



Audubon CONNECTICUT



2009 - 2010
ANNUAL REPORT

MISSION & VISION

The mission of Audubon Connecticut is to further the protection of birds, other wildlife and their habitats through science, education, advocacy and conservation, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Our vision is a Connecticut that has a rich and diverse natural heritage, where there is ample habitat for birds and other wildlife, where a majority of its people appreciate and participate in their natural environment, and whose children are educated and motivated to become the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

audubonct.org



**Bobolink, a species of
special concern**



Lingering weakness in the Connecticut economy presented many extraordinary challenges in 2010, yet Audubon Connecticut made significant progress in conserving and restoring the natural resources we cherish. Through our science, policy and education activities, Audubon continues to elevate conservation literacy and engage more people than ever in positive actions to protect and preserve the environment. This annual report will help bring our work into sharper focus for you, our supporters.

Audubon science and public policy led the protection of key coastal habitats that support important populations of threatened birds and other wildlife. Our Centers in Greenwich, Sharon and Southbury served tens of thousands of children and adults and

provided essential lessons in environmental education. And more than ever, a realization is growing that investment in a healthy environment is an investment in a healthy economy, creating safe jobs and a sustainable future for the citizens of Connecticut and the nation.

People like you help make this happen. Our chapters, members, stewardship boards, staff and donors together all helped to achieve tremendous results despite uncertain times. With your support, we can do even more in the year to come – for birds, for wildlife, and for the world we share. Thank you for your ongoing connection to nature and for your support for Audubon.

THOMAS R. BAPTIST
Executive Director
Audubon Connecticut



East River Preserve

A NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR BIRDS

Important Bird Areas Program

The Important Bird Areas Program (IBA) is a cornerstone of Audubon's work at the local, state and national levels. Our Program to identify and protect a network of key habitats across our state is part of a global effort to ensure healthy bird populations. Bringing together sound conservation science with local stakeholders, we develop and implement conservation strategies that complement existing efforts by state, federal, and other non-profit partners. This approach fills an important niche and helps to protect areas that are not easily protected by other conservation initiatives.

IBA Spotlight: Griswold Airport & Hammonasset Beach State Park

Our greatest conservation victory in 2010 was the purchase and permanent protection of the Griswold Airport property by the Town of Madison. Audubon and our partners worked for 12 years to prevent development on these 42 acres of open grasslands, rare coastal forest, and critical tidal marshlands. This acquisition creates an essential natural buffer for the neighboring IBA, Hammonasset Beach State Park.


Hammonasset is recognized as one of two 'Globally Significant' IBAs in Connecticut due to the many saltmarsh sparrows that depend on the site. To qualify, a site must contain 30 or more

breeding individuals of this species and the Hammonasset marshes are estimated to host 800-1,000 breeding saltmarsh sparrows, easily earning this distinction.

Several other Audubon "WatchList" species also nest there, including clapper rail, brown thrasher, least tern, purple martin, seaside sparrow, and federally-threatened piping plover. State-threatened snowy and great egrets forage in the marshes, and the mudflats, grasslands, and wooded areas provide critical migratory stopover habitat for many shorebirds, land birds, and raptors.

Audubon brought all of our resources to bear on this important and complex project, working at the local, state and federal levels, from the Menunkatuck Audubon Society's efforts to prevent development to providing ecological justification for the protection of the property to working with our partners to win a local referendum and secure the additional funds required to complete this \$9.7 million conservation victory.

Audubon is proud to have played a role in this impressive win for wildlife conservation. Victories like this are made possible through the work of a dedicated staff, carefully nurtured partnerships, and strong support within the community itself.



*If one way be better than another,
that you may be sure is Nature's way.*

ARISTOTLE

Tidal marshlands, like these in Madison, are one of the most productive ecosystems in the world and form the base of the Long Island Sound food chain.

PROTECTING PRIORITY BIRDS & THEIR HABITATS



Miles Wildlife Sanctuary
in Sharon

Integrating Science & Policy to Protect IBAs and Long Island Sound

Audubon uses sound science and targeted advocacy to produce positive conservation results. The 2010 fiscal year included many successes thanks to the persistence and dedication of Audubon supporters and staff.

