



Audubon North Carolina

2025
IMPACT
REPORT



Audubon

NORTH CAROLINA

FROM OUR VICE PRESIDENT

Uniting Through Birds



FOR 120 YEARS, Audubon has brought people together through the shared wonder of birds. What began as a movement to protect these species has grown into a hemispheric force for conservation—safeguarding the habitats that sustain us all.

Today, as the planet faces unprecedented environmental challenges, we are building on that legacy to meet this moment. Like the birds we protect, Audubon continues to adapt and evolve to match the scale and complexity of the threats ahead.

As we approach the midpoint of Flight Plan, our strategic plan, I am proud to share the stories and accomplishments that reflect the progress we have made toward our ambitious goals.

Flight Plan calls for the protection and conservation of 300 million acres of connected, climate-resilient habitat stretching from Chile to Alaska. We are also accelerating the transition to renewable energy and advancing natural climate solutions that store billions of tons of carbon in forests, wetlands, and grasslands to slow the effects of climate change.

Together with partners and supporters like you, Audubon is achieving lasting conservation results across the hemisphere and here in North Carolina.

This report highlights how our regional work contributes to this collective effort. Every acre protected, every policy advanced, and every person inspired by birds brings us closer to a future where birds, people, and the planet thrive.

Thank you for your continued commitment.

With gratitude,

CURTIS SMALLING
VICE PRESIDENT
AUDUBON NORTH CAROLINA



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- A map of the Americas (North and South America) with colorful lines tracing bird migration paths across the continents. The lines are color-coded by bird type: green for Land Birds, red for Raptors, yellow for Shorebirds, purple for Waterbirds, and blue for Waterfowl.
- Land Birds
 - Raptors
 - Shorebirds
 - Waterbirds
 - Waterfowl

From Vision to Impact: Audubon's Flight Plan Progress

Through Flight Plan, Audubon is leveraging the power of birds to drive conservation at the scale our planet needs. From conserving millions of acres of habitat to advancing renewable energy and deepening connections across the hemisphere, we are proving that, together, we can tackle the drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss while reversing the precipitous decline of birds across the Americas.



2028 MILESTONE: HABITAT CONSERVATION

Protect 300 million acres of connected, climate-resilient bird habitat across the Americas

Under Flight Plan, Audubon is influencing more than 200 million acres—an extraordinary achievement that includes over 80 million acres already conserved and another 152 million in the pipeline.



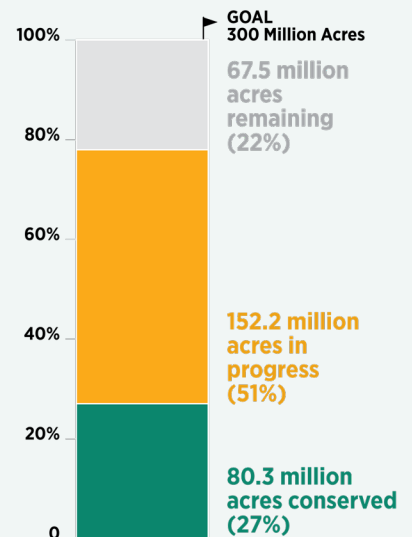
Seal River Watershed
Indigenous Protected
Area Initiative

HABITAT CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

- In Latin America, Conserva Aves has created or expanded 164 protected areas to date, including 660,000+ acres in 2025 alone.
- In Maryland, Audubon and partners identified 29,000 acres of saltmarsh for protection and restoration benefiting birds and people in coastal communities.
- The Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust, co-led by Audubon and The Nature Conservancy, delivered more than 70,000 acre-feet of water to the lake and its wetlands and leveraged \$1 million to unlock another \$52 million in funding from the State of Utah.
- In Canada, the 12-million-acre Seal River Watershed took a huge step toward permanent protections with interim protections from industrial development.
- Through *BirdReturns*, Audubon has worked with private landowners in California's Central Valley to create 90,000 acres of temporary flooded habitat, providing healthy habitat for 500,000 birds and improved water quality for communities.
- In South Dakota, we secured 22,000+ acres of marginal cropland and adjacent upland for restoration into healthy grasslands through our Conservation Forage program.

PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL

As of July 1, 2025





2028 MILESTONE: CLIMATE ACTION

Advocate for the deployment of 100 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy—enough to power 75 million homes—and support responsibly sited transmission infrastructure • Conserve forests, wetlands, grasslands, and other habitats that can collectively sequester and store 30 billion tons of carbon

Audubon's Climate Milestone addresses the climate crisis in ways that benefit both birds and people—pairing rapid, responsible expansion of renewable energy with the power of natural systems to sequester and store carbon.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Audubon has advanced 70 projects that are accelerating decarbonization while protecting important habitat. We have moved forward nearly 40 GW of renewable generation and 10 GW of transmission.



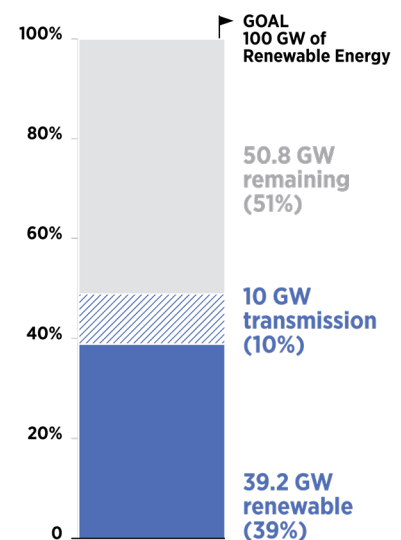
Wind turbines in the ocean off the coast of Block Island near Rhode Island.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Audubon helped pass a landmark Minnesota law allowing power transmission lines to be co-located along highway corridors, reducing habitat fragmentation while helping unlock clean energy access.
- We partnered with a solar project developer on a 1.3 GW project in Wisconsin to protect habitat of the Greater Prairie Chicken.
- Working with lawmakers and utilities in California, we helped strengthen wildlife-friendly solar siting standards, including the Darden Clean Energy Project in Fresno County—the largest in the U.S.

PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL

As of July 1, 2025



NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

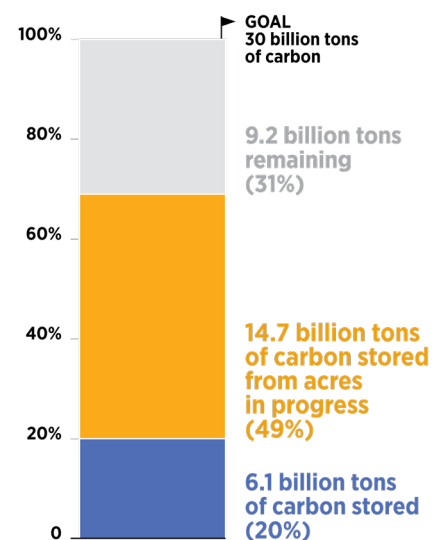
Audubon has sequestered and stored 6.1 billion tons of carbon, with another 14.7 billion tons expected from landscapes where lasting protection and restoration is already in motion, reflecting the powerful impact of conservation work underway today.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Audubon completed a major study of mangroves in Panama Bay and Parita Bay, which concluded that this habitat is projected to sequester 26.6 million tons of CO₂, providing \$155 million annually in economic benefits.
- We secured \$1.2 million from the U.S. Forest Service to support our work with South Carolina “small-acreage” forest owners—who collectively manage 87 percent of the state’s privately owned forests, which effectively sequester and store carbon.
- At Climate Week NYC 2025 and IUCN’s 2025 World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi, Audubon presented our natural climate solutions science, and led discussions on natural climate solutions at COP30 in Brazil.

PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL

As of July 1, 2025





2028 MILESTONE: POLICY LEADERSHIP

Work with policymakers at the local, state, country, and global levels to accomplish Audubon's Healthy Birds, Healthy Planet policy agenda



Bold policy action and sustained public funding are essential for reversing biodiversity loss and addressing climate change. Since Flight Plan launched, Audubon has helped secure more than 100 policies shaping a healthier future for birds and people.

Photo: Farmers, ranchers, and Audubon staff gathered in Washington, D.C., for the 2025 Farm Bill Fly-In meeting with members of Congress on Capitol Hill.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Audubon supported the passage of three federal policies: the America's Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization Act, the Bolstering Ecosystems Against Coastal Harm Act, and the Great Salt Lake Stewardship Act.
- With 30 Senate and Hill staffers, we co-hosted a State of the Birds briefing on Capitol Hill to support the threatened Bird Banding Lab and the North American Breeding Bird Survey—critical federal programs that advance bird science.
- We secured record-high funding for key Farm Bill conservation programs, scaling Audubon Conservation Ranching and the Conservation Forage initiatives.
- We helped pass Minnesota's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which steers nearly half of state lottery proceeds—approximately \$2 billion—to conservation over the next 25 years.



2028 MILESTONE: COMMUNITY BUILDING

Double the number of bird lovers and conservationists who support Audubon and advance our mission



Birding during Little Creek Summer Camp near the Audubon Center at Riverlands in Florissant, Missouri.

Flight Plan unites Audubon's community work, linking Conservation Action Centers, Sanctuaries, Community and Campus Chapters, next generation programs, community science initiatives, and millions of members and supporters into a powerful network of action.

In 2025 alone, Audubon directly engaged 2.3 million bird lovers and conservationists through this network.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 32 Centers and 29 Sanctuaries serve as Audubon's front doors, welcoming individuals and communities into conservation action.
- More than 400 active community chapters connect people locally through conservation and advocacy.
- Audubon on Campus now spans 100 colleges and universities in 38 states, including 22 chapters at Minority Serving Institutions and eight at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- We hosted two Audubon Leadership Conferences: 350+ participants from 32 states and 11 countries at Estes Park, Colorado, in 2023; 450+ participants from 48 states and 11 countries in Montreal, Canada, in 2025.
- Audubon mobilized an annual average of 80,000+ participants across 21 countries in the Christmas Bird Count, completing more than 5,300 counts and documenting over 85 million birds.

Connecting healthy,
climate-resilient habitat
across the Americas

North Carolina



Black Skimmer

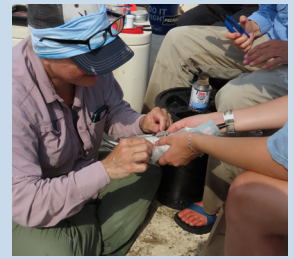
AUDUBON NORTH CAROLINA MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS THIS YEAR IN OUR WORK TOWARDS AUDUBON'S FLIGHT PLAN MILESTONES. We completed major coastal restoration projects from the Cape Fear River to Currituck Sound, grew our flock of bird advocates, increased total advocacy actions by 80 percent, and launched new research on migratory birds. All this while continuing our on-the-ground conservation work that safeguards 40 percent of the state's coastal nesting waterbirds across our network of sanctuaries.

By ensuring that birds have healthy marsh, forest, and coastal habitat here in North Carolina, we are giving species like Black Rails, Golden-winged Warblers, and Black Skimmers a stronger chance of surviving and raising the next generation of birds. In addition, this work provides countless environmental benefits for the people of North Carolina, from flood control to erosion mitigation.

Restored Habitat at Pine Island



Our team wrapped up a major North Carolina Land and Water Fund-supported habitat project at the heart of the Donal C. O'Brien Sanctuary and Audubon Center at Pine Island on the Outer Banks. The project included restoring an old bulkheaded pond, planting native vegetation, and reconnecting an important waterway for fish, birds, and other wildlife. The results have been immediate. Already, shorebirds, egrets, and ducks have returned to the newly muddy banks. This work is part of a larger suite of restoration and resilience projects taking place at the sanctuary and across Currituck Sound, based on a Marsh Conservation Plan developed by Audubon and the Currituck Sound Coalition.



