



# Audubon Mid-Atlantic Impact Report

FALL 2021

Thank you for your support this past year. With the loss of three billion birds in the past 50 years and climate change posing an existential threat to the majority of North American species today, our work has never been more important. Through a potent blend of science, advocacy, powerful partnerships, innovative conservation strategies, education, and a strong commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB), Audubon Mid-Atlantic is scaling our work in new ways to create a brighter future for birds, people, and communities throughout the region.



**A**cross the Mid-Atlantic region, your support is helping Audubon advance its important work on behalf of birds. **Thank you.** Despite the challenges presented by the persistent COVID pandemic, Audubon staff members continued our important conservation, policy, education, and public engagement work—all designed to advance our mission to protect birds and the places they and people need to thrive.

As a regional program of the National Audubon Society, Audubon Mid-Atlantic represents a network of more than 100,000 members, 25 local Audubon chapters, three nature centers, as well as thousands of annual visitors, volunteers, and partners.

Over the past year, staff installed an artificial island in the Chesapeake Bay designed for nesting terns; we created a bipartisan Congressional Caucus focused on conserving riparian habitat and improving water quality in the Delaware River Watershed; we taught bird-friendly forest management techniques to more than 330 foresters in the Pennsylvania Wilds; and we convinced the owners of large Philadelphia office buildings to turn out the lights to save the lives of thousands of migrating birds. At our three environmental centers, we developed and hosted educational programming, welcoming young children, teens, and adults even as we navigated new safety protocols and government-mandated closures.

This fiscal year, we have begun a planning process designed to develop a clear vision for our regional work. We are asking ourselves and stakeholders what our purpose is, why our work matters, and what our goals should be over the next decade. And all that we do will ultimately complement and reflect the strategic focus of the National Audubon Society. I look forward to sharing our plans for the future with you next year.

One important feature of our planning work will be a focus on equity and belonging. How do we intentionally build an Audubon Mid-Atlantic that feels welcoming to all? How might all of our work address systemic racism and environmental discrimination? How do we invite everyone to experience the joy of birds, expanding what it means to be a “birder?” Some of our work—most notably Baltimore’s Green Leaders and Bird Ambassadors programs—has already helped grow that city’s birding community. But there is much more to do.

With your continued support, we will tackle the region’s pressing environmental challenges. You make our work possible. Thank you.



Suzanne Biemiller  
Vice President and Executive Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic



Ruffed Grouse



Pileated Woodpecker



Blue Jay

# Delaware River Watershed

The Delaware River Watershed (DRW) is a complex system of forests, rivers, marshes, and urban landscapes covering 13,500 square miles and 2,000 rivers and streams and supplies drinking water to more than 13 million people across Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey. This critical landscape is an important migratory pathway for millions of birds each year and provides life-sustaining resources to a wide array of birds, including Saltmarsh Sparrow, Golden-winged Warbler, Wood Thrush, Red Knot, and American Black Duck.

Within the Delaware River Watershed and on Capitol Hill, Audubon Mid-Atlantic works toward bipartisan support and policy-focused solutions for increased conservation funding and program effectiveness throughout the watershed. Audubon's conservation and policy teams led the recruitment effort to establish the Congressional Delaware River Watershed Caucus. Led by Representatives Antonio Delgado (D-NY-19) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-1), the caucus was formed in April 2021 to establish a bipartisan delegation from the watershed's 23 Congressional Districts dedicated to

issues related to the Delaware River Watershed. It serves as a unique opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to demonstrate a shared commitment to the health and wellbeing of our water resources and the support for landscape-scale programs focused on water quality and quantity, ecological restoration, and conservation. Our work with local legislators helped ensure the inclusion of \$26 million in watershed restoration funds in the recently passed federal infrastructure bill.



Audubon developed specialized mapping that considers threats of climate change, urban development, and other factors to plan conservation projects that deliver the greatest impact for our twelve focal birds. This year we secured significant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund for our first large-scale watershed restoration project, which spans three states: advancing bird-friendly forest management on private land in the New York headwaters; restoring over 10 acres of meadow and one mile of riparian habitat in Philadelphia; and growing support for restoration along the Delaware Bayshore to benefit communities, birds, and other wildlife.



