



## Building community connections through shared experience

Like many of you, I suspect, Monday's solar eclipse captured my full attention. Some Mid-Atlantic Audubon staffers traveled to the Totality zone while others observed the moon's path from farther away. Some of us watched alone and others in groups. Some used special glasses and had zoom lenses and scopes to capture the event while other staff created their own safe viewing equipment. All of us left the experience feeling awestruck and more connected to the natural world and the mysteries that it contains.

At Audubon, we work to make connections between people and the wonders of nature every day. Our staff have the distinct joy and privilege of creating public

programs and public spaces that welcome all to experience miracles and create community connections. In this newsletter, you'll read about some of our spring events as well as the important work that staff perform to restore places for birds and people in Baltimore and Philadelphia. As always, we invite you to join us. While it won't be a once-in-a-lifetime solar eclipse, you will still learn something, experience wonder, find community and have fun.

Thank you for all of your support,

--Suzanne

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Belted kingfisher. Photo: Daniel Kelenbach

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## The 2024 Legislative Session in Maryland

The Maryland General Assembly wrapped up its 446th joint session on Monday, April 7th. 2,000 Audubon supporters helped advocate for our priorities this year! Bills that Audubon supported will increase watershed protection and coastal restoration across the state, ban the sale of invasive plants, incentivize the development of solar energy and bring more

resources to the largest urban forest on the east coast. Highlights include:

- **The Whole Watershed Act** will accelerate restoration of the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays watersheds through the beneficial use of dredge material and large-scale restoration efforts – which will benefit programs such as Audubon Mid-Atlantic’s Marshes for Tomorrow.
- **The Gwynns Falls State Park Study** legislation establishes a working group to develop a path forward for Baltimore’s Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park to become a State Park Partnership Park, bringing much needed resources to this ecological gem in west Baltimore.
- **The Brighter Tomorrow Act** provides incentives to solar energy developers to locate solar arrays on rooftops, over parking lots, and in already disturbed lands such as brownfields, preventing forest fragmentation while promoting renewable energy development.
- **The Biodiversity Protection Act** requires the secretary of Agriculture to maintain a list of invasive plant species and develop a “prohibited list” which may ban the sale of those listed species. This will improve ecosystem health for birds and their food sources in Maryland.
- **Critical Area Administrative Changes Law** will give the Maryland Department of Natural Resources more authority to guide land development away from sensitive tidal and coastal habitats, while also providing local jurisdiction more resources to plan future land use while taking climate change, habitat conservation, and environmental justice into consideration.

### **Pennsylvania Policy Updates:**

In Pennsylvania, the House of Representatives has passed HB 1842 allowing for the development and procurement of community solar projects. Advancing more broad access to solar in the Commonwealth will reduce pollution and mitigate climate change for both birds and people. The bill now needs to pass the Senate. We are also monitoring investments in Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests, as well as new renewable energy portfolio goals outlined by the Governor. Stay tuned for ways that you can help in the coming weeks!

Audubon Mid-Atlantic's priority legislation can be tracked through our website. For a closer look at Maryland priority legislation, [please navigate here](#). For a closer look at Pennsylvania legislation, please [visit our website here](#).

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Great horned owl. Photo: Michael Rosenbaum





## Baltimore's Broadway East Planting Day

Audubon Mid-Atlantic's Baltimore Program is thrilled to be partnering with ReBUILD Metro, EnviroCollab Landscape Architects, CityScape Engineering, and Broadway East neighbors on a whole block transformation including the planting of 2,000 square feet of native habitat on Saturday, April 27th. This garden is just part of a roughly half-acre greenspace restoration that will include canopy trees, an urban meadow, berry-producing shrubs (edible by birds AND humans), and blooming perennials. Audubon has worked alongside neighbors and partners to design a space that meets the goals of people, pollinators, and birds. Layers of plants and shade trees will cool this area that suffers from intense urban heat, a rain garden will filter and absorb floodwaters, and native plants will host insects, which will in turn feed migratory birds. Most importantly, the new park will be beautiful, inviting, and accessible to this multicultural, multigenerational neighborhood. Please join us for a celebration and planting day, which will include food, music, and more, on Saturday, April 27th, starting at 10:00 AM. Rain date, May 11th. [Please consider pre-registering here.](#)

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Site design planting map.

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## Spring Migration is Here!

Every year during the spring and fall months, tens of millions of birds pass through our region, including its major cities. While lights can throw birds off their migration paths, bird fatalities are more directly caused by the amount of energy the birds waste flying around and calling out in confusion. The exhaustion can then leave them vulnerable to other urban threats.

