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Audubon Society of Rhode Island



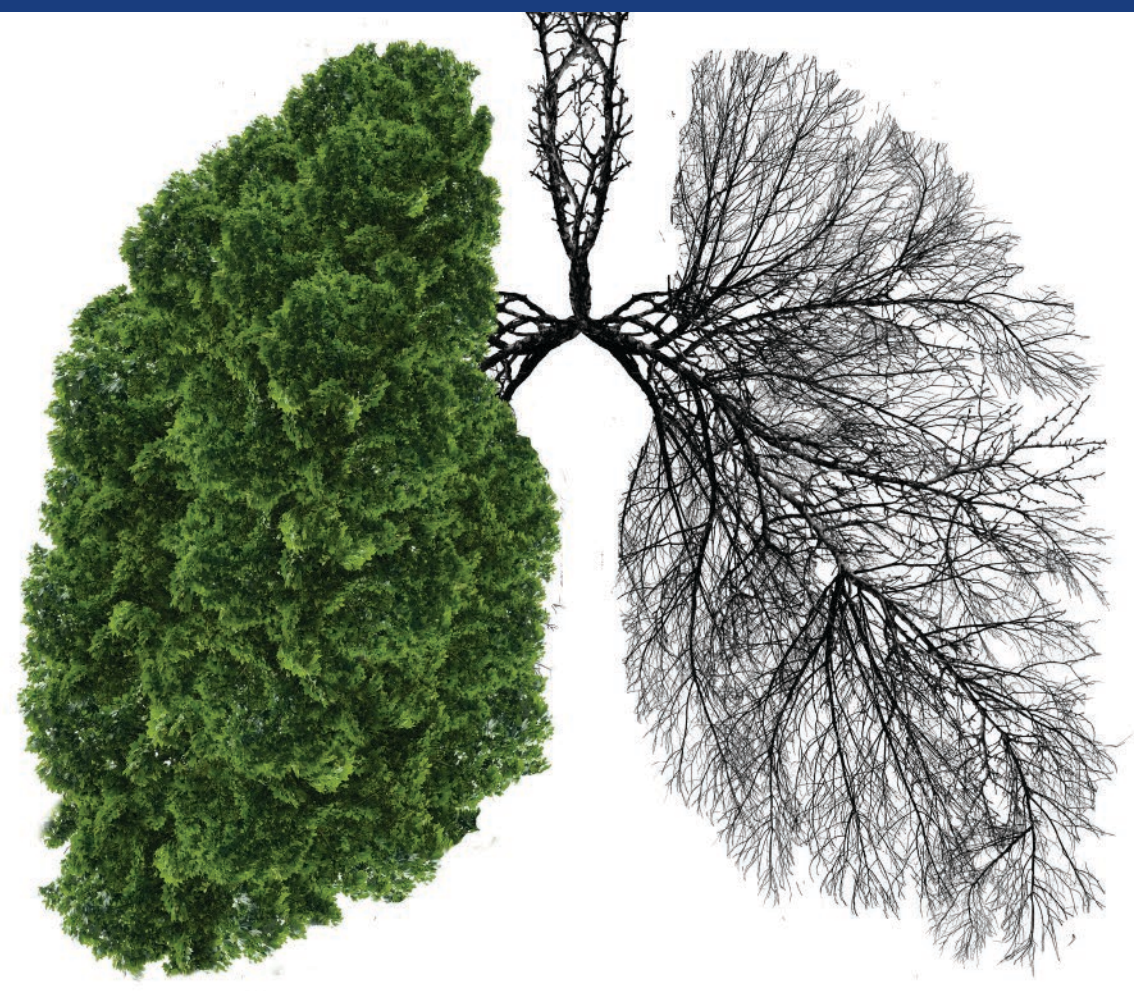
WHAT WOULD
AUDUBON DO
WITHOUT YOU?

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REPORT

VOLUME 56 • NO. 4 • FALL 2022

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE



NATURE'S VOICE

PROTECTING BIRDS, FORESTS, AND
ALL LIVING THINGS FOR 125 YEARS



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From the Desk of the Executive Director

Thank You, with Appreciation and Gratitude

At the end of this year, I will officially retire from my 23-year career at Audubon. It seems like yesterday that I decided to leave my post at the Norman Bird Sanctuary to join up with Audubon. I spent six years as director of properties and acquisitions before being promoted to executive director in 2005.



I am truly thankful for these years, the opportunities they presented, and the people I have had the pleasure to meet and work with. I am grateful for the trust that the membership, staff, and board of directors placed in me to carry forward and strengthen this remarkable organization over the last 17 years.



There were some big shoes to fill when I came to Audubon, and I feel that I have grown along with the organization. I leave confident that Audubon is in a good place and in good hands. The Audubon Society of Rhode Island that I am passing on is stronger, more resilient, and more focused than ever.

Thank you for your support over these many years.

Sincerely,

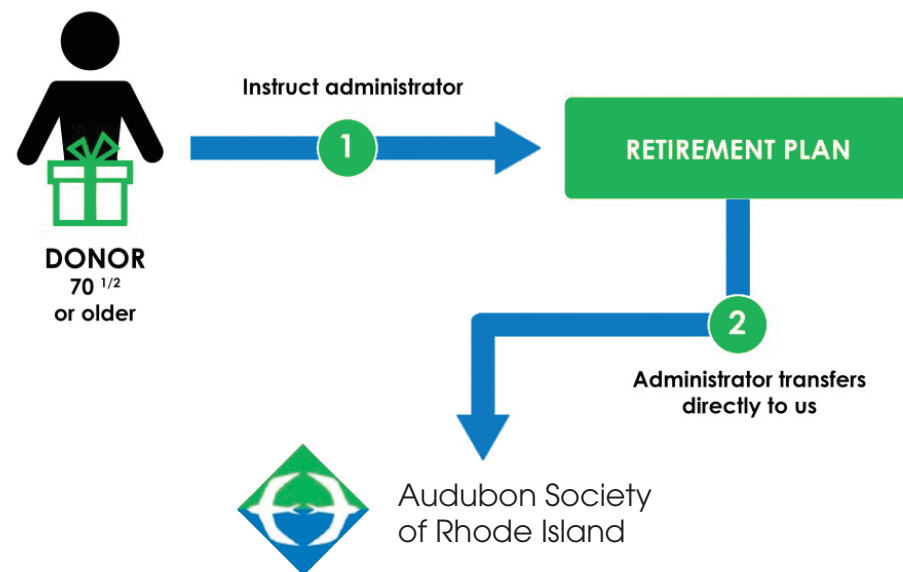
Lawrence J. F. Taft

Lawrence J. F. Taft
Executive Director

Roll it Over for Audubon

In late 2018, Retirement Account (IRA) Charitable Rollover legislation was signed which allows individuals age 70 or older to transfer up to \$100,000 of tax-free gifts on an annual basis from their IRA directly to their favorite charity. IRA charitable rollovers represent a significant opportunity for you to support Audubon's critical mission of protecting birds and wildlife.

The IRA Charitable Rollover permits those taxpayers age 70 or older to make donations directly to charitable organizations, like Audubon, from their IRAs without counting them as part of their income, and consequently without paying taxes on the contribution. The annual cap on a donor's total combined charitable IRA rollover contributions is \$100,000. Couples can contribute individually from their IRAs, resulting in potential annual gifts of up to \$200,000 for Audubon.



Audubon encourages you to consult your retirement plan administrator, tax or financial advisor to determine whether this option would be advantageous for your financial and tax circumstances. For more information, please visit www.asri.org/donate-membership/individual-retirement-account.html or contact Jeff Hall, Senior Director of Advancement at 401-949-5454 ext. 3017 or jhall@asri.org.



By Kristen Curry

Rhode Island is home to the first offshore wind farm in the nation – the first five turbines have been operational since 2016 off the coast of Block Island.”

If today's news headlines seem daunting to look at, consider the state of Rhode Island 125 years ago. Land was claimed freely, industrialization spread widely, and there was little concern for the ramifications to public health. Cholera outbreaks were a public health threat and environmental pollution was widespread. The seeds of environmentalism were born in New England in the midst of this challenging time. The Audubon Society of Rhode Island was founded in 1897 by a group of concerned citizens who were looking to take action.

Birds – the original concern of the Society's founding members – are still of concern today and remain front and center in Audubon's work. But a host of other environmental issues have come to the forefront over the years and Audubon has expanded its fight to meet those challenges.

Audubon began moving into local advocacy in the 1950s, starting to play a role as environmental watchdog in the state. Under the guidance of the late Alfred Hawkes, executive director from 1958 to 1993, the organization moved from being a small group of citizens concerned about the slaughter of birds for fashion, to becoming a strong voice for environmental advocacy, education, and land acquisition. He founded the Environmental Council of Rhode Island and shaped early environmental action and consciousness in Rhode Island, while helping Audubon progress to an organization with a strong voice at the State House.

Hawkes was unafraid to lead Audubon in taking stands on critical issues. His work to ban the harmful pesticide DDT and the preservation of wetlands and salt marshes were among the most important legacies of

Hawkes' long tenure.

Perhaps Audubon's biggest battle in the Hawkes years was against the proposed Big River Reservoir, a project meant to drown the Big River in West Greenwich and Coventry to build a supplement to the Scituate Reservoir. This long, drawn-out skirmish started in the 1960s and lasted until 1989, when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stepped in, agreeing that Rhode Island's need for water was not acute enough to justify the destruction of thousands of acres of wetlands and habitat. Hawkes viewed the proposed new reservoir as both ecologically devastating and an unnecessary public expense.

Hawkes helped Audubon turn the lens from individual birds and species to the habitat they lived in and habitat protection. Such views were prescient for the time. In the 1979 ASRI Report, he wrote, "Our degradation of wildlife's environment turns out to be a degradation of our own best interests. In testament to Hawkes' outside role in statewide advocacy, upon his retirement in 1993, the Providence Journal called Hawkes the state's environmental conscience."

Today, Audubon is continuing Al Hawkes' legacy. Advocating for climate action is a priority, as is reduced pesticide use, protection of pollinators, forest preservation, properly sited renewable energy, climate justice, and more. With the growing climate crisis upon us, Audubon's most critical fight to protect the environment, wildlife and people of Rhode Island, may have just begun.

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Clockwise from upper left: The late Al Hawkes at an environmental task force hearing in 1976; forest protection is a policy priority for Audubon; Legislators and advocates calling for the protection of pollinators at a speaking event in May, 2022; advocates celebrate the passing of Act on Climate with Governor McKee in 2021; legislation was passed in 2022 to protect pollinators by restricting neonicotinoid pesticides; working toward renewable energy goals, RIPTA has purchased electric buses as permanent additions to its fleet; Former Governor Gina Raimondo speaks at the Bee Rally at the State House in 2018, organized by Audubon. Center: Priscilla De La Cruz joined Audubon as Senior Director of Government Affairs in 2021.

