

**AUDUBON'S  
INTERNATIONAL  
ALLIANCES  
PROGRAM**  
**ELEVATING OUR  
CONSERVATION  
IMPACT**

BUSINESS PLAN  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**MARCH 2021**



Scaled Piculet

# AN INNOVATIVE PLAN TO ELEVATE OUR CONSERVATION IMPACT

Audubon’s new strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean are designed to deliver results at an unprecedented scale and pace, by incorporating bird conservation into national and local development agendas and involving a range of NGO partners, business interests, policymakers, and community leaders.

Migratory birds make epic journeys, connecting ecosystems and benefiting economies along the way. And yet, since 1970, we have lost 2.9 billion—more than one in four—birds that migrate through the Western Hemisphere. Much of this stress is attributed to the loss of critical wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean where half of the birds that breed in the U.S. and Canada spend the majority of their lives.



Canada Warbler

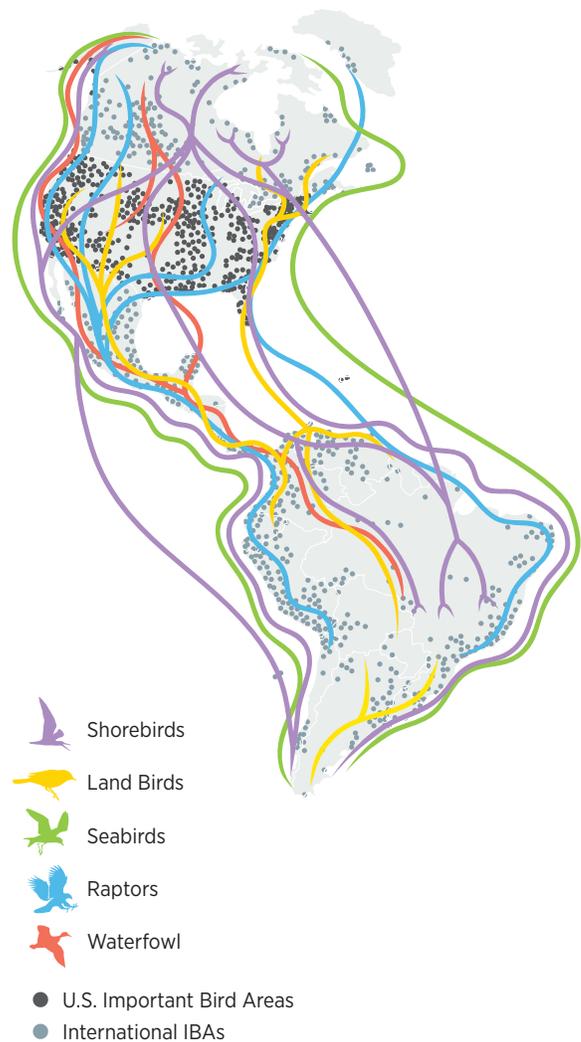
Historically, efforts to conserve bird habitat in the region have been primarily species- and science-driven, without the input and engagement of other stakeholders. As a result, bird conservation is largely absent from infrastructure,

land use, and development decisions. Consequently, conservation efforts have not been able to keep pace with rapid economic growth and intensifying pressure on natural resources.

Audubon’s International Alliances Program (IAP) has developed an ambitious plan to address these conservation shortfalls, by applying Audubon’s expertise and regional experience in innovative new ways. Targeting a portfolio of prime ecosystems that cover a combined area roughly the size of Mexico, our strategy is based on...

**Incorporating bird conservation into national and local development plans.** Our approach prioritizes efforts that protect birds and other wildlife while promoting sustainable economies, climate-change mitigation and adaptation, and human well-being. Via a comprehensive set of initiatives throughout the region, we intend to mainstream nature-based solutions into development plans to achieve conservation and sustainable-development impacts at a scale that matters. We will also support existing and emerging national conservation efforts driven by each country’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as national commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Paris Climate Agreement.

