



Audubon WASHINGTON
COMMUNITY REPORT 2016

For more than a century, Audubon has led the way in the conservation and protection of birds and their habitats.

When I started working for Audubon more than 10 years ago, my goal was to realize the dream of establishing a nature center in one of the most diverse zip codes in the country—a dream that became a reality in 2008. Since then, we've exceeded our 5-year strategic goals while re-energizing Audubon Washington's statewide initiatives, and tackling conservation priorities for critical landscapes ranging from our eastern sagebrush shrub steppe to our wild outer coasts.

We have gathered stakeholders together to develop solutions that work for everyone, championed climate action across the state, and inspired the next generation of conservation leaders. We've accomplished all of this with the power of our grassroots chapter network and the urban community surrounding Seward Park in Seattle, who are passionate advocates for birds and people across the state.

We are proud to be leading the way in conservation, education and advocacy for birds in Washington.

Gail Gatton, Executive Director



A Whimbrel in flight. Photo by Chris Early

COVER STORY: PROTECTING WHIMBRELS & THE OUTER COAST

Whimbrels are among the widest-ranging shorebirds on earth, breeding in the Arctic tundra and traveling to the farthest reaches of South America in winter. They make use of stopover sites in Washington like Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay during their long migrations, where they refuel on energy-rich aquatic invertebrates. By keeping our coastal estuaries safe for birds, shellfish and people, we're doing our part to support the Whimbrel throughout its life cycle.

Cover Photo ©Andreas Trepte
www.photo-natur.de



CLIMATE

Climate Change is the biggest threat facing birds. Now, more than ever, we have a responsibility to be the voice for birds

and combat this urgent threat by protecting the places that birds need to be resilient in a warming world, and reducing carbon pollution causing climate change.

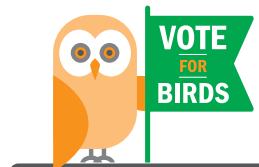
ANSWERING THE THREAT

The effects of climate change are already apparent, and birds and other wildlife are losing habitat at an alarming rate.

Progress requires a diverse network of climate activists with a shared value—a love of birds and a respect for their role as indicators of environmental health. Throughout this report, take note of how our network of chapters, centers, and state staff is helping birds adapt and pushing for solutions on their behalf.

VOTING FOR BIRDS

We take seriously our role to advocate for policies that will reduce fossil fuel pollution and improve or protect bird habitat. In 2016, we joined the campaign to pass Initiative 732—a proposal to tax carbon pollution and make Washington a leader in a clean energy future. With the support of many of our chapters, we've participated in debates, met with elected officials, joined phone banking and canvassing efforts and leveraged social media to inform voters about this historic opportunity to advocate for birds and people.



YES ON I-732



COASTS

Our Coasts initiative focuses on sustaining the food and habitat that marine and coastal birds need to thrive. In order to cultivate bird-friendly estuaries, we're getting the best available science into the hands of decision makers and working to build community support for coastal bird stewardship.

STAND UP TO OIL

Audubon mobilized thousands of comments and citizen testimony in opposition to three oil terminal proposals in coastal Washington and the Columbia River. We sent a nation-wide alert regarding the proposal in Grays Harbor—an estuary of vital importance to hundreds of thousands of migrating birds each year. People who care about birds contributed nearly 34,000 comments to the effort! Two of the three proposals have been withdrawn; we continue to fight the remaining one.

PROTECT OUR COASTAL ESTUARIES

Washington is home to four sites of vital importance for migratory shorebirds within our hemisphere. Three of these sites—the Columbia River Estuary, Grays Harbor Estuary and the Greater Skagit/Stillaguamish Delta—have already been designated as part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Resource Network (WHSRN), which helps protect key habitats by letting land and water managers know how important these areas are for the survival of shorebirds.

Audubon worked with other stakeholders to evaluate the threats facing these three vital areas and identify shared conservation priorities around protecting them. Equally important, this group identified the unique challenges facing shorebirds at Willapa Bay, a site known to support substantial bird concentrations, so that it can be nominated as an official WHSRN site in 2017.



Western Sandpiper—a priority bird species for Audubon. Photo by Seabamirum



STAFF LEADER HIGHLIGHT

In April, Director of Bird Conservation Dr. Trina Bayard chaired the Marine Birds session at the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference in Vancouver, BC. A gathering of the best thinking related to the many efforts within the Salish Sea, this session highlighted research that helps us understand the biological and physical factors influencing marine bird population dynamics.

WHAT'S NEXT

We continue to mobilize local community support for birds as we seek funding to publish an ecological atlas that compiles data about wildlife, natural resources and human impacts. This coastal atlas will help us identify key areas for protection, and serve as a guide for long-term conservation planning.



WORKING LANDS

In eastern Washington, we are working to identify and protect the best places for sagebrush songbirds, both now and in the future. In tandem with our chapters east of the Cascade Mountains, we lead critical monitoring activities to assist local, state, and federal land managers in making good decisions. At the same time, we are building a constituency that cares about and fights to protect our sagebrush ecosystem.

