



# Audubon Washington Impact Report

JULY 2020 - JUNE 2021

Thank you for your support this past year. Through a blend of science, advocacy, education, and hands-on conservation work, Audubon Washington is shaping a brighter future for birds, people, and communities throughout the state.

Chestnut-backed Chickadee

We're pleased to provide you with this report highlighting important accomplishments you helped make possible, including:

- New clean fuels standard and funding for least-conflict solar siting;
- Near-record funding for conservation priorities in Washington;
- Advances in avian science in Puget Sound;
- Funding for fire resilience and restoration in the Columbia Plateau; and
- Expanding the reach of our nature and conservation education programs.

Thank you.



**A**s I reflect on the past year, I am proud of the work that Audubon Washington and the Audubon chapter network have done to advance many important conservation outcomes. I am also deeply grateful for the continued support of our donors, partners, and friends who make it possible for us to advocate for birds and the places they need. With the loss of three billion birds in the last 50 years and climate change posing an existential threat, our work has never been more important. Birds tell us it's time to act.

Facing the reality of the pandemic, Audubon Washington quickly pivoted to continue our important work online. We actively participated in the legislative session in Olympia, with many more supporters able to participate in the virtual hearings. We are happy to share that three ground-breaking bills passed this session: the Climate Commitment Act, the Clean Fuels Standard, and the HEAL Act. These are huge wins in the fight to reduce greenhouse emissions to protect birds and their habitats, and to advance environmental justice.

We've made significant advances in avian science in Puget Sound and helped ensure state funding to advance restoration and protection in this important estuary.

Other important highlights of the past year were that Audubon Washington led the initiative for a budget proviso to advance a fire-resilience and restoration strategy in the shrub-steppe habitat of Eastern Washington. We also secured funding to create a stakeholder process for solar energy siting to protect vital bird habitats and to help reach the state's net zero climate goals. This fall we worked to develop and advance an innovative solar siting and mapping toolkit that will empower our chapters to assess avian impacts from clean energy.

This summer, Audubon Washington was delighted to welcome back over 100 youth to our summer camp programs at Seward Park Audubon Center. We are thrilled to again provide guided nature walks about birding, mushroom hunting, geology, and more. Our Seward Park events continue to be immensely popular, and we are honored to be able to serve the public with this valuable educational programming.

Looking ahead, we are excited to have brought new staff experts to the team, focused on growing our Puget Sound program and strengthening our engagement work. We anticipate deepening our conservation impacts in both the Puget Sound region and the shrub-steppe ecosystem of the Columbia Plateau, engaging in advocacy work in these areas and on climate policy, strengthening our chapter network, and reaching new, diverse audiences with our environmental education programs.

**I am pleased to share with you this impact report with the news of the year for our Coasts, Climate, Working Lands and Bird-friendly Communities programs.**

Thank you for helping us chart a brighter future for birds.



Deborah Jensen, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, Audubon Washington  
Vice President, National Audubon Society



## CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

# Coasts

Puget Sound is a key estuary for migratory birds on the Pacific Flyway and also home to the majority of Washington state residents. Population growth and urban development in the region continue to threaten this important coastal bird habitat. Audubon Washington elevates the needs of birds in addressing estuary management, land use, and the state's conservation goals—especially where the wellbeing of birds serves community needs.

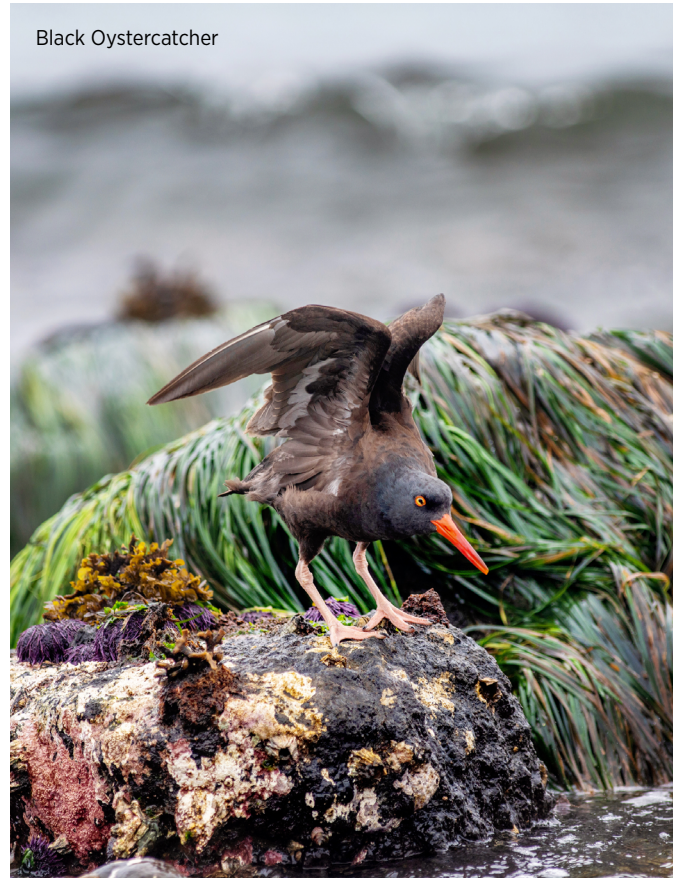
## Advancing Conservation Science in Puget Sound

Audubon Washington staff are dedicated to using sophisticated conservation science to better understand the unique needs of birds in our region. This year, we worked with the Stillaguamish tribe to secure funding for an avian monitoring framework that will inform avian science throughout Puget Sound.