**Extending our impact through innovative partnerships.** Through strategic multi-sector partnerships, we intend to drive change at a hemispheric level. By involving more than 100 NGO partners as well as a diverse range of business interests, policymakers, and community leaders, we aim to build a science-based and human-focused conservation effort that is unprecedented—in magnitude, scale, and transformational impact.



# WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

More than half of the species found in the U.S. and Canada that are now at risk of extinction spend the majority of their lives in Latin America and the Caribbean. Audubon's strategy takes aim at the most urgent issues.



## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Climate change exacerbates the threats to birds.**

Sea-level rise and extreme weather events are impairing habitat, and warming ocean waters are decreasing populations of forage fish that feed seabirds and some waterbirds. Our coastal resilience strategy will restore and improve the management of millions of hectares of coastal bird habitat.



## HABITAT LOSS

**Habitat loss is rapidly driving severe birdlife declines.** Millions of hectares of terrestrial and coastal habitat are lost or degraded every year due to development or agricultural and coastal practices. Our strategy directly addresses this threat.



## UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Natural resources in Latin America and the Caribbean are under intense pressure from economic and population growth.** Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Panama are among the most rapidly developing countries in the world. With growth expected to accelerate as economies emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, finding ways to incorporate conservation into growth solutions will be critical across the entire migratory pathway.

# MAINSTREAMING BIRD CONSERVATION: AUDUBON'S THEORY OF CHANGE

By incorporating bird conservation into national and local development agendas and involving a range of partners—NGOs, business interests, policymakers, and community leaders—our strategies can deliver results at an unprecedented scale and pace.

The National Audubon Society's mission is to protect the places birds need throughout their life cycles, today and tomorrow. Audubon's ambitious new plan focuses on the most important habitats that migratory, endemic, and threatened birds across the Americas need to survive and thrive. Although the plan emphasizes bird conservation, its goals and strategies include broader conservation, economic, and human well-being benefits.

By emphasizing the importance of our work for human health and prosperity, we intend to elevate bird conservation into national development agendas. This is a critical step, because development plans define major land-use and infrastructure investments (e.g., dams, roads, ports, urban development, and agricultural expansion) and their influence often extends beyond a single governing administration. By incorporating not only NGO partners but also business interests, policymakers, and community leaders from the beginning, we can foster the broad buy-in necessary for sustainable conservation.

To accomplish this, we will draw from Audubon's deep well of expertise in terms of science, policy, and regional experience. We will also capitalize

*"It's essential to mainstream nature-based solutions into national and local development plans to achieve conservation and sustainable-development impacts at a scale that matters. The work of Audubon and their partners illustrates that this is feasible when done with shared vision and inclusive, persistent, and continuous work."*

—**Mirei Endara de Heras**, Former Minister of the Environment, Panama

on and link to national conservation efforts already underway, many of which are driven by international conservation commitments, such as...

- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Convention on Biological Diversity, including 30x30 initiatives to protect 30 percent of ecosystems by 2030
- Paris Climate Agreement nationally determined contributions (NDCs)



## STRATEGY 1: SUBNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PROTECTED AREAS

Audubon will work with partners to establish more than 80 new protected areas covering 2 million hectares and improve management of an additional 2 million hectares.



## STRATEGY 2: WORKING LANDS

Audubon and partners will work with landowners to create healthier habitats for priority birds and other wildlife on 5 million hectares of agricultural lands in once-forested landscapes.



## STRATEGY 3: COASTAL RESILIENCE

Audubon and partners aim to restore or improve the management of 1 million hectares of coastal bird habitat.



## STRATEGY 4: BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY FOR BIRDS

Audubon and its partners will build public commitment to bird conservation by engaging one million people across the hemisphere.

# MAINSTREAMING BIRD CONSERVATION: OUR FOUR STRATEGIES

Our conservation strategies are designed to address and mitigate the largest threats to bird habitats and deliver lasting economic and environmental benefits for people. We employ market-based approaches to encourage local buy-in, scalability, and long-term conservation sustainability.