Simply turning your lights off from midnight to 6am during the spring migration from April 1 through May 31, and during the fall migration from August 15 through November 15, can potentially reduce bird collision death by up to 80%. For more information about Lights Out in the Philadelphia area, [check out this fact sheet from Bird Safe Philly](#). You can also [visit this page on Audubon's website](#) to learn more about nationwide Lights Out efforts.

Migratory birds encounter many challenges on their journeys, but can also experience issues when they return to breeding grounds. In Mid-Atlantic states like Delaware, wild birds such as the red knot face [challenges with dwindling food supplies](#).

The [Bird Migration Explorer](#) is a tool developed by the National Audubon Society, which tracks the heroic annual journeys made by over 450 bird species nationwide. Click below to learn more about our local migratory

species, along with their locations and the conservation challenges they face. [Visit the Bird Migration Explorer here!](#)

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Group of red knots. Photo: Elizabeth Brensinger



## Grid Magazine highlights Audubon Mid-Atlantic Work

Audubon Mid-Atlantic's work in southwest Philadelphia was recently featured in two Grid Magazine articles. [In this first piece](#), the author documents several challenges of creating pollinator garden space in developed areas, and profiles gardeners that are expanding educational efforts and creating space for local pollinators, including birds, to flourish. [In the second piece](#), the author interviewed Robin Irizarry, Audubon's Delaware River Watershed Program Manager, along with several community partners. They speak on the importance of conservation efforts in our city spaces, and how community members benefit from accessible green spaces.

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Shawana Mitchell stands with Cecil St Community Garden sign. Photo: Jordan Teicher/GRID Philly





## Call for educators – visit the John James Audubon Center with your school group!

If you're an educator seeking spring field trip opportunities in the Philadelphia region, consider the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove! Field trip experiences at the John James Audubon Center are educational and exciting. With nearly 200 acres of forest, meadow, and creek habitat, the center provides the perfect setting for students to discover the wonder of nature, birds, and biodiversity through hands-on learning that will increase environmental literacy and build connections with the natural world. Age-appropriate program topics include migration, watershed health, climate resilience, healthy forests, adaptations, and pollinators, and align with many PA State and STEELS Standards.

For any questions, information, or to book, please contact Marcy Engleman at [marcy.engleman@audubon.org](mailto:marcy.engleman@audubon.org) or 610-990-3416.

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Educational program at John James Audubon Center. Photo: Ted Ellis

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## Annual Earth Day Celebration at the John James Audubon Center

A wide selection of native plants from Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens, Behmerwald Nursery, Gino's Nursery, and Edge of the Woods Native Plant Nursery will be available to purchase during the John James Audubon Center's [annual Earth Day celebration on Sunday, April 21st](#). Not sure where to start? Experts will be on hand to help you select plants that work best in your space. And while you're here, enjoy bird ambassadors, kids' activities, partner organizations, canoe rides, and readings of Grandma Lisa's Humming, Buzzing, Chirping Garden by award-winning author Lisa Doseff. For more information about the native plant sale and other Earth Day related activities, [please visit our website](#).



Earth Day Celebration at John James Audubon Center. Photo: Ted Ellis



## City Nature Challenge

Join Audubon Mid-Atlantic, and the rest of Philadelphia, at The Discovery Center on April 27th at 10:00am for the annual City Nature Challenge (CNC). Started in 2016 as a competition between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the CNC has grown into an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in their own cities. Run by the Community Science teams at the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM), the CNC is an annual four-day global bioblitz at the end of April, where cities are in a collaboration-meets-friendly-competition to see what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal. [You can find more information on our website here.](#)

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Discovery Center overhead view.

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## Other Upcoming Events in the Mid-Atlantic

[Join us for Audubon's popular Habitat Gardening Intro Webinar](#) to explore why and how to cultivate your outdoor spaces for birds and butterflies. Audubon experts will share practical tips and scientific support for gardening with native plants, and transforming your home, school, work, or community space into a bird and butterfly paradise! Following the Intro

webinar, we invite you to join us for our Advanced webinar where we dive into bird-friendly garden design and maintenance.

Author and birder Dorian Anderson will be at the Discovery Center on Wednesday, May 8th from 6 until 8:30pm to discuss his exciting yearlong adventure on a two-wheeled eco-friendly bicycle. It's a twist on a more typical "Big Year" project, where a birdwatcher tries to observe as many species as possible during a calendar year. [More info and registration here.](#)

Visit our Centers, explore our trails, and join us for some winter birding and other exciting activities happening across the Mid-Atlantic region!

- [Pennsylvania Events](#), including the John James Audubon Center and The Discovery Center
- [Maryland Events](#)

#### CONNECT WITH US



#### **Audubon Mid-Atlantic**

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