



Piping Plovers, Sanderlings,
and Ruddy Turnstones



**National Audubon Society
Chief Executive Officer
Position and Candidate Specification**

The National Audubon Society traces its origins to the founding in 1896 of the Massachusetts Audubon Society when a group of Boston women, outraged at the slaughter of birds for plumes used to adorn hats, recruited others to join them in an effort to halt the practice. Within a few years, state-level Audubon Societies had been formed across the country, and by 1905 a national association of Audubon societies was established, which eventually became known as the National Audubon Society.

In the more than 115 years since its founding, Audubon has focused on birds as the lens through which the organization shapes the conservation landscape and the portal through which it does its work. It has played an historically impactful role in leveraging the ubiquity of birds to reach across communities. For example, it helped to catalyze the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) which remains to this day one of the strongest laws protecting wild North American birds. Shortly after the passage of the MBTA, Audubon established its first system of waterbird sanctuaries in seven states along the eastern coast of the U.S., and thus initiated the implementation of large-scale, science-based bird conservation efforts. Raising the alarm about the hazards of DDT and documenting the resulting decline and then partial recovery of bird species; helping to pass the Endangered Species Act; spearheading the world's longest-running bird survey in its Christmas Bird Count; popularizing birding through its field guides, publications, nature centers, and programming; scientifically documenting the health of birds and their habitats; and myriad other activities established Audubon and its hundreds of affiliated chapters as one of the nation's most iconic and influential conservation organizations.

Audubon works to save birds through conservation and advocacy grounded in science. As leaders in applied bird conservation science, Audubon engages in research and analysis to support the development of its programs, to build its authority as a science-led thought leader, and to inform and evaluate the work of Audubon and its partners. The past ten years have seen an evolution towards a flyway-based and hemispheric approach to conservation. This approach reflects both the migratory nature of birds and the growing recognition in the conservation community that certain problems, including climate change, cannot be solved locally. Most notably, Audubon has launched a landmark Migratory Bird Initiative (MBI) with partners to map migratory patterns and identify the most important places for birds from Chile to the Arctic. In this ambitious effort Audubon scientists and affiliated partners are mapping the journeys undertaken by the 520 migrating North American bird species. The MBI will position Audubon to collaborate more effectively with international partners so that together they can conserve the places most critical to birds, wherever their travels take them. The MBI will protect bird species by identifying the migration stopover sites, overwintering grounds, breeding habitats, and other places they need—thus focusing the organization's future conservation work where it matters most.

Based in New York City, Audubon has 17 state and regional field offices working across 32 states and 33 nature centers and 23 sanctuaries (the largest network of nature centers owned by a major conservation NGO), and a staff of 660, including 140 in New York City and 50 in Washington, DC. Audubon's network includes more than 450 affiliated chapters and 150 campus chapters, each an independent 501(c)(3)

organization or a student organization, aligned to Audubon's conservation strategy and engaged in driving Audubon's community-based conservation work. In 2018 it formed a 501(c)(4) Action Fund "committed to building public demand for policy solutions that address the greatest conservation challenges for birds and people."

Audubon has more than 1.8 million members and 367,000 donors who together represent one of the most geographically and ideologically diverse groups of supporters of any conservation organization in the country. Furthermore, these supporters span the political spectrum – 52% are progressive, 48% moderate to conservative. With its groundswell of activists growing by the week, Audubon is a prized and sought-after partner, increasingly called upon by organizations and campaigns to tap into "America's most effective conservation network."

Audubon is governed by an active and supportive 36-member Board of Directors, which meets three times a year. Twenty-two state advisory boards inform activities and priorities in their respective regions. At the chapter level, volunteers are very active and are increasingly tied into state and national-level priorities.

Audubon's FY 2022 operating budget is \$151.5 million, and as of May 1, its endowment totaled \$261.6 million. Its financial outlook is sound. In fact, Audubon is currently poised to increase its work and its impact as a leader in conservation.