LEADING CHANGE

Audubon's newest advocate at the State House is Priscilla De La Cruz, Senior Director of Government Affairs, who joined Audubon in 2021. While De La Cruz's hiring is in some ways a full-circle position in a sense of she currently leads the Environmental Council of Rhode Island that the late Audubon Executive Director Al Hawkes started in 1970s - her association with Audubon also represents a broadening in direction for the organization's advocacy mission. De La Cruz has experience in bringing diverse communities to the table in environmental discussions, with well-honed communications skills to take Audubon's message and priorities directly to legislators in a strategic manner. I believe in advocating effectively, efficiently, and collaboratively, De La Cruz says, and have a passion for people, education, and arriving at solutions.

One change De La Cruz has witnessed during her years in environmental work is the increasing buy-in from others about environmental challenges. Years ago, she was used to contending with climate-change denial, even resistance, in conversations about her work. Now, as if a switch has flipped, people outside the environmental community she comes into contact with also share her concern. In fact, a national academic survey released in 2020 affirmed just that. Rhode Islanders ranked climate change second on their list of concerns, second only to the looming pandemic; they were joined by a few other states. Audubon realized that it was no longer just environmental advocates being concerned about climate change; our neighbors and communities were as well.

Rhode Islanders are looking to experts and environmental organizations such as Audubon to provide needed leadership to face the climate crisis. There is a real sense of urgency in our advocacy work today, De La Cruz says. The awareness is there, and people are concerned about what will happen if we don't act.

Much of it starts with education. Audubon reaches approximately 22,000 people a year, providing multiple opportunities to talk about climate change, and manages nearly 9,500 acres of protected properties across Rhode Island and in nearby Massachusetts. One hundred and twenty-five years of advocacy and 5,000 members and supporters make Audubon a valued voice in Rhode Island's environmental community. 125 years and the backing of our members brings influence, De La Cruz says. The key question is, what do we do with that influence?

The 2021 Act on Climate enacted into law was a huge win, a real gamechanger for the environmental community. Now we have enforceable mandatory targets and policymakers and the public are actually engaged, De La Cruz says.

Last year also saw the passing of the Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Fund, which establishes a program and funding to protect and strengthen coastal infrastructure and public access sites threatened by rising seas and erosion; the Forest Conservation Act, requiring the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to establish a commission that will look at ways to encourage forest conservation and strategies to preserve private forestland. We also saw the protection of money-saving energy efficiency programs that extend Rhode Island's nation-leading energy efficiency programs; the ask-first law for plastic straws; and the prohibition of the intentional release of batches of inflated balloons.

There have been other wins recently, too. In 2022, the statewide plastic bag ban passed and legislation requiring 100% renewable electricity by 2033. The offshore wind industry, launched by the five wind turbines off Block Island, is growing quickly and will continue to advance as the State seeks to procure additional offshore wind. Neonicotinoids - the pesticides that are so dangerous to bees, butterflies, birds and other pollinators - are now restricted to use by only certified applicators, thanks to Audubon's work with the Conservation Law Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and legislative partners.

Still, the biggest threat we all face is climate change, says De La Cruz. It will have impacts to birds, wildlife, and humans. Despite this, De La Cruz says she's seeing progress and fruitful conversations about the issues and how to protect land, wildlife, and communities in a changing climate. Organizations are considering the best way to advance both the protection of forests and expand clean, renewable energy in homes, buildings, and disturbed land. And there is new attention on the growth of jobs in the climate economy as well. More people are seeing the economic impact of climate change. We have a real opportunity here, she comments.

Audubon's advocacy work takes years of and many partners of to be effective. The State's first climate bill, Resilient Rhode Island, passed in 2014, setting greenhouse gas emissions targets. Enforceable greenhouse gas limits were enacted in the Act on Climate bill which passed in 2021. We had to work hard to build a coalition to get Act on Climate passed, recalls Meg Kerr, former Audubon senior director of policy. The entire environmental community, along with organized labor, eventually got behind the bill and helped get it passed. Kerr led Audubon's advocacy efforts from 2016 to 2021, directing policy issues with skill, determination, and bringing a wide net of environmental partners to the table.

TEAM EFFORT

Kerr and De La Cruz both cite the critical importance of partnerships in their work. Advocacy is a team sport, Kerr says. Audubon can lead, but without a strong and vocal team of partners working alongside us, nothing would get accomplished. We are very lucky in Rhode Island to have so many strong environmental partners who have a long history of working together. We also have the Environment Council of Rhode Island which is where the organizations come together. But each bill that passes, each power plant that is defeated, is always the work of a group of people and organizations, including Audubon.

Audubon has also been developing strong relationships with labor and union groups, perhaps something the original Audubon founders a century ago might have had a hard time envisioning. Now instead of protesting the use of feathers in women's fashion, Audubon is making inroads to labor, hoping to add more hard hats in the climate jobs sector. Audubon and labor can work together to increase front-line climate change work for existing and future workers. There is mutual support for sustainable wages and good union jobs for workers in clean energy as the State transitions from a fossil-fuel-based economy and the workforce diversifies.

Our challenge now is how to be effective at sustaining our engagement with the public and policymakers, De La Cruz says. The warnings are serious, and people are receptive. The recent floods here in Rhode Island not only captured the attention of residents, but they also made national news.

We are at a pivotal point, she says, with federal and state goals now aligned and ready money available to invest in climate mitigation. Audubon is in a critical

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A LEGACY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

Audubon advocacy efforts have been directed for years by strong and effective women at the helm.

EUGENIA MARKS

Former Audubon Senior Director of Policy (Retired 2015)



Eugenia Marks, former Audubon Senior Director of Policy, was an unrelenting voice for nature for over 30 years. At the beginning of her career with the organization, Marks brought attention to political and environmental issues as well as natural history through Audubon publications. Gradually shifting to environmental advocacy under the mentorship of the late Alfred Hawkes, she continuously and bravely took a stand for clean water, clear air, and healthy habitats for birds and wildlife.

A virtual encyclopedia of Rhode Island environmental issues and natural history, Marks spent many an evening at the State House and late nights in town meetings tirelessly defending Rhode Island's environment. The environmental committees and coalitions she served on and led are too numerous to mention. Marks retired in 2015 after a long and distinguished career at Audubon.

MEG KERR

Former Audubon Senior Director of Policy (Retired 2021)



After three decades as a strong environmental leader in the state, Meg Kerr joined Audubon as senior director of policy in January 2016. She was well-known and respected in her work with the Rhode Island Rivers Council, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, and Clean Water Action before joining Audubon. Many have cited her true strengths as being able to communicate effectively on complex issues and her strong collaboration and persuasion skills when working with partners and legislators.

Kerr's long list of accomplishments include leading the climate-change legislation campaign in 2014 and 2019-2021; pushing an agenda to protect pollinators, including organizing the Bee Rally at the State House in 2018; furthering climate change education and initiatives; being a founder of the Rhode Island Green Infrastructure Coalition, which promotes nature-based solutions to runoff pollution; being a key partner in the development of the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center; and a founder of the RI Land and Water Summit. Kerr recently received an EPA Environmental Merit Award in October 2022 for her strong contributions to improving New England's environment.

PRISCILLA DE LA CRUZ

Current Audubon Senior Director of Government Affairs



Priscilla De La Cruz joined Audubon in 2021, coming from the Environment Council of Rhode Island and the Climate Jobs Rhode Island initiative. She also served as Rhode Island director of the Green Energy Consumers Alliance.

De La Cruz has been a key player in pushing for Rhode Island climate legislation and policy enforcement, forest conservation, renewable energy siting, and climate justice. Bringing her own personal connection to this work, De La Cruz knows how to communicate about challenges and solutions. She has a strong resume of building coalitions and community partnerships.

De La Cruz is also making important inroads in environmental advocacy as a Latina and woman of color. Traditionally the field has been a majority-white space; while she has often been the only person of color in the room doing such work, she looks to help break barriers that keep frontline communities from being at the decision-making environmental advocacy table, and part of the transitions to a healthy, sustainable environment and economy. They are critical voices that tend to live in environmental communities that are overburdened by the impacts of pollution. I think of myself when I was a child; I didn't even know this kind of work was an option. When I started at Audubon, I really felt humbled. I want to use my skills to help lead this incredible and respected institution; I'm honored to be a part of its growth.

A PASSIONATE MULTITASKER

AUDUBON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LARRY TAFT RETIRES
AFTER 17 YEARS AT THE HELM



By Betsy Sherman Walker

Executive Director Larry Taft on the trails at the Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge in Exeter.

When he arrived at Audubon in 1999 as Director of Properties and Acquisitions, Larry Taft recalls being struck by how much responsibility Audubon had and the amount of land it owned. Taft had migrated from the Norman Bird Sanctuary (NBS) in Middletown, where he had served as Executive Director since 1985. Compared to NBS, Taft explained, Audubon was operating on a shoe-string budget, and had so much going on that keeping everything on track was an exercise in herding cats. The organization was just coming off the end of celebrating its Centennial, the urban environmental education initiative had just been launched; and the \$3.5 million Environmental Education Center (now the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium) in Bristol was nearing completion.

In 2005, Taft became the fourth Executive Director to helm the Audubon Society of Rhode Island since it was founded in 1897. With his retirement in December, he is leaving a robust, dynamic organization that has remained focused on its original mission while embracing such decidedly 21st-century issues as diversity and inclusivity, as well as the organization's commitment to be a leader in climate action.

For a farewell chat, it seemed entirely fitting to join him on a rainy October morning in Coventry for a look back and forward from the porch of Maxwell Mays' guest cabin overlooking Carr Pond. The small gem on the 295-acre wildlife refuge that bears the artist's name is one piece of an impressive pie that makes up Taft's legacy. Having established a relationship with Mays early in his tenure, Taft was instrumental in navigating the transfer of the artist's beloved Woodlot Farm to Audubon, with the donation of the property subject to a life-estate in 2001 to its official dedication in 2011. Mays passed away in 2009.

The raindrops came down while Taft discussed the things that mattered. He spoke of his lifelong passion for protecting wildlife, for supporting habitat and open space preservation; and gave the 2020 Strategic Plan a plug. He also spoke of the importance of current Audubon projects, among them a new Avian Research Initiative led by Dr. Charles Clarkson that tracks and monitors the many different bird species found

on the fourteen Audubon properties that are open to the public. Going forward, this critical research will play an important role in determining how the organization protects species and manages habitats. It will also help strengthen Audubon's role as a leader in wildlife protection and preservation.

"Larry has walked every inch of the properties Audubon has conserved. What he's done for Audubon over his 23 years with the organization is all built on that deep understanding."