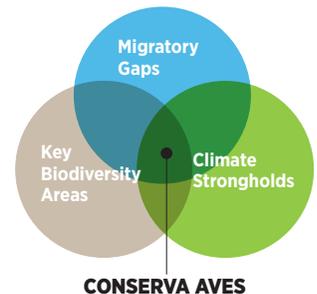
These strategies are based on models that have the potential to achieve impact at scale. We will escalate proven techniques for regenerative agriculture, coastal resilience, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. We will also incubate promising models, test and advance them, and disseminate them through public and private partnerships and distributed networks of local partners. Here is a brief description of our strategies:

## STRATEGY 1: SUBNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PROTECTED AREAS

Well-managed protected areas are essential to sustaining bird populations and reversing their decline. But a 2015 global assessment indicated that protected areas only adequately cover the ranges of nine percent of global migratory bird species. Only about 40 percent of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) enjoy some form of protection. Moreover, many existing protected areas are not managed effectively due to inadequate technical and financial capacity.

Audubon will work with partners to establish more than **80 new protected areas covering 2 million hectares (4.9 million acres)** and improve management of an additional 2 million hectares. We will focus on sites where priority areas for migratory birds overlap with Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and climate strongholds.

The core of this strategy is Conserva Aves, an innovative partnership among Audubon, BirdLife International, American Bird Conservancy, and the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Environmental Funds (RedLAC). The concept is rooted in a successful model, Conserva Colombia, which raised \$1.8 million to create 95 protected areas (202,000 hectares/499,000 acres) in four years, trained more than 40 NGO partners, provided science, and led collaborative conservation and fundraising efforts.



## STRATEGY 2: WORKING LANDS

Audubon and partners will work with landowners to create **healthier habitats for priority birds and other wildlife on 5 million hectares (12 million acres) of agricultural lands**, particularly in once-forested landscapes. These lands serve as migratory corridors between forest blocks and protected areas, and improve environmental benefits for people.

To achieve this goal, we will integrate bird habitat needs into techniques such as silvopastoral systems for cattle ranching and crop-rotation models that create artificial wetlands on sugar and rice plantations. Already prototyped in Colombia, these systems have boosted yields and income for farmers and communities while demonstrating significant environmental benefits.

The infographic features a central illustration of a landscape with a river, birds, and agricultural fields. Text boxes provide details on various aspects:

- Environmental Benefits**
  - Improved water quality
  - Increased biodiversity contribution
  - Improved carbon sequestration
  - Decreased erosion
- Socioeconomic benefits**
  - Increased yields (crops and animals)
  - Increased profitability (average annual income growth of more than 10 percent)
- Sustainable cattle ranching** restores forests, adding trees, shrubs, and live fences and providing bird habitat.
- Protected areas** conserve wetlands, water resources, and other critical habitat and wildlife corridors.
- Innovative rotations of sugarcane and rice crops** create artificial wetlands and bird habitat, mitigate flooding, and increase farm productivity.

## STRATEGY 3: COASTAL RESILIENCE

Shorebird populations are experiencing large-scale declines across the globe. The situation is especially dire in the Pacific Americas Flyway, where 36 percent of shorebird populations demonstrate long-term declines and another 33 percent have unknown population trends. As in the Atlantic Flyway, much of the decline is due to habitat loss driven by development pressures—trends that are expected to continue.

Through our coastal resilience strategy, Audubon and partners aim to **restore or improve the management of 1 million hectares (2.5 million acres) of coastal bird habitat**. We will achieve this goal by...

- mainstreaming nature-based and green infrastructure solutions into national and regional planning, policy, and implementation—to encourage smarter development and preserve the valuable services that intact coastal ecosystems provide
- quantifying and articulating the economic value of coastal bird habitat, in terms of reducing climate change risk and protecting public health
- convening coastal development, resilience, and biodiversity-conservation organizations and advocates around the common goals that unite them.