Strategy Inflection Point

Audubon's 2016-2020 strategic plan focused on bringing America's largest and most effective conservation network to bear on five highly scalable strategic priorities that can make the greatest difference for the future of birds: Coasts; Working Lands; Water; Climate; and Bird-Friendly Communities. These priorities cover the breadth of landscapes that birds need to thrive, including shorelines, lakes, bird-friendly cities, and habitat strongholds that will provide shelter to birds as the climate changes and their old homes disappear. In addition, Audubon is investing in innovative communication and engagement strategies to bring birds and nature to a new generation of diverse activists and supporters.

From 2021-22, Audubon will create its next strategic plan, building on the last decade of work, responsive to the current moment, and with its eyes firmly fixed on the future. Audubon is an organization in transition which will present a new executive with an extraordinary moment to create the next chapter in Audubon's storied history. Audubon's new leader will capitalize on the organization's current fiscal, scientific and creative strength to drive a new strategic vision and plan for the next decade and beyond, infusing equity and justice into all aspects of Audubon's work.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

For Audubon, it is a moral and business imperative to represent and reflect human diversity, embracing it in all the communities where the organization works, in order to achieve its conservation goals. Today, the National Audubon Society has publicly committed to being an antiracist institution in everything it does. Conservation, and the enjoyment of birds, cannot be held separate from racial equity. The organization is committed to doing its best to right wrongs and build a bright and wholly inclusive future.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are core Audubon values. They are also business essentials. Respect, inclusion, and opportunity for people and perspectives from different cultures attracts the best ideas and harnesses the greatest passion to shape a healthier, more vibrant future for all who share this planet. The birds that Audubon protects differ in color, size, behavior, range, and countless other ways. By honoring and celebrating the equally remarkable diversity of the human species, Audubon strives to bring new creativity, innovation, and impact to its work throughout the hemisphere. Only by creating a truly inclusive workplace, with equitable access to career development opportunities for all staff, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation, can Audubon bring greater diversity to staff at all levels—from junior positions to senior management.

Elevate Campaign

Audubon is currently in the midst of a six-year (2016-2022) \$650 million fundraising campaign, the largest in its history. The campaign is focused on three pillars, each with a \$200 million goal:

- 1) People: "empowering and engaging the next generation and the communities we serve"
- 2) Places: "protecting the places that birds need throughout their journey, from the Arctic Circle to Chile"
- 3) Policy: "driving pragmatic policy solutions that transform the political conversation around conservation"

An additional \$50 million is being raised in capital and planned gifts.

The Audubon board is taking its job seriously, engaging its constituencies in what is needed in the next CEO, strengthening its own governance practices, and working with the current Acting (and next permanent) CEO on strategic direction for the organization and the resourcing of it through and beyond the Elevate Campaign.

For more information about the National Audubon Society, please visit: www.audubon.org



Great Egret

The National Audubon Society protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation

At this critical moment in environmental history, the National Audubon Society board seeks a CEO with a passion for its mission, exceptional executive experience, and results orientation to lead the organization with clarity, urgency, and a deep sense of purpose. With climate change altering the lives of birds and the places they inhabit; the next CEO of the National Audubon Society will align the resources of the organization's vast network to focus on the most critical environmental and biodiversity challenges. In collaboration with the leadership of the organization's 23 state programs, 450 chapters and 41 centers, the CEO will materially shape the strategic plan underway and chart the course needed to reach its goals. The next CEO will embrace the opportunity to leverage the organization's assets, inspire and unite a talented and diverse staff, build trust across the organization, and expand and deepen its impact.

The National Audubon Society seeks an experienced leader who is energized by the opportunity to steward a complex organization that looks through the lens of birds to address the most pressing conservation challenges, with a keen understanding that conservation issues are human issues. A seasoned leader, the next CEO will have the vision and courage to lead on these impactful issues; the humility to listen carefully and seek input; and the judgment and experience to be decisive in managing a decentralized, multi-faceted, and global organization. Audubon's next CEO will bring personal passion for addressing these conservation challenges, a demonstrated love of birds, mature leadership experiences, and the emotional intelligence to unite the broad and diverse team that coalesces around the organization's central mission.



Burrowing Owl

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Significant Leadership Experience

A proven track record as CEO or president, or equivalent, of a complex, decentralized organization. Demonstrated vision and the ability to communicate it effectively on key issues.