- With support from the Fairfield County Community Foundation, Audubon has worked for years to protect and restore Long Beach West. The important barrier beach is part of the Stratford Great Meadows IBA and a nesting area for piping plovers and least terns. This year, with almost \$1 million in federal funding that Audubon helped secure, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service began removing 40 derelict cottages, setting the stage comprehensive habitat restoration.
- Audubon advocated successfully for \$16.3 million in federal funding:
 - \$2 million for additions to the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.
 - \$2.5 million for additions to the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge.
 - \$4 million for projects in the Highlands Region of Connecticut.
 - \$7.8 million for Long Island Sound stewardship and restoration – a record high appropriation.

These funds are true victories for Audubon's Long Island Sound Campaign and provide critical resources for open space protection, habitat and water quality restoration and wildlife research.

- Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, and other grassroots groups successfully lobbied for funds to allow the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to purchase a 290-acre piece of undeveloped land in Haddam for \$1.75 million, to be known as the Salmon River division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge.
- The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven awarded Audubon \$75,000 in 2009 to support a three year project to identify and protect key bird habitat in the area. Already, field teams have identified several sites of conservation interest and over the coming years, Audubon will outline protection strategies

and evaluate their potential for IBA status and work with local, state and federal lawmakers to advance our conservation vision.

- During a tough budget session in Hartford, Audubon helped lead the charge to streamline and improve key regulatory processes of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, safeguard funding for open space protection and clean water programs, defend progress reducing the unnecessary use of lawn care pesticides, and organize a 40th anniversary celebration of Earth Day where Audubon Connecticut's programs and Centers were a star attraction.

Least Terns



STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS, CENTERS & CHAPTERS

Audubon Centers Serving Their Communities

Record numbers of people are visiting our Audubon Centers to learn about nature and enjoy the sanctuaries. While all visitor groups have increased since last year, public program attendance has nearly doubled, signaling that the word is getting out about the quality of Audubon's programs, summer camps and special events.

School Students	11,880
Public Programs	21,504
Day Campers	744
Special Events	4,366
Self-Guided Visitors	14,793
Total Visitors	53,287

Audubon programs promote the protection of nature and inspire personal choices that create a brighter, greener future. Expanding on these themes, our Centers have steadily attracted new audiences from the communities they serve. The annual HawkWatch Festival in Greenwich added 80 eco-friendly vendors to complement the already popular live raptor shows and family-friendly events. This new element combined with great weather drew record-breaking crowds of 1,900 people in 2009 and 2,300 in 2010.

In Southbury, the Center held the first Bent of the River Festival where 250 people enjoyed horse drawn wagon rides, live bird shows, dinner and dancing in the old barn. In February, we sold out the

Chocolate Dinner, an event that promotes the Center in the community and encourages people to buy greener, organic and bird-friendly products when shopping for wine, chocolate, and coffee.

In Sharon, the Center launched the 'Forest Bird Initiative' to help people understand the importance of large intact forests for wood thrush, cerulean warblers and other neotropical migrants of conservation concern. Through habitat assessments on 8,000 acres of private land and workshops to teach landowners and planning agencies how to manage forests for these birds, Audubon is working to reverse the sharp population decline of many bird species.



Black-throated Blue Warbler White-eyed Vireo Prairie Warbler

International Raptor Conservation Conference

In May, Audubon Greenwich hosted 65 scientists and hawk watch volunteers from Mexico, Panama, and the United States for three days of lectures and panel discussions. This important conference helped coordinate research methodologies and strengthened migratory bird conservation partnerships throughout the Americas.

With 185 bird species, 700 acres, and 15 miles of trails, Bent of the River is an ideal sanctuary to visit year-round.