Connecting the Dots of Bird Migration

A small cohort of Royal Terns with tiny GPS data loggers on their backs returned to South Pelican Island on the Cape Fear River this spring with never-before-seen migration data. The tags were deployed by Audubon last year and captured their journey across the hemisphere, showing all the ways that Audubon and our many partners have worked to protect the places these birds need from Colombia to the Cape Fear River. One tern traveled to the Panama Bay Wetlands of Importance Area—a site where Audubon, the Panama Audubon Society, and other partners conducted bird surveys and developed a conservation plan for the region. This pilot project has been so successful that the team deployed more transmitters on Royal Terns and added Sandwich Terns to the project this year.

Above: A Royal Tern being fitted for a GPS tracker by partners working to better understand the species' foraging movements.

HIGHLIGHTS

Through Flight Plan, Audubon North Carolina is influencing 176,330 acres. Below are 2025 highlights of the work behind the success.



Brown Pelican

AUDUBON NORTH CAROLINA ADVANCED \$1.3 million worth of restoration projects across the coast. Our efforts included a long-term National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-funded community resilience project in Tyrrell County, as well as major stream and pond restoration at our Pine Island Sanctuary, where we are also piloting nature-based restoration methods across 2,000 acres of marsh habitat. (see sidebar for details)

OUR TEAM SAFEGUARDED IRREPLACEABLE HABITAT for 40 percent of the state's nesting waterbirds on our 20 coastal island sanctuaries. In addition to navigating depredation and human disturbance, we launched new research tracking Royal Terns from the Cape Fear River to South America, revealing how Audubon protects birds throughout their entire migration journeys. (see sidebar for details)

WE TRAINED MORE THAN 80 WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH BIRD STEWARDS to protect vulnerable beach-nesting birds, like Black Skimmers, Least Terns, and American Oystercatchers. Bird stewards spent more than 4,000 hours monitoring the sanctuary and educating the public about the birds nesting on one of the busiest beaches in the state.



Golden-winged Warbler

IN RESPONSE TO HURRICANE HELENE, WE REACHED OUT TO OUR NETWORK OF 125 PRIVATE LANDOWNERS representing 2,500 acres of Golden-winged Warbler habitat in Western North Carolina to help guide habitat restoration. Through this process we connected landowners with partner organizations like EcoForesters to fill recovery needs and plan for future habitat restoration efforts.

Royal and Sandwich Tern nesting colony on South Pelican Island on the Cape Fear River.



AUDUBON NORTH CAROLINA ADVOCATED

for policies that benefit birds and people, including the successful passage of a bipartisan law—NC S391—which mandates the removal of invasive plants from state parks and bans seasonal mowing along highways. We will help implement this law in the months and years to come.

WE TRAINED MORE THAN 100 INDIVIDUALS ON OUR 2025 POLICY AGENDA

and conducted multiple advocacy trainings in preparation for Advocacy Day, equipping Audubon members to meet with lawmakers and speak confidently about our policy priorities for birds. Seventy-five advocates joined our team at Advocacy Day in Raleigh to speak with lawmakers about the issues that matter most to them, including conservation trust funds—a funding mechanism available to the state to protect clean air, water, and habitat. Together, we successfully lobbied for a \$6.7 million increase in the conservation trust funds in the North Carolina House's draft budget.

AUDUBON NORTH CAROLINA WELCOMED DANA SARGENT AS OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY BUILDING

to develop and manage partnerships with the state's growing Audubon chapter network. Dana will engage members in important conservation and policy campaigns, like healthy urban canopy through our Urban Forestry program—an effort to protect the rapidly declining forests around North Carolina cities.

Thank you for your partnership!

From backyard feeders to global migratory flyways, we are building a more biodiverse, climate-resilient environment for birds and people across the Americas.

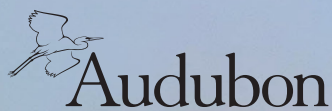
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