Deeply Held, Authentic Commitment to the Mission

Demonstrated, genuine appreciation for, understanding of, and passion for birds, their habitats and solutions to complex conservation issues and climate change.

Demonstrated Impact on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

A demonstrated contribution to and experience leading equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives and a track record of impact on organizational culture, practices, and strategies.

Management in a Complex Environment

Extensive management experience with strong strategic and organizational acumen. A strong communicator with a track record that demonstrates decisiveness, inclusiveness, transparency, and a focus on solutions.

Fundraising

Proven relationship-builder with significant fundraising experience and success.

Partnership with a Board

An ability to collaborate effectively and transparently with, and appropriately engage, the Board of Directors.



CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Inclusive Strategic Leadership

“Protecting birds and the places they need” requires an ambitious vision, clear strategic plan, and effective execution. The next CEO will be a collaborative, results-driven leader, ready to engage and listen, and ultimately prepared to set a clear direction. The next CEO will:

- Ensure that the strategic plan in development reflects the goals of the organization and is well understood and embraced by the multi-sector of Audubon stakeholders.
- Embrace the opportunity to collaborate across the organization, inviting discussion and debate, and creating an environment where all voices are invited. Listen with humility; model respectful discussion/debate and be prepared to make difficult decisions; set clear priorities and expectations.
- Seek opportunities to forge effective bonds and align the priorities throughout the Audubon network. Preserve the best of the distributed network while pursuing opportunities to execute on a well-understood coherent vision for Audubon across the continent.
- Inspire a culture that values and nurtures collaboration and create incentives/structures to motivate behavior. Have the judgment necessary to understand and evaluate new initiatives and the credibility, courage, and skills to gain support and implement change effectively.

Building Institutional Capacity

A complex, decentralized organization, National Audubon Society needs to leverage the strengths and capacities of its network to optimize the effectiveness of the whole. The next CEO will:

- Develop, evaluate, and pursue strategies to execute the strategic plan. Ensure that the organization has the structure, infrastructure, and resources essential to drive the success of these critical objectives.
- Understand and embrace the range of tools available to achieve the goals and use them strategically. Leverage the power of the network and create incentives to drive effective collaboration.
- Attract, mentor, delegate to, and empower a strong collaborative team. Encourage an environment that values and expects exceptional management, supports professional growth and holds people accountable.
- Bring strategic, financial, and operational acumen to the role. Steward the organization’s resources, balancing short-term needs and long-term responsibilities. Establish efficient and effective processes, systems and protocols that support Audubon’s work.
- Communicate widely, in a clear, compelling, and timely manner.

Community Engagement & Building

In an organization whose members are eager to identify common purpose and unify to support the mission, the next CEO will:

- Be a culturally competent leader who has demonstrated experience fostering an inclusive community where all may thrive, contribute, and change the organization.
- Engage with all members of the organization and participate actively in the office and in the field when able. Develop strong, authentic relationships and look for opportunities large and small to make and deepen connections.
- Be an inspiring and trusted leader and convener with the ability to foster an environment characterized by inclusion, equity, and respect.
- Develop strong relationships with donors who share a commitment to Audubon's values and work. Execute an ambitious fundraising program to support the organization.
- Appreciate and leverage the power of the role. Seek opportunities to speak publicly on matters of significance to the mission.

OTHER PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- A broadly engaged intellect; a deeply passionate conservationist with good judgment and strong moral compass;
- Warm and engaging with sincere humility. Genuinely interested in the lives of team members and partners;
- Exceptional verbal and written communication skills – thoughtful, inspiring and authentic;
- The confidence to invite dialogue, listen carefully, make decisions and to share credit;
- Finds joy in this work.

THE SEARCH PROCESS

The National Audubon Society is a federal contractor and an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE). All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. We are committed to a policy of nondiscrimination, inclusion and equal opportunity and actively seek a diverse pool of candidates in this search.

The National Audubon Society is being assisted in this recruitment by the international leadership advisory firm Spencer Stuart and welcomes nominations or expressions of interest. To submit comments, nominations, or expressions of interest, please send an e-mail with any supporting materials to the confidential address: AudubonCEO@spencerstuart.com

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