

 Audubon | WASHINGTON

Impact Report

FALL 2023



Meeting the Moment for Birds and the Planet

Audubon's efforts to protect birds and the places they need requires cutting-edge science, innovative conservation methods, and bird-lovers of all stripes who care and who act—so thank you!

Our vast network makes us a powerful force for conservation, with the ability to catalyze actions at the scale of the challenges we face. In response to the loss of three billion birds over the last 50 years and the compounding threats of climate change, Audubon is embarking on a new strategic direction to maximize our impact.

Touching down in every office, center, and community we work in, we are shaping a future where birds and people thrive. In Washington—and across the western hemisphere—we will protect more habitat, accelerate renewable energy, advance bird-friendly policies, engage broader constituencies, and build upon our conservation achievements from last year.

Because of your support, we were able to make important strides this year. Some of our top accomplishments in Washington and beyond include:

- **Audubon's Conserva Aves team completed its first request for proposals in Colombia**, selecting 12 initial projects covering more than 30,000 hectares (over 74,000 acres).

- **CEO Elizabeth Gray attended the U.S. Climate Action Summit** and shared Audubon's efforts to tackle climate change through maintaining and restoring natural climate solutions and supporting responsibly sited renewable energy.
- **The Audubon Conservation Ranching Program certified its 100th ranch** as bird-friendly, and we are ending the year with a total 111 certified ranches covering 2.8 million acres.
- **Audubon Washington completed the Salish Sea Estuaries Avian Monitoring Framework**, part of a multi-year effort to support avian management and conservation in Salish Sea estuaries.
- **Audubon Washington celebrated a significant milestone** in the state's transition to a clean energy future with the release of a new report that offers guidance on where utility-scale solar can be developed on the Columbia Plateau while also protecting sagebrush birds and their habitat.
- **Audubon Washington continues to build a diverse community** of people united in a common purpose of ensuring conservation for birds and the places they need, now and in the future. This year, five Washington chapters celebrated historic 50th Anniversaries, and our network of more than 50,000 statewide members remains one of the strongest voices for birds in the country.
- **Seward Park Audubon Center joined forces** with Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Woodland Park Zoo, and Bats Northwest to provide opportunities for the public to get involved in the community science Bat Activity Trends (BAT) program.

We are ready to meet this critical moment for birds and the planet and are grateful for partners like you who help support and advance our conservation efforts—from the shores of the Puget Sound and the shrub-steppe of the Columbia Plateau to the forests of Colombia, South America. Thank you for supporting this important work.



Audubon volunteers search for sagebrush songbirds on the banks of the Columbia River.

Habitat Restoration

Promoting Ecosystem Health & Resilience From the Puget Sound to the Sagelands of the Columbia Plateau

In 2020, wildfires burned over 500,000 acres of some of the last remaining shrub-steppe breeding grounds used by Greater Sage-Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse. These fires served as a wake-up call, highlighting the vulnerability of birds – and communities – in the region. In response, Audubon Washington and the greater Audubon network secured a conservation win through the 2021 passage of the Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative.

Public and private partners in the Initiative are developing a shared approach for fire resilience and wildlife conservation and Trina Bayard—Audubon Washington’s Interim Executive Director and Director of Bird Conservation—is serving in an advisory and stakeholder role to ensure that the needs of birds are strongly represented in the final strategy. This winter, we expect that the draft strategy will undergo tribal consultation and will be open to public review. Continued strong voices from our Audubon Washington network will be vital in setting ambitious goals and related actions for shrubsteppe ecosystem health and fire resilience in the Columbia Plateau. Ensuring that coastal habitats continue



Sharp-tailed Grouse

to provide food and habitat for migratory birds in a changing climate requires strong science and dedicated partner engagement. We are pleased to announce the release of a regional framework for avian monitoring in Salish Sea estuary wetlands. Audubon Washington led a team to pilot the development of the framework with the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians Wetland Program. The framework builds on years of outreach with avian managers, including Tribes and natural resource agencies, to create a shared set of monitoring methods that meets end-user information needs, is realistic and accessible, and helps advance our collective knowledge and management of birds in estuary wetlands.



