



## Persisting in the face of changing climate and weather

Over the past month, it's been hard to ignore the reality that our climate is changing. Smoke from Canadian wildfires poured into the Mid-Atlantic bringing with it a haunting red sun. Weeks with no rain turned into days of torrential downpours that flooded streets, caused creeks to overflow and tides to erase sandy landscapes. And late summer heat arrived weeks early.

The impact that these changes are having on birds is clear—lost sand island nesting habitat in Maryland's coastal bays; food sources emerging too soon for migrating birds flying north on a different schedule; invasive plants growing out of control in hot, wet conditions and crowding out the native species (and the insects they harbor) that birds need to thrive.

In July's harsh light, the future seems rather bleak. And yet, this month's newsletter offers up some solutions and some hope. Artificial islands in Maryland have

attracted hundreds of nesting terns this summer, helping to advance Audubon's goal to restore the population of these coastal birds to their 1970s level. In the forests of central Pennsylvania, wood thrush and red-headed woodpeckers have returned to land where Audubon conservation staff opened up tree canopy and created more diverse habitat. In Philadelphia, Audubon helped transform long-neglected playing fields to meadows and riparian buffers that are again welcoming birds and people to enjoy their offerings, while also cooling and cleaning Cobbs Creek.

As promising as these efforts have been, we must acknowledge that they are not enough. To stabilize or even reverse the decline in birds, we need to speed up and scale our efforts. This will require systemic changes at the state and national level. Audubon's work—as described in our new national Flight Plan—will focus on the urgent issue of climate change. We will seek greater public investments in natural climate solutions to sequester carbon and restore biodiversity to areas that are critical to birds' survival. We will also continue to support the transformation of our energy supply to renewables.

We must act with urgency and focus. Birds need us. And so do people.

Thank you,

Suzanne

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

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Ruby-throated hummingbird. Gary Robinette/Audubon Photography Awards

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## Common Tern Nesting Platform July 2023 Update

Last month, we reported that 136 nests were discovered on the artificial nesting platform in Maryland's Coastal Bays. The total of nests has now increased to over 270 for the month of July.

The continued success of these artificial rafts have helped to restore populations of Common Tern in Maryland. These populations have declined by a staggering 90-95% since the mid-1980s due to sea level rise and the erosion of their natural barren sand nesting islands in the coastal bays. While the rebound of this species is great news, more must be done to assist these populations of shorebirds. Audubon will continue to work with partners to create policy through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to preserve and protect the natural barren sand nesting islands.

Follow our social media channels for summer updates on the tern raft.

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Common terns on nesting platform / Kim Abplanalp





## Pennsylvania and Maryland Policy Roundup

### **Maryland**

On June 30, the Maryland Department of the Environment issued a [preliminary report](#) concluding that Maryland was “halfway toward meeting its ambitious climate goals.” It also reported that the state was on-track to reach net-zero emissions by 2045. We know that climate change is a significant threat to birds and bird habitat. Therefore, Audubon Mid-Atlantic staff, bird supporters and numerous other environmental organizations have been key collaborators in advocating for ambitious climate goals through legislation and administrative action and we will continue to press for policies that reduce emissions and for increased deployment of renewable energy in the years to come.

### **Pennsylvania**

The Pennsylvania House and Senate have approved FY24 spending plans; both include investments in Pennsylvania’s natural spaces. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) budget included a \$112 million increase to address infrastructure improvements in Pennsylvania's parks and forest and invest in natural climate solutions in the state's landscapes. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is proposed to receive a more modest increase. The budget remains at an impasse awaiting approval in both chambers and then the Governor's signature. We will continue to advocate

for more funding for DEP to protect Pennsylvania's waterways.

On June 29, [HB 1032](#), Solar for Schools passed the house and now heads to the senate where we hope there will be strong bipartisan support. The bill provides grant funding for schools in Pennsylvania to establish solar arrays on or near school buildings. This bill is a big step forward in advancing renewable energy in Pennsylvania to address climate change on behalf of both birds and people.

