

Audubon Onward!

AUDUBON'S IMPACT IN THE MID-ATLANTIC
2024



Audubon Onward!



DEAR FRIENDS,

This report invites you to look more closely at our collective impact over the past year to protect birds and the places they need in the Mid-Atlantic. *Audubon Onward!* provides important updates and conservation gains through our forward-looking plan to address the mounting threats of climate change and biodiversity loss—threats that not only impact birds, but people and the planet, too. The following pages underscore the urgency of now, and Audubon’s bold response.

Over the past half-century, we have lost 3 billion birds in North America—an alarming trend skewed heavily toward migratory species. This precipitous loss is a powerful statement about the condition of our planet and a harbinger of things to come if we don’t act strategically and decisively.

Here in the Mid-Atlantic, birds like the Saltmarsh Sparrow face a dire future if the current pace of climate change continues. This iconic species is among many others likely to disappear from the Mid-Atlantic in most of our lifetimes if we do not scale our work to meet the size and severity of these threats.

It is this urgency that led us to launch our *Flight Plan*, Audubon’s bold five-year strategic plan, which codifies our evolution into a truly hemispheric organization.

***Flight Plan* is about protecting birds, and at the same time, protecting people and our planet by advancing a generation-shaping agenda to the forefront of conservation.**

Beyond boundaries and across vast distances, most migratory birds only spend a fraction of their annual cycle in our state. To protect them, we need to literally meet them where they are. By studying their migrations and extensive breeding ranges, we can zero in with precision to address the dizzying array of conservation challenges they face.

It is your investment and our shared impact in the Mid-Atlantic that will allow us to achieve hemispheric outcomes—this is how we will bend the bird curve.

Thank you for your support,

Suzanne Biemiller
VICE PRESIDENT AND
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AUDUBON MID-ATLANTIC

BIRDS TELL US. THIS IS HOW WE LISTEN.

Thanks to game-changing science and new digital technologies, we are narrowing knowledge gaps that have long plagued the world of bird conservation. The Lesser Yellowlegs, for example, makes an annual migratory journey from the Boreal Forest in Canada to Chile—a round trip of nearly 20,000 miles.

Last year, four Lesser Yellowlegs originally tagged in Colombia’s Cauca Valley with transmitters—four single birds spread against the mammoth skies of the Western Hemisphere—flew past Audubon-installed Motus towers located in Michigan and Pennsylvania; a similar tower was recently installed at our John James Audubon Center in Audubon, Pennsylvania. These towers captured critical data revealing secrets of the birds’ migratory adventures, giving new revelations and insight into where, when, and how long they sought habitats needed to provide safe rest and food.



Baltimore Oriole.
Photo: Randy Barba/Audubon Photography Awards

Audubon’s *Flight Plan*:

A Powerful and Dynamic Story of Migratory Science, Climate Action, and Community Building

OUR SCIENCE IS CLEAR. We are in a critical moment for birds, people, and the planet. Climate change and biodiversity loss have reached crisis levels, yet the window of opportunity remains open—if we act now.

The most ambitious strategic effort in our history, Audubon’s *Flight Plan*, establishes our vision for shaping a world where birds and people thrive, elevating Audubon as a global conservation leader. *Flight Plan* sets five-year milestones in key areas to track progress towards our long-term vision to “bend the bird curve,” in other words, to halt and reverse the alarming decline of birds.

Our recognition of the interconnectedness of people, place, and climate led to the development of four milestones we intend to reach over the next five years: Habitat Conservation, Climate, Policy, and Community Building.

MILESTONES:

Flight Plan harnesses the full power of Audubon—including on-the-ground staff across the Western Hemisphere, centers and sanctuaries, and local chapter partners—by focusing on a set of shared outcomes for greater collective impact towards our vision.

HABITAT CONSERVATION

Using science to identify, protect, and conserve 300 million acres of bird habitat across the Americas

CLIMATE ACTION

Deploying 100 gigawatts of renewable energy and storing 30 billion tons of carbon through natural climate solutions

