And funding is critical to continue our programs in that community and others.

Another strategic liaison is with both the Met School in Providence (where Lisa Maloney has created and led several 8-week environmental science series during the school year) and the Greene School, a charter school in West Greenwich that takes students from inner-city high schools and places them in a deep dive into the environmental sciences. Both the Met and Greene schools, Parmelee says, are top examples of how the Audubon education team serves high school students.

Although many of her efforts are child-based, surprisingly, Parmelee says the greater challenge can sometimes be engaging the hesitant teacher. Often they need a spark to engage with environmental science, to feel comfortable with teaching it, and to be convinced that getting outside is doable. It's not always easy.

At the moment her favorite show and tell is what she refers to as the Audubon urban education core program in the Pawtucket third grades—it is the model of all our city programs. Maloney has taught and organized this program for years. It serves the approximately 600 children in a given school year spread throughout the ten elementary schools in that city. I'm particularly proud of it, Parmelee says, citing its longevity, and the fact that it continued, even during Covid.



A shore exploration is led by Audubon Educator Lisa Maloney.



Camp Counselor Joe Koger brings campers ponding at Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk, MA.



Audubon educators led numerous virtual nature programs during the COVID shut down. Shown here is Ianna Szweczk with a Barred Owl.



Students birding in Providence with Senior Director of Education Lauren Parmelee.

Please turn to page 23

Green Infrastructure Monitoring

Stormwater Innovation Center Implements Narragansett Bay Estuary Program Grant

By Koyla Shields, Providence Stormwater Innovation Center Intern

Green stormwater practices—nature-based ways of capturing, filtering, and diverting stormwater runoffs from vulnerable watersheds—are a key part of restoring coastal habitats and urban lakes. Runoff that flows directly from storm drains into bodies of water can contain fertilizers, litter, and other pollutants that can lead to toxic algae blooms, the degradation of ecosystems, and wildlife deaths. Frequent Narragansett Bay beach closures, cyanobacteria blooms, and public health warnings across the watershed reflect this danger.

This past spring, the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center (PSIC) was awarded a Narragansett Bay Estuary Program Grant to expand green infrastructure monitoring efforts across the Providence area. Earlier research had shown that many green infrastructure projects in the city were not fully functional, capturing only some of their estimated capacity of stormwater. Many systems would benefit from improved maintenance. To maximize the full potential of green infrastructure across the region, the PSIC is using this new grant to expand monitoring and training programs.

Using water level sensors, survey equipment, and time-lapse cameras, the PSIC is monitoring 20 different green infrastructure projects and working with community partners including Providence College, Save the Bay, the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, and more. Information from each site will be collected and uploaded onto a web dashboard. People developing and implementing green infrastructure can access this data and learn about the effectiveness of different stormwater management techniques.

Monitoring will continue until next summer, when the elevation, water level, precipitation, and video data will be complete and uploaded



PSIC Intern Koyla Shields surveys green infrastructure at Providence College.

to a new PSIC monitoring dashboard. This presentation of findings, combined with a hands-on training at Roger Williams Park, will help green stormwater infrastructure advocates from across the region learn how to better maintain and monitor their stormwater projects. Using this data, evaluations will be conducted with each community partner and conceptual retrofit plans will be developed for sites that aren't performing as designed. As we gain a better understanding of how these systems work, and we share our data through trainings, presentations, and events, the more urban and coastal watersheds can be reclaimed for plants, animals, and recreation.

Storm Drain Mural Project Expands in 2022

This school year the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center continued to expand the Storm Drain Mural Project, adding 9 new murals near 3 local schools. Audubon educators provided Stormwater 101 lessons to 70 Providence students about the importance of clean water and guided hands-on tours in Roger Williams Park focusing on stormwater pollution and local habitats. Students met with local Teaching Artists to practice drawing marine life and designed colorful storm drain murals to raise awareness about runoff. Lastly, the students participated in mural walks and ceremonies to celebrate their hard work and accomplishments.

Visit <https://arcg.is/1bfeTT> to see the murals on an interactive online map.