Osprey



Ruddy Duck

# Chesapeake Bay Tidal Marshes



The wooden nesting raft mimics the natural sand and shell islands on which the birds would lay their eggs and features crushed clamshells, wooden chick shelters, and even decoy birds to attract nesters. The custom decoys were made by Mad River Decoy, owned by Audubon's SeaBird Institute.

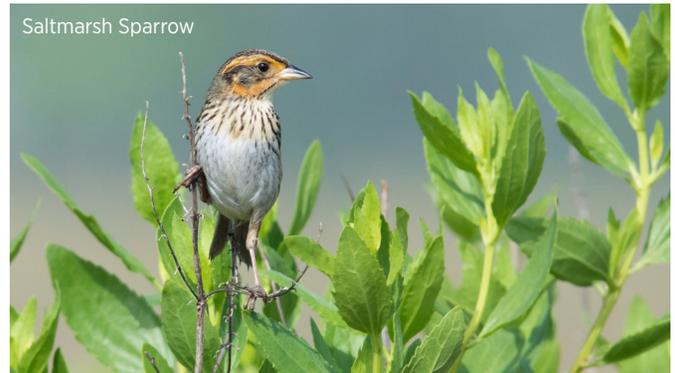
Audubon is responding to the threat of sea-level rise by developing and implementing strategies to help the largest of the Chesapeake Bay tidal marshes adapt and become more resilient, for the benefit of birds and the communities that line these coastal zones.



Deal Island Wildlife Management Area

Chesapeake Bay marshes are in greater peril than most other regions. Scientists predict that nearly all the present-day Chesapeake marshes could be lost by 2100, which would result in the loss of biodiversity, commercially important fisheries, protection against storms for coastal communities, and recreational tourism. Audubon and partners have designed a plan to restore 75 acres of subsiding tidal marsh in the

Chesapeake Bay at Deal Island Wildlife Management Area by using dredge material to raise salt marsh elevation. Construction will begin in Spring 2022. The goal is not only to extend the longevity of the marsh in the face of sea-level rise but also to restore the high marsh habitat needed by the imperiled Saltmarsh Sparrow, one of the bird species most at risk from climate change in North America.



Saltmarsh Sparrow

Royal Terns, Common Terns, and Black Skimmers are now listed as endangered in Maryland due to the erosion and loss of their nesting islands in Maryland's Coastal Bays.

Audubon and partners have installed an artificial nesting platform for these species. Since the platform launched in a remote location in May 2021, 23 pairs of Common Terns have nested with 20 nests producing at least one chick. This success makes the floating platform the largest colony in the Coastal Bays during the 2021 nesting season.



Common Tern

## Eastern Forests



Great Horned Owl

Birds are integral to forest ecosystems, yet over the past 50 years, the birds of our eastern forests have declined by approximately 170 million or 17 percent. Pennsylvania's forests provide important breeding, migratory stop-over, and wintering habitat for more than a hundred species. With 60 percent forest cover in Pennsylvania, forest management strategies can have significant impacts on bird populations and help address climate change directly.

Through our Healthy Forest Program, Audubon has embarked on a unique project, integrating forest management practices designed to sequester carbon with those aimed at producing habitat for declining forest-bird species. No other project has attempted to integrate carbon management with bird habitat enhancement. This new project incentivizes science-based practices that bring new forest-management options to private landowners.

The Healthy Forests team established two Forest Bird Conservation Centers, of an anticipated five total by 2024, in the Pennsylvania Wilds Conservation

Landscape. Each Center is more than 10,000 acres and is designed to provide habitat and demonstration areas to train forestry professionals in bird-friendly practices to improve habitat for declining species, focus conservation investments, and drive active forest management through partnerships with private landowners, agencies, local communities, and industrial forest operators.

Audubon delivered bird-friendly forest management training modules to 337 foresters, students, and industry stakeholders, including PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)—foresters who manage 2.1 million acres of public forestland and provide technical support to hundreds of private landowners each year.

Audubon and Natural Lands partnered to implement bird-friendly forestry practices for Wood Thrush, Ruffed Grouse, and Golden-winged Warblers on the 3,600-acre Bear Creek Preserve in Luzerne County.