— Former Board President Owen Heleen

Owen Heleen and Julie Sharpe share a long history of involvement with wildlife preservation and land conservation, and a similarly long working relationship with Taft. Both say his years at the helm of Audubon have been transformational. Heleen stepped down as Board president, after three years, in October. Sharpe, who currently serves on the Council of Advisors, has worked with Taft over the years through Audubon as well as at a number of other organizations. We go way back, she says. I would say he's one of my most important colleagues in the field of land conservation.

On the porch Taft described his early days as Executive Director. The main job of an executive director is to always work on strengthening the organization, he continued. It was a process that involved strategic planning, fundraising, re-focusing our attention and resources on our central mission, and capacity building. No stone went unturned. To an organization that was multi-dimensional, Taft brought an ability to see it multi-dimensionally. It also called for a bit of introspection, for an organization that was unabashedly extroverted.

Larry has been an advocate for an expansion of Audubon's strategic focus, said Heleen. It would have been easy, he adds, to dust off an old strategic plan and stay with the tried and true. Instead, with the

2020 strategic plan, we've really pivoted towards more challenging conversations about the climate crisis and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Sharpe cites his vision and a grasp of what was required. More than anything, he has prevailed, she said. There were times when things were more chaotic and dicey, she added, and he kept putting one foot in front of the other. He really moved Audubon forward. He kept it out there in the public eye.

Since 2005, Taft has seen the operating budget grow from \$2.4 million to \$3.2 million. He and his staff have worked on cultivating support from every level.

We have more major gifts, and more contracts, he said, and a host of state, federal and private partnerships whose impact extends from providing school programming and bus transportation for city schoolchildren to explore Audubon's wildlife refuges, to managing the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; and developing the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center in Roger Williams Park.

Finally, he brought the arc of his self-audit around to the things that would make a difference. He cited the Stormwater Center as a project that checks the necessary Audubon boxes: climate change, inclusion, diversity, and urban education.

More than anything, he said, it gets people involved, helps them relate to birds and habitat in their own neighborhood. It's important for the organization in the future, he added. When people invest, they benefit, and they feel as if they are a part of it.

Sharpe calls this his ability to see the bigger picture, see the long view, adding, He was also extremely adept at keeping the boat on course.

Yet for all the pieces in the pie, nothing better sums up his sense of accomplishment than the moment, last March, when Taft and team completed the application for accreditation by the National Land Trust Alliance (NLTA) — an arduous, five-year exercise in self-assessment and research. Some wondered if it was worth the effort; for Taft, it was a no-brainer. Accreditation would be a crowning achievement, both for Taft and for the organization he has so devotedly overseen for the past 17 years. Sharpe, who serves on the NLTA Board and understands what is involved, said that every organization that goes through it comes out the other end much stronger.

According to Heleen, Taft was the right person for the task at hand. Larry is dedicated to doing things the right way and, when it's important, making sure the folks who come after us do things the right way, too, he said. That's the idea behind our work with the Land Trust Alliance.

At the October 23 Annual Meeting, Taft's legacy of service and leadership was formally recognized by a host of citations signed by Senators Sheldon Whitehouse and Jack Reed, and Representative David Cicilline. Larry knows this organization from the ground up — literally, Heleen said. He has walked every inch of the properties Audubon has conserved. What he's done for Audubon over his 23 years with the organization is all built on that deep understanding.

Taft's favorite part of the job, he summed up recently, has been the feeling of pride and accomplishment I get when things are working out well. And when everyone involved feels a sense of ownership — everyone working together, getting stuff done as a team. NLTA's yae or nay won't come, at the earliest, until next spring. But making a goal of accreditation, he added, is a good reminder that there's a right way to do things. For birds, for people, and for the Audubon land. It also bestows an irrefutable cachet. As part of a national network of land management and conservation organizations, accreditation will both attract and solidify a more dynamic and diverse membership, as well as a strong community of donors and potential partnerships.

When a random last-minute thought at the end of the porch sit-down led to a rhetorical question about unfinished business, Taft's answer was just what one might expect.

Audubon's business is always unfinished, he said. Which is exactly what a multi-tasker would say, when passing on the baton.

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.



Water Monitoring at the Earl Forester Wildlife Preserve.



With Senator Whitehouse and Eugenia Marks in Bristol.



Helping his grandson with owl pellet dissection.



Guiding a birding program for visitors in Bristol.



Speaking at the Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge opening.



Joining an Audubon Urban Naturalist program in Providence.



Speaking at the 2016 Green Bond Kick-off Event with Former Governor Raimondo.



Leading a maple sugaring program at Caratunk.



Monitoring the Caratunk Trails with Scott Ruhren.



Presenting the Palmieri Pollinator Garden Party appreciation gifts.



Holding an eyas during Peregrine banding in Providence.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

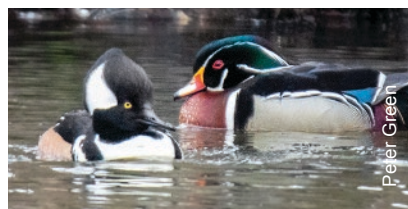
A little over a year ago, Audubon created the role of Director of Avian Research because the organization saw a very real need to document, study, and conserve the birds that each and every one of us enjoy when we look to the skies within our state. Indeed, every species of bird documented to breed, overwinter, or migrate through Rhode Island can be detected at some point within a year on one of our approximately 9,500 acres of protected land.

In essence, the role of the Director of Avian Research is to help guide the strategic vision of Audubon towards the conservation of our bird-life, both on the land the organization conserves and within the state and broader region as well. While 9,500 acres of land seems immense, it represents only 1.2% of the total acreage of our state. When viewed from this perspective, the scope of success we can achieve by focusing our conservation across just our properties may seem sobering. But the truth is that every acre counts. To a bird stopping along a migratory route, a small patch of highly productive habitat is immensely important.

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island landholdings also represent a sort of petri dish, where detailed information can be gathered and targeted research can be used to scale our understanding of avian populations to regional forest ecosystems. Consider the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest in New Hampshire. This 7,800-acre forest patch has served as a

research site for over 60-years, and the data accumulated from this one site has greatly increased our understanding of how northern forests function as a whole. In short, what we learn about the birds using our properties can help birds everywhere.

When I started in my new role with Audubon, I was eager to begin a number of research projects aimed at determining what species we host on our refuges, how many individuals of the most common species use our refuges, and the health of our habitats along with their importance to birds. Now that data collection is nearly complete for the first year of work, the late-fall and winter will be spent analyzing and writing, with the goal of releasing the first State of Our Birds report at the beginning of 2023. This detailed document will summarize the findings from our work and will make recommendations on what Audubon and others can do to promote bird populations, whether they are growing or in decline.



Yellow Warbler; Black Skimmer (top); Hooded Merganser and Wood Duck (bottom); Belted Kingfisher; Hairy Woodpecker.

HERE IS A RECAP OF WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED TO DATE - AND WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE IN THE REPORT:

BASELINE DATA

Beginning last December, surveys have been conducted across our 14 publicly accessible wildlife refuges on the distribution and abundance of all birds. These data took the form of both volunteer and professional gathered information derived from surveys conducted during the non-breeding and breeding seasons and periods of migration. Additional surveys were conducted for nocturnal and cryptic species. Data collection for this work ended on November 1, 2022, at which point data analysis will determine which species utilize our refuges for breeding, overwintering or migration and how many individuals are present during these periods. Additional information will be included from 380 point counts where habitat type associated with each bird detected has been documented to determine bird-habitat associations.

ARUS (ACOUSTIC RECORDING UNITS)

The deployment of Acoustic Recording Units (ARUs) across six of our refuges allowed for additional data to be collected on spring migrating and breeding birds across the three largest habitats that Audubon conserves (Oak Forest, Forested Swamp and Mixed Deciduous/Coniferous). These recorders were placed in habitat patches ranging from the largest contiguous patches we protect to average sized patches (averaged across all properties).



Summer Tanager (top); Prairie Warbler (bottom); Cedar Waxwing; Red-tailed Hawk.

MOTUS (WILDLIFE TRACKING SYSTEM)

The MOTUS wildlife tracking system (MOTUS is Latin for movement) has successfully linked researchers across 4 continents and over 30 countries in their quest to track the movement of wildlife species. To date, over 35,000 animals have been tagged and tracked within the network of receivers and we now understand a great deal more about the movement patterns of birds, bats and insects because of this work. In Rhode Island, the northern portion of Narragansett Bay remains devoid of a MOTUS receiving tower and installing one will help fill a gap in coverage within southern New England. Along with its importance to researchers, the erection of a MOTUS tower at our Nature Center in Bristol will be an important educational tool.

NEONICOTINOIDS

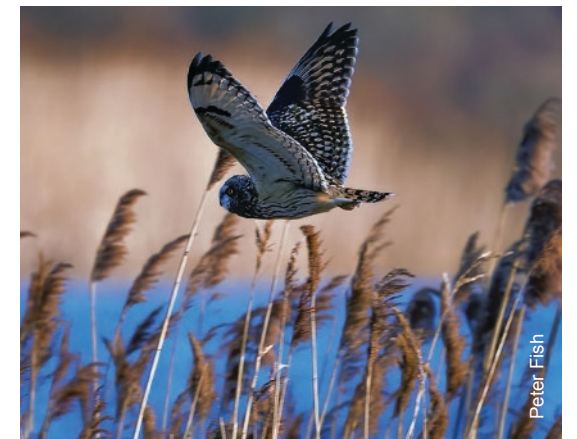
A key component of understanding how our refuges can support bird populations throughout the year is elucidating the health of the habitats themselves. Baseline data collection and the deployment of ARUs will help with deriving bird-habitat relationships, but in order for conservation to be effective, it is imperative that we also understand whether habitats that birds rely on are themselves degraded. Neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) are pervasive and toxic chemicals known to negatively impact birds by causing outright mortality, delaying migration and reducing overall fitness. While we made great strides in our state over the past year regarding the regulation of neonic use, we also need to determine whether these chemicals are present on our protected land.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER: AUDUBON REGIONAL CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM

The results of all of these projects will be highlighted during the inaugural Audubon Regional Conservation Symposium on January 28, 2023. During this one-day event, the results of our own in-house research will be presented and scientists from throughout the region will come together to discuss the health of the bird populations they study as well. The symposium will bring together the general public and bird researchers to facilitate science communication across a larger audience and to create a working group designed to generate comprehensive, region-wide conservation plans, something that is currently lacking in the New England conservation landscape.

Anyone interested in learning more about Audubon's research and the state of Rhode Island birds are encouraged to attend. Space is limited, register early.

See page 11 for more information and register today at asri.org/BirdsAcrossNE.



Short-eared Owl.

