



Audubon NORTH CAROLINA

2011 - 2012 ANNUAL REPORT





Audubon North Carolina is the state office of the National Audubon Society representing 10,000 grassroots members and ten 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
www.ncaudubonblog.org







For more than a century, Audubon's success has been built on two key elements: the dedicated people who make up the Audubon network and the birds that inspire them. Donors support Audubon because they know that our staff, chapter members, and volunteers work tirelessly to protect birds and wildlife and the diverse habitats they need to survive and thrive. As Kim Brand, a member of Audubon Society of Forsyth County, wrote in a guest post for our blog: "For me, the power of Audubon is rooted in connections between people who are passionate about birds and feel an irrepressible urge to do something about it."

The impassioned people who make up Audubon's extensive network of 22 state offices, 465 grassroots chapters, and 47 nature centers are now guided by the organization's first conservation-focused strategic plan in more than 20 years. Audubon is now focusing exclusively on strategies that have the greatest potential to improve the outlook for priority bird species within the Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic flyways. Birds' actions now inform all of the organization's activities. We are collaborating with numerous partners to understand exactly where birds travel throughout the year, what they need to survive, and how we can help priority species thrive. This sharpened focus makes our mission clear to birders, conservationists, and lawmakers.

Audubon North Carolina is playing a leadership role in this new robust Audubon. Our staff is leading Flyway-wide initiatives including Sharing our Seas and Shores and Putting Working Lands to Work for Birds and People. We are working with other states and centers in the network to protect migratory birds

that spend part of their lives in North Carolina and travel beyond the state's borders at certain times in their life cycles. We are spearheading groundbreaking research on species such as the Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, and Golden-Winged Warbler that will inform management and conservation decisions for these imperiled species throughout their ranges.

The other key element in our success is the birdlife itself. Birds are truly the best ambassadors for our conservation work as they provide the uplifting experiences that motivate people to take action. Last summer coastal biologist Lindsay Addison met a family while she was monitoring the beach-nesting bird colony on the south end of Wrightsville Beach. She talked to the family about the colony and showed them a close-up view of the American Oystercatchers and Black Skimmers through her spotting scope. That experience inspired third grader Michele Niño, an aspiring journalist, to write this guest blog post:

“When I went to the Bird Sanctuary at Wrightsville Beach, I saw many birds and they made lots of noise. One was called an American Oystercatcher. American Oystercatchers got their name because they catch oysters, clams, shellfish, and mussels. I loved looking at the birds through binoculars and watching them scoop up fish for their chicks. Now I'm interested in birds and I