INCREASING CONSERVATION ACTION BY PEOPLE

Volunteers Making Science Possible

Audubon supports bird studies through a variety of 'citizen science' projects with hundreds of dedicated volunteers participating each year. In Sharon, Audubon staff and principal investigator Art Gingert expanded the American Kestrel Nestbox Program from 39 nestboxes in 2008 to 56 in 2009 to 74 in 2010. From these boxes, 21 breeding pairs fledged 100 young and volunteers banded 80 nestlings and eight adults. Banded kestrels, when later re-captured, provide critical data about the welfare and movement of this beautiful raptor, whose numbers have alarmingly declined in recent years.

At the Bent of the River Center, our IBA Coordinator Chris Field expanded research started in 2005 to study shrubland bird survivorship. In 2009, the team captured 85 birds, 17 of which had been previously banded at the Bent. This year, the team captured 96 birds; 31 were previously banded. This information helps Audubon better understand shrubland bird nesting success and when continued through 2013, the results will guide best management practices for this and similar habitats.

In Greenwich, the Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch conducted its 24th year of full-time hawk counting. From August to November, hawk watchers recorded 17,046 raptors of 17 different species on their southbound migration. This effort is headed by a single staff person and was assisted by dozens of volunteers, seven days a week, whose reliable data added to the importance of this continentally-significant hawk count.

Once again, Connecticut's citizen scientists broke all previous state records during the 13th Great Backyard Bird Count in February. They tallied 153,705 individual birds from 141 species on 1,994 checklists – an increase of 572 checklists, 23,046 birds, plus one additional species compared to the previous year. In 1998, the entire state submitted just 273 checklists, accounting for only 11,403 birds from 45 species.

These and the many other scientific efforts supported by volunteers are testimony to an increased interest in bird conservation. Audubon deeply appreciates and congratulates the many citizen scientists across Connecticut.



*Conservation is a state of
harmony between men and land.*

ALDO LEOPOLD



**Short-billed dowitchers and
lesser & greater yellowlegs
resting at migratory stopover
habitat in Connecticut**

The Osprey Success Story:
Since DDT was banned, osprey have
rebounded from eight nesting pairs
in 1970 to hundreds today.



BUILDING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Audubon Grants Empowering Local Conservation Action

More than \$22,000 distributed through Audubon's IBA Small Matching Grants Program helped to leverage over one hundred times that amount in other matching funds for projects across the state. These matching grants and the partnerships they create and sustain enabled many important conservation initiatives to move forward during this challenging economy.

Cove Island Park Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford received \$2,000 for additions and enhancements to existing butterfly gardens.

Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven received \$2,700 to fund the 2010 Annual Migration Festival that welcomed over 1,000 attendees.

Tom Sayers received \$500, which he matched, to construct and deploy new American kestrel nest boxes across eastern Connecticut.

The Connecticut Butterfly Association received \$1,000 for the enhancement of bird and butterfly gardens at Lighthouse Point Park.

The Mount Vernon Songbird Sanctuary in Southington received \$1,750 to help protect one acre of land adjacent to the sanctuary.

The Menunkatuck Audubon Society received \$3,750 for invasive plant removal and native plant restoration in the Guilford Salt Meadows Sanctuary.

The Bent of the River Audubon Center received \$3,810 for equipment to combat invasive species and fund stipends for interns who will monitor land management effectiveness.

The East River Preserve in Guilford received \$1,500 to help develop a management plan for the newly acquired 583 acre open space area.

The Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington received \$1,000 for protecting coastal grassland habitat adjacent to this globally significant IBA.

The Trust For Public Land received \$4,750 to help protect the 42 acre Griswold Airport in Madison from an intensive condominium development. Audubon also provided a much needed bridge loan of \$200,000 to help finalize this historic purchase.

Audubon Chapters, Land Trusts and other IBA stakeholders are encouraged to apply for the next round of IBA Small Matching Grants.



STRENGTHENING THE AUDUBON BRAND



Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Audubon At Home

The mission of Audubon At Home (AAH) is to conserve birds, wildlife and habitat by inspiring people to incorporate conservation actions into their daily lives, and by giving them the conservation tools they need to do so. AAH accomplishes its mission by maintaining demonstration sites, holding workshops, developing print and web-based materials, and supporting community-level and regional-scale projects.