## STRATEGY 4: BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY FOR BIRDS

Birds are persuasive ambassadors. Over the past half-decade, the explosion of awareness and popularity of birds and birding in Latin America and the Caribbean have been extraordinary, especially among young people. Audubon and its partners will continue to build momentum and public commitment to bird conservation by **engaging one million people across the hemisphere**. As we harness public enthusiasm we will also build a strong economic case to advance conservation agendas.

*“People come to our region from around the world because we have the best birding on Earth. Bird tourism has become part of our efforts to build a community that is empowered and self-sufficient, and engaged in sustainable economic development.”*

—Birding Guide **Dora Guzmán González**,  
Quindío, Colombia



Demonstrating the economic value of bird habitats is an essential component for creating local and regional conditions that help to protect wildlife. We will continue to augment our successes in bird tourism and community engagement as a way to grow support for conservation among multiple stakeholders and audiences. And we will deploy our communication, policy advocacy, and community-engagement expertise to promote awareness of the vital link between human and bird health.

# MAINSTREAMING BIRD CONSERVATION

## TARGETING OUR WORK FOR THE GREATEST IMPACT

Audubon aims to conserve 10 million hectares of important bird habitat in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2026, and 40 million hectares by 2030.

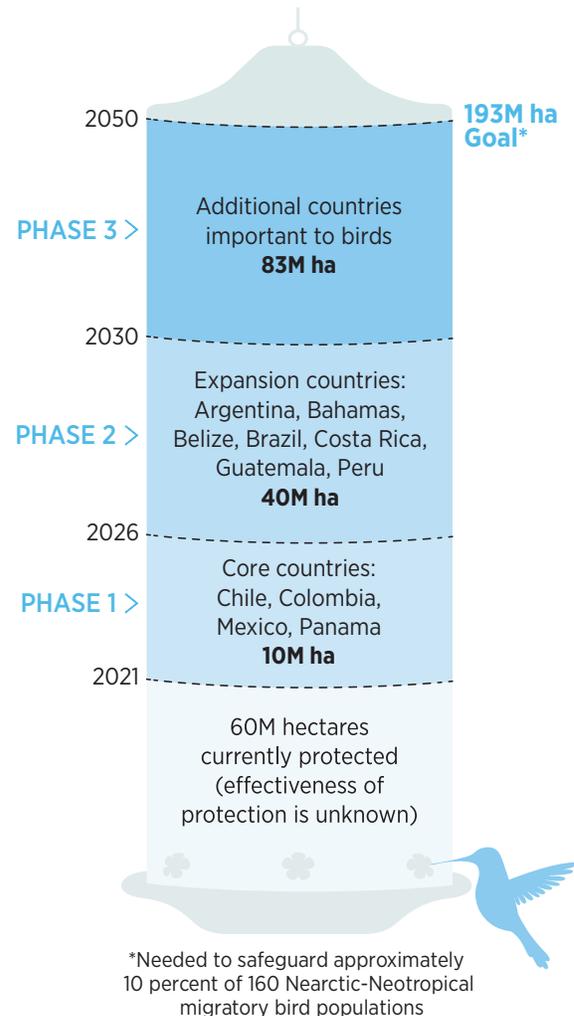
Audubon’s first step in the development of our business plan was to establish a “north star” goal for bird conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean, quantifying the amount of habitat needed to effectively protect migratory birds. Using the latest peer-reviewed migratory bird science and data from the Migratory Bird Initiative, we determined a target of **193 million hectares (477 million acres) — an area roughly the size of Mexico**. This would safeguard prime habitats for at least 10 percent of the population of 117 priority terrestrial bird species and 41 shorebird species, and tackle bird conservation at the scale needed to prevent the loss of billions of migratory birds. (See the full Business Plan for complete methodology.)



Only about 60 million hectares (148 million acres) of this area is currently protected, although the effectiveness of protection is unknown. We intend to protect another 50 million hectares (124 million acres) by 2030 via a phased approach that includes multiple conservation strategies, intensive collaboration with a wide array of stakeholder-partners, and a clear vision for large-scale conservation.