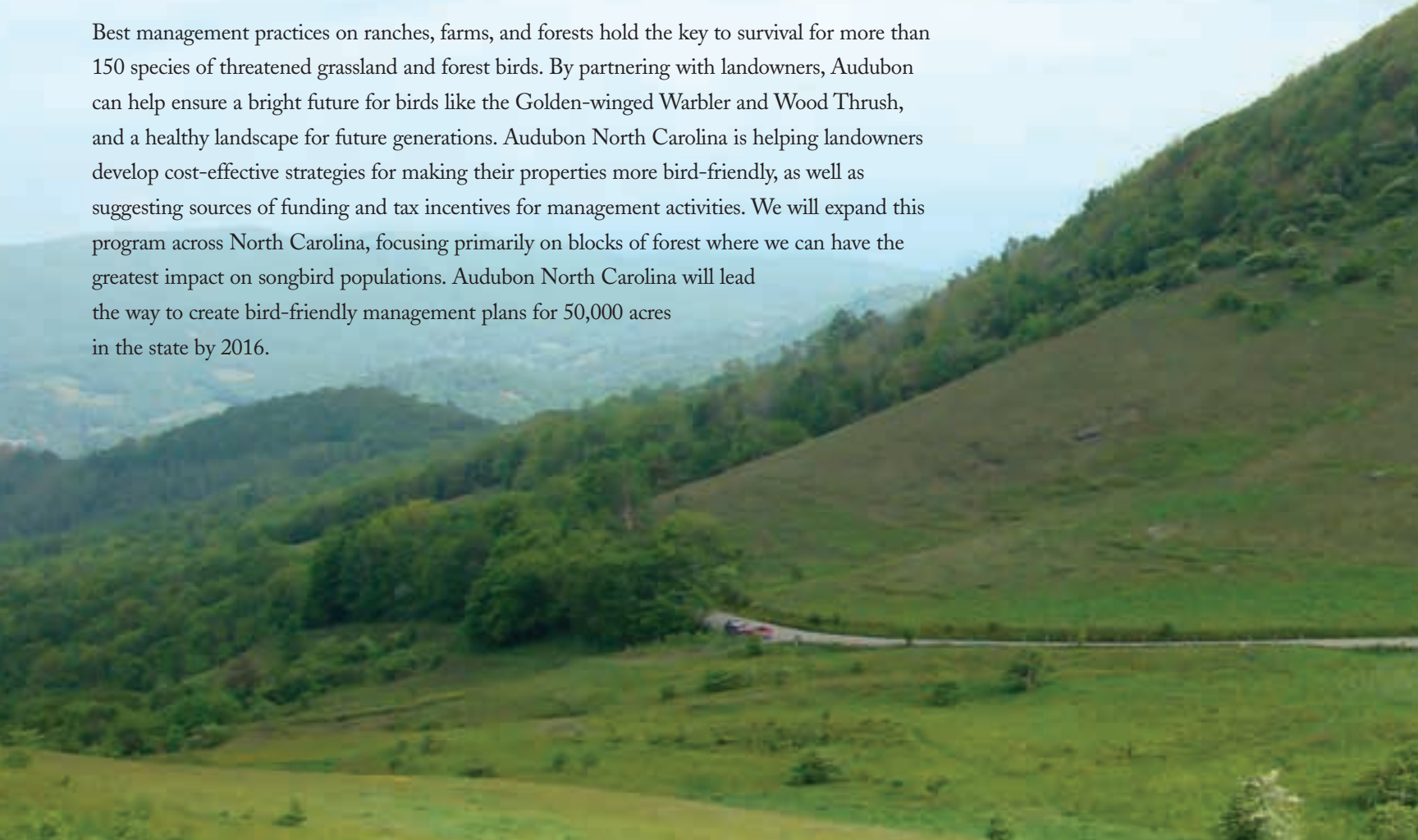
want to get my own binoculars to look at birds all the time.”

North Carolina's birds move people to action every day, as more and more people post their bird photographs on our Facebook page, volunteer to “babysit” young birds at coastal nesting colonies, and make financial contributions to our organization. And every action made on behalf of birds and wildlife, no matter how small, makes a difference. Curtis Smalling, Director of Landbird Conservation for Audubon North Carolina, notes that: “Everybody makes hundreds of decisions every year about how they manage their property or their backyard, from deciding what to plant to deciding when to mow. And if a significant portion of those decisions started to be made with birds or wildlife in mind it could really make a difference. Each action we take literally gives birds one more day to make it to their next destination.”

And each action made on behalf of birds benefits people as well. When birds thrive, people prosper. We hope this annual report will provide a snapshot of how your support benefits all of North Carolina's birds, from uncommon birds that rest here for one day on their migratory journeys to the common birds that reside in your backyard for years. Thank you for your continued support of Audubon North Carolina.

PUTTING WORKING LANDS TO WORK FOR BIRDS AND PEOPLE

Best management practices on ranches, farms, and forests hold the key to survival for more than 150 species of threatened grassland and forest birds. By partnering with landowners, Audubon can help ensure a bright future for birds like the Golden-winged Warbler and Wood Thrush, and a healthy landscape for future generations. Audubon North Carolina is helping landowners develop cost-effective strategies for making their properties more bird-friendly, as well as suggesting sources of funding and tax incentives for management activities. We will expand this program across North Carolina, focusing primarily on blocks of forest where we can have the greatest impact on songbird populations. Audubon North Carolina will lead the way to create bird-friendly management plans for 50,000 acres in the state by 2016.





Accomplishments

- > We teamed up with a number of land trusts and government agencies, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, and N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and Division of Parks and Recreation to provide management guidance, conduct inventories, and offer technical assistance on high priority bird habitats in western North Carolina totaling more than 13,000 acres.
- > We secured funding from TogetherGreen and the Clabough Foundation for the production of bird-friendly forestry guides for North Carolina.
- > We provided tiny transmitters that UNC-Wilmington graduate students placed on Golden-winged Warblers to find out what habitats this species of conservation concern uses on its wintering grounds in Nicaragua. We also supported the placement of 70 geolocators (small photo cells) on Wood Thrushes in Nicaragua to determine where these birds spend the summer. The geolocators will record a daily estimate of the birds' locations and in the future biologists will try to recapture the birds to download the data.
- > We worked with several local and community parks on management and restoration projects including Green Valley Park, Valle Crucis Community Park, Tate Evans Park in Banner Elk, and the Boone Greenway Wetlands.



