

TO: THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FROM: DAVID YARNOLD
DATE: JANUARY 11, 2021



BALD EAGLE. PHOTO: JEFF MEAUX/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

2020 Top Wins for Birds

With the generous support of our committed donors, Audubon is protecting birds and the places they need. Here are a few of our most important victories over the past 12 months:

1. Defending and Strengthening Foundational Bird Conservation Laws. Audubon went to federal court to defend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act — a 102-year-old law that formed the foundation for the modern bird conservation movement — and we won. However, ignoring legal challenges, public opposition, and science, the Trump administration is rushing to finalize a rule to weaken this bedrock policy. To reinforce the MBTA, Audubon is working with Congress to pass the Migratory Bird Protection Act. This bill would end the industry's free pass to kill birds and provide a permitting framework to help businesses implement management practices

that best prevent bird deaths. And with our leadership, both California and Vermont passed and enacted bills that reinstate bird protections to backstop the federal rollbacks.

2. Feeding Seabirds Along the Atlantic. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries, a commission formed to coordinate and manage fishery resources, voted unanimously to recognize the important role Atlantic menhaden play for birds and other wildlife on the Atlantic Coast — and the need to manage that fishery with overall ecosystem health in mind. The vote sets the stage for healthier fisheries that better support birds such as the Atlantic Puffin and Least Tern. Audubon was instrumental in the win, from federal lobbying to engaging local decision-makers.

3. Saving Old-Growth Forest in Alaska. Audubon won a critical lawsuit protecting the Tongass National Forest from logging. The large old-growth trees and rich ecosystem on Prince of Wales Island contribute to the region's tourism, fishing, and recreation industries, and are vital habitats for birds such as the Bald Eagle and Marbled Murrelet.

4. Taking Climate Action Across the Country. The Audubon network was integral in advancing a number of important climate solutions in the states in 2020.

- Audubon successfully worked to pass the Disaster Relief and Resilience Act in the South Carolina legislature. The critical law will help mitigate many of the impacts of sea level rise, which makes flooding a persistent problem in the state.
- The Vermont General Assembly passed the Global Warming Solutions Act. Audubon helped advance the legislation, which sets carbon pollution reduction targets and mandates a state plan, including natural climate solutions, to achieve those goals.
- In Connecticut, Audubon testified and advocated for legislation that explicitly

addresses environmental justice. The bill requires facilities that impact the environment, like power plants, to communicate more with the public about those impacts and increases the opportunity for frontline communities to be heard by decision-makers.

- Because of Audubon's advocacy work, New York's renewables plan includes protections for at-risk species, including environmental and fisheries mitigation plans, provisions to reduce impacts to wildlife, and support for monitoring wildlife and fish stocks.
- Audubon was integral in creating Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan, a framework to help protect the state from the effects of sea level rise. And we're working to keep those projects fully funded, pushing Louisiana closer to its goal of net zero emissions by 2050.
- Audubon gave critical input on wetlands, rivers, and environmental funding to a new executive order that mandates climate mitigation strategies in Connecticut. This kind of order is one of the best ways to create impact at scale when tackling large issues like climate change.



OVENBIRD. PHOTO: MEGUMI WILLIAMSON/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS



BLACK OYSTERCATCHER. PHOTO: STEVE LEFKOVITS/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

5. Building a Secure Water Future for Everyone.

Water security is a critically important topic across Audubon, not just in the arid West but also in hydrologically complex landscapes like the Florida Everglades. Audubon's work was key to making sure there's enough water to go around. Audubon has long worked to increase Utah's flexibility in managing water resources. And three new bills will help achieve that goal by promoting optimal use of the public's water, making it easier for water users to share or split water allotments, and creating councils to address watershed issues.

- After a multi-year effort, Audubon helped pass a bill that will give Colorado water users more flexibility to divert less or no water during dry years. The legislation will allow for more water to stay in a river, benefiting the local environment, wildlife, and economies.
- Audubon helped secure record-high Everglades appropriations at the state and federal levels, improving water use in Florida and building a healthier future for birds and people.

6. Creating More Bird-friendly Communities.

Audubon has been instrumental in passing legislation that will help transform communities into places where birds flourish. Take for instance

the Moving Forward Act, which passed in the U.S. House of Representatives and includes more than \$1.5 trillion in infrastructure investments with key protections for birds and wildlife, including amendments that incorporated the Bird-Safe Buildings Act and Recovering America's Wildlife Act. Audubon also passed four state-level and 11 local-level native-plant proclamations, resolutions, and ordinances last year — helping to foster climate-resilient communities that provide reliable food sources for birds while keeping our water clean by reducing streambank erosion and stormwater runoff due to increased flooding.

7. Advancing Social Justice. In 2020, Audubon deepened our commitment to building an inclusive and anti-racist future. And we're pushing this meaningful work forward by supporting critical programs such as Black Birders Week, organizing our youth-led "Tough Conversations" webinars, and continuing Audubon's LGBTQ series "Let's Go Birding Together."

8. Increasing Our Flock. Two years ago, Audubon launched Audubon on Campus, an initiative dedicated to engaging student leaders. And this year, the program has been expanded to more than 120 campuses across the country.



AMERICAN GOLDFINCH. PHOTO: GARY ROBINETTE/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

9. Driving Conservation Forward. Because of you, Audubon's conservation wingspan is parallel to none. Together, we're protecting birds, safeguarding our natural heritage, and fostering a healthier environment for us all.

- Audubon helped stop development of the proposed Pebble Mine in a critically important Alaskan watershed. The project violated the Clean Water Act and would have damaged or destroyed one of the world's largest salmon fisheries.
- We're entering the second phase of an effort to revive 400 acres of tidal marshland in the San Francisco Bay Area. The initiative is creating important resting habitat for shorebirds, particularly during high tides and storm surges.
- Audubon helped save the Gila River, one of the last free-flowing rivers in the Southwest, from a diversion project that would have threatened its ecology and wildlife and benefited less than 1 percent of the region's population.
- In California, Governor Newsom issued an executive order — based on a successful Audubon-sponsored assembly bill — aiming to set aside 30 percent of the state's open spaces by 2030, in addition to recognizing the rights, stewardship, and wisdom of Indigenous People.
- After working to pass the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, which governs water use and development along the Platte and was set to expire at the end of 2019, Audubon played a key role in extending the program, ensuring the river and its habitats are protected for years to come.
- Because of Audubon's work with Florida State Senator Tom Lee, task forces for the state's three proposed turnpikes found no need to build the new roads, which would have opened large parts of rural Florida to development and potentially destroyed important conservation lands and wildlife habitats.
- Audubon won three stunning victories for bird species in 2020: In California, we saved 100 percent of the nesting Tricolored Blackbird colonies on agricultural fields across California. Our efforts in Arizona helped uphold federal safeguards for the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo. And in Louisiana, we ensured that the secretive Black Rail was listed for protections under the Endangered Species Act.