Roger Williams Park is home to the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center (PSIC)—a hub for innovative nature-based solutions and green stormwater practices improving urban water quality and wildlife habitat in vital recreation green spaces. Learn more at stormwaterinnovation.org/get-involved.

Clockwise from upper-left: Students at Sophia Academy present their mural sketches at PSIC Mural Celebration. Students from Eden Park school in Cranston on a storm drain mural tour. Students at Sophia Academy in Providence present information on stormwater runoff pollution in their neighborhood. Sophia Academy students present a storm drain mural created by teaching artists.



Busy Beavers

TRAIL RESTORATION AT THE MAYS WILDLIFE REFUGE

There are very active beavers living in Carr Pond at the Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge in Coventry. Their damming activities occasionally result in flooded trails and bridges. When water levels get too high, Audubon staff remove some of the branches and debris blocking the outflow from the pond. This work does not harm the beavers.



WE CAN HELP WILDLIFE...

WHEN YOU HELP US.



DONATE TODAY:
ASRI.ORG/RAPTORCARE



SAVING BIRDS ONE CUP AT A TIME!

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All proceeds benefit the Audubon Avian Research Initiative.



VOLUNTEERS ARE THE BACKBONE OF AUDUBON

Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences share their time and talent to support Audubon. From interns and educators to gardeners, trail guides, office help and more, we depend on volunteers. Upcoming issues of the Report will highlight a number of Audubon volunteers and the many talents they share with us.

ALICIA SHICKLE

Nature Center and Aquarium Volunteer and Aquarist



Alicia Shickle with her illustration of northern star coral that was used on Audubon exhibit signage.

Among the many new exhibits at the Nature Center and Aquarium, you'll find a digital microscope where visitors can examine natural history specimens. It is known as the Curiosity Corner and Audubon knew that ever-curious Alicia Shickle would be the perfect person to curate it! Alicia volunteers her time to organize items from Audubon's collections for this interactive exhibit, giving the public a close-up view of the natural world.

Through a partnership with Roger Williams University, Alicia began her long-standing connection with Audubon as an aquarist, helping to maintain our tanks. Since then, she has also illustrated a number of the animal identification cards in the exhibit hall, showcased her art in the gallery, led a behind-the-scenes video tour of the aquarium for Audubon at Home, and, as part of her day-job cares for our Northern Star Coral.

Alicia's creativity and love for science helps Audubon connect people with the wonders of the natural world in new and unique ways. Thank you for sharing your passions with the Audubon community, Alicia!

By Paige Therien
Audubon Development and Communications Associate

ED SLATTERY

Caratunk Wildlife Refuge Volunteer, Purple Martin Monitor



Over 20 years ago, Ed Slattery began work on attracting Purple Martins to the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk, MA. Over the years he has worked with a number of volunteers to purchase, erect, and monitor a series of homes for these fascinating and often elusive birds. In 2018, a colony was fully established with twelve pairs nesting within the 16 gourds (plastic gourd-shaped nesting boxes) that the Purple Martins prefer to use in protecting their nests.

As well as purchasing many of the arrays and gourds, he assists with set up in the spring, monitors them throughout the summer, and cleans and removes the gourds for storage in the fall. Audubon thanks Ed for his long-standing commitment and generosity to insuring a healthy and growing Purple Martin population at Caratunk.

Ed Slattery stands near the Purple Martin gourds that he manages and monitors each year to support a healthy population of these birds at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge.

By Jon Scoones
Caratunk Wildlife Refuge Manager

JOHN WOUFFE

Property Monitor Volunteer



John Woulfe is an active property monitor and a new member of the Audubon Board of Directors.

Audubon property monitors provide an extra set of eyes for our wildlife refuges. They walk the trails on assigned properties each month, noting and photographing any needs that should be addressed. Issues might include downed trees, vandalism, or boardwalks that need attention. From their reports, conservation staff coordinate any needed work or repairs.

Since 2020, John Woulfe has been a committed and active refuge monitor, taking on additional properties over time. He is currently monitoring the trails on one of Audubon's largest wildlife refuges, Parker Woodland, as well as the Maxwell Mays and Waterman Pond refuges. Despite initial interest in an environmental career, John spent over 40 years in the field of long term care. Now in retirement, he is returning to his passion and volunteering with Audubon. He explained that he enjoys the beauty and vibrancy found in nature, as well as the exercise he gets on the trails.