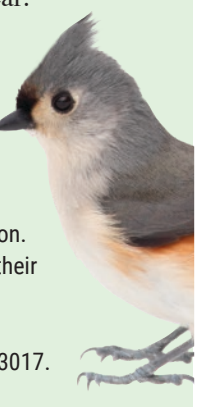
AUDUBON RECEIVES \$111,000 FOR LAND PROTECTION

Barbara Walsh and Earl Simson Fund Acquisition of Critical Habitat and are Honored as Audubon Philanthropic Partners of the Year.

To support the acquisition of vital natural habitat in Rhode Island, Barbara Walsh and Earl Simson have generously donated \$111,000 to Audubon, allowing the organization to strategically expand already protected areas and acquire other tracts of land for conservation. Ms. Walsh and Mr. Simson also generously offered a \$25,000 challenge grant during the 401Gives campaign in April 2022, bringing Audubon an additional \$50,000 that will be used to acquire valuable properties.

They have contributed to a broader understanding of the natural world through support of Audubon media campaigns, scientific research, and land acquisition. To lead by example, Ms. Walsh and Mr. Simson have also turned their yard in a quiet Warwick neighborhood into a pollinator sanctuary. They were honored for their ongoing support of Audubon and commitment to preserving wild places by being named Audubon's Partners in Philanthropy for 2022.

If you are also interested in becoming a donor for land conservation, please contact Audubon Senior Director of Advancement Jeff Hall at (401) 949-5454 ext.3017.



Preserving a Disappearing New England Habitat

Grassland Management for Birds and Wildlife

Historically, large fields or prairies were a common feature in midwestern North America, where dry soils, fire and large grazing mammals maintained the habitat. In comparison, large fields and pastures found in New England were created by European settlers over the past several hundred years. In fact, few, if any fields in New England are natural. Stone walls and old barn foundations are signs of the land formerly grazed by cows and sheep or set aside as hayfields. Indigenous tribes were less likely to clear large swaths of land.

Over the centuries, grassland birds took advantage of these open spaces to nest and feed on the seeds, fruits and insects found in these fields. At wildlife refuges across Rhode Island, Audubon manages hundreds of acres of open fields to preserve this valuable habitat. Without proper management, most of these breaks in the forested landscape would revert to shrub thickets and eventually forest in the process of field succession.

The bird community in these grassland habitats has changed over the past fifty years. Meadowlarks were once common field birds in Rhode Island but have drastically declined. Upland Sandpipers have been gone from Rhode Island for many years. Grasshopper Sparrows, more rare grassland specialists, prefer large fields. Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Bobolinks, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, Woodcock and Wild Turkeys are common inhabitants of Rhode Island grasslands. Nationwide, grasslands birds have been declining largely because of habitat loss and alteration. This is one reason that Audubon is committed to restoring and protecting the habitat and the species relying on it.

Audubon controls this process through careful mowing. This management tool recycles organic matter back into the soil and helps reduce invasive plants of old fields such as autumn olive and barberry. Our goal is to protect grassland plants and animals.

Grasses mostly warm season grasses such as little bluestem and switch grass define grasslands whether they are called prairie, meadow, or field habitat. Plants are the structure and the soil producers. Interspersed with the grasses, are waves of flowers from spring to fall including asters, goldenrods, black-eyed Susans and thistles. The plants and flowers feed pollinating bees, wasps, beetles, and butterflies. Monarch caterpillars rely on the abundant milkweeds and the adults collect nectar all summer as they prepare to migrate. Several rare plants, including



Clockwise from top left: American Kestrel; grassland at Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge in Coventry, RI; Tree Swallows at Caratunk Wildlife Refuge.

some native orchids, thrive in these fields managed by Audubon.

The grasses and flowering plants feed countless insects which also attract insect-eating birds. What may look like a common field is a complex web of interactions as grasslands also support other native animals of New England. Milk snakes and black racers hunt for mammals such as meadow voles, jumping mice, and shrews while smooth green snakes seek smaller prey. Box turtles feed on summer strawberries and bask in the sun.

Fields are good places to observe wildlife because the views are broad and unobstructed. The rolling fields of Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge in Exeter, Maxwell Mays Wildlife Refuge in Coventry, and Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk are wonderful places to experience these habitats.

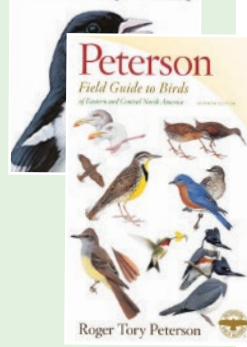
FIELD GUIDE DRIVE FOR CITY YOUTH

Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Ocean State Bird Club, and Wild Birds Unlimited Partner to Collect Field Guides for Underserved Youth in Rhode Island

Do you have extra field guides on your shelves? Audubon, the Ocean State Bird Club (OSBC), and Wild Birds Unlimited in Warwick are looking for donations of new or gently used birding field guides to share with children in city communities. The Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership will partner with us to determine where donations will be best allocated.

Please drop off gently used field guides* (or purchase a new one) at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol, Wild Birds Unlimited in Warwick, or at Audubon Headquarters in Smithfield. Guides will also be collected at Audubon Wednesday Morning Bird Walks and any program with OSBC. **The deadline for field guide donations is March 31, 2023.**

* Note that due to changes in birds names and classifications, guides that are over 30 years old cannot be accepted.



REGISTER NOW

AUDUBON NATURE CENTER AND AQUARIUM, BRISTOL, RI
JANUARY 28, 2023 • 9:00 AM–4:00 PM

Social Hour to follow at Ragged Island Brewery, Portsmouth, RI; 5:00–6:00 pm

BIRDS ACROSS NEW ENGLAND: THE AUDUBON REGIONAL CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM



Join the Audubon Society of Rhode Island for an inaugural conservation symposium on birds as scientists from throughout New England share research in an easy-to-understand manner.

- Are you concerned about how birds are faring across New England?
- Are you interested in ongoing research to better understand our bird populations and the major conservation issues they face?
- Is accessing research data in an easy-to-understand manner important to you?

The premise is simple: the more you know, the more you can do to help our birds. This symposium will arm you with information about what is being done to save our birds and what obstacles stand in the way of conservation success.

Beginning with a keynote address in the morning, concurrent sessions will cover topics concerning saltmarsh and coastal bird species, eastern forest health, bird tracking technologies and large-scale demographic projects aimed at determining the size and health of bird populations throughout New England.



AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND "STATE OF OUR BIRDS" REPORT

Audubon Society of Rhode Island will also unveil its first comprehensive "State of Our Birds" report. Derived from the past year of data collection, the report will offer a full accounting of species across our wildlife refuges and will provide conservation recommendations for specific bird populations and habitats.

The symposium is limited to 80 people, please register today to ensure your attendance is secured. Coffee, snacks, and lunch will be provided. After the event, join the presenters for a social hour at Ragged Island Brewery in Portsmouth, RI.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER, VISIT ASRI.ORG/BIRDSACROSSNE

SYMPOSIUM RESEARCH PARTNERS AND PRESENTERS:

Audubon Society of Rhode Island

University of Rhode Island

University of Connecticut

New Hampshire Audubon

Vermont Audubon

MOTUS Wildlife Tracking Network

University of New Hampshire

AUDUBON NATURE TOURS & PROGRAMS

December 2022 – February 2023 For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at asri.org/calendar

BIRDING WITH AUDUBON

Advance registration is required for all programs.

OWL PROWL AT POWDER MILL LEDGES

Two Dates Offered. Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI; December 7, 2022, February 3, 2023; 7:00-9:00 pm.

OWLING AT FISHERVILLE BROOK

Two Dates Offered. Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; December 8, 2022, January 27, 2023; 7:00-9:00 pm.

WINTER BIRDING VAN TRIP: WATERFOWL AND SEABIRDS AT THE SHORE

Departs from Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; December 10, 2022; 8:00 am-4:00 pm.

OWL PROWL AT FORT REFUGE

Fort Wildlife Refuge, (Rt. 5), 1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI; January 6, 2023; 7:00-9:00 pm.

OWL PROWL AT CARATUNK

Three Dates Offered. Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; December 8, 2022, January 5, February 2, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.

WINTER BIG DAY 2023

Set out with an Audubon expert and cover many winter hot spots during this day-long van trip. Departs from Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge, 99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI; January 7, 2023; 8:00 am-5:00 pm.

OWLS AND ALES

Two Dates Offered. Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, 1401 Hope Street, Bristol, RI; January 14, February 11, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.

WINTER BIRDING WITH AUDUBON

Two Dates Offered. Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI; January 21, February 25, 2023; 2:00-4:00 pm.

WINTER BEACH WALK WITH AUDUBON

Moonstone Beach Road, South Kingstown, RI; January 21, 2023; 1:30-3:30 pm.

BIRDWATCHING 101: WORKSHOP & WALK

Two Dates Offered. Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, 301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA; January 29, February 25, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.



Marjorie Vothaben

AUDUBON NATURE CENTER AND AQUARIUM

1401 Hope Street (Route 114), Bristol, RI

PROGRAMS, LECTURES & WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

FAIRY ORNAMENTS

December 8, 2022; 6:00-7:30 pm.

OWLS AND ALES

Two Dates Offered. January 14, February 11, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.

SEA GLASS JEWELRY WORKSHOP

Two Dates Offered. January 14, Feb 25, 2023; 1:00-2:30 pm.

STAMP AND SIP! WINTER NATURE CARD-MAKING WORKSHOP

January 21, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.



FAMILY PROGRAMS AND CLASSES FOR CHILDREN

CITIZENS FREE FAMILY FUN DAY

Thanks to Citizens, the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium is open free to the public the first Saturday of every month. Join Audubon for nature stories, animal discoveries, hikes and more. No registration required. December 3, 2022, January 7, February 4, 2023; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.

DECEMBER SCHOOL VACATION WEEK WITH AUDUBON

Dissect an owl pellet, build a fort for fairies, take a winter hike and more! Visit the events calendar at asri.org/calendar. December 27-30, 2022; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.

LI'L PEEPS

Introduce children to the delights of nature. January 12, 19, 26, February 2, 9, 16, 2023; 10:00-11:00 am.

AUDUBON FEBRUARY SCHOOL VACATION WEEK ACTIVITIES

February 20-24, 2023; 10:00 am-3:00 pm.



Cate Brown

CARATUNK WILDLIFE REFUGE

301 Brown Avenue, Seekonk, MA

STARGAZING AT CARATUNK

December 1, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.

TERRIFIC TURTLES!

December 4, 2022; 1:00-2:30 pm.

OWL PROWL AT CARATUNK

Three Dates Offered. December 8, 2022, January 5, February 2, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.

WINTER WALK SERIES: ANIMAL CUISINE ON THE REFUGE

December 18, 2022; 10:00-11:30 am.

WELCOME WINTER! TALES FOR THE WINTER SOLSTICE

December 21, 2022; 6:30-8:00 pm.