INNOVATING FOR EXCELLENCE

Esri, the largest mapping platform in the world, supports our Sagebrush Songbird Survey with free access to its software. Esri has recognized this project as an exceptional example of volunteer engagement and a model of best practice for community science. By charting sagebrush habitat crucial to songbirds across the region, Audubon can identify and focus conservation efforts on the ecosystem's most vulnerable areas, and collaborate with state agencies to better manage these lands and protect wildlife. Now in its third year, over 117 trained volunteers have participated in the survey, contributing 5,214 total hours to the project.

FIREWISE VOLUNTEERS

During a songbird survey in the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge, volunteer Kathy Criddle and her survey team spotted something they weren't expecting: wildfire! "We had a spectacular lightning bolt flash right in front of us," she reported, "pretty cool until we realized the refuge was on fire!" They immediately called in the alert and watched until the fire crews arrived. Thanks to their quick thinking and active fire response, less than 5 acres of sagebrush was burned that day. Increasing wildfires have already had major effects on this ecosystem in Washington, and as the climate warms, Western states expect hotter, dryer seasons and earlier snowmelts that will exacerbate the risk of damaging fires. That's why we're working with our chapters and partners from state and federal agencies to create more fire resilient habitats.

Sage Thrasher photo by Mick Thompson



WHAT'S NEXT

We will take an important step for the future of birds in the Columbia Plateau by leading a community forum to explore how this landscape can continue to support thriving populations of birds and people with quality, connected habitat. Our chapters and volunteers will march forward with the 4th annual songbird survey.

VOLUNTEER LEADER HIGHLIGHT

"I value Eastern Washington's landscape for its wild and stark beauty teeming with wildlife diversity. I want people to know how they can live harmoniously in these ecosystems while protecting their homes and birds' homes."

— Judy Hallisey

Judy is the Vice-President of Kittitas Audubon Society, and an influential climate leader in the arid regions of our state. She authored a comprehensive guide on using native plants to preserve birds and protect homes in a changing climate, and stands tall for climate action.



BIRD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Through programs that protect our local habitats, we create communities where birds and people thrive. Our chapter network across the state creates opportunities to connect people with birds, and at Seward Park Audubon Center, we develop nature programs to engage our diverse urban community.

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LEADERS OF TOMORROW

With the help of 617 community volunteers, teen leaders from our Tenacious Roots program contributed 1,942 hours toward restoring the old growth forest at Seward Park. These teens learn skills that help them achieve academic and career success and discover the power of their voice in current conservation issues. This year, these student-led groups planted 163 trees, 1,356 shrubs and 1,295 native plants!



PRESERVING FOREST HABITAT

Did you know that dead trees can be more important for wildlife than live ones? In the northwest, nearly 100 species of wildlife use snags including some of our favorite birds such as owls, woodpeckers, and ducks. To protect valuable habitat, Yakima Valley Audubon Society is working to reform forestry regulations on federal lands in Washington. They've collected more than 422 signatures on a petition to end the cutting of snags and destruction of bird habitat.



Great Grey Owl nesting in a snag. Photo by Matti Suopajarvi



PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Native plants conserve water and support higher bird diversity, even in the urban environment. We're doing our part to reach Audubon's ambitious goal of growing 1 million native plants for birds across the country by hosting native plant sales at Seward Park, where 980 people purchased 1,187 plants! To identify the best plants for birds in your area, or explore more native plant resources, visit Audubon.org/PlantsForBirds.



A Rufous Hummingbird refuels with nectar from a Red-flowering Currant. Photo by Minette Layne



BIRD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES



**“In the beginning, I didn’t like science very much. But now I want to learn more about how animals digest food, and spend more time in nature!”
— Tasha**

Our naturalists partner with the schools that are closest to Seward Park—schools that are among the most diverse and low-income in Seattle—so students like Tasha have positive and enriching experiences in nature as part of their science education.

“There are so many things to see, hear, feel, smell and taste!” — Ling

People take care of the things they love, so we make it our mission to foster a love of birds and nature in our community. This starts with introducing children to nature at an early age, and providing fun and safe opportunities for them to explore the wonder of the world around them—like our Toddler Tales & Trails programs offered every week for young children and their caregivers.



BLAZING NEW TRAILS

In February 2016, we stretched our wings and connected our work with hemispheric birding tourism in Northern Colombia by hosting guides who are developing a birding trail modeled on our Great Washington State Birding Trail. The experience was eye-opening for the guides, who played in the snow at Rainier National Park, experienced the massive migration of snow geese and swans in the Skagit River Delta and exchanged stories with tribal leaders on the Olympic Peninsula.

The Great Washington State Birding Trail shares 39 bird species with our sister trail in Columbia, creating opportunities to protect imperiled species like the Red Knot and Snowy Plover throughout the Pacific Flyway.

