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The sun grows stronger every day and milder temperatures signal that winter is loosening its grip on the region. So too are birds sending out signs that it is time to start moving and start building.

Staff at Audubon Mid-Atlantic are heeding those signs. For the past six weeks, two staff working groups have taken concrete steps to shape the direction our efforts will take over the next years. Some of that work involved stakeholder interviews: 47 environmental leaders, community organizations, government officials and funders, to be exact. We also sent out surveys to 350 additional stakeholders, including chapter leaders and advisory board members (past and present). We asked all of them to share their views on the biggest environmental challenges facing the region and how they think Audubon should work to address those issues.

Another staff team delved into scientific data and studies, considering the region's bird species, threats to their survival within habitats and opportunities for Audubon to work on their behalf at a landscape scale.

This work revealed a number of insights that we are now using to refine our goals and strategies.

While all of this has been happening, we have been working hard on our on-going conservation, education and policy work, as you will read below.

It is a busy time for birds and for us!

Thank you,

Suzanne Biemiller

Executive Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Vice President, National Audubon Society

Black Skimmer. Photo: Alexander Viduetsky



I Bird. I Vote.

A big thank you to everyone who joined us on February 11 and 12 for Audubon Mid-Atlantic's 2022 "I Bird. I Vote." Conservation Summit. With virtual presentations from elected leaders, community activists, and Audubon staff, participants learned about the latest local, state, and federal legislation that affects birds and people in the region as well as exciting programs and accomplishment from the Mid-Atlantic team. The event was a tremendous success! We look forward continued growth of this annual summit to encourage others to advocate on behalf of birds and the places they need.

Baltimore Oriole. Photo: Ken Carol Norment



MD Priorities for Birds

The Maryland legislative session is almost at its halfway point and Audubon Mid-Atlantic has been working with a coalition of legislators, local Audubon chapters, conservation partners and environmental organizations across the state to support bird friendly policies. This year, we are supporting a number of bills that would promote habitat conservation and mitigate climate change. Among those bills that Audubon Mid-Atlantic joins our partners in supporting are the following:

- **Maryland the Beautiful Act (HB 1031/SB 791):** Establishes a statewide land conservation goal to protect 30% of its lands by 2030 and 40% by 2040.
- **Climate Solutions Now (SB 0528):** Aims to achieve net-zero statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 and adopt a plan that reduces statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030.
- **Comprehensive Climate Solutions (HB 708):** Requires the State to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions through the establishment of a net-zero statewide greenhouse gas emissions goal.
- **Reclaiming Renewable Energy (HB 11):** Aims to take trash incineration out of definition of "Tier 1 renewable source" of renewable energy in Maryland.
- **Forest Mitigation Banks and the Forest Conservation Fund (HB 961/SB 651):** With partners, Audubon Mid-Atlantic supports this bill with the amendment added that existing tree stands cannot be used for forest mitigation plantings required by Maryland's Forest Conservation Act.
- **Sustainable Buildings Act (HB 43):** Sets standards for state buildings to reduce energy consumption and minimize impacts on birds.

Additional information about how members can raise their voices in support of these policies will be shared with Maryland members soon through our Every Action email alert system.

Photo: Gerry Ellis



Protecting Cobbs Creek in West Philadelphia

Birders in Philadelphia were taken aback in February when confronted with land clearing in Cobbs Creek park. Acres of mature trees were felled as part of work being done by the non-profit Cobbs Creek Foundation (Foundation) to restore an historic golf course located in this part of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park system.

While Audubon Mid-Atlantic supports the work of the Foundation to restore miles of Cobbs Creek banks, this park area is an Audubon Important Bird Area and has become a favorite spot for local birders and nearby neighbors who appreciate its natural beauty. The golf course also lies just north of Whitby Meadow, which Audubon Mid-Atlantic staff have been working with Land Health Institute and other community partners to restore over the past few years. Like many, we could not help but wonder why acres of mature trees were cut down with seemingly no public input or consultation with local environmental organizations including Audubon Mid-Atlantic. We immediately contacted project leads to voice our disappointment in the decision and to implore the Foundation to work with neighbors and organizations like Audubon Mid-Atlantic on a plan to restore the property's tree canopy and other habitats in a way that will yield long-lasting environmental benefits for birds and people.



PA's Growing Green III Plan

Audubon Mid-Atlantic strongly supports Governor Wolf's proposal to invest more than \$450 million in federal recovery dollars in the commonwealth's Growing Green III. In the words of executive director Suzanne Biemiller, "The Growing Green III plan offers Pennsylvania a great opportunity to protect and restore critical habitat, increase the public's access to outdoor recreation, and support efforts that address the growing threats of climate change. These proposed investments will benefit birds and people across the Commonwealth. We applaud Governor Wolf for offering a plan that would devote \$450 million from the American Rescue Plan Act to this work and for increasing the total funding for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources up to \$638 million. We urge the state legislature to support the Governor's proposals." Over the coming months, our new policy director, Jim Brown, along with other Audubon Mid-Atlantic staff will be working on efforts to inform Audubon members in Pennsylvania about the positive impacts that these dollars will have on habitat conservation projects critical for birds.

Bald Eagle. Photo: Antonio Busiello



Audubon's Return on Environment Study Drives Ballot Measure

Recently, Carbon County Commissioners in Northeast Pennsylvania approved placing a \$10 million bond question on the November ballot to protect open space and agricultural land. The support for this ballot measure was prompted by a 2018 Return on Environment Report by the Kittatinny Coalition, led by Audubon Mid-Atlantic and in partnership with the Carbon County Economic Development Corporation, county officials and other environmental organizations that showed natural resources are worth approximately \$800 million for the county annually. Audubon Mid-Atlantic's work along the Kittatinny Ridge and neighboring communities continues to gain protections for the land, air and water that birds depend on. Read more [here](#).



Bring in Spring with Intro to Birding & Gardening Classes

Join us in-person at The Discovery Center and the John James Audubon Center for “Intro to Birding” classes that will introduce you to the wonderful world of birding! Birding (aka bird watching) has been a pastime for centuries but Audubon recognizes that it can be intimidating to start. These classes are designed for new audiences, novice birders, or anyone with an interest in the outdoors. We will help participants learn about equipment, techniques, and codes of conduct of birding. No previous experience required—just an interest to learn and have fun. The class will take place at The Discovery Center on March 12 and at the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove on March 19, with more birding introduction classes coming in April as well. Great for the whole family!

For virtual opportunities, the Patterson Park Audubon Center is hosting virtual webinars next month, including an “Intro to Wildlife Gardening” (March 9 or March 31) and “Bird-Friendly Garden Design” (March 16 or April 7). Audubon experts will share practical tips and scientific support for gardening with native plants. Explore the resources you need to beautify your outdoor space and attract birds, butterflies, and other beneficial wildlife. We hope you will join us to explore why and how to cultivate your space for birds and butterflies.



Upcoming Opportunities

Mussels Maniacs

Join us for our monthly freshwater mussel measuring event at The Discovery Center! This community science will help aid our freshwater mussel propagation program and bring us a step closer to cleaner water for birds and for ourselves. For more information, contact Bria Wimberly at bria.wimberly@audubon.org.

Upcoming Programs and Events

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

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

CONNECT WITH US



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