The goals of AAH are:

- Creating and maintaining healthy yards and neighborhoods that support birds.
- Promote consumer choices and individual actions that benefit birds and healthy habitats.

This year, more than 750 people attended panel discussions, how-to workshops, and documentary film screenings created to increase awareness and inspire personal action. The most popular topics explored organic and sustainable food movements, the impact of carbon dioxide on ocean ecosystems, and the role of consumers in creating demand for sustainable products and business practices.

To meet this demand, Audubon Connecticut created an AAH Coordinator position to broaden the reach and impact of these programs across the state. This added strength will expand our message to new, more diverse audiences and will increase participation through Chapter activities.

Environmental Leadership Award Dinner

At our April Award Dinner, we celebrated the effort to preserve Long Island Sound and offered a special toast to the founding families of Connecticut conservation. The Dinner is our largest fundraiser of the year and thanks to generous supporters, Audubon raised more than \$509,000 for our conservation and education programs across the state.

An inspiring video montage was shown telling a timeless story about Long Island Sound and:

- Althea Clark's gift of 700 woodland acres to create the Bent of the River Sanctuary in 1993.

- Anne Conover's gift of 200 coastal acres to create the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary in 1964.
- The Ford & Miles families gift of 2,700 acres to create Audubon Sharon & the Miles Wildlife Sanctuary in 1961.
- Eleanor Reese & Hall Clovis's 295-acre property in Greenwich that became the National Audubon Society's first nature education center in 1942.

The generosity of these families and Audubon's supporters has created a long-lasting legacy that promises to protect our birds, the wild places they depend on, and to teach countless generations to come.

CELEBRATING A CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Donal C. O'Brien Awarded Audubon Medal

Few, if any, are more passionate about birds and bird conservation than Donal O'Brien, who served 25 years on the Board of Directors of the National Audubon Society including 15 years as chairman. Donal charted Audubon's course in conservation as co-chair of the Society's monumental Strategic Planning process that led to the establishment of the network of state offices across the country. These offices, in turn, launched the Important Bird Areas program now totaling over 2,500 IBAs, helped launch 43 new Audubon Centers reaching new and younger audiences to build future conservation leaders, and empowered our grassroots network of nearly 500 community-based Audubon Chapters. It is thus fitting that Donal was presented the prestigious Audubon Medal at a special ceremony in Greenwich on October 2, 2010.



Katie & Donal O'Brien



Eastern Screech-Owl

FUNDING CONSERVATION

Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2010 (July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010)

Audubon Connecticut is proud to report that we completed a difficult financial year in a stable fiscal position while still growing our conservation, education, and policy programs. Our success is due to donors like you, to our enterprising board and staff, and to our commitment to real conservation outcomes. Individuals contributed greatly to our work, donating \$970,000 in fiscal year 2010.

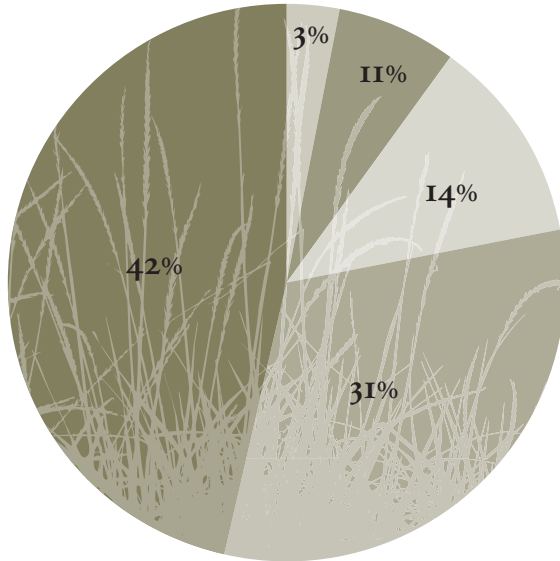
Audubon Connecticut benefits enormously from supporters who have made legacy gifts or bequests. The endowment established by these gifts provided more than \$1.32 million in operating revenue in fiscal year 2010. These far-sighted gifts greatly enhance our financial stability, and we are grateful to this group of Audubon donors for their leadership and support. Our endowment is made of gifts that, indeed, “keep on giving.”

