



2008 – 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

Audubon North Carolina is the state office of the National Audubon Society representing 10,000 grassroots members and nine local chapters across the state. With a century of conservation history in North Carolina, Audubon strives to conserve and restore the habitats we share with all wildlife, focusing on the needs of birds. Audubon North Carolina achieves its mission through a blend of science-based research and conservation, education and outreach, and advocacy.

www.ncaudubon.org





We at Audubon often describe our work as “connecting people with nature.” Conserving nature is not something done in a vacuum or only in uninhabited wilderness. Rather, we are surrounded by nature and live potentially in both conflict and harmony with it. But the phrase implies more.

In the era of climate change and accelerating sea level rise, we must come to understand that the resilience of our human communities is directly linked to the resilience of our natural communities. To protect and enhance habitats for birds and other wildlife we must build a future in which we work with nature as an ally.

The past year has brought us at Audubon North Carolina a few steps closer to fulfilling this aspiration. We’ve involved more people than ever in conserving areas important to birds and other wildlife; built partnerships across traditional cultural boundaries and across national borders; and we’ve embarked on programs we believe will provide models for others across the state and country. We are grateful for the support of all our donors and members, each of whom, every day, provides another vital point of connection among us.

CHRIS CANFIELD
Executive Director
Audubon North Carolina





PROTECTING OUR GREAT NATURAL HERITAGE

Important Bird Areas

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) provide a compass for Audubon's science, policy, and educational endeavors. North Carolina's IBAs cover more than 4.5 million acres of both private and public lands. Audubon North Carolina's work at each IBA varies, ranging from providing critical bird data to partner land trusts seeking funding for land protection, to banding migratory warblers that we "share" with Central America.

> Audubon North Carolina is helping to lead the Atlantic Flyway Conservation Initiative, a multi-state project to protect the most critical IBAs along the Eastern Seaboard with a focus on forests, salt marshes, and coastal habitats.

> In 2008-2009, BirdLife International and the national IBA committee recognized 22 of North Carolina's 96 IBAs as being globally significant because they provide habitat for critical populations of globally imperiled bird species. These singular sites include Lake Mattamuskeet, Cape Lookout National Seashore, and the New River Corridor.

> One of North Carolina's most noteworthy mountain IBAs, Grandfather Mountain, became the newest addition to North Carolina's state parks system in the spring of 2009. Audubon North Carolina has long been involved with bird monitoring, research, and education at Grandfather. The varied habitats in the 2,456-acre state park and surrounding area shelter at least 118 breeding bird species, the highest diversity of breeding birds at any site in North Carolina.

Exploring new territory:

Waccamaw River Important Bird Area

With funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon North Carolina is conducting an intensive biological survey of one of the state's largest areas of bottomland forest, the Waccamaw River Bottomlands IBA in Columbus County. The project is focusing on a 20-square-mile swath of swamp forest that is home to bobcats, river otters, and a wealth of neotropical songbirds. Audubon biologists will continue to study the area's birdlife through early 2010, providing insights into such species of concern as Swainson's and Prothonotary warblers and Red-headed Woodpecker.

Productive times at coastal sanctuaries

While camouflage and a scrappy survival instinct offer some protection to beach-nesting waterbirds, the innumerable threats they face, including storms, predators, and humans, make them masters of survival. People can inadvertently disturb coastal birds just by walking in or near their nesting areas. Yet most human disturbance is not the result of malice, but misunderstanding. As they monitor birds at Audubon North Carolina's 19 coastal sanctuaries, our biologists also reach out to beachgoers to help them understand how simple actions, such as staying out of bird enclosures and keeping dogs on a leash, can enable more fragile fledglings to survive to adulthood.

Audubon biologists were encouraged by the productivity of the coastal sanctuary system in 2008.



> With 535 Least Tern nests, Mason Inlet had its second most productive season ever for this species and continues to host the state's largest beach-nesting colony of Least Terns.

> Volunteers from GE and Cape Fear Audubon Society continue to help with the labor-intensive task of posting signs and roping around enclosures at Lea-Hutaff Island.