Using the insights from our [Puget Sound Blueprint](#), we partnered with Audubon chapters to identify pilot sites where together we will collaborate with tribes and coastal communities to accelerate habitat conservation on the ground. As we move forward, our new Puget Sound Senior Program Manager, Scott Andrews, will help us deepen our engagement and impact at these sites and Sound-wide.

Audubon Washington's Director of Bird Conservation, Dr. Trina Bayard led a collaborative project to model landscape suitability for several estuary birds, including Brant and Dunlin. These models use data collected by various agencies, tribes, NGOs, and community scientists to help us understand how past and future changes to estuary habitat will impact estuary birds. These studies are a part of our [ongoing efforts](#) to strengthen the scientific basis for avian conservation in Puget Sound estuaries and highlight birds as a key priority for Puget Sound land-use and management plans.

Black Oystercatcher



## Advocating for Marine Birds

The Audubon network demonstrated its political influence as we advocated for conservation-focused resources to benefit the protection of marine birds. In partnership with our members across the region, we achieved significant funding victories that will keep large-scale conservation efforts moving forward, including:

- The Department of Fish and Wildlife received \$2.5M in funding to support essential wildlife monitoring and habitat management activities that will provide insight into the health of birds in the Puget Sound.
- Key capital budget programs supporting Puget Sound habitat restoration projects were funded at near-record levels, totaling over \$160M. These programs will help to ensure the protection of critical ecosystems for birds.





## CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

# Climate

Audubon's 2019 report, *Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink*, shed light on the stark reality that two-thirds of North American birds are at increasing risk of extinction due to global temperature rise. The fate of these birds is heavily dependent on our collective ability to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Following the science, Audubon Washington has doubled down on our efforts to advance policies that reduce our climate impact, while supporting the birds and communities who are most at risk.

This spring, we celebrated several climate victories in the state legislature, which we advocated for with the help of our members, including:

- [Climate Commitment Act \(CCA\)](#): A win for both birds and people, the CCA is one of the most ambitious climate policies in the nation. This act will cap and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from industries with high emissions, invest funds in climate resiliency programs, and address health disparities in communities that have been heavily impacted by air pollution.
- [Clean Fuels Standard \(HB 1091\)](#): After three years of championing a clean fuels standard, we successfully supported passage of the bill, which will limit emissions from transportation while investing in electrification and cleaner burning fuels.

## Advocacy by the Numbers

We'd like to thank the hundreds of Audubon members across Washington whose partnership and support made a huge difference for birds. Together, we achieved:

- **14** op-eds and letters to the editor published
- **5,461** individual actions taken to advocate for birds at key moments throughout the legislative sessions
- **700** people and **50** organizations signed on to our new shrub-steppe conservation provision
- **80** Audubon representatives met with **25** legislators on Environmental Lobby Day
- **3** Washington state legislators attended the National Audubon Society Seabirds Fly-in to advocate for policies that protect marine birds



## CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

## Working Lands

Eastern Washington's shrub-steppe is an important habitat for many birds and species of concern, including the Greater Sage-grouse and the Sagebrush Sparrow. Over the years, this landscape has been transformed by agricultural production and fragmented by development, resulting in a loss of over 80% of historic shrub-steppe habitat. In addition, invasive grasses and climate change are increasing the frequency and intensity of wildfires, putting both wildlife and communities at risk. Audubon Washington is responding to the critical needs of this region by developing fire resilience and clean energy siting plans centered around birds and ecosystem health.

### **Building Fire Resilience in the Columbia Plateau**

In recent years, the shrub-steppe ecosystem in Eastern Washington has been devastated by wildfires that threaten communities, habitats, and vulnerable populations of birds. Audubon recognized the challenge that fire poses for birds and people in the Columbia Plateau and successfully helped to pass a state budget

proviso of nearly \$4 million for the immediate restoration of the shrub-steppe. In addition, this budget proviso funds a long-term fire preparedness strategy that Audubon Washington's Director of Bird Conservation, Dr. Trina Bayard, is helping to advise.

### **Bird and Community-Centric Clean Energy Expansion**

During the 2021 legislative session, Audubon Washington reintroduced a program to identify potential solar energy sites that protect vital bird habitat in the Columbia Plateau. We will work in partnership with Washington State University to convene diverse stakeholders for their input on where to best place solar energy locations to help guide recommendations for future development projects. We are creating a clean-energy screening tool to help chapters evaluate local solar projects and make recommendations to avoid or minimize impacts to birds and habitats.

## CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

# Bird-Friendly Communities

The Seward Park Audubon Center is a treasured community hub that serves the diverse South Seattle neighborhood. Our environmental education courses engage youth and adult learners in outdoor experiences that inspire environmental stewardship and provide pathways toward careers in conservation.

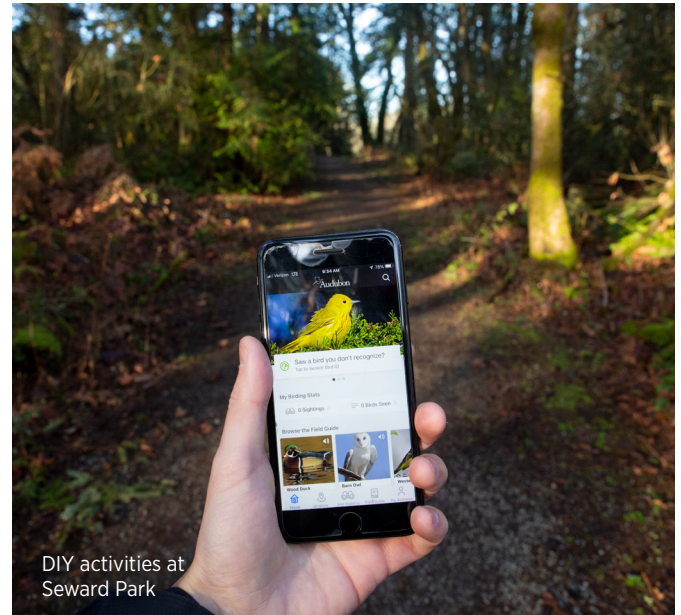
## Community Engagement

During a year challenged by the pandemic, our Seward Park Center Director, Joey Manson, found creative ways to stay connected to the local community and continue to provide environmental education opportunities.

Our Three Degrees Affair and Urban Naturalist Lecture event series both continued online, featuring a highly diverse collection of authors, researchers, artists, and newsmakers who presented on topics such as environmental justice and the Burke Museum's [Waterlines Project](#). By leveraging a virtual format, we were able to host speakers from around the country, increase the frequency of our programs, and reach an even broader audience.



Summer Camp at Seward Park



DIY activities at Seward Park

For summer 2020, we created two “camp kits,” each providing a week-long collection of outdoor activities and crafts that connect kids to nature. In addition, we offered a number of “DIY” recreational and educational outdoor activities for members of the public to enjoy, such as:

- A Google Maps overlay called “Seward Park Smart Walks” for users to enjoy self-guided and educational treks through the park; and
- In partnership with iNaturalist, we produced a plant and wildlife scavenger hunt that allowed community members to practice their bird identification skills from anywhere.

## Seward Park Audubon Center Re-Opening

In Spring of 2021, we were thrilled to welcome the public back to the Center with in-person naturalist-led walks and access to our nature store. The return of our youth summer camps was enthusiastically welcomed by the community and we provided over 100 children with conservation-focused experiential learning.



# Looking Ahead

Audubon Washington made enormous strides over the past year toward our mission to protect birds and the places they need—successes that would not have been possible without your continued support. Building upon this year's progress, we are primed for even greater impact moving forward by leveraging recent policy victories, conservation science, partnerships with the 25 Washington Chapters, and a growing team of staff experts to guide the work ahead.

Looking ahead to the next year, we plan to:

- Deepen our work to create a resilient Puget Sound by building public awareness and support for needed policies, protecting and restoring key habitats, and developing and delivering needed avian science;
- Advocate for climate policies that responsibly site solar energy on the built environment and seek funding for the Sustainable Farms and Fields program;
- Protect remaining shrub-steppe habitat in Eastern Washington by leading the charge on responsible clean energy siting, and by developing a strategy for fire resilience; and
- Grow our nature education and experiential learning programs at the Seward Park Audubon Center to more deeply engage and serve the diverse community of South Seattle.

Reflecting on the successes of the past year, we are deeply grateful for your continued partnership with Audubon Washington and your commitment to protecting birds and the places they need. Without your support, we would not have been able to do the essential work of protecting threatened habitats for birds, advocating for sustainable clean energy practices, and guiding young people to be future conservationists. We are truly stronger when we fly together and we look forward to continuing this journey with you. **Thank you.**



**Photos** (Cover) Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Photo: Mick Thompson; (p3) Black Oystercatcher, Photo: Roger-van Gelder/Audubon Photography Awards; (p4) Sage Thrasher, Photo: Evan Barrientos; (p5) Snow Geese, Photo: Lennette Newell/Audubon Photography Awards; (p6) Photo (Left): Sean Adair, Photo (Right): Luke Franke; (p7) Great Egret, Photo: Nick Palmieri/Audubon Photography Awards.