Audubon appreciates the dedication, hours, and enthusiasm that John brings to the organization, and we look forward to working with him as a new member of the board of directors.

By Emily Westcott
Audubon Board Member

KYLEE HARKINS

Animal Care Volunteer at Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge



Kaylee Harkins, animal care volunteer at Powder Mill Ledges, holds an Audubon turtle ambassador.

Kylee Harkins has always enjoyed being around animals as she grew up with horses, dogs, ducks, and parakeets. It was a natural fit for her to volunteer with Audubon education staff and use her passion for animals to help with our turtles, snakes, frogs, and hissing cockroaches that are used in education programs across the state. Kylee started volunteering at Powder Mill Ledges in 2021 and is a recent Smithfield High School graduate. She will be continuing her education at the University of Rhode Island this fall to study Wildlife Conservation Biology with a minor in Animal Science.

Asked about her favorite Audubon ambassador to care for, she quickly pointed to our western painted turtle because she had so much personality, and never stopped moving.

Kylee hopes to run a farm and animal sanctuary in the future. We wish her all the best as she heads to URI this fall and thank her for the many hours she spent caring for our education critters!

By Tracey Hall
Audubon Educator Coordinator and Camp Director

THANK YOU!

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

The companies listed below have demonstrated their significant commitment to the quality of life in Rhode Island and to conserving natural habitats through stewardship and education.

Bank of America
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NEC Solar
Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP
R.I. Beekeepers Association
Target
United Natural Foods, Inc.
Van Liew Trust Company

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: Sona Ahlijjan
From: Shanna Treveloni and Jaclyn Treveloni

In Memory of: William Brosnan
From: Anonymous
Judith and Joel Berger
Beverly Brindle
Albert and Marie Cecchini
Stephen Chase and Elizabeth Gospodarek
James and Deborah Doyle
Lorna Rodio
Bob and Leigh Turner

In Memory of: Buddy Bullock
From: Richard and Leslie Jarbeau

In Memory of: Shiloh Burke
From: Abigail Judge

In Memory of: David Steele
From: Christina Englund
Socks Family

In Memory of: Janice Fernandez
From: Alan Soares

In Memory of: Marcel Mandeville
From: Tom Williams

In Memory of: Joe Weissfeld
From: Dreher Corp
Alicie Willard

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: Zoe Cellemme
From: Jennifer Paiva

In Honor of: Iris D.
From: Medini Padmanabhan and Unnikrishnan Alathady Maloor

In Honor of: Kyla Dennigan
From: Rep. Elizabeth M. Dennigan

In Honor of: Brooke DeWitt
From: Kathleen Mortenson

In Honor of: Lizzie and Abby Jones
From: Laura Lovely

In Honor of: Gaytha Langlois
From: Jeremy and Sandi Brenner

In Honor of: Joseph Loberti
From: Leah and Joe Loberti

In Honor of: Alan Martone
From: Allison Scribner

In Honor of: Henry Meyer
From: Leah and Joe Loberti

In Honor of: Terry Meyer
From: Eugenia S. Marks

In Honor of: Cynthia Morissette
From: Kimberly Heon

In Honor of: Anthony Pina
From: Melissa Robichaud

In Honor of: Gail Risse
From: Emily Tobin

In Honor of: Barbara and John Shaughnessy
From: Christine Johnston

In Honor of: Maddie Thomas
From: Elise Schuster

In Honor of: Marjorie Vorhaben
From: Ellie Vorhaben

In Honor of: Emily Wescott
From: Steven Carpenter



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WEEKLY

STORIES THAT MATTER
SUNDAYS 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAYS 7:30 PM

Rhode Island PBS
ripbs.org/weekly

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:

Leader — \$1,000 to \$2,499 **Benefactor** — \$7,500 to \$9,999
Advocate — \$2,500 to \$4,999 **Visionary** — \$10,000+

If you wish to join the 1897 Society and help promote the values and mission of Audubon, please visit 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.

