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Audubon Society of Rhode Island



REPORT

WHAT WOULD
AUDUBON DO
WITHOUT YOU?

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VOLUME 54 • NO. 4 • NOVEMBER 2020

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE



WE ARE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN
TO FOCUS ON
CLIMATE CHANGE, DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSIVITY

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

Facing the Future: Climate Change, Diversity, Inclusivity



Since our founding in 1897, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island has grown, evolved and adapted to change. With the support of members like you, we have faced many challenges while keeping a solid focus on our core mission of protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats through conservation, education, and advocacy for the benefit of people and all other life. That focus will never change.

This past year we have all experienced enormous challenges. And your Audubon has adapted once more. Our staff has been remarkable in their swift and creative response to the pandemic. They created numerous online and virtual education resources, they committed to keeping the trails open for public use when a connection to nature was needed most, and they kept open communication with our members and supporters regarding our ongoing work. Once again, we have proven our resiliency and our commitment to the Rhode Island community.

In the midst of this pandemic we have also developed a new strategic plan with four major goals focused on climate change, diversity, and inclusivity. I encourage you to read the cover story in this issue to learn more about our plans, hear directly from local experts regarding the steps we need to take to combat climate change, and learn about our goal to engage people from all backgrounds and walks of life in this work.

We've got the energy, will, and resources to tackle these challenges. With your continued support, we will move ahead with confidence.

Lawrence J. F. Taft

Executive Director

Why Endowments Work

Mark and Mary Jones* have been giving to Audubon for many years. We consider them partners in fulfilling our mission, and have become dependent on their gifts. Mark and Mary know this and are doing something to make sure their giving continues after they are gone. Through their will they have created the Jones Endowment Fund. A portion of their estate will be set aside for a special fund that will generate annual gifts to Audubon, to continue their giving. Here are three reasons why endowments work for couples like Mark and Mary:



1. Endowments are Perpetual

Like an artesian well, endowment funds keep giving and giving. Programs and people will come and go, but endowments last. In the future, family members such as children and grandchildren will be reminded of Mark and Mary's involvement with Audubon and the value of making regular gifts to support worthy causes. What a wonderful legacy to leave behind!

2. Endowments are Protected

Endowment funds at Audubon are set aside and kept separate from operating and capital fund accounts. Mark and Mary have the assurance that their endowment fund will be secure. The written agreement will be on file, and the terms will be carefully followed.

3. Endowments are Personal

While it is possible to create an unnamed, unrestricted endowment fund, many people want their fund to bear a person's name. And they often wish to tailor the purpose of their endowment to benefit a specific area of interest at Audubon, such as land conservation, advocacy, the Nature Center and Aquarium, environmental education, or animal care.

Audubon has developed sound policies for creating and managing endowment funds. Contact Senior Director of Advancement Jeff Hall to learn more. He's able to show you a variety of ways you can use the vehicles of gift planning to make an endowment, whether it's through a current gift, or later through your estate plan. Contact Jeff at 401-949-5454 ext. 3017, or email him at jhall@asri.org.

** Names changed to protect privacy.*

WE ARE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS

By Todd McLeish



Audubon launched the Urban Environmental Education Initiative in 2009. Since then, the program has brought over 38,000 students outside, engaging them in nature with hands-on environmental programs. For many of these youth, their first visit to a wildlife refuge was provided through this initiative.

Audubon has a long history of rising to meet the challenges of the day. Since its founding in 1897, it has grown and evolved through world wars, economic challenges and environmental emergencies, and it has continuously adapted to keep its focus on its core mission of protecting birds, other wildlife and their habitats through conservation, education and advocacy.

And now it is evolving again.

In the midst of a global pandemic and a national fight for social justice on top of the ongoing battle over climate change and a political administration that has reversed decades of environmental progress, Audubon has prepared a five-year strategic plan that addresses all of these issues. And yet the plan's four targeted goals and numerous strategies for achieving them are clear and direct.

Our staff has been remarkable about adapting to the present-day circumstances, said Audubon's Executive Director Larry Taft. This plan outlines our priorities and commitments so we can continue to be nimble and do what we need to do.

The plan, entitled Practice, Inspire, Mobilize, was developed over the last year following 57 interviews with community leaders. Much of the feedback from those interviews emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change and making it the central theme of all of Audubon's activities.

We heard many concern in those interviews that focused on climate change, specifically that our government isn't acting with sufficient urgency. We understand that Audubon can play an important role in moving policy forward, that we can step up and put pressure on the government to keep climate change on top of the agenda, Taft said.

The changing climate is having a dramatic impact on wildlife populations and their habitats. The birds Audubon was founded to protect are now disappearing from the skies at a rate that even shocks ornithologists. A study published this year found that, since the 1970s, nearly one in every three birds is gone, and even many common species like sparrows and blackbirds are in decline. Much of it is due to alterations in habitat, food webs and species interactions resulting from climate change and the birds' inability to adapt quickly enough to keep up with it. And it is likely to get worse without immediate action.

In response to these threats, all four of the major goals in Audubon's strategic plan address climate change.

Climate is the complicating factor in almost everything taking place around the world. It's the major underpinning for species survival, Taft said. But it's not just wildlife that it affects. We are seeing health issues result from the pollution, extreme and more frequent flooding, heat waves, damage from more extreme storms, and other hazards as well.

The first of the plan's four strategic goals is to protect birds and their

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Above: Audubon Educator Tracey Hall presents an owl during a free program in Burnside Park, Providence. Audubon partnered with Downtown Providence Parks Conservancy in 2019 to provide nature programming for the public. Below: Audubon Urban Education Coordinator Lisa Maloney (center with hat) with a group of young campers at Neutaconkanut Park in Providence. Audubon teamed with the Partnership for Providence Parks for a summer camp initiative.

habitat to support species survival and adaptation through climate changes, with the ultimate outcome of ensuring that critical habitat on private and public lands is also protected, expanded and managed for species diversity and human health. Audubon plans to achieve this goal through a series of actions to support Rhode Island landowners and land managers. We look to work with them as they adopt climate resilience practices, and use Audubon refuges as models for species and habitat protection strategies.

Taft calls birds the proverbial canaries in the coal mine. This goal will focus on using sci-

ence to properly manage Audubon properties to support birds as they adapt to changing conditions, and share successful strategies with other landowners so they can manage their properties in a similar way.

We're not talking about mitigating climate change; we're talking about adapting to climate change," said ornithologist and Audubon board member Jameson Chace, professor of biology at Salve Regina University. "We can make a difference by looking at the data on various bird species and their habitat needs, and do what we can to give them a chance not only for those that breed here but also for those that migrate

"While we will always strive to protect birds and wildlife, we need to act with urgency on climate change and engage the community with this mission. We will need the help of all Rhode Islanders."

Audubon Executive Director Larry Taft

through, because stopover habitat is critical.

Chace noted that climate is always changing, but the changes taking place now are happening much faster and are more dramatic than ever seen before, and the landscape and wildlife are already being impacted.

Our job is to take the areas we have preserved and make sure we manage them with birds and climate in mind, he said. And then it's about educating others and advocating to the state so they will take similar steps to protect other properties.

A second major focus of the strategic plan is inclusiveness and making sure that Audubon reflects the people of Rhode Island on its staff and board, in the visitors to its refuges, in its membership, and in those it engages in its programs and activities.

Rhode Island is comprised of so many diverse communities and cultures, and we aim to see that diversity represented in our membership and on our board. Taft said. We have to encourage future leaders and supporters, those who will carry the torch in the years to come. Expanding our numbers, those people who care about birds and environmental issues, will be vital as we face future environmental challenges. We need community voices and participation from all backgrounds, ages, and walks of life to remain relevant.

Indeed, the second goal of the strategic plan is to mobilize people from all backgrounds to take action on climate change, with the objective of making sure that all Rhode Islanders have the knowledge, skills and willingness to take community-wide action to mitigate climate change and its impact.

To accomplish this will require placing an increased emphasis on developing programs and partnerships in communities of color. The organization has had success in its initial efforts to reach urban residents particularly with its school outreach and summer programs for youth and its recent work testing green infrastructure at the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center at Roger Williams Park but much more work still needs to be done.

April Alix, the conservation program coordinator for the Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, said gone are the days of Audubon focusing primarily on what she called

the fabulous bird nerds in the woods, of which she considers herself one. It now has to be more about reaching audiences that need to develop a local connection to nature, she said.

A former AmeriCorps intern at Audubon who now partners with Audubon on urban programming, Alix notes that many young people she engages with are aware of and concerned about climate change, but their parents are not because they have other priorities, like putting food on the table, not being racially profiled, and the safety of their communities. They're open to the message, but it can't be thrown in their face. They will need stepping stones to engagement.

