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New Year, New Beginnings

I'm not one for New Year's resolutions—the only one that I ever kept was to wear my seatbelt, which I made in the early 1980s when such a vow seemed positively revolutionary. But I do consider the turn of the calendar page to be an opportunity to take a long view of the year ahead, dream about what could be different in twelve months and make plans.

While I do not imagine that birds are aware of man-made calendars, I do know that January's lengthening days signal a start of their own preparations for the year ahead—the heroic journeys that they will make, the mates that they should find, the nests that they must prepare.

As we plot our course for Audubon Mid-Atlantic, we will have two new senior staff members to help guide our way: Angela Wenger, who will direct our southeastern Pennsylvania environmental centers, and Jim Brown, who will oversee our regional policy work. Both are seasoned leaders, bringing with them a wealth of experiences, an abundance of ideas and a passionate commitment to our mission. You can read more about them below.

We are well into our strategic planning work and have established two staff working groups: one group interviewing and surveying partners while the other team analyzes data related to birds and regional threats. These data points will help us determine our priorities and goals.

Staff are also developing a robust year of programming at our centers, optimistically assuming that in-person classes and learning experiences will happen safely again. One of our goals is to introduce more people to the wonder of birds and prepare would-be community scientists to participate in perennial Audubon events such as the Christmas Bird Count, Climate Watch and the Great Backyard Bird Count. As you will read below, we will start this effort to welcome more people into the flock in March with an "Introduction to Birding" class at Philadelphia's Discovery Center. Please check our calendar events regularly as we add more and more programs with each passing week.

With all of you at our side, we look forward to a year full of joy, ambition, connection and achievement.

Thank you,

Suzanne Biemiller

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

Great Egret. Photo: Patricia A. O'Keefe



New Leadership for Southeastern PA Environmental Centers

On January 31, Angela Wenger will join Audubon Mid-Atlantic as the director of our two southeastern Pennsylvania environmental centers: the John James Audubon Center (Audubon, PA) and the Discovery Center (Philadelphia, PA). Angie currently works as the Chief Operating Officer at New Jersey's Center for Aquatic Sciences at Adventure Aquarium ("Center"), a leading conservation-oriented research, environmental education organization that serves a four-state region through travelling and aquarium-based programs. Angie started as an educator at the Center before becoming the Vice President for education and eventually COO. She is also a leader among Delaware River Watershed environmental groups, serving on the Alliance for Watershed Education's steering committee and as a co-chair of its Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice committee. Staff at both JJAC and the Discovery Center participated in the hiring process, and we all look forward to having Angie in the Audubon flock.



Great Blue Heron. Photo: Ken Lassman

Policy Director to Start Work in February

Jim Brown will be joining the Audubon Mid-Atlantic team in mid-February as our region's first-ever director of policy. Jim comes to us from the national Rails to Trails Conservancy where he currently leads its Trail Nation work. Jim will bring with him a deep understanding of how to achieve policy objectives through data-informed research and grassroots advocacy efforts. His charge will be to work with Audubon Mid-Atlantic and National Audubon staff as well as with chapter leaders and other Audubon stakeholders to build a robust, strategic policy agenda for the region—one that helps advance our conservation goals. Jim will also lead efforts to find more ways to engage and activate our strong advocacy network and raise up our collective voices on behalf of the birds we love. We're excited to be building the Mid-Atlantic team in this important way.



Join Us For “I Bird. I Vote.” Conservation Summit

Audubon Mid-Atlantic invites you to take action at the free virtual 2022 “I Bird. I Vote.” Conservation Summit on February 11 & 12. Scientists, conservationists, and legislators will come together to address the latest Audubon priorities for protecting birds at the community, state and national scale. Summit speakers include Audubon’s Chief Conservation Officer Marshall Johnson and Senior Director of Government Affairs Jesse Walls, Maryland elected officials, and our partner organizations. Although a few of the speakers will focus on issues facing Maryland, the sessions focused on National Audubon’s conservation and federal policy priorities will be of interest to everyone in the Mid-Atlantic. We therefore welcome all members in the Mid-Atlantic region. Sign up to participate in three planned sessions and learn how each of us can help become better advocates for people and birds. Read more [here](#) for information and registration.



Get Involved in Climate Watch & Other Programming

Climate Watch is back this year! It kicked off on January 15 but there is still time to sign up until February 15 to participate in Audubon's community science by surveying species of goldfinches, towhees, buntings and bluebirds in your area. Learn more and sign up [here](#). Early this month, Audubon Mid-Atlantic started 2022 off by hosting the "Bringing Climate Action Home" webinar with great attendance from members. You can also download the recorded webinar [here](#). Look out for more in the future. The Great Backyard Bird Count is around the corner from February 18-21. Be sure to check out how to get involved [here](#).