Private- and public-lands foresters visit a demonstration site to learn about various approaches to implementing bird-friendly forestry practices.

# Education And Engagement

Audubon Mid-Atlantic has three environmental education centers across the region that serve as innovative hubs for learning and community engagement designed to inspire more people to act on behalf of birds. Patterson Park Audubon Center uses the 137-acre park in southeast Baltimore as a springboard for a wide array of programs in the park and throughout Baltimore, with a strong focus on programs for Latinx students and adults. Southeast Pennsylvania is home to two centers: the John James Audubon Center in suburban Montgomery County, which provides public programs at and through the new museum devoted to birds and conservation, as well as the artwork of John James Audubon. The Discovery Center, in north Philadelphia, serves as a hub for conservation education programming to adjacent, densely built neighborhoods and throughout Philadelphia.

Throughout the region, Audubon staff educate children and adults on how to provide food, shelter, safe passage, and places for birds to raise their young. Some of these initiatives engage homeowners, retail garden centers, and commercial landscapers in promoting the use of native plants in residential and municipal settings.



Story hour at the John James Audubon Center



Students Birding at the Discovery Center



**BIRD SAFE PHILLY**

## BIRD SAFE PHILLY

Following a mass collision event in Philly in October 2020, the largest in the city in 70 years, Audubon Mid-Atlantic joined forces with the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club, and two local Audubon chapters—Valley Forge Audubon and Wyncote Audubon—to form Bird-Safe Philly in March 2021 with a mission to make Philadelphia a bird-safe city.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic launched Lights Out Philly. The most recent high-profile addition to Audubon’s national Lights Out program provided an exemplary model of collaboration and support from local government and prominent leaders in the building industry. More than 85 commercial, residential, and municipal building managers have signed on to turn off their lights between midnight and dawn during spring and fall migration seasons. This simple action can potentially reduce 80% of nighttime bird deaths. [birdsafephilly.org](https://birdsafephilly.org)

Other local efforts are more hands on. In the city of York, PA, Audubon completed the [Community Blooms](#) project where we built six community learning gardens that are home to over 300 bird-friendly plants, leading to over 3,000 square feet of converted habitat. In Baltimore, Wildlife Gardening Workshops and tours engaged 450 people over the last year. In the Schuylkill Highlands region of Chester and Berks Counties, 75 homeowners planted over 600 plants along stream banks to strengthen riparian corridors. Throughout Pennsylvania, nearly a dozen retailers have teamed with Audubon to highlight native plants. And 420 people in the region registered their properties in the Bird-Friendly Habitat program.



### I BIRD I VOTE

Two days. Fourteen guest speakers. And, an array of advocacy opportunities for conservation-minded voters and volunteers across Maryland and DC. This was the foundation for the 6th annual “I Bird. I Vote.” Conservation Summit that engaged 140 Maryland and D.C. bird-lovers in advocacy for bird-friendly legislation. Participants were addressed by U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen, U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (represented by Shannon Frede), Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, Rep. John Sarbanes, and Rep. Jamie Raskin as well as speakers from Audubon and its environmental partner organizations. The event resulted in hundreds of advocacy actions taken on a range of state legislation from climate change to bird-friendly buildings and bird-friendly landscaping.



Patterson Park Audubon Center’s Bird Ambassadors plant a bird-friendly garden in southeast Baltimore.

### BALTIMORE BIRDING WEEKEND

Each year in late September, more than 100 people have gathered over a three-day weekend to explore and celebrate birds and Baltimore. The restrictions of the pandemic have not slowed us down and this year and last we were still able to safely come together. Held during peak migration season, visitors observed thousands of birds in urban and rural settings, from land and the water. Last year, local experts guided nineteen trips, including five virtual, from Cox and Swan Creek Wetlands to Herring Run Park, providing education about birds and the importance of healthy habitats. This year’s trip was equally as successful and inspirational.

Northern Shoveler



Your generous support this last year has helped Audubon-MidAtlantic grow its capacity to shape a better future for birds and people. In the coming years, we will recruit new supporters and volunteers from every corner of the region and engage an increasingly diverse audience by expanding our work within and alongside historically underrepresented communities.