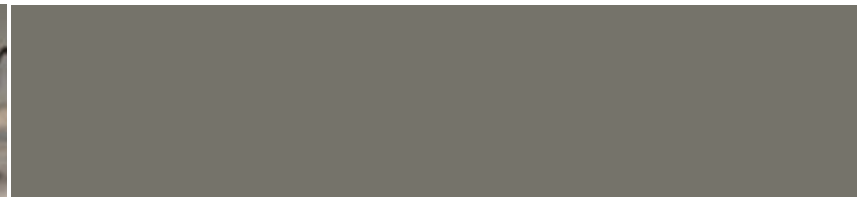
> The Cape Fear River Islands offer predator-free nesting habitat for hundreds of Brown Pelicans, dozens of American Oystercatchers, several wading bird species, and thousands of Royal and Sandwich terns.

Audubon and partners safeguard diamondback terrapins

Audubon North Carolina is tackling the problem of marine debris, such as discarded fishing gear, which entangles and traps many wildlife species, including turtles and birds. With funding from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

and in partnership with the Tortoise Reserve, Audubon North Carolina is studying how crab traps impact diamondback terrapins. These eight-inch long aquatic turtles live in and around salt marshes from New England to Texas. This once abundant species is now imperiled by coastal development, sea level rise, and “ghost” crab pots.

Every year some one million commercial crab traps (called crab pots) are fished in coastal waters. An estimated 15 to 20 percent of the pots are lost to storms, entanglement with boats, and other causes. These “ghost pots” can continue trapping crabs, fish, and the air-breathing terrapin, which are attracted to crab pots by bait and trapped crabs. We hope the findings from this project will help craft new regulations to require crab traps to be fitted with turtle excluding devices and biodegradable panels. Such legislation would benefit terrapins and birds, as well as crab stocks and the crab fishery.







DEFENDING IBAS

Wildlife and visitation are thriving at Cape Hatteras National Seashore under a new management plan that maintains a balance between recreation and wildlife conservation. More than two million people visit Cape Hatteras National Seashore each year and the National Park Service reports that the number of Seashore visitors in July 2009 grew by more than three percent from July 2008.

As the 2009 nesting season for waterbirds and sea turtles drew to a close, wildlife on the Seashore continued to show encouraging signs of recovery after a decade-long decline. According to National Park Service preliminary resource reports, colonial waterbird nests more than doubled in 2009 compared to 2007, with 535 nests in 2009 compared to 212 nests in 2007. The number of nesting sea turtles has reached record levels in the past two years with 112 nests in 2008 and 103 nests to date in 2009.

The Park Service now temporarily closes nesting areas to vehicles and pedestrians until chicks and sea turtle hatchlings have begun their journey towards adulthood. At the height of the 2009 nesting season, only 13.7 miles of the 67-mile seashore were temporarily closed to vehicles to protect wildlife.

Even with such promising statistics, legislation was introduced into Congress in 2009 that threatens the Seashore's wildlife. HR 718 and S 1557 intend to overturn the court-approved management plan and return the Seashore to its previous flawed management plan. Audubon North Carolina and our partners are vigilantly monitoring this legislation.

Saving our dynamic coastline

North Carolina's long-standing ban against hardened structures at the coast means that very few jetties, groins, or sea walls interrupt the natural dynamics of our barrier islands. Terminal structures,

such as groins and jetties, trap sand on one side and deprive sand on the other, causing increased erosion rates on downdrift barrier islands. Natural shoreline movement is one of the ways that inlets provide habitat for North Carolina's birdlife.

In 2009 legislation was introduced in the N.C. General Assembly to allow the construction of "experimental" groins. Working with the N.C. Coastal Federation and the Sierra Club, Audubon North Carolina helped defeat the legislation, but another bill was passed that will allow the Coastal Resources Commission to study terminal groins and jetties.

Audubon North Carolina believes that the most effective way to protect our coastline for future generations is to develop a comprehensive coastal management vision that unites the many agencies that currently influence coastal policy.