Salish Sea Avian Monitoring Estuaries Team: Gary Slater (Ecostudies Institute), Amanda Summers (Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians), Trina Bayard (Audubon Washington), Kyle Spragens (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Climate

Supporting Biodiversity Protection Under a Clean Energy Transition

Audubon Washington is leading the way in demonstrating that we can balance the needs of birds and clean energy with smart policies, land use planning and project engagement. This year we celebrated a significant milestone in the state's transition to a clean energy future with the completion of the Least-Conflict Solar Siting report. The report offers guidance on where utility-scale solar can be developed on the Columbia Plateau, while minimizing impacts to sagebrush birds and their habitats.

Through our collaboration with American Farmland Trust and our dedicated network of members and supporters, Audubon Washington secured bipartisan support for the legislation that funded the creation of this local values-driven clean energy siting resource. Additionally, we partnered with Audubon chapter leaders to participate in the environmental mapping group for



Governor Inslee signs seven new climate bills into law, including important clean energy siting legislation.

the project, bringing science and local knowledge on bird occurrence and habitat needs to the table. Together, we helped ensure that datasets like our very own community science-generated sagebrush songbird data were used. Using comprehensive data sets and extensive community input, the Least Conflict Solar Siting maps will help developers, lawmakers, and local communities make better solar-siting decisions that minimize the encroachment on critical bird habitats.

Persistence Proves Powerful for Climate and Growth

The development of climate resilient communities requires smart planning, and HB 1181, the climate and growth management bill, marks a crucial step towards local climate change planning and action. This new policy mandates that local governments address the environmental impacts of a changing climate in their comprehensive plans and shoreline management plans. By working in tandem with other state policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions and protecting our cherished landscapes, from the Palouse to Grays Harbor and beyond, this bill strengthens our collective efforts in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Notably, passing HB 1181 signifies a triumph after two previous legislative sessions where the bill failed to reach the finish line.



Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) 2023

Policy & Advocacy

Celebrating Major Wins in the 2023 Legislative Session

Together with our network of over 50,000 statewide members, we have ample reason to celebrate the 2023 state legislative session. Our network's contribution included over 80 people engaging 31 legislators in our annual advocacy day, and a remarkable 13,484 individual emails to legislators and ten influential media hits across the state.

Puget Sound

Tide Comes Back in on Shoreline Assessment Bill

Healthy shorelines are the nursery grounds for forage fish, which in turn support the birds, salmon, and orcas that rely on them. The Shoreline Assessment Program bill (SB 5104) represents a crucial stride towards safeguarding and restoring this vital zone by providing a first of its kind inventory of the state of Puget Sound shorelines. Once the inventory is complete, policymakers, conservationists, and scientists will possess invaluable information needed to develop effective strategies aimed at protecting Puget Sound shores from development and incentivizing restoration. Despite facing setbacks last year, we rallied together and garnered broad bipartisan support, culminating in the bill's passage out of the House with unanimous backing.

2023 Legislative Session



by the numbers



HB 1216: Responsible Clean Energy Development and Citing

- * 4 media stories placed by Audubon Washington Statewide/regional radio and online (KUOW, Northwest Public Broadcasting, Oregon Public Broadcasting, Northwest News Network)
- * 1 LTE placed by Audubon Washington: Yakima Herald Republic /Yakima County (Yakima Valley Audubon Society)

HB 1181: Updating the Growth Management Act and Shoreline Master Plans to include Climate Resilience

- * 1 media story placed by Audubon Washington: Skagit Valley Herald/Skagit County
- * 1 Op-Ed placed by Audubon Washington: La Conner Weekly News/Skagit (Skagit Audubon Society)

HB 5104: Shoreline Protection

- * 1 Op-Ed placed by Audubon Washington: Everett Herald/Snohomish County (Audubon Washington)

DFW Biodiversity Funding

- * 1 Op-Ed placed by Audubon Washington: Spokesman Review/Spokane County (Spokane Audubon Society)
- * 1 LTE Placed by Audubon Washington: Seattle Times/King County (Audubon Washington)

Bird Budget

Currency for Conservation

In addition to the passage of the key conservation and climate policy bills noted above, this legislative session resulted in significant investments in habitat acquisition, restoration, and conservation strategies important for

birds and wildlife. The investments in Audubon Washington's "Bird Budget" totaled over \$270M and reflect the commitment of our state legislature to protect habitat in a changing climate.