One of our program priorities this year is to welcome more people to the wonder of birds and encourage more people to take part in National Audubon Society's community science efforts like Climate Watch, the Great Backyard Bird Count and the Christmas Bird Count. To that end, we will begin to host "Intro to Birding" at our centers, starting with a class held in partnership with the Valley Forge Audubon Society focused on the Great Backyard Bird Count taking place on February 19 at the John James Audubon Center ([click here for information](#)) and on March 12 at The Discovery Center. Click [here](#) to learn more. More classes will take place throughout the year.

Eastern Bluebird. Photo: Michael Thomas



Healthy Forests Program Partners with Domtar

Audubon Mid-Atlantic has entered into a new partnership with the Ruffed Grouse Society, American Bird Conservancy and Domtar, a private company, through which an innovative approach to forest conservation and management will be offered to private landowners in upstate Pennsylvania. The program will identify and provide incentives to forest owners to adopt bird-friendly forest management practices on their land. The program will promote sustainable, science-based timber harvesting that diversifies forest age classes, structure and tree species composition at landscape scales. The project will improve habitat for game and non-game wildlife, including the Ruffed Grouse, in Pennsylvania's forests as well as drive landowner income and jobs in rural Pennsylvania. Learn more [here](#).

Ruffed Grouse. Photo: James Stafford



Advocating for Forest Birds in Maryland

This month, Audubon Mid-Atlantic learned of the potential sale of a 105-acre tract of NASA-owned forest. This site is located in Greenbelt, MD and lies adjacent to the Patuxent Research Refuge, the largest remaining forest block in central Maryland. It is also recognized as an Important Bird Area due to the diversity of forest birds and at-risk species, such as Eastern Whip-poor-will and Prairie Warbler, that rely on it. Audubon Mid-Atlantic immediately submitted comments to U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer (MD) advocating to halt this sale and instead transfer the land to the Patuxent Research Refuge to be protected habitat. Through our and partners' efforts, the entire Maryland Congressional delegation has called for the Office of Management and Budget to transfer this 105-acre parcel to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We thank Rep. Hoyer and the Maryland delegation for their support in protecting vital forest habitat for birds!

Prairie Warbler. Photo: Jesse Gordon



Upcoming Opportunities

Virtual Event

Join us for a webinar on winter birding, featuring some of the most iconic migrants like the Tundra Swan and the Snow Goose. Speakers include Audubon Mid-Atlantic's Keith Russell, Program Manager for Urban Conservation, and Brant Portner, Environmental Education Specialist, Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Register for the “From Swans to Songbirds: Winter is for Birding” (Feb. 3, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm) [here](#).

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](#)



In the News

Outlet: The Philadelphia Inquirer

Headline: [Insider's guide to 19 essential museums just outside Philadelphia](#)

Excerpt: “The John James Audubon Center is a safe haven and refuge for birds and other wildlife, and it’s also a space for guests to connect with nature. The 1762 home was once the residence of the naturalist, artist, and author John James Audubon — with the hillsides, flowing Schuylkill River, and farmland as its backdrop, the area inspired Audubon’s passion to paint nature and animals. He turned the 175-acre estate into a place for conservation where, today, visitors can escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life. There are more than seven miles of trails on the property, in addition to access to Perkiomen Creek, a bird habitat, and a three-story stone farmhouse — which houses the museum where you can see the work of Audubon and learn the history of Mill Grove.”

Outlet: Green Philly

Headline: [Bria Wimberly brings her love of aquaculture to Discovery Center as an environmental educator](#)

Excerpt: “Discovery Center is a three-party system. All three of us agree that connecting back to the community is priority. We have our own missions within each individual organization. For us, it’s bird conservation—planting trees, watershed education, policymaking, etc. We want to connect that back to the community in a way that benefits them. We also want to make sure they feel welcomed in this green space.” Interview with Bria Wimberly, Environmental Educator, The Discovery Center

Outlet: Avian Conservation & Ecology

Research Paper: [Avian response to plant community composition and structure in regenerating timber harvests protected by ungulate exclusion fencing](#).

Abstract: “We studied the influence of white-tailed deer browsing on breeding bird communities in ten pairs of operational-sized fenced and unfenced regeneration timber harvests in northcentral Pennsylvania. Based on a previous study that examined correlations between bird and deer abundance in Pennsylvania, we developed species-specific predictions about how density would vary between fenced and unfenced harvests.” Co-authored by Ron Rohrbaugh, Director of Conservation Science and Forest Programs, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Check out these articles below on Audubon.org about Audubon Mid-Atlantic's work and efforts.

Headline: Ghost Forests Could Provide Respite for Marsh Birds as Coastal Habitat Disappears

Excerpt: At Blackwater, old tree stumps in present-day marshes are a sign of how the habitat has changed. “These areas used to be forests,” says Dave Curson, Audubon Mid-Atlantic's director of bird conservation. Now they have converted into quality marshland—and marsh birds have moved in. “We see Seaside Sparrows and Clapper Rails and Least Bitterns.” Even at protected areas like Blackwater refuge, the new habitat created by marsh migration inland will likely not be enough to compensate for all that’s lost, Curson says. But these marshes could still be a lifeline for threatened birds.

Snowy Owl. Photo: Diane McAllister

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