Rather than encouraging urban families to visit Audubon refuges or attend programs on their own, Alix recommends engaging with their churches and community groups to participate together. You can't expect people to come out and feel welcome and safe on their own, she said. It might be good to offer to host a nature hike for their church instead, or invite their group to be a part of a larger program. That way they're not the lone person trying to figure it out.

The third strategic goal builds on the first two. Advocate for local and state government to rapidly invest in climate crisis responses so that Rhode Island leads the nation in nature-based climate resiliency and economy and achieves carbon neutrality.

We need our advocacy to have a more urgent focus on climate, Taft said. We need to hold our regulatory and legislative leadership accountable for implementing plans that support the state's climate goals. There have been lots of state recommendations, but we don't see a lot of action. So, we need to get more vocal and start holding our elected officials' feet to the fire.

One way to do that will be to emphasize the human health implications of the changing climate.

According to Rachel Calabro, climate change program manager at the Rhode Island Department of Health, the extreme heat, increased flooding, sea level rise and other direct effects of climate change affect the mental and physical health of local residents.

We know that more resilient communities have healthier people, and we know that a lot of our health is related to where we live, how we live, and the support we get within our communities, she said. So, having green spaces and places we can go for refuge benefits our mental health. In addition, hotter temperatures and increased ozone levels aggravate pre-existing conditions and result in increased hospitalizations and poorer physical health.

The final goal in the new strategic plan directs Audubon to transform itself into an inclusive climate action organization so it becomes a



Top left: Audubon partners with and supports The Providence Stormwater Innovation Center, which recently engaged the community in a Rain Harvest Arts Festival. Top right: April Alix, Conservation Program Coordinator for the Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, spends much of her time engaging the urban community in programs and initiatives using Providence Parks as outdoor learning spaces. Below: Alix was formerly an AmeriCorps member, serving with the Audubon education staff in 2011.

powerful, recognized leader in Rhode Island's move to climate resilience.

Taft calls this a more organizationally-focused goal that will involve aligning its internal systems to support its focus on climate resilience and inclusion. While we will always strive to protect birds and wildlife, we need to act with urgency on climate change and engage the community with this mission. We will need the help of all Rhode Islanders, he said.

The financial implications of the strategic plan are significant, but the recently completed capital campaign has provided the organization

with the additional funding to begin tackling many of these initiatives with confidence.

We've got the horse power and the will to move forward, Taft said. Aside from the current challenges caused by the pandemic, we're in a good position to confidently take on the challenges ahead.

Many photos in this issue of the Report were taken before the pandemic. Audubon carefully follows safety guidelines. Masks and social distancing are required in our programs and at the Nature Center and Aquarium.



WINTER WILDLIFE SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

By Todd McLeish

The shorter days and declining temperatures in autumn are a key signal to wildlife that it's time to make preparations for winter. For some, that means changing their diet, bulking up, and taking off for distant destinations with warmer temperatures. Others stockpile food in anticipation of a long winter nap, while those that remain active throughout the winter make more modest preparations. Yet for all New England wildlife, the steps they take to prepare for winter are vital to their survival.

While humans may take their cozy homes for granted when winter sets in, the strategies that wildlife have developed to cope with the plunging temperatures, biting wind and lack of food are as creative and innovative as they are necessary.

In the bird world, the best-known strategy for surviving the cold of winter is to avoid it entirely. Every year, tens of millions of birds from throughout the region, especially those that rely on insects as their primary food source, migrate south to escape the chill.

The majority of birds that migrate do so less because of the cold weather and more because they eat insects and need to go somewhere that's warm enough for them to find enough food to hold them over through the winter, said Laura Carberry, manager of the Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge and one of Audubon's resident bird experts.

They don't stay in the south year-round because there's so much competition with other birds for breeding sites and food resources, so they come back up here to breed.

In anticipation of migrating, Carberry said that some birds can switch to fat-enriched foods like berries to provide them with the energy reserves

to power their way south. If they don't have those fat resources, they won't survive migration, she said.

Migration is a risky strategy, because traveling great distances to Central America, South America and the Caribbean is fraught with danger. Between the physiological toll it takes on their bodies, the challenges of navigating long distances at night, the risks of collisions with human obstacles like buildings, and the potential for encountering predators makes it one of the natural world's most challenging endeavors. But for many species, it works.

Birds aren't the only animals that migrate, however. In mountainous regions, some animals like deer and elk migrate vertically from upper elevations to valleys to escape the snow and freezing conditions. Some butterflies and dragonflies, most notably monarchs, migrate long distances to escape the cold and to find their preferred food, too. Others, like bats, migrate to sites with the precise environmental conditions they require for their winter hibernation. In the case of Rhode Island's bats, most migrate in the opposite direction of the birds—they go north to caves and mines in New Hampshire, Vermont and northern New York.

Speaking of hibernation, a wide variety of wildlife choose some version of winter sleeping as a means of escaping the cold weather without actually leaving the area. Bats and woodchucks are among our only true hibernators, which means they slow their metabolism, heart rate, respiration and other physiological factors to reduce their energy consumption and enter a deep sleep through the winter months.

Chipmunks, bears and skunks, do something similar, but they occa-

sionally wake up to grab a snack, perform some bodily functions, and maybe even wander around a bit before returning to their winter sleep. This strategy allows them to conserve energy but still have the flexibility to become active again when they need to, said Scott Ruhren, Audubon's senior director of conservation. Squirrels and raccoons, on the other hand, only go into a deep sleep for a few days or weeks at a time when the weather is particularly uncomfortable.

As the climate changes and winter temperatures rise, we may end up with fewer true hibernators and more occasional sleepers because they won't really need to totally hibernate anymore, added Carberry.

Most reptiles and amphibians choose a strategy similar to hibernation, but in their case it's called brumation. Snakes and salamanders seek out underground dens to escape the winter weather, and most turtles and frogs bury themselves in the mud at the bottom of ponds or in burrows.

Wood frogs undergo what may be the most radical change to sustain themselves through the winter. They hunker down under the leaf litter on the forest floor and freeze solid.

They essentially become frogsicles, Ruhren said. They use a natural antifreeze in their blood to keep ice crystals from forming, but otherwise they're frozen solid. You can't detect a heartbeat or any other signs of life, and yet freezing doesn't harm them. When the time is right, they can thaw themselves out and come back to life. And if the weather changes again, they can go through the freezing and refreezing process multiple times during a season. Spring peepers and gray tree frogs can also survive in this way.

Insects do something very different, however. In most cases, the adult insects—moths, beetles, grasshoppers and others—die prior to the onset of winter, but their offspring survive the winter months in earlier life stages. Most butterflies and moths overwinter in a chrysalis or cocoon—the stage between caterpillar and adult—and are ready to emerge as flying adult insects as soon as the weather warms up. Young spiders often overwinter in egg cases hidden in log piles or under ledges—except for those that are hidden in the nooks and crannies inside our homes, where they may remain active all winter.

One exception is the mourning cloak, a beautiful brown butterfly with a gold stripe along the edge of their hind wing. They are among the longest-lived butterflies in the world, and they live through the winter in their adult form, hiding in crevices of tree bark or beneath leaves where they are protected from freezing. It's a strategy that gives them a head-start on springtime, because as soon as the weather warms up a bit, they can be out flying around.

Most colonial insects like bees, ants and wasps overwinter as adults. Many of them ride out the winter in a big ball of insects, generating heat

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SNOW BUNTINGS These birds are used to extreme cold as they breed in the high Arctic. In Rhode Island, Snow Buntings are strictly found in winter as they migrate south to avoid the coldest of temperatures. They can be found in flocks, foraging for seeds in open winter fields and along the coast. In the Arctic tundra, the males are generally black and white in color, and the females are more brown. But when they migrate south, their plumage turns a mix of white and sand that camouflages with shorelines and snow.



CARDINALS Easy to spot against winter's snow, Cardinals (like many birds that overwinter in New England) will puff up into the shape of a little round ball to minimize heat loss. Feathers provide wonderful insulation. They are likely to visit your yard if you provide a feeder containing black oil sunflower seed.

MOURNING CLOAK BUTTERFLY While most butterflies overwinter in a chrysalis or cocoon, a mourning cloak will live through the winter in their adult form, hiding in crevices of tree bark or beneath leaves where they are protected from freezing.



WOOD FROGS These frogs use a natural antifreeze in their blood to keep ice crystals from forming, but otherwise they freeze solid. You can't detect a heartbeat or any other signs of life, and yet when it warms, they thaw themselves out and come back to life.

BEAVERS Although we may not see them during the winter months, beavers don't hibernate. They stay warm in their lodges, with a stockpile of twigs on the bottom of their pond so they have access to food in winter.



CONIFERS "Evergreen" is a misnomer as coniferous trees shed old needles while retaining newer ones. Their needles are a specialized leaf which can withstand drought and cold conditions. Needles are very waxy with water conservation strategies built into them.