Audubon's role in climate change and the energy crisis

Using data collected from the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), National Audubon Society released a report in early 2009 that revealed that birds across the continent are responding to milder winters by staying farther north than they have in years past. *Birds and Climate Change — Ecological Disruption in Motion* showed that birds seen in North America during the first weeks of winter have moved dramatically northward—toward colder latitudes—over the past four decades. This movement is caused in part by the disruption of healthy, functioning ecosystems caused by climate change.

In response to this crisis, National Audubon Society has taken a leadership role in educating the public about the need to pass strong climate and energy legislation. In 2009, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the first comprehensive climate and energy legislation in our nation's history - the American Clean Energy and Security Act. Many environmental organizations banded together to secure the crucial votes needed for its passage. Audubon North Carolina staff provided climate education to legislators and their staff in Washington, and traveled throughout North Carolina presenting climate and energy-related programs to local Audubon chapters, civic organizations, church groups, and universities.



Wind power

Audubon North Carolina is committed to promoting cleaner energy solutions as long as they are balanced with protecting wildlife and wild lands. Significant wind resources are available for power generation in many parts of the state and we support the development of this clean and renewable form of energy. Audubon also recognizes that these technologies are not without their own environmental consequences. Wind energy projects in the state should adhere to strenuous siting criteria, mitigating the impacts to resident, wintering, and migrating birds and bats, which have been shown to be at risk at certain commercial wind energy sites around the country.

As a participant in the Wind Working Group, Audubon North Carolina staff insures that wildlife issues are integrated into the issue at hand. In 2008-2009, Audubon staff participated on a committee that drafted legislation to establish a new statewide permitting process for wind energy projects. The legislation was introduced in the 2009 session but received opposition from some mountain area legislators. A modified version of the bill, which effectively bans commercial wind projects in the mountains, will be considered in the N.C. House in the 2010 legislative session.





BRINGING CONSERVATION HOME

Chapters

Lifelong birders. Impassioned activists. Plant-lovers. Members of Audubon North Carolina's nine local chapters are as diverse as the geographic regions they represent. Chapter members seed conservation projects on many levels, from running bird censuses and monitoring IBAs, to teaching birding basics to beginners. The chapters' achievements would fill these pages, so this report provides just a snapshot of their many accomplishments in 2008-2009. Thank you to all the chapters for their ongoing support of Audubon's conservation mission.

> More than 500 chapter members volunteered for projects throughout the state, logging more than 10,000 hours.

> All nine chapters have adopted IBAs where they conduct bird monitoring and surveys of imperiled species such as the Cerulean Warbler.

> Several chapters sponsor educational programs, including Wake Audubon Society's new Young Naturalists Program, an outing club for young folks ages 12-18.

> Chapters are testing innovative fundraising strategies. Forsyth Audubon's "February Doldrums Fun(d) Raiser" raised approximately \$6,000 for the Children's Home Discover Agriculture Program, which offers outdoor experiences to low income elementary school children.

> The chapters play a key role in citizen science projects such as the Christmas Bird Count and Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Thanks to the chapters' participation in the 2009 GBBC, North Carolina came in third in the nation in the number of checklists submitted and Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Durham, and Wilmington were among the ten localities that submitted the most checklists.





Education and outreach

- > In 2008-2009, Audubon North Carolina's workshops and presentations for civic groups, master gardeners, and Audubon chapters reached 1,300 people.
- > With the completion of the mountain section of the North Carolina Birding Trail in June 2009, this network of hot birding spots is helping promote birding and ecotourism throughout the state.
- > Mason Inlet Waterbird Management Area continues to show how education and community involvement produce conservation successes. Participation in our free Friday guided tours has more than doubled since 2008 thanks to promotional support from the Cape Fear Convention & Visitors Bureau. Lessons learned at Mason Inlet, our most popular and accessible outdoor classroom, will help us develop a new center for research and conservation education at the Pine Island Sanctuary along Currituck Sound.
- > Audubon North Carolina is piloting a social marketing campaign that we hope will become a model for the entire Audubon network. The project is designed to expand awareness in coastal communities about beach-nesting birds, other coastal

wildlife, and their imperiled habitats. TogetherGreen, an Audubon/Toyota partnership, has provided critical funding for this project.