Here’s how we’ll do it:

- In the near term (2021-2026), Audubon will focus on conserving **10 million hectares (25 million acres)**. We will concentrate on habitats of highest value to migratory birds and threatened and endemic resident birds, factoring in future climate strongholds. We will test and scale pilots and demonstration projects across priority habitats in four core countries: **Colombia, Panama, Chile, Mexico**. Within these countries Audubon has identified landscapes that need immediate attention and are of outsized importance to conservation goals. Examples include Panama Bay and Colombia’s Cauca Valley.



- During Phase 2 (2026-2030), as our strategies gain traction and as new partnerships take hold, our goal increases to **40 million hectares (99 million acres)** of conserved land in seven additional countries in the region.
- Phase 3 (2030 and onward) expands our work to priority landscapes in other countries in the region, as opportunities emerge and capacity grows.

# OUR 2026 GOALS

Over the next five years, we will scale up our focus on Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) ecosystems. At the same time, we will continue to execute our existing strategy in Canada's boreal forests, which provide nesting grounds and migratory stopovers for nearly half of the common bird species found in North America. Here are the highlights:

## Conservation for birds, nature, and people

- Create at least 80 new protected areas totaling 2 million hectares (4.9 million acres) and improve conservation of an additional 2 million hectares of protected lands and 6 million hectares (15 million acres) of coastal and agricultural lands.
- Prioritize techniques with a potential to significantly affect climate mitigation and adaptation (including coastal resilience).
- Stabilize populations and reverse declines of priority species such as the Canada Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Least Tern, Hudsonian Godwit, and Prothonotary Warbler via intensive focus on high-priority habitats.

Our conservation strategies apply the latest bird conservation science and balance economic development needs to ensure that conservation is viable and durable for local communities.

## Practices and policies

- Develop playbooks to guide local stakeholders toward proven conservation strategies for agriculture, including regenerative cattle ranching and lower-impact practices for sugarcane and other crops.
- Help local stakeholders increase coastal resilience, with an emphasis on sustainable and cost-effective infrastructure solutions, water sanitation, and municipal adaptation.
- Develop national plans for bird conservation, and mainstream conservation policies into development plans in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Panama.
- Establish legislation and policies advancing bird conservation and nature-based solutions in each of our core countries.

We aim to expand the constituency for birds by demonstrating the value of bird data to indicate ecosystem health and measure the impacts of nature-based solutions.



Audubon's Diego Ochoa with Audubon-certified guide Liliana Trujillo in Bogota, Colombia

## Partnerships

- Establish strategic multi-sector partnerships that can drive change at a hemispheric level.
- Train and strengthen more than 100 local partner organizations.
- Focus at least 30 percent of our conservation agenda on marginalized areas and communities, with an emphasis on empowering local conservation leaders.

By investing in strong, strategic, and diverse partnerships at all levels we can integrate bird conservation into national and local development agendas.

## Strategic investment

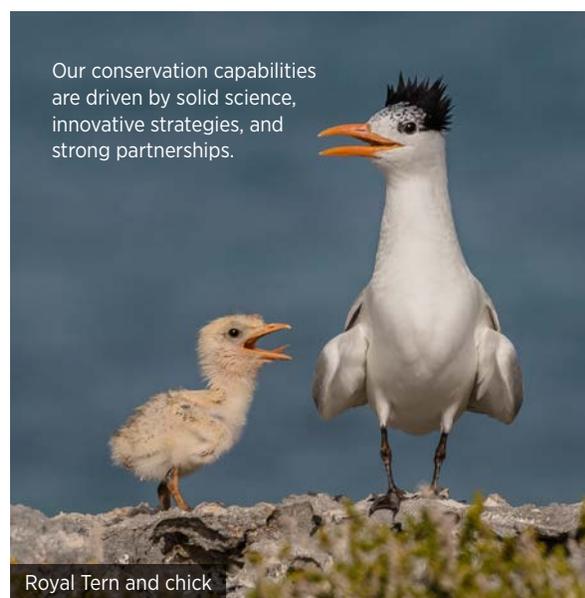
- Directly invest more than \$40 million to support priorities for bird conservation and sustainable economic development across the LAC region.
- Magnify this support with an additional \$55M in leverage funding for our partners, and influence an additional \$285 million in conservation spending through partnerships, policy initiatives, and other investments.