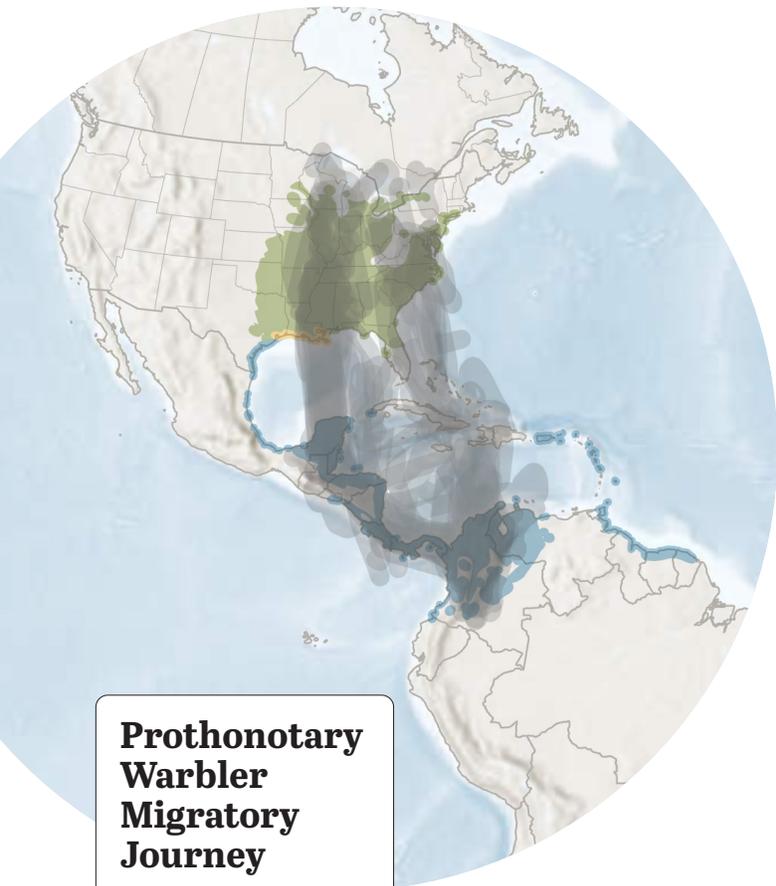
POLICY LEADERSHIP

Pairing diplomacy with advocacy to develop and implement bird-friendly solutions

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Creating a diverse network of bird lovers working together to advance our shared vision

AUDUBON'S HEMISPHERIC APPROACH TO CONSERVATION focuses our efforts on the places where birds need us most and to all the places they call home; their seasonal migration across the Western Hemisphere means Audubon also works from boreal Canada to the Carolinas to Chile and beyond.



Prothonotary Warbler Migratory Journey

- Winter Range
- Summer
- Year-Round
- Journey of a Tracked Bird



Audubon's Bird Migration Explorer provides a clearer-than-ever look at bird migration and the incredible journey of individual species. Here we see how the iconic Prothonotary Warbler requires us to work beyond our borders to ensure it remains safe and healthy throughout its annual cycle.

ILLUSTRATOR: DAVID ALLEN SIBLEY

In the past year, we have made progress towards our milestones—much of which has touched down in our region—and developed operational plans to continue driving this work forward.

Guided by our *Flight Plan*, we are engaging in conservation on 116,650,000 acres and influencing 50 renewable energy generation and transmission projects totaling 34 gigawatts—enough energy to power roughly 25 million homes.

HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE PAST YEAR INCLUDE EFFORTS TO:

- **Launch Audubon's Conservation Ranching Program in Wisconsin,** building on our success in fourteen other states where more than 100 ranches covering nearly 3 million acres have earned status as Audubon Certified bird-friendly land.
- **Fund seven new projects for protected areas in Perú and six in Bolivia** through *Conserva Aves*, totaling over 1.9 million acres.
- **Break ground on the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, the single-largest ecosystem restoration project in U.S. history;** this project will restore and strengthen up to 28,000 acres of wetlands in Louisiana, providing climate resiliency benefits to local communities.
- **Begin new engagement on a \$10 billion transmission project** spanning seven Midwestern states representing up to 20 gigawatts.
- **Deliver 10,000 acre-feet of water to benefit Great Salt Lake and Jordan River** through local partnerships and co-management of the Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust.
- **Convene 11 Indigenous Guardians and leaders from five First Nations,** key partners on our work in Canada, at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine for knowledge exchange and training opportunities.

Through innovative strategies to restore Maryland's saltwater marshes, create healthy forests, protect the Delaware River watershed, and improve public spaces in Baltimore and Philadelphia, the Mid-Atlantic region is making important progress. Regional staff are advancing *Flight Plan* by amplifying our collective voices and implementing innovative conservation efforts aligned with Audubon's vision to identify connected, climate-resilient places across the hemisphere. As is true across the Americas, we are focusing our efforts where birds need us the most.

Audubon’s Work in the Mid-Atlantic. Unified by the Power of Birds.

Through our *Flight Plan*, we commit to achieving significant milestones that will demonstrate measurable impact on the climate and biodiversity crises. We are pleased to report back to you that your investments supported the following impact over the past year:



Audubon Avian Biologist Brittany Panos holds a **Red-Winged Blackbird** while conducting field research at Irish Grove. Photo: Sydney Walsh/Audubon

→ Healthy Forests:

Through our Healthy Forest Program, an additional 6,800 acres of privately-owned Pennsylvania forests are now managed or have created management plans that use bird friendly techniques. Those plans were created by foresters trained through Audubon’s Forester Endorsement and will improve water quality and breeding habitat for late-successional and mature forest birds. This work was done through a collaboration with the Ruffed Grouse Society, American Bird Conservancy, and Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Audubon Forest Program staff also created migratory stopover habitat for Golden-winged and Cerulean Warblers on Cove Mountain, owned by the Nature Conservatory.