Recognizing outstanding conservationists

> In October 2008, Audubon North Carolina awarded board member Juanita Roushdy with the T. Gilbert Pearson Award. An avid birder and lifelong conservationist, Juanita has helped revitalize the Cape Fear Audubon Society and supports our conservation efforts in Nicaragua.

> In April 2009, Audubon presented the Birdlore Conservation Education Award to Partners for Environmental Justice (PEJ) of Raleigh and the N.C. Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill. The award recognizes exceptional efforts to educate the public about birds and their habitats. PEJ raised more than \$1 million to rehabilitate wetlands and build an educational center in a predominantly African American community. Behind much of this effort was Dr. Norman Camp, PEJ chair and

Audubon North Carolina board member, who was recognized by National Audubon's TogetherGreen program as a national Environmental Hero in 2008. Hundreds of thousands of students and adults have been touched by the N.C. Botanical Garden's offerings – both natural and academic – since it opened to the public in 1966. The garden has many vital connections to bird conservation, including its management of Mason Farm, the site of one of the longest-running studies of breeding birds in the eastern United States.

> In May 2009, National Audubon Society presented Chris Canfield, Executive Director of Audubon North Carolina, with the Charles H. Callison Award. This annual award is presented to staff and volunteers who demonstrate outstanding leadership and service. Audubon Society President John Flicker recognized Canfield's leadership in rallying a coalition that blocked the construction of a Navy jet landing field next to Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and his efforts to improve wildlife management at Cape Hatteras National Seashore.



CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

Birds (and birders) know no borders

To successfully protect neotropical migratory birds, Audubon North Carolina must employ conservation strategies on both nesting and wintering grounds. We are elevating our commitment to international partners in two countries where some of North Carolina's breeding migratory birds winter: Belize and Nicaragua.

Nicaragua

One bird is the color of the sky and the other wears gold on its wings, and both are imperiled by habitat loss and fragmentation. Audubon North Carolina is working in concert with partners in Nicaragua to protect two warbler species – Cerulean and Golden-winged – while simultaneously helping to strengthen the conservation infrastructure in that developing country. A Federal Species of Conservation Concern, the Golden-winged Warbler nests in shrubby early successional habitats in the North

Carolina mountains and winters in Nicaragua. Along with Nicaraguan researchers, our biologists conducted surveys in Nicaragua in the winter of 2008-2009 to learn more about the species' distribution and habitats.

The partners have also established a bird banding station at a shade-grown coffee plantation in San Ramon in the Matagalpa Highlands of Nicaragua thanks to the cooperation of the owners of Finca Esparanza Verde. The banding station is providing important data and the finca is helping create ecotourism opportunities for the local community.

A generous grant from SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund was directed towards a five-day intensive bird banding and conservation training workshop in El Imposible National Park in El Salvador, Nicaragua, in November 2008. Twenty Mesoamerican ornithologists attended the



workshop, which promoted the ethical use of birds in science and provided training in banding and conservation policies.

An identified species of risk in North Carolina, the Cerulean Warbler breeds in the North Carolina mountains and in a disjunct population on the Roanoke River and winters in several Central American countries. Audubon North Carolina has been providing guidance and resources for a Cerulean Warbler survey in Nicaragua as part of a larger effort coordinated by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

Belize

Belize Audubon Society is undertaking an outreach campaign to help local community members and policy makers understand the importance of Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, a critical natural area northwest of Belize City. Audubon North Carolina staff contributed their expertise to the project by creating a watershed map that is used in presentations and educational projects such as a coloring book called *Wonderful Wetlands*.