With science as our guide, we're establishing substantive conservation goals targeting many of the most essential and threatened habitats in the Mid-Atlantic, while pioneering environmental practices for the rest of the country to follow. Where birds thrive, people thrive.

Thank you for being a key component of our success.

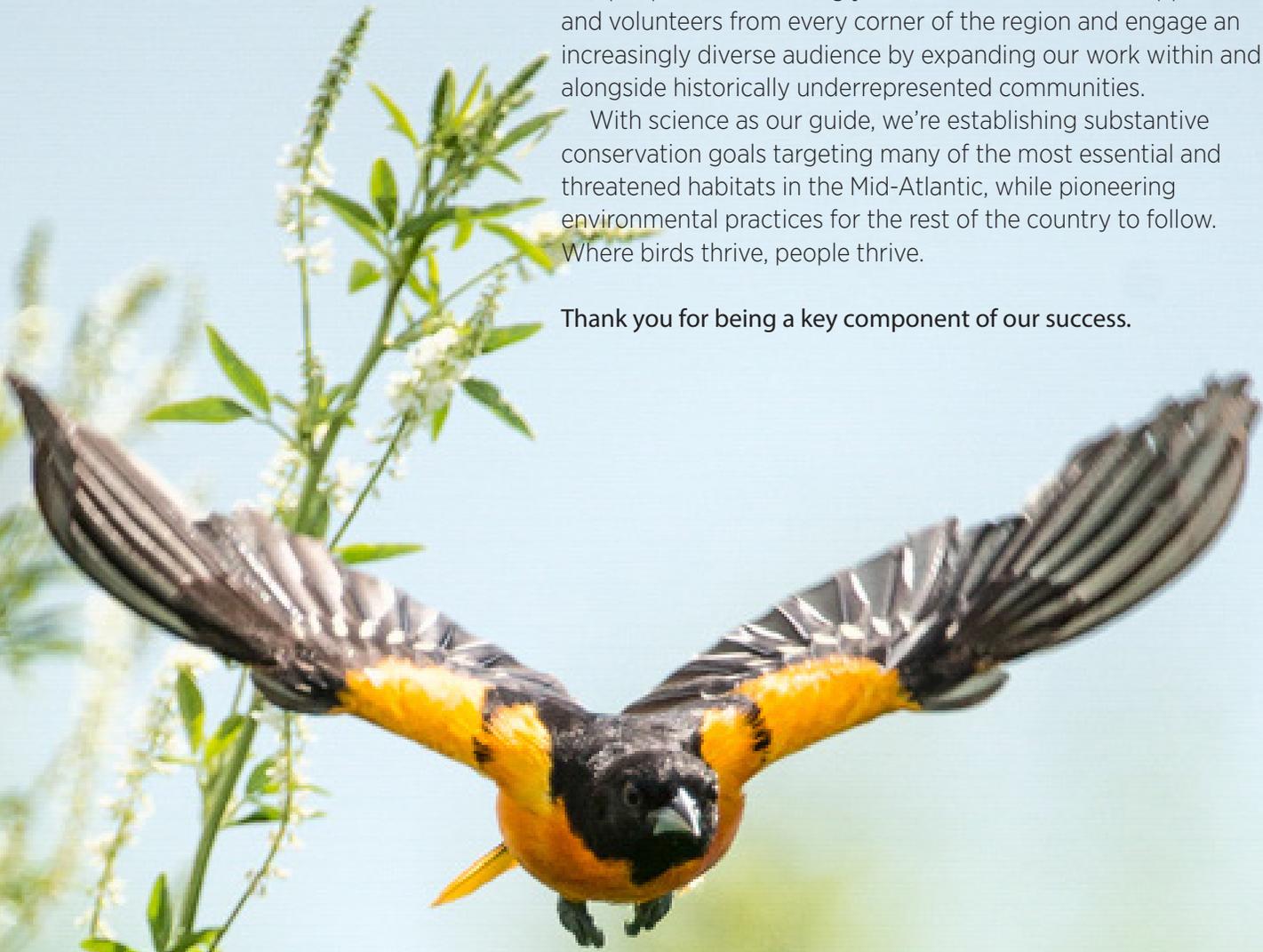


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