WOODCHUCKS The woodchuck is one of Rhode Island's only true hibernators. They slow their metabolism, heart rate, respiration and other physiological factors to reduce their energy consumption and enter a deep sleep through the winter months.



EVERGREEN AND SPLEENWORT FERNS

Though they go dormant, some ferns and woody plants hold onto green leaves in winter. Evergreen native ferns include Christmas fern and many of the spleenworts, a common and widespread group of ferns. Many will still have green leaves during the colder months.

DUCKS Species of ducks that overwinter in New England have insulating downy feathers that keep them warm. They also can store more fat than most birds and their legs and feet have a counter current heat exchange. The veins that carry cold blood from their feet to the heart are surrounded by arteries that are sending warm blood in the opposite direction. Through this exchange of heat, they require less energy to warm the colder blood coming back to the heart. Ducks will also stand on one leg while the other is lifted and warmed in their feathers.



Sponsor-a-Raptor: The PERFECT Holiday Gift.



Zephyr, Peregrine Falcon, 2020

Audubon welcomes a male Peregrine Falcon to its family of ambassadors! This stunning raptor flew into a concrete seawall in Stratford, CT this spring, most likely chasing shore birds. His right wing was shattered in the collision and the injury has caused a loss of flight ability. Zephyr was rehabilitated for several months at Christine's Critters in Weston, CT and now calls Audubon home. Staff report that he has quite the appetite and is adapting well to his new environment.



WELCOME,
ZEPHYR!



Audubon's Avian Ambassadors:



Webster, Great Horned Owl, 1997



Lady Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, 2004



Eec, Barred Owl, 2006



Finn, Red-tailed Hawk, 2016



Zachariah, Common Raven, 2017



Atlanta, Red-tailed Hawk, 2017



Chaplin, Red-tailed Hawk, 2017



Queen Solomon (Sollie), Great Horned Owl, 2017



Oliver, Barred Owl, 2018



Serena, Barred Owl, 2018



Lucy, Common Raven, 2018



Penny, Eastern Screech-Owl, 2018

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

Visit asri.org and click on Learn and Audubon Ambassadors or call (401) 949-5454 ext. 3018

Sponsorships make wonderful gifts for nature enthusiasts.

Bald Eagle Sightings on the Rise

During the last few months, Audubon has received quite a few calls from enthusiastic individuals reporting that they had seen Bald Eagles in Rhode Island. Many wondered whether their eagle sighting should be reported to RI Fish and Wildlife. The good news is that no reporting is needed due to over four decades of conservation and eagle re-introduction programs around New England. Populations of eagles in the Ocean State are once again on the rise. Bald Eagles are no longer on the endangered species list and general sightings do not need to be reported. Several nesting pairs have been noted in Rhode Island over the last few years, and RI Fish and Wildlife staff would likely want to be informed of any nest building activity.

While some Bald Eagles will migrate south for the colder months, others will call Rhode Island home for the winter. Primarily fish eaters, bald eagles often gather along rivers and bays where the water is open and food can be found.

As we are seeing more and more Bald Eagles - both adult and juvenile - keep your eyes on the skies and watch for these powerful and majestic birds.



Fun Facts

It takes five years before a Bald Eagle reaches maturity and sports that gorgeous white head and tail. Juvenile Bald Eagles are a mottled brown in color, including their head and tail, but are just as large and impressive as the adults.

Balde is an old English word for white. Their name essentially means white-headed eagle.

Nature in the City:

Audubon Partners with Newport's Martin Luther King Community Center

The mission of the Martin Luther King Community Center in Newport, RI (MLKCC) is to fight hunger, promote health, educate young and school-aged kids, support families, and engage seniors all across Newport County.

Audubon is now partnering with the MLKCC to bring nature stories, outdoor explorations and animal ambassadors to Pre-K classrooms multiple times over the course of the year. The MLKCC preschoolers will meet owls, hawks, turtles, and snakes and learn more about their adaptations and habitats.

Audubon educators will also be facilitating outdoor after-school explorations for school-age children at the Community Center. Every week, students will explore nature in the neighborhood, meet live animals, play games and take on science challenges. In addition to these programs, every child will receive an *Audubon Nature Kit* of their own to use for outdoor explorations. Kits will include magnifiers, bug boxes, field guides and other exploration tools.

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



We Can Help Wildlife...

When You Help Us.

Audubon Raptor Care

Donate Today:
asri.org/raptorcare



HELPING BIRDS in WINTER

Peter Green

You can help our feathered friends by providing some of their basic needs this winter, like **FOOD, WATER, & SHELTER.**

Birds come in all sorts of sizes, shapes and colors and make all kinds of noise. Learn to identify the birds that visit your yard this winter. American Goldfinches are very small, but Wild Turkeys are really big. Blue Jays are blue and Tufted Titmice are gray, but they both have pointy heads. Black-capped Chickadees say their own name "chick-a-dee, dee, dee" and Northern Cardinals say "cheer, cheer, cheer" which is always a good way to start the day!

FOOD

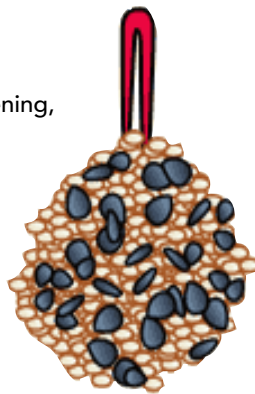
Birds can usually find plenty of food in nature, but if you provide healthy snacks like black oil sunflower seed, safflower seed, Niger thistle, peanuts and corn, they will stop by your yard on a regular basis. You can make one of the feeders below, throw some seed on the ground, or put some on a tree stump. In winter, suet provides extra energy for birds – and woodpeckers love it!



PINECONE BIRD FEEDER

Materials: pinecones, string, peanut butter or shortening, birdseed, spoon, pie plate, scissors.

- Tie a long string to the top of your pine cone.
- Use a spoon to spread peanut butter or shortening all over your pinecone.
- Roll the cone in birdseed so that the seeds stick to the peanut butter or shortening.
- Head outside and tie your pinecone feeder to a tree branch.



WATER

Just like you, birds need clean water to drink and bathe in. Put a shallow pan of fresh water out for the birds. Add a rock in the middle where they can perch. Make a water drip for birds using an empty plastic bottle or milk jug. Poke a hole in the lid or in the bottom, fill the bottle with water and hang it over a shallow pan. The drip, drip, drip will attract birds and other wildlife. Water freezes when it is gets cold, so it is important to check your bird bath daily.



MILK CARTON BIRD FEEDER

Materials: scissors, milk or juice carton, string, birdseed, chopsticks or 10"-12" twigs, Wash the carton and let it dry completely.

- Create a hole in the top edge of the carton and tie a string through this hole.
- With scissors, cut feeding holes two inches up from the bottom. Make the feeding holes two to three inches in diameter.
- Add perches by making a hole, then push chopsticks or twigs through it to make a perch.
- Add bird seed and hang it outside.



SHELTER

Birds need places to hide from predators and get out of the rain. Bushes and trees provide good shelter, so put your feeders and bird baths nearby. After the holidays, put your Christmas tree out near the feeders for the birds to hide in. Clear glass windows reflect the sky, so birds often fly into them by accident. Place your bird feeders 3 feet or less or farther than 30 feet from big windows.

CATS

Cats love to watch birds too, but they will also eat them if they can. Keep your cats inside and let them birdwatch from a window.



AUDUBON NATURE TOURS & PROGRAMS

December 2020 – February 2021 For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at www.asri.org. Advance registration is required.



SAFETY NOTICE: Face masks and social distancing are required for all programs. Participants must bring their own masks.



BIRDING WITH AUDUBON

AUDUBON PRIVATE BIRDING AND NATURAL HISTORY TOURS

Get out in nature...it's the safest place to be! Let an Audubon guide take your group of up to four people on a private two-hour natural history or birdwatching tour in Southeastern New England. Visit asri.org/private-nature-tours for details.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS

Advance registration is required. Locations determined weekly and will be sent to registered participants in advance. Every Wednesday through June 2021.

WINTER BEACH WALK WITH AUDUBON

Moonstone Beach Road, South Kingstown, RI; January 13, 2021; 1:30–3:30 pm.

DUCKS AT TRUSTOM POND

Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge, 1040 Matumuck Schoolhouse Road, South Kingstown, RI; February 5, 2021; 1:00–4:00 pm.

WINTER BIRDING AT FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

Fort Wildlife Refuge, (Rt. 5), 1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI; February 7, 2021; 12:00–2:00 pm.