WINTER WALK SERIES: ANIMAL HOMES

January 8, 2023; 10:00-11:30 pm.

WHITE BARN STORY TIME: GOOD-NIGHT, OWL! BY PAT HUTCHINS

January 21, 2023; 11:00 am-12:00 pm; Ages 1-4.

MUSKRAT, OTTER AND MORE!

Take a hike to Muskrat Pond to look for muskrat and otter! January 22, 2023; 9:00-10:30 am.

BIRDWATCHING 101: WORKSHOP & WALK

Two Dates Offered. January 29, February 25, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.

WINTER WALK SERIES: ANIMAL TRACKS

February 12, 2023; 1:00-3:00 pm.

WHITE BARN STORY TIME: BUYING, CARING, AND TRAINING YOUR DINOSAUR BY LAURA JOY RENNERT

February 18, 2023; 11:00 am-12:00 pm; Ages 4-8.

FISHERVILLE BROOK WILDLIFE REFUGE

99 Pardon Joslin Road, Exeter, RI

OWLING AT FISHERVILLE BROOK

Two Dates Offered. December 8, 2022, January 27, 2023; 7:00-9:00 pm.

SNOWSHOEING BY THE FULL MOON

February 4, 2023; 6:30-8:30 pm.



AUDUBON NATURE TOURS & PROGRAMS

December 2022 – February 2023 For more information and to register, visit the events calendar at asri.org/calendar

FORT WILDLIFE REFUGE

1443 Providence Pike, North Smithfield, RI

OWL PROWL

January 6, 2023; 7:00-9:00 pm.

SNOWSHOEING / WINTER HIKE

February 11, 2023; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.



Ed Hughes

POWDER MILL LEDGES WILDLIFE REFUGE

12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI

AUDUBON HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

Find perfect gifts for the nature enthusiasts on your list. December 3, 2022; 10:00 am-4:00 pm.

OWLS OF NEW ENGLAND

Bring the family and discover Rhode Island's owls. December 10, 2022; 3:00-4:30 pm.

NAKED TREE I.D. – WORKSHOP & WALK

January 14, 2023; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

WINTER BIRDING WITH AUDUBON

Two Dates Offered. January 21, February 25, 2023; 2:00-4:00 pm.

ANIMAL TRACKS & SIGNS FOR FAMILIES

January 28, 2023; 2:00-4:00 pm.

INTRODUCTION TO ANIMAL TRACKING FOR ADULTS

January 28, 2023; 10:00 am-12:00 pm.

FEBRUARY VACATION WEEK AT POWDER MILL LEDGES

Bring the kids to meet live animals, try science experiments, candle-making and more. Visit asri.org/calendar for details and to register. February 21-24, 2023, times vary.

PRUDENCE ISLAND

Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Prudence Island, RI

EXPLORE PRUDENCE ISLAND

Two Dates Offered. December 10, 2022, January 20, 2023; 9:45 am-4:45 pm.

SEALS, SEABIRDS AND SUNSET!

February 23, 2023; 1:30-6:30 pm.



Jane Gavin



Ed Hughes

DECEMBER SCHOOL VACATION WEEK

Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium, Bristol, RI
December 27-30, 2022;
10:00 am-3:00 pm

Bring the kids and dissect an owl pellet, build forts for fairies on the refuge, meet cool critters, and take a winter hike! Visit asri.org/calendar for details.



PROWL FOR OWLS WITH AUDUBON!

Join an expert to search for owls on the Audubon trails.

Powder Mill Ledges, Smithfield, RI: December 7, 2022 & February 3, 2023
Fisherville Brook, Exeter, RI: December 8, 2022 & January 27, 2023
Fort Wildlife Refuge, North Smithfield, RI: January 6, 2023
Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, Seekonk, MA: December 8, 2022, January 5 & February 2, 2023
Audubon Nature Center & Aquarium, Bristol, RI: January 14 & February 11, 2023

Register at asri.org/calendar



AUDUBON HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge, Smithfield, RI
December 3, 2022; 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Find the perfect gifts for the nature enthusiasts on your list!




BALD EAGLES

Keep your eyes out this winter for large dark birds sitting in trees along the edges of lakes and rivers or soaring over bodies of water.

Winter is the best time to look for Bald Eagles in Rhode Island.



These amazing birds migrate south from their northern homes because the rivers and bays in our area don't freeze. That means the Bald Eagles can easily find their favorite food: fish. 

- Bald Eagle numbers in Rhode Island are on the rise! Although we may see more eagles in the colder months, there are at least five nest sites around the state.
- Bald Eagles are very big birds with a 6.5-foot wingspan, which is larger than a Great Blue Heron or a Turkey Vulture. How big is your wingspan? Spread your arms out wide and have a friend or parent measure!
- These adult eagles are easily identified with their brown body with a white head and tail. The term "bald" comes from an Old English word meaning white.
- It takes an eagle five years to become an adult and start a family. When they are young, their head and body plumage is brown with various patterns of white underneath.
- An eagle call is high-pitched and not particularly impressive for such a big bird of prey. In movies, they often substitute the Red-tailed Hawk call for eagles in flight.
- Female eagles are larger than males, standing three feet tall, and weighing up to 13.5 pounds.
- Bald Eagles have a large, powerful yellow beak designed for tearing their prey. They also have yellow feet and strong, sharp talons for catching their food.
- Eagles add sticks to their nests every year often creating enormous structures. The largest nest ever recorded was 9.5 feet in diameter and 20 feet in height. That's a BIG Nest!
- The Bald Eagle has been the national symbol of the United States since 1782. Benjamin Franklin had recommended the Wild Turkey. What bird would you choose to represent your family or community?



Peter Green

The Audubon Nature Shop in Bristol, RI has eagle puppets, building activities, books, and other raptor games & puzzles.

Stop in and browse the wide selection of nature-themed toys – perfect for holiday and birthday gifts! Member Double Discount Days are December 2 – 4, 2022.



CHECK IT OUT!

U.S. Senator Jack Reed Delivers \$100,000 Federal Grant to Audubon

Audubon's Environmental Education for Urban Schools Initiative receives new federal funding to bring comprehensive STEAM* education programs to children in city communities.

In an effort to connect K-12 students with nature close to home, U.S. Senator Jack Reed delivered a \$100,000 federal earmark to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island for their Environmental Education for Urban Schools Initiative in the fiscal year 2022 appropriations law. This federal funding will help Audubon provide hands-on learning experiences in the field and classroom to 4,000 Rhode Island students in kindergarten through high school, particularly kids in urban areas of Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket.

Audubon's expertise, teaching resources, and natural areas engage students in active learning. Educational opportunities will be offered in science and nature, often with live animals, such as birds and reptiles, that provide children with up-close experiences that can support their learning. The curriculum is aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), enhancing what Rhode Island teachers are doing in the classroom.

Whether its teaching children about wildlife or how to build a better birdhouse, the Audubon Society does an exemplary job of connecting kids with nature. They really take outdoor fun and environmental learning to new heights and that helps students learn all kinds of important lessons across a range of subjects. This federal funding will help Audubon expand their reach and ensure children from urban areas get to experience the wonders of nature up close and in person. We want every student to be able to appreciate nature and learn about conservation. This program helps bring kids on field trips where they can get outside,



U.S. Senator Jack Reed joined third grade students in Pawtucket on November 2, 2022 for an Audubon Owls of Rhode Island program led by Audubon Educator Tracey Hall.

explore, and learn about the world around them, said Senator Reed, who authored the No Child Left Inside Act to help more states provide effective environmental education programs and integrate environmental literacy and outdoor learning into other core subjects.

Audubon will also provide professional development to at least 30 schoolteachers in kindergarten through grade 12 to encourage and support outdoor learning in schoolyards.

Transportation scholarships are also available to remove the barrier of high busing costs. These funds will provide students with opportunities for outdoor field explorations at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol, as well as in the fields, wetlands, and forests of nearby Audubon wildlife refuges.

Thanks to this federal grant, lack of funding will not prevent students, regardless of where they live, from gaining real world experiences with science and nature that can enhance their learning across the curriculum.

*STEAM Education is an approach to learning that uses Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics as access points for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking.

Audubon Partners with Providence Promise Youth Council Students Visit the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge

On a beautiful August afternoon, 12 students from the Youth Council of the Providence Promise (PVD Promise) organization climbed aboard the Audubon van and headed to the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk, MA. There they joined Audubon staff for wildlife programs, a guided nature walk on the trails, and delicious s'mores around a campfire.

PVD Promise is a family-oriented nonprofit that promotes high educational aspirations and more equitable opportunities for Providence Public School and Charter School students by advocating for college savings accounts and family engagement, increasing financial literacy, and reducing the financial burden of higher education.

Their Youth Council fosters the growth of students from marginalized communities by encouraging a commitment to education and service, while developing an awareness of society and their community. Audubon is pleased to partner with PVD Promise to offer nature programs for students and their families and introduce environmental learning opportunities.

Sheila Bautista, PVD Promise Bilingual Youth Engagement Coordinator, noted that The nature walk was very detailed and informative, and students learned about different trees, and animals they saw along the hike. The students had a great time, and it was a perfect wrap up to the summer.

Audubon thanks PVD Providence for encouraging student engagement with science and nature and looks forward to working together to promote environmental awareness and career investigations.



PVD Promise Youth Council and staff enjoyed an August nature exploration and campfire at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk.

ANNUAL MEETING

Audubon celebrated 125 years of environmental leadership when members and supporters gathered at the organization's annual meeting on Sunday, October 23, 2022, at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol, Rhode Island.

Rhode Island's gubernatorial candidates, Governor Daniel McKee (D) and Ms. Ashley Kalus (R) shared their accomplishments with members and addressed pertinent environmental issues.

Those gathered also honored retiring Executive Director Lawrence Taft for his years of service and leadership to the organization. (See page 6 for a feature story on Taft's years as executive director.)



Newly elected Audubon board members with Audubon Executive Director Larry Taft. From left: Dr. Kathleen Melbourne, John Woulfe, Executive Director Larry Taft, and Katherine Burnham. Not pictured: Dr. Stephen Porder.



LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP AWARD

**Rhode Island House Speaker
K. Joseph Shekarchi**

Audubon recognized Speaker Shekarchi for his dedication to Rhode Island's environment and the protection of birds and wildlife.

From left: Audubon Executive Director Larry Taft, Speaker Shekarchi, Audubon Senior Director of Government Affairs Priscilla De La Cruz.



EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Joseph Koger

Bristol science teacher and long-time Audubon camp counselor Joseph Koger was honored for his 40-year dedication to environmental education. A camp scholarship fund was also named in his honor. See page 24 to donate to this fund.

From left: Joe Koger, Audubon Educator Tracey Hall, Audubon Executive Director Larry Taft.



VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

**Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium
Exhibit Hall Guides**

True ambassadors for the organization, Audubon Exhibit Hall Guides interact daily with the public and cheerfully guide thousands of visitors each year.

Nature Center Director Anne DiMonti (left) and Audubon Program Registrar Michelle Solis (third from left) with the exhibit hall guides.



Audubon Board Members with retiring Executive Director Larry Taft after the Annual Meeting. (Taft standing in back, sixth from right)

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island gratefully acknowledges the terms of service of the following Board Members who are stepping down from the board of directors this year: **Christian Capizzo, Owen Heleen, Deborah Linnell.**

If you were not able to attend the 125th Annual Meeting on October 23, additional highlights from the event can be found online at: asri.org/annual-meeting

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS:



WHAT WOULD AUDUBON DO WITHOUT YOU?

NOTHING.

You make our work possible. The pages in this issue of the Report are full of accomplishments that Audubon has achieved with your support over the last three months.

Without you...the other pages would be as blank as this one.

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

We need your support now more than ever.

Please donate today. Visit asri.org/donate or use the enclosed envelope.

Employees of the Bank of America /Merrill Call Center in Lincoln Raise \$25,000 to Support Audubon Camp Scholarships

Employees of the Bank of America/Merrill Call Center in Lincoln, RI held their annual employee charity golf tournament on Wednesday, September 14, 2022, at the Crystal Lake Country Club in Burrillville, RI. Organized and orchestrated by team members of the two companies, the event was attended by more than 185 staff members.

Funds collected from hole-in-one contests, putting challenges, and a gift basket raffle were donated to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. The event raised \$25,000 which Audubon will use to fund summer camp scholarships for youth at wildlife refuges in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts.

The employees of Bank of America/Merrill appreciate the importance of connecting young people to nature, said Kevin Tracy, President, Bank of America Rhode Island. Introducing children to the outdoors can positively impact their well-being for a lifetime. Aside from the physical and emotional benefits, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island is also helping to create the next generation of conservationists by getting youth to spend more quality time outdoors.

Audubon thanks the many employees at the event for their generosity and enthusiasm to support summer camp scholarships for children in need.



Audubon Executive Larry Taft receives check from Board Member and Bank of America/Merrill employee Leslie Samayoa.

Welcome Maeve!

A new Great Horned Owl is now calling Audubon home. Close to 500 people recently voted online to choose her beautiful name. Maeve is a traditional Irish name that means 'She who rules.'

This beautiful young owl arrived in July 2022. Found entangled in a soccer net in Connecticut, her struggle resulted in a left-wing injury with three to four inches of secondary wing feathers missing. They may never regrow. Falconer David Stevens rehabilitated her before she arrived in Rhode Island. Look for Maeve at upcoming Audubon programs soon.



Planning a Celebration or Special Event?

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.

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE AUDUBON TRAILS!

Order Now! Only \$14.95

Visit www.asri.org/natureshop to order your copy today.

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND BACKYARD BIRDS COLORING BOOK

Featuring 36 beautifully illustrated bird species with fun facts by West Warwick, Rhode Island artist and cartoonist Jerry Shippee.

A Wonderful Gift Idea for All Ages!
Only \$9.99. Size 8.5" x 11" with 36 pages to color.

ORDER ONLINE: ASRI.ORG/NATURESHOP



LET'S GO Birding

By Laura Carberry

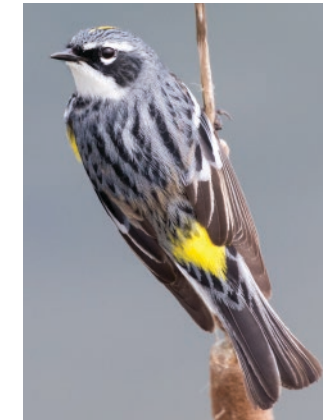
From Insects to Berries: Yellow-rumped Warblers Adapt for Winter

As the final days of autumn approach, and winter is not far behind, most of the summer warblers have left Rhode Island for warmer climates. But there is one that returns to our state in large numbers this time of year. The Yellow-rumped Warbler is able to switch from eating insects in the summer to consuming waxy berries in the fall and winter. With our coastline full of cedar trees, bayberry, and poison ivy berries, these birds can be found fluttering around in small groups foraging for food. They are the only warbler that can change its diet to eat these waxy fruits. Because of this adaptation, Yellow-rumped Warblers are able to spend more time farther north than other species.

In the spring and summer, Yellow-rumped Warblers show a mix of bright colors in their plumage: yellow, bold blacks, white and grays. But in the fall, their plumage is a drab brown with a streaky chest, although they still have the notable yellow-rump patch and varying amounts of yellow on their sides. Yellow-rumped Warblers nest in conifer trees in Northern New England and Canada, as well as the higher elevations out west. In the fall we see an influx of these birds headed south. They can migrate all the way to Central America, but many will stay right here in New England as long as there is a food resource.

You may notice Yellow-rumped Warblers in your yard this winter as they will sometimes visit suet feeders and are known to eat sunflower seeds, raisins, and peanut butter. But for a more natural food source, consider planting red cedar trees or bayberry bushes on your property. These two food sources also provide nourishment for Eastern Bluebirds and American Robins and make excellent roosting trees and bushes during the winter.

I hope you are able to catch a glimpse of these special warblers this fall. Great places to look for them are Sachuest Wildlife Refuge, Napatree Point, Ninigret Park and most coastal areas. And be sure to watch for the Yellow-rumped Warbler to change into bright breeding plumage in April as they get ready to move north!



Yellow-rumped Warbler with spring plumage above, and fall plumage below.

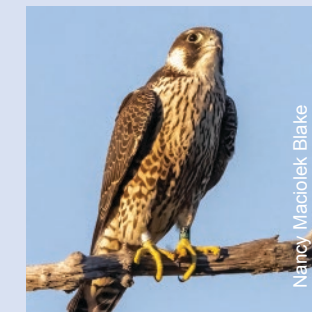
Providence Juvenile Peregrine Sighted on Duxbury Beach in September

One of the four Peregrine Falcons that hatched this year in Providence was spotted on September 2, 2022 on Duxbury Beach in Massachusetts.

Nancy Maciolek Blake took the image that clearly shows the identifying band (87/BU) in the photo. We thank Nancy for reporting the sighting to the Federal Bird Banding Laboratory.

Bird banding allows scientists to track the life history, migration and reproductive behavior of individual birds and populations. The data is becoming increasingly valuable as we aim to better understand the impact of the climate crisis on birds.

Also shown, lower right, is an image by Peter Green that he shared from banding day on May 20 atop the superman building in Providence, showing this Peregrine as a young eyas. Audubon thanks both photographers for sharing their beautiful images. It is always good news when we hear that one of the juvenile Peregrines from the nest box is thriving!



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 fundraising, 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 an appropriate cause.

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
- Alice O. Harris Fund
- Jonathan H. Harwood Fund
- Hicks-Borden Fund
- Priscilla J. Hollis Fund
- Walter Hammond Kimball Fund
- Margaret Robinson Knight Fund
- Kimball Memorial Garden Stewardship Fund
- Kay Kinsey Fund
- Kraus Wildlife Fund
- Henry J. Larkin Wildlife Preserve Fund
- Lorraine Leaney Fund
- Little Rest Bird Club Fund
- Lonesome Swamp Fund
- Edward B. and Phoebe W. McAlpine Memorial Preserve Fund
- Constance McCarthy Fund
- McKenzie Wildlife Fund
- George B. Parker Fund
- Powder Mill Ledges Fund
- Prudence Island Fund
- Susan M. Romano Memorial Fund
- Elton Sanford Fund
- Alicia Perry Seavey Family Fund
- South County Fund
- Everett F. Southwick Fund
- Touisset Marsh Fund
- Viall Memorial Library Fund
- Mrs. and Mr. Dudley A. Williams Memorial Fund

For more information contact Jeff Hall at jhall@asri.org or (401)-949-5454 ext. 3017.

Green Infrastructure Is Only Getting Better in Roger Williams Park

Restoration and Community Engagement are Key for Climate Resiliency

By Rebecca Reeves, Stormwater Education and Outreach Coordinator



Providence Stormwater Innovation Center

Look for some new retrofits to be constructed on existing green infrastructure in Roger Williams Park next year. These restorations will improve the structures in place and allow them to work more efficiently by directing more stormwater, removing more pollutants, and keeping the ponds and lakes cleaner for the community.

Providence Stormwater Innovation Center (PSIC) received funding for these projects from Restore America's Estuaries Southern New England Program Watershed Implementation Grant (SWIG). With over \$1 million awarded each year, these grants help organizations to restore coastal and watershed ecosystems in cities and communities throughout Southeastern New England.

Along with these retrofits, the PSIC will offer a training session about potential issues that can arise during the design, construction, and maintenance of green infrastructure. Another portion of the grant funds will go toward engaging community volunteers statewide to monitor and record the performance of these structures during and after storm events using a web app. This web app will allow us to collect performance data for the owners of green infrastructure projects and to advise them of any potential retrofitting needs.

Part of PSIC's mission is to relay to professionals, as well as the public, best practices within stormwater management. Our hope is that engaging the community in this work will build awareness and responsibility for stormwater management. While Rhode Islanders might notice green infrastructure projects, they are often unaware of how these structures help filter stormwater. We are also looking to educate members of the community in ways they can help at home, such as restricting use of

fertilizers and refraining from pouring foreign materials down a storm drain. This project will help build a bridge between those who are more focused on the technical aspects of stormwater management and those who live in our urban Rhode Island communities and are most impacted by this work.

Improving the health of our watersheds is critical, particularly in urban environments. Our watersheds support native plant and animal life and provide food and habitat for numerous species, including native birds. With the funding from this grant, we hope to work with our many partners to increase the efficacy of our local stormwater systems and build public awareness about how stormwater management affects our ecosystems and the health of our communities.



Volunteers use a fluorometer and microscope to examine and measure cyanobacteria. A plankton net is used by volunteers to collect water quality samples. Audubon Stormwater Manager Ryan Kopp conducts an elevation survey within existing green infrastructure.

Rain Harvest Arts Festival

Over 400 Guests Celebrated Science, Water and Art in Roger Williams Park

The Providence Stormwater Innovation Center, Providence Parks Department, and Roger Williams Park Conservancy hosted the Rain Harvest Arts Festival on October 15, 2022, spreading the word about green infrastructure, water quality and a healthy environment for all.

Providence's Extraordinary Rendition Band (ERB) kicked off the celebration with a high-energy performance after a land acknowledgement by Narragansett & Niantic elder Dawn Dove. Over a dozen local environmental organizations brought a selection of workshops, tours, and walks related to water quality and ecology. Attendees also enjoyed face painting, art vendors, lawn games, and chalk art. Spoken word poetry artist Vatic Kuumba performed a piece about the intersection of water quality issues and environmental justice, and the day finished with another danceable performance by the Providence Drum Troupe.