Our first-phase initiatives concentrate on five core countries: Colombia, Panama, Chile, Mexico, and Canada.

# WHY AUDUBON?

Audubon is uniquely positioned to mobilize the conservation actors and actions needed to secure a positive future for birds and their habitats.

No other organization is as well-positioned as Audubon to lead this unprecedented effort. Our legacy is built on science, education, policy, on-the-ground conservation, and the collaborative networks we have built to support bird conservation. We bring the power of birds to engage and inspire, a committed network of 1.9 million supporters, and relationships with critical partner organizations.



We offer...

- **A hemispheric presence and track record.** Birds provide the connectivity that links habitats throughout the hemisphere. Audubon has a long track record and expanding presence in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada. Our brand is widely recognized in the places we work, and synonymous with bird conservation.
- **Strategies informed by the latest migratory bird science.** Audubon's Migratory Bird Initiative and international science team apply the latest data to guide our international priorities and measure program impact. This ensures that conservation investments are made where they will produce the greatest return. Audubon is also able to quantify and communicate the co-benefits of bird conservation to climate-change mitigation, human well-being, and economic development.

*"The construction of Colombia's National Plan for the Conservation of Birds will be iconic, since we plan to use birds as ambassadors for the nature-based solutions needed to ensure water, food, and energy security, as well as climate-change adaptation. We hope to continue working closely with Audubon to consolidate leadership in the conservation of birds and natural capital."*

—**Hernando Garcia**, General Director,  
Alexander von Humboldt Biological  
Resources Research Institute

- **Valued partnerships.** Audubon's access to a vast international network positions the organization to leverage and expand our influence. Our network includes BirdLife International and its partners as well as other conservation NGOs, research institutions, and policy makers. We will empower local people and organizations through training, capacity building, and connection to a coordinated strategy. We'll also bring in partners such as ministries of tourism and agriculture, development banks, and industry leaders.
- **Innovation that delivers conservation impact at scale—for people and for birds.** Bird conservation agendas get more traction when they are aligned with broader conservation and socioeconomic objectives. By emphasizing the connection between healthy bird habitat and factors essential for human well-being—such as job creation, improved climate resilience, and health and food security benefits—we can create momentum for effective conservation solutions.

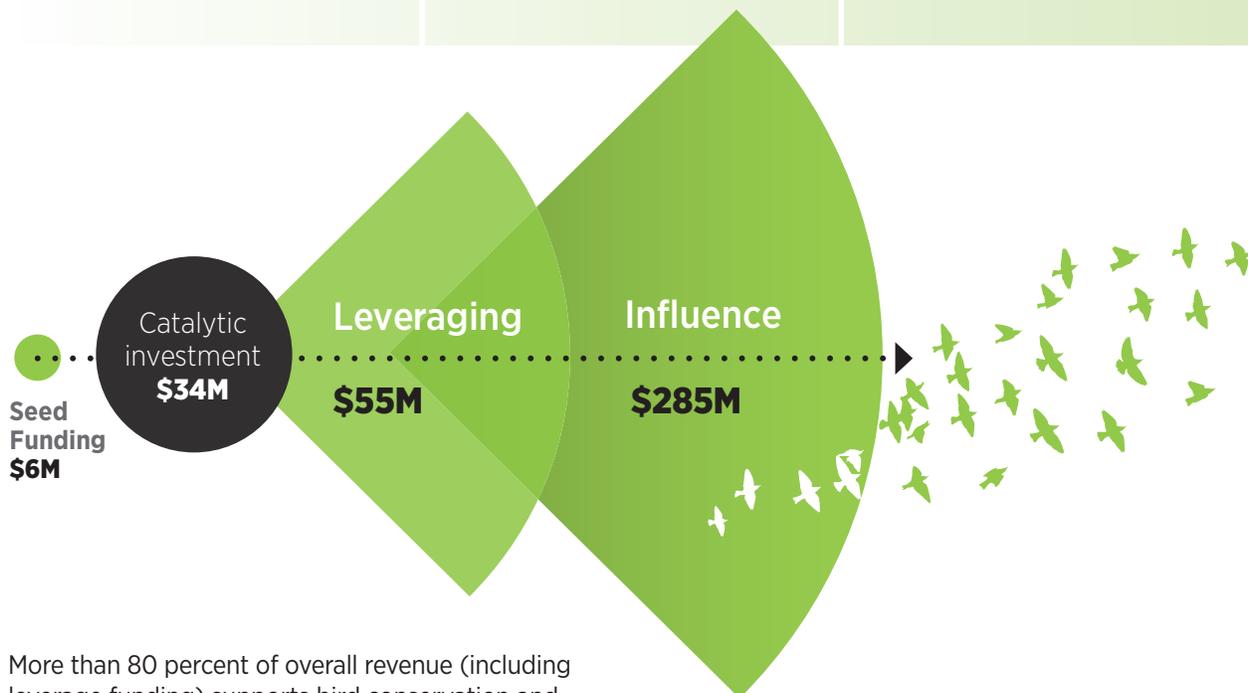
From the birding community to large conservation programs, Audubon is recognized for its ability to convene and catalyze the people and organizations that care about wildlife, biodiversity, and human well-being.