AUDUBON OUTDOOR SCOUT PROGRAMS

Audubon educators lead programs for Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts working on badges related to natural history and life science. Ask how we can help fulfill your troop's badge requirements in outdoor programs that are designed with safety in mind. Prospective Gold Award Girl Scout and Eagle Scout projects are also considered on an individual basis.

Bristol, Smithfield, Exeter, RI and Seekonk, MA locations are available for programs. Please email msolis@asri.org for more information.

REGISTER TODAY!

OWL PROWL AND PROGRAMS

OWL PROWL AT FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

Three Dates Offered. Fort Wildlife Refuge, (Rt. 5), 1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI; December 6, 17, 2020, January 22, 2021; 7:00 pm–9:00 pm.

OWLING AT FISHERVILLE BROOK

Two Dates Offered. Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; December 11, 2020, January 22, 2021; 7:00–9:00 pm.

OWLS AND ALES

Two Dates Offered. Learn about these fascinating birds while enjoying locally brewed beers. Then take a guided walk to look and listen for owls. Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, 1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI; January 23, February 27, 2021; 6:30–8:30 pm.

PROWL FOR OWLS AT CARATUNK

Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; February 21, 2021; 6:00–7:30 pm.

WHOOO WANTS TO MEET AN OWL?

Meet a live owl and learn about the species that live at Caratunk in this family program. Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; February 28, 2021; 1:00–3:00 pm.

CELEBRATE THE SEASON!

SENSATIONAL SNOWMAN ADVENTURE

Bundle up and search for snowmen hidden on the trails. Enjoy snowman stories and prizes for all, then take home a snowman craft kit! Free with admission. No registration needed. Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, 1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI; December 5, 2020; 10:00 am–1:00 pm.

HOLIDAY CARD WORKSHOP

Create hand-made holiday cards for your friends and family this year. Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; December 5, 2020; 2:00–4:00 pm.

WILDLIFE WREATHMAKING

Make a winter wreath that is attractive and edible to birds and other wildlife! Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield, RI; December 12, 2020; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.



AUDUBON NATURE CENTER AND AQUARIUM

1401 Hope Street (Route 114), Bristol, RI

PROGRAMS, LECTURES & WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

BIRD FRIENDLY COFFEE LECTURE

Discover how your morning cup of coffee connects to the environment around you.

December 3, 2020; 7:00–8:00 pm.

FAIRY HOUSES FOR ADULTS

December 5, 2020; 1:30 pm–3:30 pm.

SEA GLASS ORNAMENTS WORKSHOP

December 12, 2020; 11:00 am–12:30 pm.

SEA GLASS JEWELRY WORKSHOP

January 16, 2021; 11:00 am–12:30 pm.

OWLS AND ALES

Two Dates Offered. Learn about these fascinating birds of prey while enjoying locally brewed beers. Then take a guided walk to look and listen for owls.

January 23, February 27, 2021; 6:30–8:30 pm.

NEEDLE FELTED OWLS

Join fiber artist Tala Wunderler-Selby and learn how to make owls from wool.

January 23, 2021; 2:00–3:30 pm.

VALENTINE CARD WORKSHOP

January 30, 2021; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

FAMILY PROGRAMS & CLASSES FOR CHILDREN

THE SENSATIONAL SNOWMAN ADVENTURE

Join a morning of snowman fun! Activities are free with paid admission. No registration needed.

December 5, 2020; 10:00 am–1:00 pm.

FAMILY FUN COOKING FOR THE BIRDS

Create unique and tasty dishes for the birds in your backyard!

December 5, 2020; 11:00–11:45 am.

DECEMBER SCHOOL VACATION WEEK ACTIVITIES

Visit the events calendar at asri.org for details and to register for special programs. Space is limited due to COVID-19 restrictions.

December 28, 29, 30, 31, 2020; 10:00 am–2:00 pm.

CITIZENS BANK FREE FAMILY FUN DAY

January 2, February 6, 2021; 10:00 am–3:00 pm

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

10:00 am–3:00 pm: Scavenger Hunt

10:30 am and 2:30 pm: Nature Story

11:00 am: Refuge Hike (weather permitting)

1:30 pm: Animal Interview

LI'L PEEPS

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

January 21, 28, February 4, 11, 2021; 10:00–10:45 am.

STORIES IN THE STARS

Bring the family and discover the legends of the night sky.

January 29, 2021; 7:00–8:00 pm.

VALENTINE CARD WORKSHOP

January 30, 2021; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

FEBRUARY SCHOOL VACATION WEEK

Visit the events calendar at asri.org for details and to register for special programs. Space is limited due to COVID-19 restrictions.

February 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 2021; 10:00 am–2:00 pm.

SEA GLASS FOR KIDS

Our popular Sea Glass Workshop is now available for kids!

February 16, 2021; 2:00–3:00 pm.

Meet Lucy & Zach!



Merilyn Parry



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

AUDUBON PRIVATE BIRDING AND NATURAL HISTORY TOURS

at Scenic Locations across Rhode Island

*Get out in nature...
it's the safest place
to be!*

Let an Audubon guide take your group of up to four people on a private two-hour natural history or birdwatching tour in Southeastern New England. Tours will be designed with ages and interests in mind.

Visit asri.org/private-nature-tours or contact Lauren Parmelee at lparmelee@asri.org or call 401-949-5454 ext. 3111 for details and pricing.



FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

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

OWL PROWL AT FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

Three Dates Offered.

December 6, 17, 2020, January 22, 2021; 7:00 pm–9:00 pm.

ANIMAL NESTS AND DENS AT FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

Look for signs of animal activity of seasons past! Search for bird and insect nests as well as dens of active animals.

December 10, 2020; 12:00–2:00 pm.

WINTER BIRDING AT FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

February 7, 2021; 12:00–2:00 pm.



FISHERVILLE BROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE

99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI



OWLING AT FISHERVILLE BROOK

Two Dates Offered.

December 11, 2020, January 22, 2021; 7:00–9:00 pm.

SNOWSHOEING BY THE FULL MOON

February 26, 2021; 6:30–8:30 pm.

POWDER MILL LEDGES WILDLIFE REFUGE

12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI

WILDLIFE WREATHMAKING

Join Audubon to make a winter wreath that is attractive and edible to birds and other wildlife! *December 12, 2020; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.*

ANIMAL TRACKS AND SIGNS FOR FAMILIES

Families learn how to identify tracks and signs left by mammals and birds. *January 16, 2021; 2:00–4:00 pm.*

INTRODUCTION TO ANIMAL TRACKING

This class will be geared for an adult audience. *January 16, 2021; 10:00 am–12:30 pm.*

NAKED TREE I.D.

February 13, 2021; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

FEBRUARY SCHOOL VACATION WEEK AT POWDER MILL LEDGES WILDLIFE REFUGE

Animal Clothes: *February 16, 2021; 11:00 am–12:00 pm*

Rockin' Reptiles! *February 16, 2021; 2:00–3:30 pm*

Frederick (Story and Walk): *February 17, 2021; 11:00 am–12:00 pm*

Build Your Own Bird House: *February 17, 2021; 2:00–3:30 pm*

Fred's TV (Story and Make a Bird Feeder):

February 18, 2021; 11:00 am–12:00 pm

Raptor Encounter: *February 18, 2021; 2:00–3:30 pm*

Feed the Snowman! *February 19, 2021; 11:00 am–12:00 pm*

Family Winter Walk: *February 19, 2021; 2:00–3:30 pm.*



DECEMBER SCHOOL VACATION WEEK

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI

December 28–31, 2020; 10:00 am–2:00 pm.

Bring the kids for a WILD time!

Meet some cool critters, learn all about how animals survive in winter, dissect an owl pellet and more!

Visit the events calendar at www.asri.org for details and to register for special programs.

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

CARATUNK WILDLIFE REFUGE

301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA

WHITE BARN STORY TIME WITH A LIVE OWL

Three Dates Offered.

December 3, 2020; January 7,
February 4, 2021; 2:00–3:00 pm.

HOLIDAY CARD WORKSHOP

December 5, 2020; 2:00–4:00 pm.

WINTER RESIDENTS OF CARATUNK

Come learn about where birds and animals live in winter, how they stay warm and what they eat.

December 10, 2020; 1:00–3:00 pm.

BIRDS THAT LIKE BARK

Come search for birds that forage for food in the trees.

December 12, 2020; 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

WINTER TREE ID

December 20, 2020; 1:00–3:00 pm.

TRACKING ANIMALS IN WINTER

Take an early winter hike look for tracks and signs of animals. January 3, 2021; 12:00–2:00 pm.

MUSKRAT, OTTER AND MORE!

Hike to Muskrat Pond to look for muskrat, otter, and other winter animals. January 24, 2021; 7:00–9:00 am.

SNOWSHOE CARATUNK!

January 31, 2021; 8:00–10:00 am.

FINDING ANIMALS: TRACKS & SIGNS

February 7, 2021; 9:00–11:00 am.