Community Building

Partnerships with Chapters Bring Out the Best of Audubon

The success of Audubon’s statewide conservation priorities depends in part on a strong, engaged network of chapter members. We work closely with chapter leaders to leverage their local expertise and community relationships on everything from passing our legislative policy agenda and securing our bird budget to engagement in the Least Conflict Solar Siting Project. We’re actively working with Puget Sound chapters to identify how we can best collaborate on coastal resilience issues and we have a longstanding partnership with chapters in Eastern Washington focused on science and landscape protection. Together, we truly are local everywhere.

Seward Park Audubon Center’s 15th Anniversary: Rooted in Conservation and Community

This fall, Seattle’s Seward Park Audubon Center celebrated its 15th Anniversary and the incredible journey this community resource has achieved. When we first opened the Center fifteen years ago, “welcome” was etched onto the front door in six languages. That welcome message continues to greet every person who passes through that door. This year, the Center participated in the Urban Heat and Urban Forestry Accelerator Program, conducted by the Center for Regenerative Solutions. Part



Latino Conservation Week participants build bird houses at Seward Park.

of our work in the program included creating four presentations to provide an understanding of the potential health crisis arising from climate change-related heat events in Seattle and elsewhere.

Additionally, The Center worked to increase avenues for conservation action by partnering with organizations that represent Seattle’s diverse ethnic communities. During the winter of 2023, one program brought members of Outdoor Afro and Outdoor Asian to Seward Park for a unique owl prowl experience. After an educational presentation on the owls of region, these groups joined lead naturalist Ed Dominguez and volunteers on the Seward Park trail under the cover of the night to listen and maybe spy our resident owls. Then, after a field dissection of a fresh owl pellet, our audience warmed up at a shoreline bonfire and enjoyed s’mores and hot cocoa. As everyone settled in, we talked about the importance of strengthening Seattle’s tree canopy and shared steps we can all take to protect Seattle’s trees. Knowledge was gained and friendships were made before everyone departed, armed with tasks to support a healthier city now and into the future.

Community Partnerships

Seward Park Audubon Center joined forces with WDFW, Woodland Park Zoo and Bats Northwest, to provide opportunities for community members to get involved in community science through the Bat Activity Trends (BAT) program. While not directly related to birds, this community science program stoked the wonder and curiosity of children and adults alike, educated and empowered volunteers to lead programs for their peers, and opened the door to strategic, lasting partnerships with strong organizations working towards similar conservation goals.

Chapter Milestones

Five state chapters celebrated their **50th Anniversaries** in 2023, representing five decades of enjoying and protecting Washington’s birds. Congratulations!

- Kitsap Audubon Society (475 chapter members)
- Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (375 chapter members)
- Palouse Audubon Society (150 chapter members)
- Pilchuck Audubon Society (459 chapter members)
- Spokane Audubon Society (140 chapter members)

With Gratitude

Audubon Washington made significant strides toward our mission to protect birds and the places they need over the last year—successes that would not have been possible without your continued support. Building upon this year’s progress, we are primed for even greater impact in 2024, including:

- Expansion of Audubon Conservation Ranching in the Columbia Plateau that will incentivize natural climate solutions, a win for birds and ranchers.
- Science and policy input on state planning processes to help drive clean energy towards low impact areas.
- Support for resilient coastal communities through climate change planning in four Puget Sound counties.
- Launch of Elevation – a new initiative to empower young conservationists through representative mentorship.

We are deeply grateful for your continued commitment to protecting birds and the places they need—in Washington and beyond. With your help, we’re excited to be making an impact for birds across the hemisphere. If you’d like more information about how the work that you support in Washington contributes to our ambitious strategic plan, *Flight Plan*, please don’t hesitate to contact Michelle Moga. Thank you.

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Cover: Volunteers participating planting native trees as part of a habitat restoration project.

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