Jason Major



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Rhode Island Birding Trails

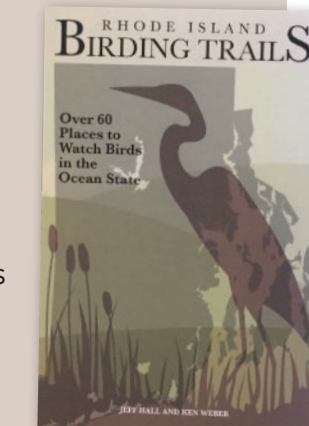
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2022 Rhode Island Youth Conservation League

The 2022 Youth Conservation League is back and working safely on Audubon wildlife refuges and other conservation properties. They have restored and created trails, removed invasive species, restored boardwalks, improved wildlife habitat, completed light carpentry and more. Five environmentally-minded high school and college students along with a leader and assistant have teamed this summer to gain valuable experience while helping conservation groups with their service.

The work can be labor intensive and challenging in the summer heat, but the experience is rewarding and has inspired many environmental careers.

In addition to working alongside the team, Audubon provides guidance, tools and coordination for the league and partners with the RI Conservation Stewardship Collaborative for funding.



Top photo from left: Abby Gill, Aimee Robertson, Winston Palumbo, Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium Caretaker Barry Cohen, Emma Phillips, Assistant Leader Bridget Damon, Anna Byron, and Leader Ethan Paiva. Bottom photos from left: The YCL crew removing fallen trees at the Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge, building new benches for the Caratunk trails, and showing the new protective cover that was built for the turtle tank at Caratunk.

The following organizations are partners in the Youth Conservation League in 2022:

- Barrington Land Conservation Trust
- Burrillville Land Trust
- RI Department of Environmental Management
- Sakonnet Preservation Association
- The Nature Conservancy

AWE-INSPIRING

Continued from page 17



To make it all run smoothly she cites the ongoing support of individual donors, the Rhode Island Foundation and the Jane Rockwell Levy Fund, and laments the fact that National Grid, having departed the state, will no longer play a role as a primary funder. Another prominent Audubon location for both after school programs and Summer Camp is the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk, MA which borders Providence and is hence a bus ride away for the groups of city elementary and middle-school children she works to get outside in nature. As she tries to expand programming in that location, Parmelee mentions a number of donor liaisons, the most recent being a significant gift from the Helen Bracket Trust of \$200,000, announced last year to cover transportation, staff education, programming, and teaching materials.

Another collaborative effort that the Audubon education staff is involved with is the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association (RIEEA). With its army of volunteers and a mission to raise the voice of environmental education, Parmelee sees RIEEA as one of the leaders of environmental education in the state. She also had a hand, six years ago, in launching the Schoolyard Habitat Program in Rhode Island in partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, which began on a shoestring \$25,000 grant and has morphed from a little tiny pilot to an enormous collaborative, involving Audubon, RI Department of Education (RIDE), RI Department of Environmental Management, and URI's GEMSNet (a science and math program) and other partners. RIDE and Audubon are now collaborating to apply for a multi-million-dollar grant, to enable schools around the state to have the funding to develop outdoor learning spaces, not only for students but for the communities to enjoy after hours as well.

Along with wonder and discovery, and the organization's goals to be more inclusive and accessible, for Parmelee, her staff and collaborators, the final challenge is the reality check of climate change. It's all still a matter of teaching, she says. You try to weave it into your programs. It's challenging, to know what to teach about climate and at what grade levels without scaring them. In place of a term such as rampant CO2, for example, the image of the heat-trapping blanket is used. The important conversation to have, at any age level, is that the world is warmer, and how does that affect the earth, nature, habitats, and humans?

Parmelee is asked about Hawkes' comment in 1969 about environmental education needing to be taught as a moral concept, not as science. She is quick to acknowledge that he got so much right in his years at Audubon and was a driving force in moving the organization forward. But she also feels times have changed. With the climate crisis upon us, science is now more important than ever. We still need to engage people in a way that they can relate to and stress the importance of preserving critical habitat, but we also need to present the facts, she said. It's always a balance of being science-based, once again speaking from the imbuers' playbook and still trying to teach the joy of nature.