ECOLOGY OF A WOODPILE

Explore the living communities below the woodpiles, fallen trees, dead leaves and rocks that operate like larger eco-systems. February 16, 2021; 1:00–2:30 pm.

NESTS AND DENS: ANIMAL HOMES

Take a mid-morning hike to search for homes created by animals in the forest and field areas.

February 18, 2021; 11:00 am–12:30 pm.

PROWL FOR OWLS AT CARATUNK

February 21, 2021; 6:00–7:30 pm.

WHOOO WANTS TO MEET AN OWL?

Families meet a live owl and learn about the wild owls that live at Caratunk. February 28, 2021; 1:00–3:00 pm.



YOURS TO DISCOVER!

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND WILDLIFE REFUGES

Take to the trails and discover the natural wonders found on Audubon Wildlife Refuges across Rhode Island.

Explore those special places that are only accessible by foot!

Visit www.asri.org for details, trail maps and directions or call (401)-949-5454.



- 1 **Fort Wildlife Refuge**
1445 Providence Pike (Rt. 5), North Smithfield, RI
- 2 **Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge**
12 Sanderson Road (Rt. 5), Smithfield, RI
- 3 **Waterman Pond**
Waterman Hill Road, Coventry, RI
- 4 **George B. Parker Woodland Wildlife Refuge**
1670 Maple Valley Road, Coventry, RI
- 5 **Caratunk Wildlife Refuge**
301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA
- 6 **Long Pond Woods**
Long Pond Road, Rockville, RI
- 7 **Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge**
99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI
- 8 **Davis Memorial Wildlife Refuge**
Davisville Road, North Kingstown, RI
- 8A **Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve**, Prudence Island, RI
- 9 **Nature Center and Aquarium / Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge**
1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI
- 10 **Touisset Marsh Wildlife Refuge**
Touisset Road, Warren, RI
- 11 **Lathrop Wildlife Refuge**
Route 1A, Westerly, RI
- 12 **Emilie Ruecker Wildlife Refuge**
Seapowet Avenue, Tiverton, RI
- 13 **Lewis-Dickens Farm**
Cooneymus Road, Block Island, RI
- 14 **Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge**
2082 Victory Highway (Rte 102), Coventry, RI

PRUDENCE ISLAND

Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Prudence Island, RI

PRIVATE ADVENTURE WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Spend the day safely exploring beautiful Prudence Island with staff from the Narragansett Bay Research Reserve. Program will be designed with your interests and ages in mind. For more details contact Maureen Dewire at Maureen.Dewire@dem.ri.gov or 401-683-1478.



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

Brrrr...Birding Behavior in Winter

As the colder weather approaches, many birds shift their behaviors and even food sources to survive the winter. While many migrate south, several species have developed amazing adaptations to survive the winter months.

A bird's body temperature is approximately 105 degrees Fahrenheit, so it takes them a lot of energy to keep warm in cold weather. Although some birds may look fatter in winter, it isn't from gaining a few ounces. They fluff up their feathers to trap the warm air from their bodies. It's like putting on a warm downy coat.



But at night, when it really gets cold, some birds have learned to drop their body temperature and huddle together to conserve energy. Scientists have found that Golden-crowned Kinglets will roost together with 4 or more of their friends to survive the cold winter nights. Other birds like Black-capped Chickadees and Eastern Bluebirds will find cavities or nest boxes to huddle together at night. If you have nest boxes, now is the time to clean them out so birds have room to roost together. And check them periodically to ensure that mice haven't moved in, as they love to overwinter in these boxes as well. Consider purchasing or building a nest box or roosting box if you don't have natural nesting cavities in your yard.



Because birds have such a high body temperature, they also have a high metabolism. They need to be constantly refueling with high protein energy sources. If you are walking through the woods in winter, you might come across a noisy flock of Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and Kinglets. These mixed flocks of birds are actually helping each other. They comb the area for insects, berries and seeds. If they notice their neighbor has found food, they will all head in that direction. That is why when your bird feeder first goes up in winter, you may quickly see a flock of birds all at once. They watch each

other and communicate where the food sources are. This is a great adaptation when resources are scarce.

Good quality food is always helpful for birds in winter. Suet is a high protein food that you can provide for Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Pine Warblers, Chickadees and Tufted Titmice. Raw beef suet from the supermarket can easily become rancid, so a better alternative is rendered blocks of suet or suet cakes. These are easily slipped into a cage feeder without the mess. Some of these cakes have peanuts, seeds, insect or berries added - all which the birds love.

A sure way to attract Bluebirds is to offer mealworms. They provide an excellent source of nutrients. You can find Bluebird feeders for sale, provide dried mealworms, or if you are bold, offer live ones! Live mealworms can be costly, so I suggest putting out just a few a day and offering suet cakes or berries as well.

Tube feeders that hold sunflower, safflower, cracked corn and millet

Binocular Drive to Support Young Birders



The Ocean State Bird Club and Audubon Society of Rhode Island are collecting gently-used and new optics for inner city youth that have expressed an interest in birding. Donations will be distributed through the Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, an organization that works with urban youth to develop an interest in nature and birds.

Please drop off new or gently-used binoculars by December 31 at one of these locations:

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI.

Audubon Wednesday Bird Walk:
leave binoculars with program leader.

Wild Birds Unlimited Shop, Route 2, Warwick, RI.



are popular because of the diversity of the seeds they can hold and many birds are able to use them. If you love finches make sure you have a thistle feeder with very small holes that offer birds the tiny Nyger seeds.

And don't forget your ground feeders like doves, sparrows and cardinals. These birds don't do well on perches and need a little extra space to land. Keep those birds safe from cats and other predators by using a platform feeder. Just offer millet and cracked corn to encourage them to visit.

Birds also need an open source of water in winter. Look for a heated bird bath that you know will not freeze. And remember to clean both your bird baths and feeders regularly! Happy feeding!

The Audubon Gift Shop in Bristol is a great resource for all your bird feeding needs. They are happy to answer questions and help you make the right selections. Please stop in the Nature Center and Aquarium or shop online by visiting asri.org and click on Nature Shop.



Butch Lombardi

Legislative Update

No State Bond Referenda on November Ballot

By Meg Kerr, Senior Director of Policy

The Rhode Island legislature's environmental work ended abruptly with the COVID-19 pandemic. Bills addressing climate change, plastics, other toxics like pesticides and PFAS, and solar siting that were introduced are not being considered this year.

Even the 2020 Beach, Clean Water and Green bond did not receive a vote. In early September the leadership of the General Assembly and the Governor's office issued a joint press release stating that they will have a special session after the November election to adopt a budget and approve bonds. Once approved the bond will go to the voters in a special election. We now need to hold them to that promise.

The \$69 million 2020 Green bond includes the following components:

State Beaches, Parks and Campgrounds: \$40 million for capital improvements, likely to include upgrades at Goddard Park Beach, Roger Wheeler Beach, Scarborough State Beach, Misquamicut State Beach, Brenton State Park, and state campgrounds.

Clean Water and Drinking Water: \$15 million in matching funds for the Clean and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds. These matching funds will unlock close to \$74 million in federal funds.

Local Recreation: \$4 million in matching grants to create new and improve existing community parks and recreation facilities.

Natural and Working Lands: \$3 million to conserve forested land and farmland.

Municipal Resilience Program: \$7 million to help communities restore and improve resiliency of vulnerable coastal habitats, rivers and stream floodplains and infrastructure.

Please contact your state senator and state representative to ask for action on the 2020 Beach, Clean Water and Green Bond. We would like to see the bond approved as it was presented by the Governor.



2020 Annual Meeting: Virtually Broadcast to Members and Supporters

 Audubon Society of Rhode Island • October 25, 2020

Diversity, Inclusion, and Climate Change: The Future of Audubon

Audubon announced its new strategic plan with guest speakers **Leah Bamberger**, Director, City of Providence Office of Sustainability; **Charles Clarkson**, Audubon Board Member and Coordinator, Rhode Island Bird Atlas; **Priscilla De La Cruz**, Rhode Island Director, Green Energy Consumers Alliance; and **Kate Sayles**, Agriculture and Forestry Program Manager, Northern Rhode Island Conservation District.

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island gratefully acknowledges the terms of service of **Nathan W. Chace**, **Peter Lyle**, **Peter Paton**, and **Cynthia J. Warren** who are stepping down from the board of directors this year.

Audubon would also like to acknowledge the service of **Robert Berkelhammer**, a board member who passed away in February of this year.

Newly Elected Board Members



Ivan Colón

Mr. Colón is a development officer at Care New England. He has extensive experience in the hospitality and nonprofit community and is an Adjunct Professor at Salve Regina University. He has also previously served on the board of the Animal Rescue League of Southern Rhode Island.