Photo by Glenn Nelson

WHAT'S NEXT

We're expanding our school partnerships to include three local K-8 schools, working with every class, both in-school and out, three times per year. We're also maintaining our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by working deliberately with underserved populations, and offering scholarships for school and community programs.



STAFF LEADER HIGHLIGHT

Recognized as a leader throughout the entire Audubon network, Seward Park Audubon Center Director Joey Manson took on an important role as a mentor to 25 diverse change agents within the organization. His work brought diversity champion Drew Lanham (pictured here with Joey) and renowned birder David Sibley to Seward Park.



Gifts Received July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016

\$25,000+

Anonymous at the Seattle Foundation
William & Beatrice Booth Singh Family Foundation
Walker Family Foundation at The Seattle Foundation
Wildlife Forever Fund

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Olive Higgins Prouty Foundation

\$1,000+

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Wild Woods Foundation
Timothy Zisman & Molly Capron

WE'RE ESPECIALLY THANKFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF OUR WASHINGTON CHAPTERS

Admiralty Audubon Society
Black Hills Audubon Society
Blue Mountain Audubon Society
Eastside Audubon Society
Kitsap Audubon Society
Kittitas Audubon Society
Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
North Cascades Audubon Society
North Central Washington Audubon Society
Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society
Palouse Audubon Society
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Rainier Audubon Society
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Woody Wheeler & Lori Cohen



Our Chapter Conservation Manager Jen Syrowitz surveys shrub steppe habitat. Photo by Dave Showalter

“I’m honored to work alongside regular folks making an extraordinary effort to save some of the enduring wild in eastern Washington’s sagebrush ecosystem.”

— Dave Showalter, Nature Photographer

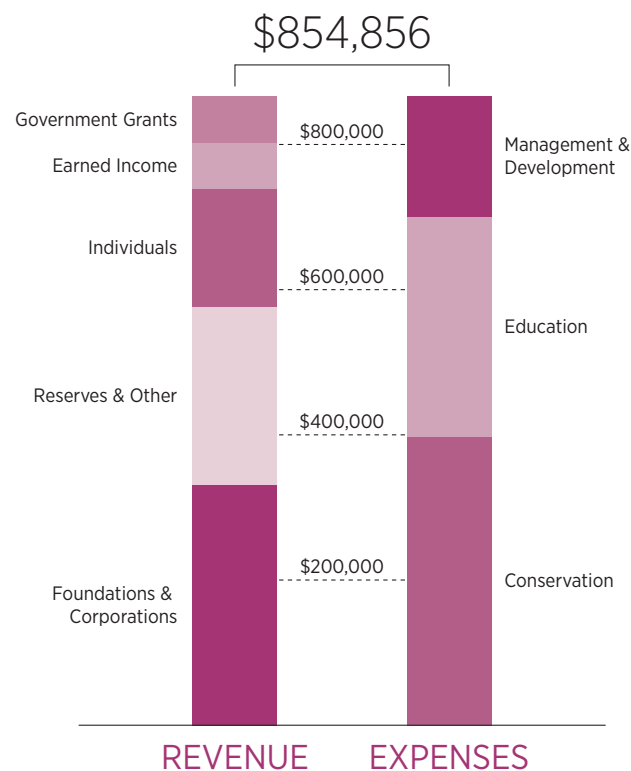


SAGEBRUSH ROADSHOW

Conservation photographer Dave Showalter joined staff and chapters on an 8-day, 7 city tour to heighten awareness about the sagebrush landscape for more than 450 people last spring. Partnering with Humanities Washington, the Wenatchee River Institute and the Methow Conservancy, we engaged local communities in conversations about the evolving management of the public lands that support species like the Greater Sage Grouse that are threatened by loss of habitat. A passionate advocate for the enduring beauty and importance of the sagebrush sea, Dave Showalter helped make the case for why we should value and protect this ecosystem.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

JULY 1, 2015 – JUNE 30, 2016



SUMMER FUN!

Nearly 200 summer campers built giant bird nests, developed wilderness skills, and made new friends during seven weeks of summer at Seward Park Audubon Center! Campers took on new animal names and prowled their way through the park, feeling more at home in the forests and meadows each day. Our hope is that the deep connections our campers make with Seward Park and its wildlife spark a lifelong curiosity and appreciation of the natural world.

“A forest adventure! I’ve always wanted to go on a forest adventure! This is my first one!”

— Griffin, age 5, on his first day of Summer Camp!

WOMEN IN CONSERVATION

The first annual Women Conservation Leaders Luncheon honored Legacy Award Winner Dee Arntz and Tracey Silva-Wayling Memorial Scholarship recipient Ashley Powell. Ashley is an environmental activist and citizen scientist whose efforts were instrumental in helping Tahoma Audubon prevent damaging zoning changes. We are proud to recognize her achievements as an emerging female leader in conservation.

Back Cover Photo by Glenn Nelson

Audubon Washington Staff

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 Christi Norman, *Program Director*
 Jen Syrowitz, *Chapter Conservation Manager*
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