We thank our partners, volunteers, performers, and presenters for helping with this free community event and look forward to hosting the festival for years to come!



AUDUBONFIRE Lit Up the Night!

Audubon members enjoyed a beautiful fall evening at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge on October 14 for AuduBonfire 2022. Over 150 supporters attended this annual member appreciation event in Seekonk, enjoying s'mores around campfires, live music from the folk-duo Atwater-Donnelly, lawn games, a food truck, and scavenger hunts on the refuge.

The Audubon education team kept families busy with a nature sensory station, night sounds and bug investigations, and a fascinating biofacts table. Guests also learned all about raptors as they met some of Audubon's live owl ambassadors.

Thank you to all who attended this fall celebration honoring our members – we can't wait to do it again next year!



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PERUVIAN DECAF COFFEE
A full-bodied, but flavorful and aromatic coffee.



All proceeds benefit the Audubon Avian Research Initiative.

RAPTOR WEEKEND

Over 1,400 guests flocked to Raptor Weekend on September 10 & 11 at the Audubon Nature Center and Aquarium in Bristol. A Land Honoring started this year's event with Pokanoket Tribe Sachem Tracey Dancing Star Brown.

Guests got up-close with eagles, owls, falcons, and hawks. They learned about raptor conservation, habitats, adaptations, rehabilitation, and more. Popular games, crafts, lectures and even a sing-along for the kids rounded out the event.

<https://sowamsheritagearea.org/wp/honoring-the-land-at-the-audubon-raptor-weekend/>



Pokanoket Tribe Sachem Tracey "Dancing Star" Brown.



NATURE'S VOICE

Continued from page 5

position to see what's coming and offer expert guidance on critical next steps. Being on the ground provides an advantage, De la Cruz says, organizations like Audubon are often the first to spot the warning signs and advocate for steps needed. The scientists and those outdoors on a daily basis see the change coming first, they witness it up-close in their work and in the field. Audubon's new Avian Research Initiative is one such program that will continue to provide science-based data to advocacy efforts, as is the work of the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center (PSIC). Audubon supports the PSIC and its efforts to improve water quality as stormwater pollution increases with more flooding from extreme rain events.

Recent open dialogue between various stakeholders is a sign of progress. Audubon is looking forward to expanding partnerships with labor and enlisting the power of labor as environmental justice advocates. We are more effective working together, De La Cruz comments.

While Audubon had its share of strong and effective advocacy voices in the past (see sidebar on page 5), the organization is now well-poised to speak across divides to different parties. It's less a dictate of what needs to be done, more building a process of listening and working together so all are heard. Although people today are more educated and aware of environmental issues, challenges remain. The work is ongoing, and it can be a heavy load.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

Looking forward, Audubon aims to make strides in the electric sector, move the state toward 100% renewable energy by 2033, and complete the process of moving toward offshore wind. We can do this, De La Cruz asserts. Rhode Island is small in size but outsized in assets to do this kind of work. Audubon has an opportunity to really effect change here.



The Providence Stormwater Innovation Center engages the community in their work to improve urban water quality through the use of green infrastructure.

Audubon's critical advocacy work only happens when members and supporters get involved. Individuals can participate in events, stay updated on current topics, and reach out to lawmakers. Legislators rely on hearing from constituents to make their decisions. We're all ambassadors, says De La Cruz. Together, we can make a real difference.

Visit asri.org/lead to sign up for Audubon's Eagle Eye updates on policy issues and please consider donating to Audubon's advocacy efforts and supporting our critical work to protect Rhode Island's environment.

Kristen Curry works in local nonprofit communications, with recent articles on plankton research at URI's Bay Campus and water improvement in Roger Williams Park. She's taken Audubon's popular Owl Prowl and has also enjoyed walking on Rhode Island's North South Trail.

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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CVS Health
DBWW Architects
Green Energy Consumers Alliance, Inc.
National Education Association RI
NEC Solar
Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP
Rhode Island AFL-CIO
R.I. Beekeepers Association
Target
United Natural Foods, Inc.
Utilidata
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 Ahlijian
From: Thomas and Sondra Pitts

In Memory of Carl Bishop
From: Gloria and Mark Amatrudo
Asbury United Methodist Church
Andrea Dunn
Shirley Keene and David Humphrey
Michael Legere
Susan and Thomas Osborn
Patricia Reynolds

In Memory of John Bruscatto
From: Nancy Dowding
Lois Kyle Macpherson

In Memory of Jean Celletti
From: Patricia O'Hara

In Memory of Allison DeAngelus
From: William DeAngelus

In Memory of Lionel Fontaine
From: Frank Jarrabeck
Andra Lou Millerd
Mary Beth Smith

In Memory of Hannah Kitty
From: Janet Emery

In Memory of David Merchant
From: Alan Gray
Judith B. Hale
Samuel and Elizabeth Hallowell
Beth and Stanley Weiss
Cynthia and James Patterson
Georgina Regnault
Elizabeth Sittenfeld
Martha Slaughter
Geoffrey Swaebe

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

In Memory of Chip Young
From: Sharon and Thomas Hegburg

In memory of George Zizzari
From: Constance Ucci

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 Xavier DiMartino
From: Tom DiMartino

In Honor of Scarlett Glinka
From: Carissa Mills

In Honor of James Horvet
From: Sarah Biester

In Honor of Owen Murphy
From: Diane McFall

In Honor of Evelyn Doris Renden Mackenzie
From: Taylor Van Ahnen

In Honor of Cathy and Todd Saunders and Scibelli
From: Todd Harris

In Honor of Larry Taft
From: Thomas and Sondra Pitts



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AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND 1897 SOCIETY

Named for the year of the Audubon's founding, the 1897 Society honors those whose leadership gifts enable the Audubon Society of Rhode Island to advance its mission of protecting birds, other wildlife and their habitats through conservation, education and advocacy. Our donors can take satisfaction that their contributions have an immediate and lasting impact on the people, wildlife and natural beauty of Rhode Island.

The 1897 Society celebrates donors who give annually at the \$1,000 to \$10,000+ level as special contributors to our ongoing mission and shall be recognized at the following levels:

Leader — \$1,000 to \$2,499 **Benefactor — \$7,500 to \$9,999**
Advocate — \$2,500 to \$4,999 **Visionary — \$10,000+**
Conservator — \$5,000 to \$7,499

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. 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.

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Order your copy at ribirdingtrails.com or purchase at the Audubon Nature Shop in Bristol.





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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.

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

JOE KOGER CAMP SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Honoring the Tremendous Impact of an Extraordinary Audubon Camp Counselor

For 40 years, Joe Koger inspired and led over 4,000 campers at Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk, MA. He guided young naturalists on thousands of field explorations. They waded into ponds and discovered frogs and turtles, netted insects in the field, and learned to identify native plants, birds, and animals. Koger brought children on hikes where they searched for life under logs, explored stream habitats, and honed their naturalist skills.

With 35 years of experience as a high school biology teacher in Warren, Koger knows how to engage children in science. With his skills, passion for science, and extensive knowledge of the natural world, Joe Koger was a camp counselor extraordinaire. He became a beloved mentor to many as they returned to Caratunk year after year. Many of his campers became junior counselors and camp instructors, and he has inspired many careers in environmental science.

With this scholarship fund, Audubon looks to thank Koger for 40 years of dedication to environmental education and to offer camp experiences to future generations in his honor.

Donate today at asri.org/SendAKidToCamp.



A FRESH LOOK FOR AUDUBON REFUGES IN NORTHERN RHODE ISLAND

New refuge signs for Powder Mill Ledges in Smithfield, and the Fort Wildlife Refuge in North Smithfield were installed on October 7, 2022 by Audubon conservation staff.

The old signs had faded and weathered over the years, and the new installations were easy-to-read and clearly identified the Audubon properties. Perfect timing for all those fall hikers looking to hit the trails!



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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.

BARBARA COSTA

Nature Center and Aquarium Volunteer

Audubon depends on volunteers for data collection in many citizen science programs - including our annual Osprey Monitoring. All that collected data must also be compiled into an annual report. Barbara Costa, an 11-year veteran of volunteering for Audubon was the perfect person to tackle this enormous job. Living in Tiverton, Barbara was familiar with Osprey and she enjoyed working on the report so much that she became a monitor herself, taking on the additional responsibility of visiting a nearby nest and documenting all the Osprey activity within.

During the Osprey off-season Barbara volunteers weekly to assist in the Bristol offices with whatever project is underway. From research to general filing, she takes on all assignments with equal enthusiasm, even if it means dueling with her nemesis: the copy machine! She has been instrumental in compiling animal and plant archives and has assisted the education team with seasonal inventories, camp paperwork, Raptor Weekend schedules, and more.

We thank Barbara for her dedication over these many years. Her flexibility, warmth, and willingness to help has made her such a valuable member of our team. We look forward to working with her for many years to come!

By Michelle Solis
Audubon Nature Center Volunteer Coordinator and Program Registrar



Barbara Costa has volunteered 11 years, tackling a wide variety of projects for the Audubon education staff.

BARBARA SHERMAN

Avian Research Initiative Volunteer

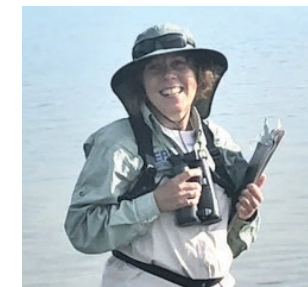
As a volunteer, Barbara Sherman has been an asset to bird research projects in Rhode Island since the early 2000s. I first met her when I coordinated the statewide Bird Atlas, where she aided in the collection of data across all seasons.

A gifted birder, Barbara lives in Narragansett, where she recently retired from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She became associated with Audubon in 2007 where she served as an Osprey monitor for nearly a decade. As part of Audubon's new Avian Research Initiative, Barbara has volunteered to collect data during the breeding and non-breeding seasons and has participated in targeted surveys for nocturnal and cryptic species such as owls and nightjars.

When I asked Barbara why she enjoys volunteering with Audubon, she stated that, while she loves to bird for pleasure, participating in these large science-based projects means that she is birding for a purpose. She went on to say that volunteering allows me to supply data that will (hopefully) help protect birds and their habitats now and into the future, and I've met some great people in the process.

Barbara Sherman deserves her place in the spotlight. Her dedication to the well-being of the birds of our state, combined with her eternal enthusiasm and good-spirits are rare qualities and we are lucky to have her as a volunteer!

By Dr. Charles Clarkson
Audubon Director of Avian Research



Barbara Sherman is a dedicated field volunteer with the new Audubon Avian Research Initiative.