Thomas Lisi

Mr. Lisi is a Certified Public Accountant and Marcum's Office Managing Partner in Providence, Rhode Island. He advises on a broad array of issues including accounting, finance, human resources, and marketing.



Leslie Samayoa

Leslie Samayoa is a Customer Service Representative for Merrill Edge in Lincoln, RI and is a previous Volunteer of the Year with the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.



Patricia Thompson

Ms. Thompson is a Certified Public Accountant and partner at Piccerelli Gilstein & Company, LLP. She has served on numerous boards and has chaired the finance committees for both the YMCA of Greater Providence and the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce.

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

WHAT WOULD AUDUBON DO **WITHOUT YOU?**

NOTHING.

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

Please give to our year-end appeal so we can continue to keep the trails open, engage the community safely with virtual and in-person programs, and move forward with our new strategic plan focusing on climate change, diversity and inclusivity.

We need your support now more than ever.

Please donate today online at asri.org or use the enclosed envelope.

Providence Stormwater Innovation Center Rain Harvest Arts Festival at Roger Williams Park

By Ryan Kopp, Stormwater Coordinator

The Rain Harvest Art Festival was held October 3, 2020 to celebrate over 40 green stormwater projects that have been implemented in Rogers Williams Park. The festival brought the local community together to raise awareness about stormwater and the associated water quality impacts in the ponds scattered throughout the park. Local artists brought the festival to life with the creation of water inspired murals and participatory art.

The Providence Stormwater Innovation Center and local artist Holly Ewald worked together to organize the event. Over the past decade, Holly has worked with artists, scientists, historians and community members to improve the health of urban ponds in Rhode Island.

A Blue Dot Trail was created to guide visitors around the ponds and urban park forest, leading to nine different green stormwater projects. The structures are often designed to be inconspicuous and blend into the park landscape, so stenciled art directed visitors to the structures.


Two of the stormwater projects were highlighted by the work of indigenous artist Dawn Spears, and artist and educator Andrew Oesch. Both painted murals to stress the importance and function of green infrastructure and the health of water in the ponds. At the mural sites, children and adults were given chalk and encouraged to enhance the landscape with their own creative

vision on the importance of water. Both artists interpreted stormwater and natural green infrastructure in their work.

Public tours of multiple stormwater projects explained the function and process of each green infrastructure installation. Visitors also learned how they could make a difference in their own homes. A demonstration on how community volunteers and the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center are monitoring and tracking cyanobacteria blooms in the park ponds was also given, which inspired visitors to join the volunteer effort.

In the coming years we hope to grow the festival, involving more artists and possibly expand to include performance art, music and sculptures. We are also looking to increase the science education and interactive nature of the festival by creating hands-on science models and demonstrations. The Providence Stormwater Innovation Center will continue to educate and inform through professional training, volunteer programs, and public outreach events in an effort to improve water quality throughout Rhode Island.


Top to bottom: Artist and educator Andrew Oesch at work, indigenous artist Dawn Spears paints during the festival, community engagement during the festival, and a masked Holly Ewald paints a mural.

Leaving Audubon in your estate is for the birds.

Learn Simple Steps to Begin Planning Your Legacy.

Call 401-949-5454 (ext. 3017) or download information at asri.org/legacy



Jason Major

OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO! AUDUBON INTRODUCES NEW ILLUSTRATED TRAIL MAPS



Audubon has new, updated trail maps available at wildlife kiosks and online at www.asri.org.



Available in both English and Spanish, the maps provide clear directions, highlights from each property, and a list of birds and wildlife that you might encounter.

Instead of sticking close to home, grab one of these maps and hit some new trails. Audubon protects and maintains 14 wildlife refuges across the state ó visit them all!



Audubon Remembers Gurdon B. Wattles

Gurdon Wattles, long-time environmental advocate and member of the Audubon Board and Council of Advisors, passed away unexpectedly on Sunday, September 27, 2020.

Gurdon supported the development and construction of the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol. He joined the Board during the years of extensive planning and fundraising for the Center, realizing this was an opportunity to promote environmental education.

Over the years, Gurdon and his wife Kathy also provided thousands of dollars to support bus transportation for students to travel to the Nature Center and Aquarium and other Audubon wildlife refuges. This cost was a major obstacle for many urban schools when trying to plan field trips for children. The Wattles were instrumental in providing thousands of children the ability to experience and learn about nature first hand.

Gurdon and Kathy were also frequent and enthusiastic guests at Audubon events, fundraisers, and leadership programs. Their on-going support of environmental education and conservation programs made a significant difference to the organization and moved Audubon forward with many initiatives.

Gurdon will be remembered for his generous spirit, his dedication to environmental education, and his commitment to protecting the environment for future generations.



Kathy and Gurdon Wattles at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

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Rhode Island PBS **Learn**

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digital 36.1
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10AM WEEKDAYS
digital 36.2
Cox 808/Verizon 478

RIPBS.ORG

TerraCorp Members Serve Conservation Efforts Across Rhode Island

By Scott Ruhren, Senior Director of Conservation

Two new TerraCorps members are now actively working in conservation efforts across Rhode Island, both serving through July 2021. TerraCorps, a newer affiliation of AmeriCorps, was founded on the principles and practices of service with an emphasis on land conservation.



Michael Perrin, who is working directly with Audubon's conservation staff, graduated from the University of Vermont with a degree in Environmental Studies and a minor in Wildlife Biology. He has developed a passion for birds. His main focus will be improving the mapping of refuges and conservation easements. Improved mapping using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will greatly enhance our annual monitoring efforts.

Eric Wuesthoff, a graduate of the University of Massachusetts Amherst with a B.S. in Natural Resources Conservation, is working with the RI Land Trust Council and their members. He will be assisting land trusts throughout the State to record the boundaries of their protected properties with GIS, as well as developing trail maps for their properties and training and coordinating volunteer efforts.



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

**Free Estate Planning Guide
asri.org/bequest**

Planning a Celebration or Special Event?



Audubon offers unique venues for weddings, showers, meetings, and receptions, as well as a charming vacation cottage!

- Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI
- Caratunk Barn, Seekonk, MA
- Mays Cottage, Coventry, RI

For more details, visit asri.org and click on services.

Bring Owls, Turtles, and Frogs into the Classroom or Library!

Audubon Offers In-person, Virtual and Video Programs with our Animal Ambassadors.

Let your local librarian or child's teacher know that Audubon can bring nature right into the classroom through virtual or in-person programs as well as nature videos for all ages. Nature stories with an animal ambassador are perfect for preschool and young students, programs on owls, frogs and birds are designed for elementary classrooms, and a bird of prey program is offered for middle school students. Audubon also has programs designed for adults.

We offer a series of videos on nature exploration topics such as seasons, habitats, bird watching, animals in winter, schoolyard explorations, and more!

For program details visit asri.org/learn/schools. To schedule a program, email education@asri.org or call (401) 949-5454 ext. 3014.

Scholarships are available! Find the application here: asri.org/learn/schools/discounts-and-scholarships.html



"...I am even more appreciative for your 'Audubon at Home' link. I use it weekly and my in-person learners benefit hugely, and love the time we spend outdoors. Today's find is the walk to discover rocks and minerals in your backyard."

- Rosemary Petrucci
4th grade teacher
Winsor Hill School
Johnston, RI

Wildlife Cam Images from the Audubon Refuges



Audubon has unobtrusive wildlife cameras on wildlife refuges across the state. Located well off the trails in remote locations, they are used to monitor wildlife and any activity on the properties.

A photo of a black bear was captured in June 2020, and the image of the fawn was taken in July, both at the Audubon Marion Eppley Wildlife Refuge in South Kingstown. The photo of the bobcat was also taken in July at the Audubon Lathrop Wildlife Refuge in Westerly.

It is always fun to see what creatures are out and about on the Audubon Wildlife Refuges.



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:

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Leader</i> — \$1,000 to \$2,499 | <i>Benefactor</i> — \$7,500 to \$9,999 |
| <i>Advocate</i> — \$2,500 to \$4,999 | <i>Visionary</i> — \$10,000+ |
| <i>Conservator</i> — \$5,000 to \$7,499 | |

If you wish to join the 1897 Society and help promote the values and mission of Audubon, please contact Jeff Hall at 401-949-5454 ext. 3017.

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.

AUDUBONFIRE Lit Up the Night!

Audubon understands that the great outdoors is the safest place to be, and took full advantage of a beautiful fall evening to host over 100 guests at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium for AuduBonfire 2020, our Member Appreciation Evening.

This annual event honors and thanks our members for their ongoing support. Guests socially distanced and wore masks to walk the lighted trail to stations of bonfires. They brought blankets and lawn chairs, enjoyed offerings from a food truck, live music and a nature scavenger hunt. Thank you to all who attended - we can't wait to do it again next year and look forward to bringing back the games and s'mores!