Cerulean Warbler.
Photo: Lance Leonhardt/Audubon Photography Awards

HABITAT CONSERVATION

Conserving quality, connected, and climate-resilient bird habitat

→ **Marshes for Tomorrow:** Audubon has been working on an ambitious plan to restore 25,000 acres of Maryland’s saltmarshes. Funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the landscape-scale restoration plan will provide public and private landowners with a schedule of restoration actions required to restore marsh habitat critical to the recovery of the Saltmarsh Sparrow and key to improving climate resiliency along Maryland’s eastern shore and coastal bays. Audubon has also embarked on a project to restore saltmarsh habitat at Irish Grove, which is owned by the Maryland Ornithological Society.

 CLIMATE ACTION

Accelerating renewable energy and restoring forests, grasslands, and wetlands



Audubon advocates during the 2024 I Bird I Vote Conservation Summit. Photo: Emily Scarr

→ **Offshore Wind:** Audubon staff and supporters continue to support efforts to create an 8500-megawatt offshore wind project in Maryland. Our expertise has helped ensure that the project is sited in a way that reduces harm to birds. Our policy team is also working with Audubon members and other environmental leaders to support Governor Shapiro’s proposal to increase Pennsylvania’s renewable energy requirement to 35 percent by 2035.

→ **I Bird I Vote:** More than 70 Maryland environmental advocates attended Audubon’s 2024 I Bird I Vote Conservation Summit and learned about our efforts to support responsibly sited renewable energy projects and regional coastal resiliency efforts from guest speakers, including Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz. Attendees also heard from U.S. Senator Ben Cardin and thanked him for his decades of public service to Marylanders—and birds.

 POLICY LEADERSHIP

Advancing our *Healthy Birds, Healthy Planet* policy agenda

→ **Maryland:**

Audubon worked on several policy priorities in 2024, including the Whole Watershed Act (SB 969) and the Offshore Projects – Alterations (HB 1296). These laws will accelerate habitat restoration in the Chesapeake Bay, guide land development away from sensitive tidal and coastal habitats, and open opportunities for appropriately sited wind energy off the coast of Maryland.

→ **Pennsylvania:**

Our team is actively involved in efforts to identify and advance dedicated funding to clean local streams and for Growing Greener III, which funds public land conservation, restoration, and access projects throughout the commonwealth. We also support proposed policies to increase the size of no-build riparian buffers and accelerate the commonwealth’s transition to renewable energy.



Black-throated Blue Warbler. Photo: Sandra Rothenberg/Audubon Photography Awards

 **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Working together across the hemisphere to advance our shared vision



→ Public Programs:

Audubon Mid-Atlantic held over 100 public-facing events this year, engaging and inspiring guests of all ages. Staff and volunteers planted several hundred native shrubs and trees at the John James Audubon Center; novice and experienced birders alike took part in local bird walks and the annual Philadelphia Birding Weekend; and residents in Baltimore’s Pigtown neighborhood removed invasive species and installed native plants in a new public green space.

Southwest Philadelphia’s Cecil Street Community Garden created by Audubon, partners, and community members. Photo: Robin Irizarry

→ **School Programs:** At Philadelphia’s Discovery Center, our education team welcomed more than 500 young adults and students from North Philadelphia-based summer camps. During field trips, participants learned about birds, played migration-themed games, and journeyed along the reservoir trail.

→ **Lights Out:** Audubon continues to work with the Wyncote Audubon Society and the Academy of Natural Sciences to collect data on bird collisions in Center City Philadelphia and to encourage more building owners to turn off their lights during spring and fall migration.

→ **MOTUS Network:** Our team installed a MOTUS tower at the John James Audubon Center to track migratory and local birds. In addition to collecting invaluable data to be used by ornithologists and other scientists, the tower will help bring birds’ epic migratory journeys to life for students and other center visitors.



Audubon staff installs a Motus tower at John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove in Audubon, Pennsylvania on July 9, 2024. Photo: Sydney Walsh/Audubon

We are deeply grateful for your continued commitment to Audubon and our mission to protect birds and the places they need—in the Mid-Atlantic and beyond. In the first year of *Flight Plan*, we have made significant progress towards our habitat and climate milestones. We could not have gained such momentum without you. The challenge before us is clear. Act now or risk a future with skies silenced with loss. With your help, we will bend the bird curve and make a sustainable impact for birds across the hemisphere.

This is our moment.

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Saltmarsh Sparrow.

Photo: Nadia Haq/Audubon
Photography Awards

Cover: Prothonotary Warbler.

Photo: Peter Brannon/
Audubon Photography Awards



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