Betsy Sherman Walker is a Rhode Island native who writes for area non-profits, news, and lifestyle publications, and who has recently discovered the joy and wonder of birding. Touch base at walkerbets@gmail.com.



Caratunk Barn

The big white barn at Caratunk provides the perfect rural setting for weddings, showers, family reunions or meetings. Birthday parties for children are also offered.

For availability and reservations regarding weddings and birthdays, visit asri.org and click on 'services.' For all other rental queries, contact Jon Scoones at jscoones@asri.org.

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Fall Swallow Spectacular!

As the summer heat ramped up in July, I noticed the Tree Swallows leaving the fields of Fisherville and heading to the coast. Fall is one of my favorite times of year. I love the cooler temperatures and going down to the beach and seeing hundreds of thousands of swallows gathering before they head out on their southerly migration. If you have never seen this phenomenon, it is truly a sight to behold.

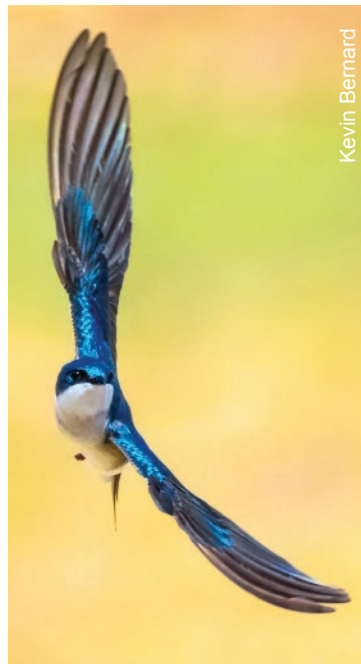
Rhode Island is home to breeding Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows, Bank Swallows, and Rough-winged Swallows. But I will focus on Tree Swallows, since they are found in the largest numbers in the fall. These birds are cavity nesters that make their homes in old woodpecker holes and nest boxes that are often put up for Eastern Bluebirds. They have an iridescent blue back and white chest. We love to have them at Fisherville as they often feed on hundreds of mosquitoes a day. Just after fledging the last of their young, these birds head to the coast to join other swallows in what we call their staging grounds.

From August to October Tree Swallows slowly migrate down the coast to their wintering grounds in Florida, the Caribbean, and Central America. They take their time migrating South, it might take them three or four months to reach their destination. They stop along the way at these staging grounds to eat and fatten up until they reach their next stop. Tree Swallows feed on insects and berries that are found in coastal marshes. In the morning these birds rise from the reeds and search for food throughout the day. Come dusk, you can see a black cloud of hundreds of thousands of swallows circling and swirling over the marsh. One brave individual will dive into the reeds, and they all funnel down together and...poof! They disappear as if they were never there at all.

So why do they gather in these large flocks? There are several theories. One is for the juveniles to learn from the adults. Tree Swallows quickly move from their breeding grounds to the coast to feed in late July and August. Marshes have a large abundance of mosquitoes and other flying insects to consume. They are also a place to find fattening myrtle and bayberries. The juveniles can practice their insect catching skills and follow the adults to staging grounds and on to their final destinations.

Secondly, there is safety in numbers. If you are in a flock of thousands and the birds are moving in all different directions, it is harder for predators to pick out an individual to catch. With so many other birds around, your chance for survival increases. Also, a large group of swallows offers more eyes and ears looking and listening for predators. It is more likely a predator will be found before it can become a threat.

In Rhode Island, Charlestown Breachway, East Beach, Quonochontaug Breachway, and Napa-tree Point are great spots to look for these swallow staging grounds. During the day you can witness thousands of birds hunting for insects, and in the evening you can watch the clouds of birds moving together before they plummet into the reeds. Look for this phenomenon all along the eastern coastline throughout the fall. This is also a great time to learn the different species of swallows listed above and keep your eye open for a few rarer swallows like the Cliff and Cave Swallows. Happy Birding!