Bluebirds and Paint Brushes: Volunteers at Caratunk



Top: Newly refurbished nature mural at Caratunk. Below left: Volunteers Lauren and Kelley Shanahan of Seekonk. Below right: Lucas Johnson with one of the panels that had been removed.

Kelley Shanahan of Seekonk, MA reached out to Caratunk Refuge Manager Jon Scoones early this summer looking to volunteer her time to support Audubon. She quickly became engaged by creating an electronic map of the 51 Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes located on over 16 acres of fields at Caratunk. Kelley created the map, and added data to individual pins that each represent a different nest box. Visitors can easily view the map, identify species that have been using the nesting boxes, and discover how many fledglings each nest has produced over the past few years.

Kelley also recruited her sister, artist Lauren Shanahan to freshen up the 25-foot long painted mural on the second floor of Caratunk's big white barn. The mural is a favorite of visiting children and an education resource for Audubon programs and camps - but it was in desperate need of an update. The panels were faded and had structural problems that mirrored its age. Both sisters pitched in to remove the panels, clean and restore them. Lauren refreshed the illustrations with a new coat of paint, and then they were reinstalled on the walls. Volunteer Lucas Johnston helped with the removal, structural repairs and reinstalling the panels. It was teamwork from day one! The result is a bright, clean, updated mural that both enhances the barn and beautifully represents the habitats and animals that call Caratunk home.

Audubon thanks Kelley and Lauren Shanahan and Lucas Johnson for choosing to spend time this summer volunteering with Audubon. What a job well done!



Lauren Shanahan with the mural.



Jason Major

How Can You Make *Your* Mark On Conservation?

Adopt an acre of prime wildlife habitat for yourself, a family member or a friend.

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Not everyone is able to donate a parcel of land for conservation, but that doesn't mean you can't make a significant contribution to protecting habitat for birds and other wildlife. By adopting one acre of Audubon wildlife habitat for \$95, you can help to protect those special places that connect people with nature.

Your donation will help pay for property monitoring, trail maintenance, removal of invasive species, and other habitat enhancements that provide maximum value to birds and wildlife.

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Audubon protects 9,500 acres of habitat, please consider adopting one of those acres for \$95.

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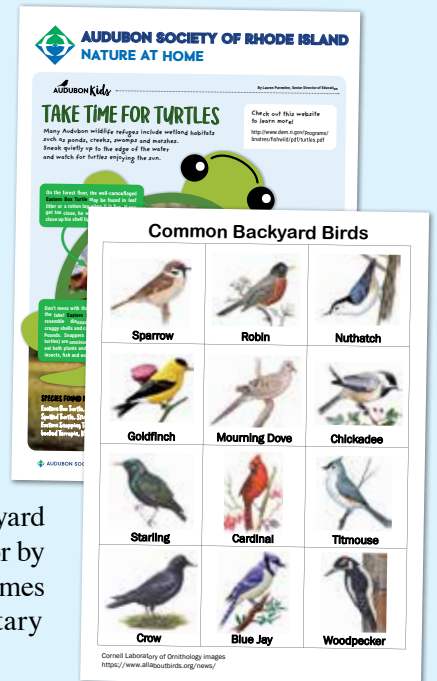


Perfect for homeschoolers, virtual classrooms, science projects, and outdoor exploration!

Do you know or a student or teacher who is engaged in a virtual classroom? Is your child looking for ideas for a science project? Are you homeschooling your children? Audubon can help!

Just visit Audubon at Home, our online site that encourages nature discovery in your backyard. Audubon educators have developed 20 nature themes, each containing natural history and science activities, educational games, videos, animal interviews, crafts, suggested resources, and more! They are free and available to all students and educators.

Discover the world of turtles, owls, frogs and snakes. Go on a nature or bird scavenger hunt in your yard or a local park. Explore nature in the wetlands, the city, or by the shore with Audubon as your guide. There are story times for younger children, science experiments for elementary school students, and fun activities for all ages.



Visit www.asri.org/audubon-at-home to start exploring nature at home!

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.

- AMC Narragansett Chapter
- BB&S Lumber
- Citizens Bank
- Dassault Systemes
- Green Energy Consumers Alliance, Inc.
- Lyons & Zaremba, Inc.
- New England Dispatch Agency
- NEC Solar
- ParsonsKellogg
- Partridge, Snow & Hahn
- R.I. Beekeepers Association
- Target
- United Natural Foods, Inc.
- Van Liew Trust Company

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: Rochelle and Jeff Blease

From: Kelly and Neil Fandel

In Honor of: Elizabeth Schumann

From: Robert Del Gizzi

In Honor of: Karen Kemp

From: Dan Kemp

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: Rachel Carson

From: Kevin and Mardee Carson

In Memory of: Maxwell Mays

From: William and Claire Chatto

In Memory of: Inez Craig

From: Barbara Carnes

Deb and Sue Flanders

Pam Asquith

George Kroeninger

Daniel and Ruth Wyttenbach

Montana Polans

In Memory of: Daniel J. McCombs Jr.

From: William and Claire Chatto

In Memory of: Christine Thormodsgard

From: Nancy Kirsch

In Memory of: Richard Yund

From: Warren and Debbie Prell

Virginia Folick

In Memory of: David Ford

From: Kathy and Pierre Irving

In Memory of: Marie Hawkes

From: Marjorie Hurd-Casbarro

Mario and Andrea Mattia

Anthony and Dale Zampini

In Memory of: Gurdon Wattles

From: Jackson and Lea Angell

Charlotte and Martin Sornborger



Andrea King

PROWL FOR OWLS WITH AUDUBON!

Join an Audubon naturalist on an evening hike this winter to look and listen for different species of owls.

See page 11 for a list of owl prowl dates and locations.

No Matter How Slice It, You Can't Take It With You.



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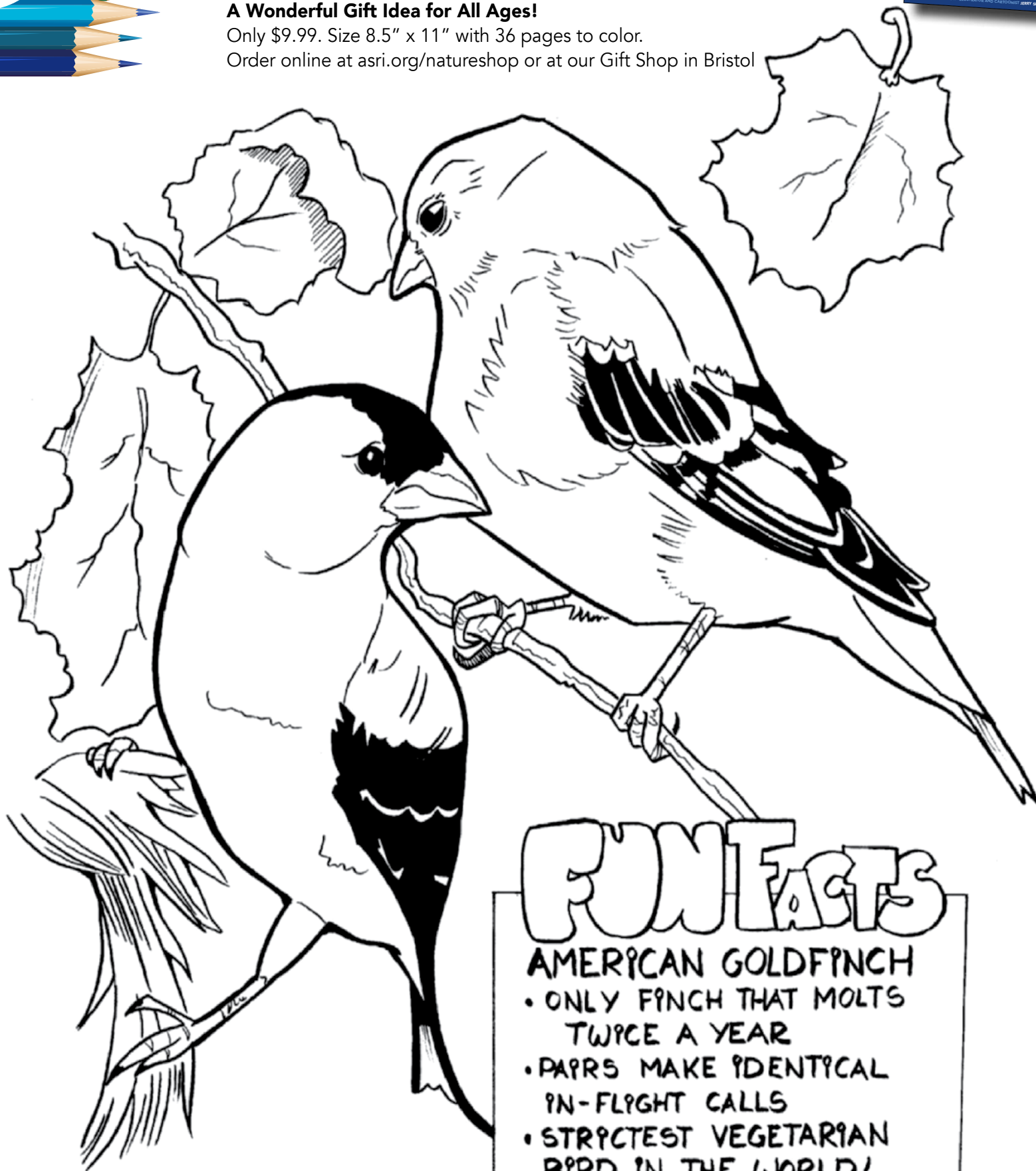
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Hawks and Hoots A Celebration of Birds of Prey

A number of hawks and owls thrilled over 150 visitors on September 12 and 13, 2020, as Audubon hosted Hawks & Hoots, a celebration of birds of prey.