MONIKA KOSIOROWSKI

Volunteer Junior Camp Counselor at Caratunk Wildlife Refuge

Highly creative and skilled in the arts, Monika Kosiorowski volunteered this past summer with the younger campers at Caratunk. She shared art projects with the children weekly and was responsible for preparing the crafts as well as directing the children in procedure and technique. She volunteered over 140 hours during the camp season and was an enormous help keeping the younger campers engaged and learning.

Monika is currently a junior at The Greene School in West Greenwich, an innovative school that embraces nature as a core of the school's curriculum. She is a talented musician who plays guitar, enjoys biking and swimming, and has an unusual language skill - she is bilingual in English and Polish.

Monika plans to attend college and major in life sciences, with a particular interest in studying soil remediation. We wish her all the best in her last two years of high school and thank her for the many hours she spent at Caratunk this summer, enriching the camp experience for so many young children!



Monika Kosiorowski shared her passion for art with Audubon campers at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge.

By Marina Flannery
Audubon Assistant Camp Director

LINDSAY DULUDE

Providence Stormwater Innovation Center Watershed Watch Volunteer

Each week, Lindsay Dulude of Cranston measures the chlorophyll, dissolved oxygen, and temperature of the water within Roosevelt Lake in Roger Williams Park. Her results are added to a multi-year dataset that helps researchers at URI to assess long-term water quality and pursue environmental solutions. She is an active volunteer with the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center's (PSIC) partnership with the URI Watershed Watch and has been engaged in this work for two years.

Lindsay originally volunteered to get involved with the community and stay connected to her academic roots - she studied environmental science at Roger Williams University. Able to do her sampling during breaks from working remotely in a neighborhood near the park, Lindsay said, "This volunteer opportunity was a dream!" and noted that the PSIC and Watershed Watch make it effortless to be a volunteer.

Lindsay sometimes brings along her children, ages 6 and 9, on sampling days to teach them the importance of science. Thank you, Lindsay, for all you do to support the health of our waterways and communities in Rhode Island!

By Rebecca Reeves
Stormwater Education and Outreach Coordinator
Providence Stormwater Innovation Center



Lindsay Dulude monitors water quality in Roger Williams Park as a volunteer with the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center.

Scholarship Opportunities and Upgrades at Caratunk

A Generous Gift of \$200,000 from the Helen Brackett Trust Brings Scholarships, New Education Materials, and Refuge Upgrades to Caratunk.

Transportation scholarships brought bus after bus to the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge last spring. Over 764 students from 12 schools in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts scrambled down the bus steps and into the big white barn to start their nature programs. Newly purchased student tables and chairs were used for nature-based activities and crafts, and the younger children found a spot on the big colorful rug for story time programs.

Students headed out on the trails with brand new discovery tools. Upgraded ponding nets, magnifiers, field guides, bug boxes, and binoculars are now available to young explorers as they investigate local habitats and learn about the birds and animals that live there.

New outdoor picnic tables, including one that is wheelchair accessible, and a recently installed compostable restroom also met the children's needs.

Funds from this generous gift supported five Audubon camp staff and four junior assistants as they led 94 young campers at Caratunk this summer. Fresh art supplies, new books, and selected biofacts were all put to good use over the four weeks of camp.

The funds from the Helen Brackett Trust also allowed for the purchase of two shade tents and safety supplies, including an AED and storage cabinet, staff radios, and first aid kits.

Audubon is grateful for this generous gift and looks to expand scholarship and transportation opportunities with the remaining funds.

Helen Brackett grew up in Seekonk, MA and worked for years with children in need. She championed the mental health benefits of time spent in nature and looked to expand the experiences of children in city communities. This generous gift from her estate has enabled Audubon to purchase much-needed upgrades and education materials for the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk and has allowed hundreds of children to reap the benefits of outdoor exploration.

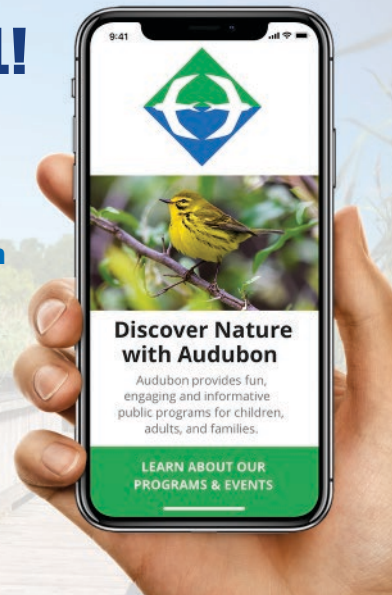


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THANK YOU! Summer Camp Scholarship Donors

The generous donors noted below sent 10 children to summer camp through the Audubon Camp Scholarship Program. These campers explored field and shore habitats as well as Audubon's large pollinator garden. They made nature discoveries, hiked, visited with live animals, made messy crafts and much more. Thank you for allowing these children to experience nature this summer.

Over \$6,000 in camp scholarships were awarded.

- Elizabeth and Eugene Antonell
- Maria A. Masse
- Lavinia Connors
- John Miller
- Bonnie England and Rita Bugbee
- Wendy Miller
- Walter and Eileen Jachna
- Peter A. Tassia, III and Maija Lutz

Legislative Update

By Priscilla De La Cruz, Senior Director of Government Affairs



In 2022, the General Assembly set a new standard for environmental action in Rhode Island.

The emerging 2023 legislative efforts include:

Audubon will continue to push for solutions that protect forests and the health of pollinators and other wildlife.

Climate action to reduce carbon emissions in the heating and transportation sector is a priority and critical to meeting the Act on Climate mandates.

We will advocate for investments in climate adaptation and nature-based solutions to protect wildlife and communities against the impacts of climate change.

Audubon will work to curb plastic pollution and ban pyrolysis of like the burning of plastics through a high-heat process of which undermines Rhode Island climate goals and environmental justice efforts.

To stay abreast of our emerging priorities, subscribe to Audubon's Eagle Eye newsletter: asri.org/lead

Can Rhode Island Rise to The Challenge of Protecting Core Forests?

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

Recently I had the opportunity to visit Prudence Island, the third largest in Narragansett Bay. Nearly eighty-five percent of the island's roughly 1,800 acres are protected from development, including 240 acres that were donated to Audubon. This commitment to conservation supports a diverse ecosystem and critical habitats including coastal wetlands, natural marshes, and forestlands that allow wildlife to thrive. Prudence had a long history of farming during colonial times and served as a Navy base during World War II. It is now home to roughly 200 year-round residents and the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, where state and federal scientists monitor water quality and ecological conditions. While the residents of Prudence are committed to protecting the island's natural resources, the impacts of climate change could already be seen on the coastal lines of Sandy Point Lighthouse. Due to high tides, increases in sea level rise, and extreme storm surges, the impact was visible and alarming.

While many may first think of our vulnerable coasts when they hear the words climate crisis, Rhode forests are also threatened. Our woodlands will play a major role in climate mitigation, and yet 2,000 acres of core forest* were lost between 2011 and 2018 in the state. This fragmentation and conversion of forestland to other land uses are among the greatest threats to Rhode Island's forests, according to the RI Department of Environmental Management. Solar development accounted for sixty-nine percent of all forest loss throughout that eight-year period. The reality is that forest loss from solar development has been working against our climate goals, which are now mandatory under the 2021 Act on Climate law. The limited natural resources in Rhode Island are irreplaceable as we attempt to adapt to climate impacts while ensuring wildlife and people can endure adversities with resiliency.

Beyond playing a role in mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration, forests offer air quality benefits by removing toxins and hazardous air pollutants. Trees provide water filtration that keeps our drinking water supplies safe and clean; shade and relief from heat islands in city frontline communities; outdoor recreational activities that support our health and well-being; cultural and economic value; and important habitat that supports thousands of wildlife species.

According to Dr. Charles Clarkson, Audubon avian research director, core forest is a critical resource for many species of breeding birds in Rhode Island. Wood Thrushes, as an example, are an international species of concern. These birds depend on core forestland, in particular oak forest, for survival. All of the above are vital values that must be considered and prioritized as we work toward a solution to deforestation.

As the threat of climate change intensifies and exacerbates the vulnerability of Rhode Island's 400 miles of coastline and nearly 370,000 acres of forestland, the stresses of land use in our densely populated areas also increase. Both present challenges to the State as it works toward responding to the climate crisis.

While we may not have all the answers at Audubon, we have strong partnerships and collaborate with a wide range of public and private stakeholders and policymakers. We think creatively about holistic solutions and opportunities. We have the determination to ask important questions and insist on truthful answers. Our questions help to bring focus to climate and issues from solar development to the need for green affordable housing and clean transportation options. Perhaps the biggest opportunity we have at our fingertips is breaking through public and private silos to avoid making infrastructure development decisions within a vacuum approach, especially considering the influx of federal dollars that could be leveraged.

Rhode Island has the opportunity, through smart policymaking and investments in clean energy and jobs, to change our current status quo of state renewable energy programs. These programs must not continue to be at odds with our climate goals, unintentionally leading to the clear-cutting of large tracts of forests as developers focus on inexpensive and privately owned open space. With careful and comprehensive planning and adjustments to state policy, real progress can be made. With intentional investments and incentives to level the costs of building solar on previously disturbed land or preferred sites such as gravel pits, landfills, commercially zoned properties, rooftops, and parking lots forests can be protected and coexist with renewable energy and clean energy jobs.

Audubon's advocacy and education efforts to elevate the value of forests is ongoing. We collaborate with groups such as the RI Woodland Partnership, play a role in the Land Use and Forest Conservation Commissions, and will ensure that our policy priorities for 2023 will reflect the need for reform of solar development siting. Audubon will continue to support effective land use decisions and conservation initiatives that align with our climate goals.

* Core forest is defined as blocks of undisturbed forested land of 250+ acres.

<https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/agriculture-and-forest-environment/value-of-forests>



Forest at Audubon Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge in Smithfield, RI. Inset: Wood Thrush is an international species of concern.

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, Charles Clarkson,
Kristen Curry, Priscilla De La Cruz,
Hope Foley, Lauren Parmelee,
Rebecca Reeves, Scott Ruhren,
Betsy Sherman Walker

Contributing Photographers
Nancy Maciolek Blake, Susie Dorr,
Peter Fish, Hope Foley,
Peter Green, Ed Hughes,
Jason Major, Glenn Osmundson,
Scott Ruhren, Scott Slusarski,
Paige Therien

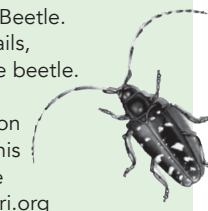
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The Report is the Audubon Society's member newsletter and updates members on the current issues and actions of the Society, its staff and volunteers. We encourage your participation and you may send items that will be considered for publication to: 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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