Kevin Bernard



Jerome Montvilo

Swallow Spectacular on the Connecticut River

SEPTEMBER 22, 2022; 6:30-8:30 PM.

Join Audubon on a river journey from Essex, CT to see the spectacular swallow display. Led by Audubon naturalist Kim Calcagno. For more information and to register, visit asri.org/calendar.



Audubon Society of Rhode Island Named Endowment Funds

The Audubon Endowment is a permanently restricted fund that, by law, exists in perpetuity.

Because the Audubon Endowment is invested, it allows for long-term stability, fiscal responsibility, and financial viability that keeps Audubon a vibrant and growing organization. It also enhances our credibility, relieves pressure on fund raising, allows program expansion, and provides independence.

Donations of \$10,000 or more to the Audubon Endowment can be recognized by a named designation, either for an individual, family, or a cause you believe in.

Audubon Society of Rhode Island Named Endowments

- Aust-Capron Memorial Fund
- Barter-Moore Fund
- Edith Becker Fund
- Mary Catherine Rogers Beckett Fund
- John Brezinski Memorial Fund
- Bristol Education Center Fund
- Caratunk Fund
- Mary B. Cottrell Fund
- Severyn Dana Fund
- Davis Memorial Wildlife Fund
- Norman A. Deslauriers Fund
- Dickens Farm Fund
- Patricia Meagher Dwyer Conservation Fund
- John Raleigh Eldred Fund
- Bayward Ewing Fund
- Fisherville Brook Fund
- Fort Nature Refuge Fund
- Grout Memorial Fund
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- Walter Hammond Kimball Fund
- Margaret Robinson Knight Fund
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For more information contact Jeff Hall at jhall@asri.org or (401)-949-5454 ext. 3017.

THE PALMIERI POLLINATOR GARDEN Volunteers Add New Plant Species to Encourage Biodiversity

By Katie Schortmann, Audubon Garden Coordinator / Environmental Educator

The Palmieri Pollinator Garden volunteers and Master Gardeners spent the first half of the growing season establishing native plants in the garden. In an effort to create more biodiversity and with a focus on increasing early pollen and nectar sources, 25 plant species were added including golden alexanders (*Zizia aurea*), woodland phlox (*Phlox divaricata*), and foam flower (*Tiarella cordifolia*). The volunteer team also added several trees and shrubs with a grant from the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society. White meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba*), eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and common buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) were chosen for their early and abundant spring blooms.

As spring slowly warmed, volunteers adopted sections of the orchard garden that were mapped out to give staff and volunteers a better understanding of how to maintain the vast array of plants. This adopt-a-plot project will be a valuable aid in the continued management of the garden, creating a record of how each area is growing over the course of the year. The pollinator garden benefits hugely from the discerning eyes and skillful hands of so many gardeners, each person bringing their own expertise to the garden environment. Audubon is grateful to have such wonderful and dedicated volunteers!



From left to right: Intern Kristen Beach, and URI Master Gardeners Anne Mulready, Heather Evans, and Wendy Brennen collect blue eyed grass seeds for next year's plants.

Providence Stormwater Innovation Center

RAIN HARVEST ARTS FESTIVAL

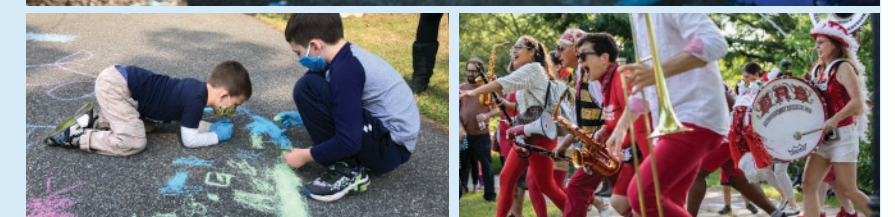
at Roger Williams Park, Providence

A community celebration of water quality and habitat improvements

October 15, 2022; 10:00am-2:00pm.

Storytellers, musicians, green infrastructure tours, rain garden and eco-gardening workshops, urban bird walk and more!