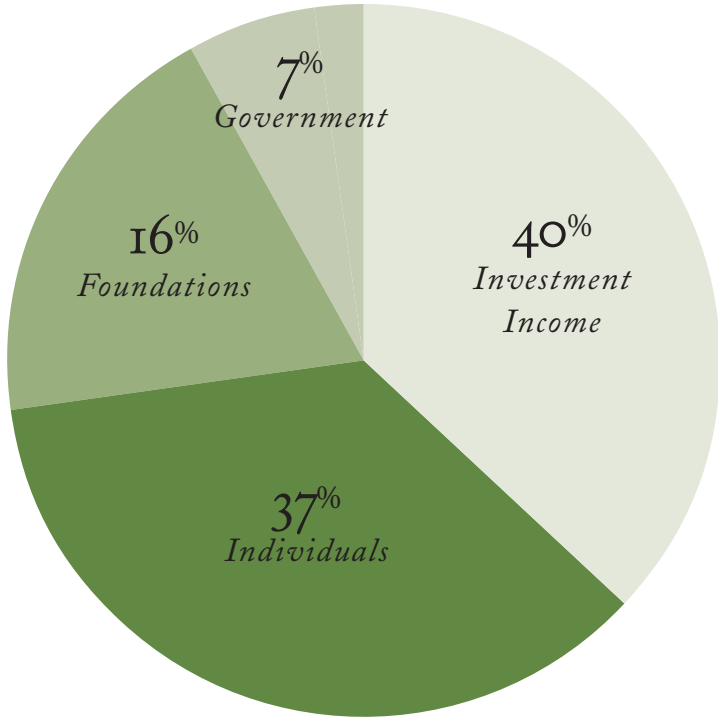
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Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2009 (July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009)

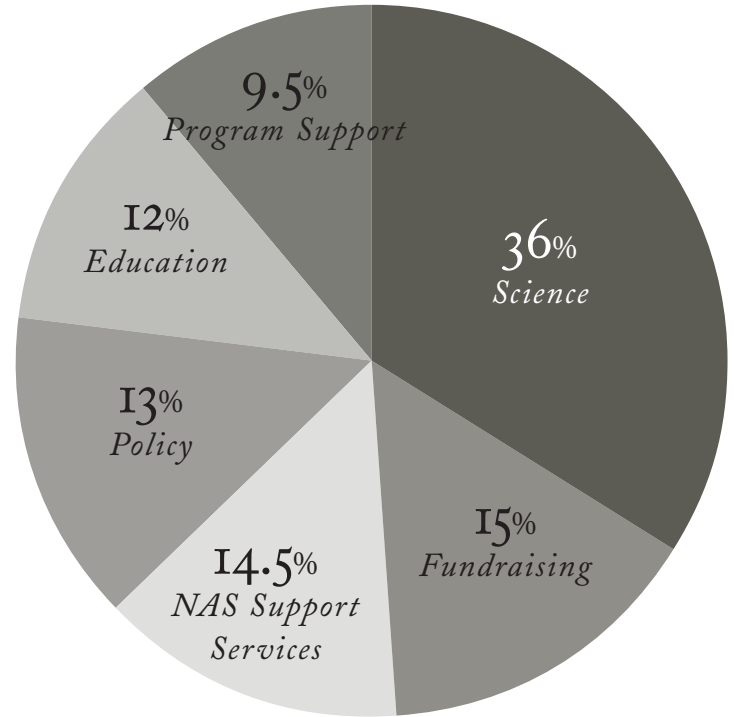
Audubon North Carolina is proud to report that we finished a tough financial year in a stable fiscal position while still growing programs and staff. That outcome is due to donors like you, to our frugal and enterprising staff, and to our commitment to real conservation outcomes. Individuals remain the greatest contributors to our work, donating \$386,660 in fiscal year 2009.

Audubon North Carolina continues its model-setting work in conservation. With solid science we respond to the most urgent threats to habitats as we have done for a decade. With a new initiative – social marketing – we intend to involve the communities of people who use, visit, and own these habitats to positively impact conservation outcomes.

None of our past successes fueling this future growth would be possible without your generosity. The staff of Audubon North Carolina thanks you for your support of our programs.



REVENUE



EXPENSES





WINGS OF SUPPORT

Audubon North Carolina is deeply grateful to all of the following individuals, organizations, and foundations who supported our mission throughout our fiscal year, July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009. We thank each and every one of you for your loyalty and commitment.

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