# INVESTMENT PLAN: A PHASED APPROACH

Audubon is seeking investments for on-the-ground conservation, pilot projects, capacity building, and core operations over the next five years. Our funding strategy is designed to magnify seed funding so that even moderate investments during the plan's initial stages will have a very

significant conservation impact. Overall, we expect that \$20M+ in private philanthropy will create proof points needed to attract \$20M in public and corporate support to fund expansion, plus \$55M in leverage funding for our partners.

ROUND 1 INVESTMENT NEED \$10.5M by June 2022	ROUND 2 INVESTMENT NEED \$25.5M over FY23 and FY24	ROUND 3 INVESTMENT NEED \$59M over FY25 and FY26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$6M initial seed funding from individual investors and foundations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$8M private funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$6M private funding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$1.5M public and corporate funding, while we build capacity to secure larger public funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$5.5M public and corporate funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$13M public and corporate funding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$3M leverage funding invested directly in partner projects aligned with strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$12M leverage funding invested directly in partner projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$40M leverage funding invested directly in partner projects</li> </ul>



More than 80 percent of overall revenue (including leverage funding) supports bird conservation and strengthens local partners and communities.

## LET'S KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Audubon envisions a resilient future where the people, birds, and nature of the Americas thrive; where public policy and individual and community choices reflect the essential link between economic prosperity and ecological health; and where sustainable forests, mangroves, grasslands, rivers, and beaches provide rich habitat for birds and other wildlife and vital environmental benefits for communities throughout the hemisphere.

Realizing our vision will require creative thinking and a dedicated commitment from everyone

who values the exceptional work we do, and who recognizes our potential to reach even greater heights. We look forward to your participation in this unprecedented conservation effort, and we thank you for your support.

**Together, we can create a brighter future for the birds, wildlife, and human communities of the Americas.**



Scarlet Macaw, Chiquibul Forest Reserve, Belize



Audubon

**Audubon International Alliances Program**

1200 18th Street NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20036 USA

[audubon.org/conservation/international](http://audubon.org/conservation/international)  
[International@audubon.org](mailto:International@audubon.org)

**Photo Credits**

Cover: Mike Fernandez/Audubon; p. 2: John Benson/Flickr CC (BY 2.0);  
p. 3, from top: Shutterstock/kakteen; Kike Calvo/VWPics; Chris Linder/  
iLCP; p. 6: Bill Gozansky/Alamy; p. 8: Mike Fernandez/Audubon; p. 9:  
Lorraine Minns/Audubon Photography Awards; p. 11: Camilla Cerea/  
Audubon; back cover: Hal Beral/VWPics/Alamy