Small groups were guided through a number of raptor stations, safely distanced throughout the grounds of the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol. Visitors spoke with Audubon educators who care for these birds, learned about their amazing adaptations, and discovered the various habitats that they call home. Children received a special Hawks & Hoots fun pack to take home.

Note: With large group restrictions in place due to COVID-19, Audubon has rescheduled Raptor Weekend to 2021. We look forward to bringing back this popular event when it is safe for all.



Audrey Royer




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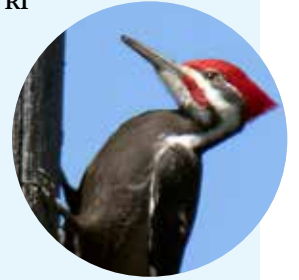
Pull on your woolly mittens and warm winter hat and head out on the trails. There is nothing quite like the beauty and stillness of nature in winter, and outside is the safest place to be.



CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING AND SNOWSHOEING

The following Audubon Wildlife Refuges are popular destinations for both cross-country skiing and snowshoeing:

- Powder Mill Ledges, Smithfield, RI
- Fisherville Brook, Exeter, RI
- Fort Wildlife Refuge, North Smithfield, RI
- Caratunk, Seekonk, MA
- Touisset Marsh, Warren, RI
- McIntosh Wildlife Refuge, Bristol, RI



BIRDING

Bird walks are offered year-round by Audubon at locations across the state. Visit the events calendar at www.asri.org.

Check out the Lathrop Wildlife Refuge in Westerly. Visitors enjoy a short walk to view a variety of ducks during the winter months on Winnapaug Pond. It's popular with waterfowl as the pond does not freeze.

ANIMALS TRACKS

Head to the Fort Wildlife Refuge in North Smithfield during the winter months to look for tracks of fisher, fox, coyote, mink, Wild Turkey, and white-tailed deer.

OWL PROWLs

Audubon hosts popular evening owl prowls at many locations during the winter months. Visit the events calendar at www.asri.org for dates and to register.

Winter Wildlife Survival Strategies

Continued from page 7

together and eating food they have stored," said Ruhren. In the case of bumble bees, the queen spends the winter alone in her nest, and she's the first one out in the spring to start a new colony.

Rather than migrate or hibernate, many animals are well adapted to remaining active in the winter months with just minor adjustments. White-tailed deer, for instance, shed their coat for a grayer version that's warmer and provides better camouflage from predators (and hunters). Red squirrels cache their food at the base of a pine tree so it's easy to find, even under the snow. And beavers, like those at Audubon's Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge in Exeter and Fort Wildlife Refuge in North Smithfield, fortify their dams to make sure they can maintain water levels high enough to allow them to swim under the ice.

A lot of rodents like beavers are food hoarders," said Carberry. Beavers stockpile twigs on the bottom of their pond, which is why it's so important for them to keep the water level high so they have access to their food in winter. They don't hibernate, but we don't see them because they're either under the ice or in their lodge.

How plants survive the winter is a totally different story.

They can't move, so they have to deal with whatever conditions are here," Ruhren said. And they deal with it in a lot of different ways.

Annual plants produce seed and then die off and decompose into the soil, for instance, and hope that their seeds will sustain the next generation. Perennials, on the other hand — including trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants — pull the nutrients from their leaves and branches to store in their root system and go dormant above ground. That's why deciduous leaves fall from the trees in autumn — because all the nutrients that keep them alive have retreated into the roots.

Conifers are evergreen because they have a specialized leaf in the form of a needle, which can withstand drought and cold conditions, so

they don't drop like deciduous leaves," said Ruhren. Their needles are very waxy with lots of water conservation strategies built into them. Yet even conifers stop growing in winter.

Trees have added armor, in the form of bark, to insulate and protect the more delicate structures inside the trunk from the extremes of weather.

Trees spend a lot of energy making bark because the vascular system of the trees — the xylem and phloem that conducts water and nutrients up and down the trunk — are right beneath the bark, and that system needs to be protected.

It's just one more of the dizzying variety of strategies that local wildlife have evolved to sustain themselves through the challenges of a New England winter.



Jason Major

We Can Change the Future – We’ve Done It Before

Audubon’s New Strategic Plan

Editorial by Meg Kerr, Senior Director of Policy

The new strategic plan adopted by Audubon’s board in June sets an optimistic tone for the daunting work ahead of us. The preamble to the plan talks about how, over our 123-year history, Audubon has bravely risen to face environmental challenges. Halting the destruction of birds for feathered hats and the clean-up of filthy waters and smog filled air have been accomplished because of the passion and hard work of dedicated environmentalists - here in Rhode Island and throughout the country.

Today the reality of climate change can seem overwhelming as we watch fires burning in the west and rising seas lapping at Audubon’s marshes and at coastal homes throughout the state. The pandemic adds layers of stress as we are forced to work remotely, Audubon’s programs go virtual and our legislative process grinds to a halt ó the 2020 legislature has not adjourned but they haven’t acted on environmental bills or passed a state budget.

But Audubon’s strategic plan encourages us to view the world with an optimistic lens and to stay focused and driven towards the goals outlined.

When we think about Audubon’s legislative priorities in 2021, it was exciting to see progressive candidates win in the September primaries. At least three of the winners (Brianna Henries in House district 64, Cynthia Mendes in Senate district 18, and Jonathon Acosta in Senate district 16) face no opponents in the general election. These wins ó even without the results of the general election -- will give the legislature a progressive boost. The Rhode Island primary garnered national attention and showed how organizing by the Working Families Party, the Rhode Island Political Cooperative and the Sunrise movement are making a difference and should change the conversation at the State House. Leaders have stepped forward who share many of Audubon’s priorities like addressing climate change and empowering diversity.

I am also encouraged by the ways the pandemic has allowed people to participate in training and learning activities provided by Audubon and our partners. People can learn about nature and environmental issues from the comfort and safety of their homes. Trainings offered by the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center have regularly attracted 100 attendees, people from throughout the state and region. It’s likely that many of these people would not have had the time or opportunity to travel to in-person workshops. It is easy to imagine that people unable to travel due to financial or health limitations are taking advantage of the many learning opportunities that the pandemic has moved on-line.

Finally, we have all probably read about how in San Francisco, White-crowned Sparrow’s songs changed during the City’s pandemic lock down. The quality of their songs became more melodic while the volume was reduced. According to BBC coverage, the scientist publishing the research, Dr. Elizabeth Derryberry, said, birds did sound different during the shutdown and they filled the soundscape that we basically abandoned. The research is hopeful, showing how quickly nature can adapt and recover from pollution.

As I work remotely from my home in North Kingstown, I wake up each morning with hope and gratitude. As Audubon has for over 123 years, I meet the challenges ahead with hard work mixed with optimism and buoyed by your support.



Rhode Island’s salt marshes have been adversely affected by rising sea levels due to climate change. This habitat so vital to the vulnerable Saltmarsh Sparrow is severely threatened.

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND REPORT

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Audubon Society of Rhode Island
12 Sanderson Road
Smithfield, RI 02917
(401) 949-5454
www.asri.org

Executive Director
Lawrence J.F. Taft

Editor
Jeffrey C. Hall
Senior Director of Advancement

Managing Editor
Hope Foley

Contributing Writers
Laura Carberry, Hope Foley,
Meg Kerr, Ryan Kopp,
Todd McLeish, Lauren Parmelee,
Scott Ruhren

Contributing Photographers
Hope Foley, Peter Green,
Ed Hughes, Butch Lombardi,
Jason Major, Chris Powell,
Scott Ruhren

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.

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See page 8 to meet all of our Avian Ambassadors



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