



Happy New Year from Audubon Mid-Atlantic!

Until last month, I had not been aware of the origins of the annual Christmas Bird Count. For those of you as in the dark as I was, the count was first proposed in 1900 by ornithologist Frank Chapman as an antidote to annual Christmas bird hunts. This tradition involved men (and I assume some women) competing for the most bird kills on Christmas Day. Over the past 124 Christmas Days, the Count has grown in many ways, not the least of which being participation and geographic reach.

Today, the Count helps build and strengthen the diverse community of people who love birds. And it serves as an important data set for Audubon scientists and others who use the observations to track the ebbs and flows of different species populations. Many thanks to all of you who took part in this year's Count!

If you missed this year's Christmas Bird Count, there are other ways for you to get involved in Audubon-sponsored Community Science work. For example, Climate Watch will start later this month and continue into February. Details on how to

participate are below.

Happy New Year to all you!

Best,
Suzanne

Blue herons. Photo: Stacey Howell



I Bird I Vote 2024

Audubon Mid-Atlantic invites you to join us for this year's *I Bird I Vote Conservation Summit*, which will focus on policy priorities as the Maryland legislative session gets underway. The event will be held at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in Annapolis, Maryland on Saturday, February 3rd, starting at 9:00am. Scholarships are available for this event; for more information, please contact Tess Wilson at tess.wilson@audubon.org.

[Visit our website](#) for more information and to reserve tickets for *I Bird I Vote*!

We also have a Facebook event available for *I Bird I Vote*. [Let us know that you're attending!](#)

Downy woodpecker. Photo: Megan Bonham



Maryland Climate Pollution Reduction Plan

Audubon applauds the Maryland Department of Environment's (MDE) release of the [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#), a policy platform and plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 60% by 2031 and to reach net-zero emissions by 2045. These are ambitious but important goals, and we thank MDE for including healthy forests and wetland management as a critical component of the state's climate plan. Thank you to all our members who helped us elevate these two issues as the plan was being developed.

Red-bellied woodpecker and Northern cardinal. Photo: Joan Tisdale



Audubon Mid-Atlantic's 2024 Policy Priorities

Maryland:

The 2024 Maryland General Assembly session kicks off on January 10th. Audubon will be paying close attention to these bills and issues:

- Audubon will be work alongside conservation allies to identify and secure the financial resources needed to advance coastal resiliency efforts and encourage the prioritization of salt marsh restoration. We anticipate that a draft bill, being referred to as the “Whole Watershed Act,” will be introduced and we will share more information about it as details are made public.
- In addition to marsh and wetland restoration, Audubon’s priorities this session will include legislation that incentivizes the appropriate siting of solar arrays and efforts to keep Maryland on track to meet the state’s offshore wind energy goals.

Pennsylvania:

Audubon will continue to engage our members and elected officials in support of two renewable energy bills that could come up for a vote in March.

- [House Bill 1842](#) will support community incentives for adoption of community solar in Pennsylvania.

- [House Bill 1467](#), sometimes referred to as “30 by 30”, will establish goals requiring the state to expand Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards requirements from 8% to 30%, meaning that 30% of the state’s distributed energy must come from renewable sources by 2030.

We will also continue to monitor Pennsylvania’s next steps in regard to participation in the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#).

Finally, we plan to ramp up our Healthy Forest policy work with field trips designed to familiarize elected officials, state agency/forestry staff and private landowners with best practices in bird-friendly forestry practices. Attendees will visit Audubon’s forest management demonstration sites along the Kittatinny Ridge. We hope that these trips will increase participation in our Healthy Forest training courses for foresters and encourage more public agencies to use trained foresters on state and municipal lands.

Stay tuned for ways to get involved and take action!

Red-tailed hawk in snow. Photo: Roman Pluta



Aneca Atkinson – Director, Delaware River Watershed Program

Aneca Atkinson, our Director of the Delaware River Watershed Program, will be leaving Audubon in mid-January for a significant new role as the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Justice in Maryland's Department of the Environment. In this role, she will report directly to Secretary Serene McIlwaine.

Since joining Audubon in 2022, Aneca has been a steadfast advocate for water quality and habitat restoration in the Delaware River Watershed. She represented Audubon on any number of committees and coalitions, providing valued insights and a steady hand. In Philadelphia, she helped create partnerships with the Overbrook Environmental Center and led work to improve the watershed landscape at the John James Audubon Center. She also helped develop the Water habitat initiatives for National Audubon's Flight Plan.

We'd like to thank Aneca for her time in her role at Audubon and her willingness to advocate for birds and people in the Delaware River Watershed area. Thank you, Aneca!

Aneca Atkinson.



Audubon's Christmas Bird Count

Audubon's 124th Christmas Bird Count was held from Dec 14, 2023 to January 5, 2024!

Our Director of Coastal Programs, Dave Curson, took part in the event, observing many species in the salt marsh at Irish Grove sanctuary. This land is owned by the Maryland Ornithological Society, one of Audubon's partners in conservation. Dave, along with a few volunteers, spotted two Short-eared owls hunting over the marsh, some Northern harriers, and many Dunlin in the pools surrounding the area.

Are you looking to compile resources from your own circle of the Christmas Bird Count? [Use this resource from the National Audubon Society with helpful webinar recordings.](#)

Pileated Woodpecker. Photo: Pamela Underhill



Climate Watch

According to Audubon's 2019 climate change report, *Survival By Degrees*, up to two-thirds of North American birds are vulnerable to extinction due to climate change. Since 2016, Climate Watch volunteers have collected data that Audubon scientists use in peer reviewed research to document that birds are responding to climate change and shifting their ranges. You can join us in this project by observing birds in your area and helping us learn about how birds are responding to the changing climate. The next survey will take place January 15 - February 15, 2024 and is open to the public. For information about how to get involved in Climate Watch, [click here](#).

Gray catbird. Photo: Darla Joathout



The Discovery Center Book Club

Please join us on Saturday, January 20th from 10am until 12pm for the Discovery Center Book Club conversation on "A Wing and a Prayer - The Race to Save Our Vanishing Birds". This book, written by Anders and Beverly Gyllenhaal, takes a deep look into the avian decline in North American Birds. During our initial meeting, we'll gather and discuss Audubon's scientific findings about the decline in birds, what we can do to bend that bird curve, and take a bird tour as we discuss this important topic. More information and registration [here](#).

Anders and Beverly Gyllenhaal. Photo: The Cornell Lab



Museum Day at the John James Audubon Center

Please join us on Sunday, January 21st from 10am until 4pm at the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove for our Museum Day! Participate in a self-guided Historic House tour, meet our bird ambassadors, and witness the excitement of another page turning of The Birds of America. You're sure to learn something new during this fun day out with family and friends! More info available [on our website here.](#)

Check out Audubon Mid-Atlantic's Upcoming Events

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](#)

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