For more information visit stormwaterinnovation.org



THE PERFECT PUMPKIN PARTY

October 22, 2022; 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI

Join Audubon for an autumn celebration and find out how much fun a pumpkin can be!

For details visit asri.org/calendar



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Sunday, October 23, 2022

AUDUBON ANNUAL MEETING

Gubernatorial Candidates will be Invited to Speak

Watch for Details.



Audubon Partnership Supports In-depth Outdoor Learning

THE CROFT SCHOOL IN PROVIDENCE

Beginning in February 2019, the Croft School (currently grades K-4) in Providence reached out to Audubon with the hopes of establishing an ongoing partnership to provide hands-on environmental education in the classroom and at Audubon wildlife refuges. Their education model is based on small classes, active learning, and a diverse, welcoming community for students and families. They strive to find balance between indoor and outdoor learning.

Since the partnership began, Audubon educators have led numerous discovery walks and habitat explorations for the children and brought a variety of nature programs to the school, including Audubon's impressive inflatable whale. This past school year, the kindergartners and second graders participated in five environmental education experiences with Audubon staff.

The final school visit to the Nature Center and Aquarium in May was the culmination of their experiences and included not only a pollinator program, but a service project. The students helped to revitalize Buggingham Palace by creating more hotel rooms. They worked diligently to create paper tubes and fill recycled yogurt containers. The collaboration resulted in a wall of habitat for our native bees and other insects.* With magnifiers in hand, students then scoured the rain-drenched garden looking for insects and pollinators and were elated at the discovery of lady beetle larvae.

Audubon thanks the Croft School for their partnership and dedication to environmental education and outdoor learning.

* To protect pollinators, it is important that insect hotels be cleaned annually and the tubes be replaced to maintain proper hygiene and prevent the spread of disease.



Top: Audubon Educator Katie Schortmann works with Croft School students to fill Buggingham Palace with new homes for pollinators. Bottom left: Croft School students engage in a pollinator activity. Bottom right: A student proudly displays a snail found in the Palmieri Pollinator Garden.

THE AUDUBON 2023 CALENDAR NEEDS PHOTOS OF BIRDS AND WILDLIFE

New this year! Audubon is including images of wildlife, as well as birds, in the 2023 calendar competition. Remember that photos must be taken in Rhode Island, and we are looking for images that reflect all seasons.

DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 12, 2022
Visit asri.org/audubon-calendar.html for details and to submit photos.

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND

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Digging Deep Into Outdoor Learning Spaces

SCHOOLYARD HABITATS ARE VITAL FOR FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

Editorial By Lauren Parmelee, Senior Director of Education

My favorite middle school science teacher, Mr. Mitchell, facilitated project-based learning before that term was part of current curriculum jargon.

He believed in getting students outside to explore topics of their own choosing. I decided to create an illustrated report on the birds that lived in the fields and forests around my home. For another project, my friend Pam and I used her camera to take photos of abandoned tires and cars, roadside trash and broken glass. We wanted to raise concern about pollution in our community.

Is it a coincidence that I grew up to study ecology, work for environmental organizations, and became a passionate birder? I don't think so. Great teachers like Mr. Mitchell deserve much credit for encouraging and inspiring young learners. His guidance, in addition to my nature-loving family, most certainly shaped the direction my life took as an environmental educator.

Studies have shown that taking children outside to observe and explore engages them in learning, improves academic performance, and reduces discipline issues. In addition, time in nature has health benefits such as exercise and social and emotional well-being. Children who play and learn in nature are also more likely to care for the earth.

There are quite a few schools in Rhode Island that have created outdoor spaces for students. Nature trails, vegetable and pollinator gardens, outdoor seating, and groves of trees all provide opportunities for children to learn. Audubon has been involved in many of these projects, offering expertise on native plants and nature trails, as well as providing activity guides and professional development for teachers. Even before I joined Audubon in 2015, the education staff had worked on outdoor spaces with schools in Smithfield, Foster, Bristol, Woonsocket, and other communities.