A resolution promoting the study and elevation of Conservation Corridors ([HR 87](#)) passed on the floor of the PA House on May 23. This resolution commissions a study which will inventory the significant wildlife, habitat, and conservation corridors in the commonwealth and, hopefully, offer specific information on how and where more corridors can help. Audubon Mid-Atlantic will elevate the role of bird migration corridors in this study in order to attract more resources and attention to the role that Pennsylvania's landscapes play in protecting birds while supporting the state's conservation goals.

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Gray Catbird. Darla J. Oathout/Audubon Photography Awards



## Eyes to the Sky for Philadelphia Birding Weekend

Save the date! The Philadelphia Birding Weekend will return in 2023 from October 13th through October 15th! Audubon held its inaugural Philly Birding Weekend last October, and people from across the Philadelphia region explored some of the city's iconic green spaces and looked for birds on their fall migration. Last year, people had 9 field trips to choose from and observed 93 species of birds! We'll announce over email and social media once registration opens for the 2023 event, but in the meantime, you can head over to [phillybirding.com](https://phillybirding.com) to read more!



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Group of birdwatchers at the 2022 Philadelphia Birding Weekend.



## Whitby Meadow in the News

Audubon Mid-Atlantic's Delaware River Watershed Program Manager, Robin Irizarry, was recently [featured in a Grid Magazine](#) article focused on the meadow and riparian restoration work that Audubon and partners have been spearheading in southwest Philadelphia's Cobbs Creek park. The work has included the creation of trails into and within the Whitby Meadow. Staff have also removed invasive plants that threatened to take over the meadow and planted new trees and grasses along Cobbs Creek and in the meadow. The meadow has become a great birding spot—during last fall's migration, more than forty bird species were spotted in one day. [Be sure to read this article](#) for a closer look at our work in Whitby Meadow!

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Audubon Mid-Atlantic employees Robin Irizarry and Skye Glover in the field.

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## Cove Mountain In Pennsylvania

This spring, Audubon Mid-Atlantic is using avian surveys to document bird species activity in the Cove Mountain forest restoration area that staff helped to create last year. The surveys compare the project area to the surrounding unmanaged forest. The news is positive! As one of our bird surveyors noted in his report, "Spring migration surveys indicated higher migrant diversity in experimental openings relative to closed canopy forest. Several species, including Wilson's warbler, red-headed woodpecker, and bay-breasted warbler, were found only in the treatment site. These openings also support a more diverse breeding bird community relative to the surrounding forest."

Audubon is therefore continuing to improve forest habitat within Cove Mountain, which is owned by The Nature Conservancy. Our forest team worked with contractors this spring to install 625 bare-root native seedlings, including American elderberry, Black chokeberry, Spicebush, and Gray dogwood on the property. We are also planning a new 4-acre migratory stopover site that will employ direct seeding methods - part of an experimental lower cost approach that we hope will still reap the benefits of more expensive forest management practices. If successful, Audubon's Healthy Forest project will use training programs to encourage the use of direct seeding among private landowners.

Eastern Towhee nest in Audubon restoration area.

## Check out Audubon Mid-Atlantic's Upcoming Events

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Join us for an Environmental Justice/Activism Listening Session at The Discovery Center on Friday, July 14th from 6:00-8:00pm. This will be an evening to learn, explore, and focus on ways we can get involved and volunteer locally on environmental issues affecting their community like pollution, housing, utilities and more! Refreshments will be provided. [Read here for more info](#) about this and other upcoming events.

At the John James Audubon Center, join us on Thursday, July 22nd, from 6:00 until 7:30pm for an evening paddle on the gentle waters of the Lower Perkiomen. [More info here.](#)

### DISCOVERY CENTER 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

- [Patterson Park Audubon Center Events](#)

### CONNECT WITH US



#### **Audubon Mid-Atlantic**

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