None of our past successes fueling our growth would be possible without your generosity. The board and staff of Audubon Connecticut thank you for your continuing support.

REVENUE

- 42% INVESTMENT INCOME
- 31% INDIVIDUALS
- 14% FOUNDATIONS
- 11% EARNED INCOME
- 3% GOVERNMENT & CORPORATE GRANTS

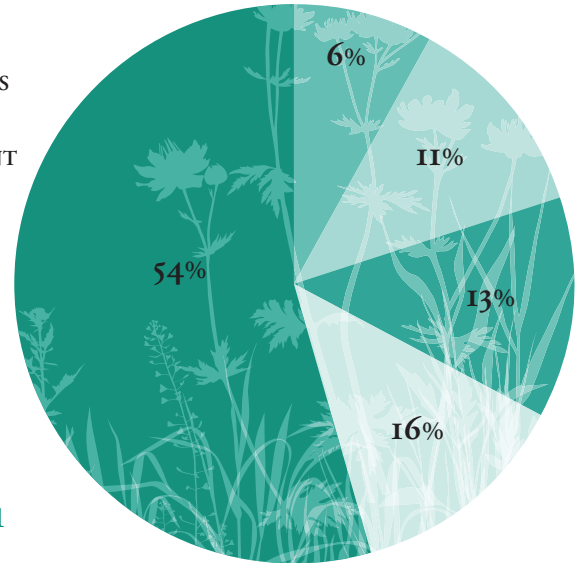
TOTAL
\$3,129,751



EXPENSES

- 54% CENTERS & SANCTUARIES
- 16% DEVELOPMENT
- 13% NAS SUPPORT SERVICES
- 11% SCIENCE
- 6% POLICY

TOTAL
\$3,129,751



East River Preserve

WINGS OF SUPPORT

Audubon Connecticut is very grateful for the generous support and commitment given by following individuals, organizations, and corporations in 2009-2010.



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\$100,000 +

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Guilford Salt Meadows Sanctuary

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Front Cover: A. J. Hand (WOTH)

Page 2: A. J. Hand (BOBO)

Page 3: Peter J. Kindlmann

Page 5: Patrick Comins

Page 6: Jonathan Doster

Page 7: Mark S. Szantyr (LETE)

*Page 8: A. J. Hand (BTBW); Mark S. Szantyr (WEVI);
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Page 9: Bill Akins

Page 10: Ted Gilman; Ken Elkins; Brian O'Toole; Faith Sweeney

Page 11: Paul Fusco (SBDO/GRYE/LEYE)

Page 12: Mark S. Szantyr (OSPR)

*Page 13: Mark S. Szantyr (PIPL - chick/LETE - eggs);
Paul Fusco (PIPL)*

Page 14: Mark S. Szantyr (RBGR)

Page 15: John Goodman

Page 16: Mark S. Szantyr (EASO)

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Page 18: A. J. Hand (MERL)

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Page 23: A. J. Hand (CSWA)

Back Cover: Mark S. Szantyr (AMOY)

Editor: J. Cordulack

This Annual Report is proudly printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.

*Mother Nature always bats last,
and she always bats a thousand.*

ROB WATSON



Peregrine Falcon at Milford Point IBA

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Coastal grassland and forest at Griswold Airport



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**Chestnut-sided Warbler,
a shrubland nester at
Bent of the River**



American Oystercatcher

Audubon Center at Bent of the River

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Southbury, CT 06488
bentoftheriver.audubon.org
203-264-5098

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613 Riversville Road
Greenwich, CT 06831
greenwich.audubon.org
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Audubon Sharon

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Front Cover: Wood Thrush nest in the U.S. and winter
in tropical broad-leaf forests in Central America.