In 2016, Cindy Corsair from U.S. Fish & Wildlife reached out to Audubon about collaborating on a grant-funded initiative to create more schoolyard habitats in the state. They had developed the Schoolyard Habitat Project Guide, a step-by-step manual for developing outdoor spaces. Cindy had been using the guide in Connecticut and was looking to expand the program into Rhode Island.

Over the next five years, we worked together to support the development of school yard habitats in Johnston, Coventry, Cumberland, Portsmouth and East Providence. As a scientist, Cindy provided the habitat expertise and mentored the school teams. Audubon managed the grant funds, facilitated professional development, and produced a Schoolyard Habitat Resource Guide with activities, strategies, and tools for teachers.

We learned some lessons through our collaboration: a strong team is needed from the school and the community to plan, build and maintain schoolyard habitats, and it takes leadership and inspiration for educators to develop enthusiasm for taking students outdoors.



While casting about for new opportunities, Cindy came across an innovative project in Providence. The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) was working with the City of Providence on redeveloping an old school off Charles Street for use as a swing space. Once the building and grounds are overhauled, Narducci School will be used temporarily by other Providence schools that are undergoing renovations.

Based on input from Audubon and U.S. Fish & Wildlife, as well as support from City Counselman Nicholas Narducci, this swing space is now going to include a restored woodland habitat and other outdoor learning areas. These green spaces will be available to the neighborhood, as well as the students. As different Providence schools cycle through this swing space, the teachers and students will use the schoolyard habitat for learning, and hopefully be inspired to create their own green spaces when they return to their permanent location.

What about all the other public schools across the state? Those that don't have the resources to create natural areas or the confidence to take their students outside to learn? Funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), matched by State funds, might just make it possible for Rhode Island to provide three hundred schools with the infrastructure, design expertise, and professional development to create, maintain and use outdoor learning spaces.

RIDE, with support and input from a number of partners including Audubon, just submitted a request for \$7.5 million to NFWF to fund the design and implementation of school yard habitats, professional development, purchase of science and gardening tools, and more. This will be matched 100% by the State and has the full support of the Governor, the Federal delegation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, RI Department of Environmental Management, a variety of school districts, URI GEMS-Net (science and math program) and of course, Audubon.

We know that spending time in nature is healthy. Children engage in learning that is project-based and takes place outdoors. This visionary statewide initiative could not only make learning across the curriculum more beneficial for Rhode Island children in the short term, it could inspire them to become environmentally literate stewards of a planet that really needs their help.

REPORT

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND

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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.

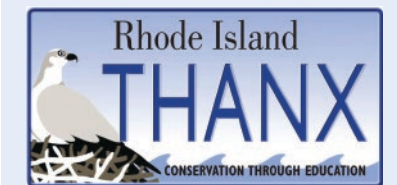
SPOT THE BEETLE, STOP THE BEETLE

Help prevent the spread of Asian Longhorned Beetle. When hiking the trails, look for signs of the beetle.

For more information on how to detect this destructive invasive insect, visit www.asri.org and click on "conservation."



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AUDUBON FIRE

Member Appreciation
Evening

October 1, 2022

5:00–9:00pm

Caratunk Wildlife Refuge
Seekonk, MA

Register at asri.org/audubonfire



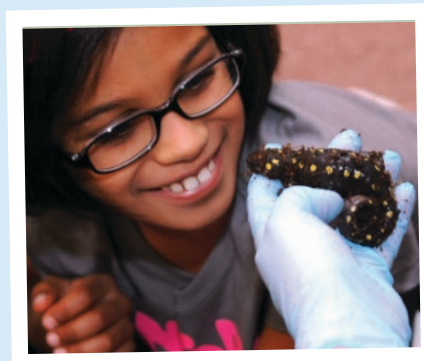
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Live Presentations with Eagles, Owls, Falcons & Hawks



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Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI
Purchase tickets online at www.asri.org



BIRD & WILDLIFE CARVING EXPOSITION

NOVEMBER 12 & 13, 2022
Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI
For details visit www.asri.org

Award-winning wildlife artisans return to Audubon in November! Meet the artists, shop the carvings, take part in lectures and enjoy the beauty of the Audubon trails in autumn.

BACK FOR 2022!