SHARING OUR
SEAS AND
SHORES



Coastal areas are magnets for birds and people alike. Unfortunately, overfishing, development, and sea level rise put 60 percent of coastal birds at risk. By expanding our successful coastal stewardship program, Audubon can enlist a growing army of volunteer caretakers of nesting habitat. In addition to managing a network of 19 coastal sanctuaries, Audubon North Carolina coastal staff plays a leading role in research projects for two priority species: the Piping Plover, a species with an estimated global population of only 8,000, and the American Oystercatcher, a species of special concern in North Carolina.

Accomplishments

> With funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, biologists from Audubon, N.C. State University, and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission are conducting a groundbreaking study of the American Oystercatcher along the entire North Carolina coastline in an effort to establish best management practices for this species throughout its range. The research is providing vital information about the species' habitats and the connections between the sites where the birds raise young, migrate, and spend the winter. The research team has launched a database (accessible through www.amoywg.org) where biologists and citizen scientists can record sightings of banded birds.

> Beacon Island's peaty shoreline has been eroding over the years, decreasing the habitat available to Brown Pelicans and other birds that

nest on this Important Bird Area. Through a grant from TogetherGreen, Audubon North Carolina and the North Carolina Coastal Federation teamed up to experiment with oyster shell revetments that are designed to naturally slow the erosion and rebuild the shores by jump-starting oyster bed formation. In early 2012, local watermen bagged the oyster shells and placed them on the island. Audubon staff hope to see new oysters beginning to grow on the old shells next year.

> The 2012 nesting season at Audubon North Carolina's coastal sanctuaries was successful, with one highlight being that an estimated 15 to 20% of the entire North Carolina population of Least Terns nested at the south end of Wrightsville Beach, one of Audubon's managed areas. About 100 pairs of Black Skimmers and three pairs of American Oystercatchers also nested there. Biological Technician Brianna Elliott organized ten volunteer bird stewards to keep an eye on the colony and show the nesting birds to beachgoers.

> Since 1977, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, along with volunteers and partner organizations, has regularly censused North Carolina's nesting waterbirds—herons and egrets, ibis, terns and skimmers, and other shorebirds. This project helps biologists understand trends in bird populations that help guide management decisions and future research projects. In 2011, a team of 15 people combed Audubon sanctuaries from Oregon Inlet to the Cape Fear

River as part of the census. Biologists and volunteers recorded 25 species at all sites statewide and found 71,036 nests. Sites managed or owned by Audubon hosted 37% of North Carolina's nesting waterbirds. By providing suitable nesting habitat and low levels of disturbance, Audubon North Carolina's coastal sanctuaries contribute to the health of the state's shorebird and waterbird populations.

> As a follow-up to the 2011 international plover census, a small team, including Walker Golder of Audubon North Carolina and Matt Jeffery of Audubon's International Alliances Program, returned to The Bahamas in 2012 to continue the search for Piping Plovers, Red Knots, and other shorebirds. This important work has resulted in the discovery of new wintering sites that support as much as 20% of the Atlantic breeding population of Piping Plovers and the designation of two globally-significant Important Bird Areas that encompass approximately 60,000 acres of prime shorebird habitat. With this data, Audubon will work with Bahamas National Trust to secure permanent protection for these sites, ensuring they will be safe from threats that could threaten shorebird habitat. The discovery of major wintering areas for Piping Plovers in The Bahamas has focused new attention on the need to protect shorebird habitat at every point in the annual cycle, including wintering areas, migration stopovers, and breeding sites.



SAVING IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Knowing which places are most important for birds is the first step toward conserving them. Audubon has identified 2,544 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the United States, including 4 million acres in North Carolina. Audubon utilizes its vast network to protect, restore, and advocate for these landscapes and the birds that depend on them. Data from the IBA program have been incorporated into nearly every major conservation planning effort in North Carolina and have influenced a variety of policy decisions at the local, state, and federal levels.

Accomplishments

> Years of perseverance in pursuing a science-based, balanced management plan at Cape Hatteras National Seashore have finally paid off. 2012, the first year under a long-awaited rule to manage beach driving at the Seashore, was record-breaking for the birds and sea turtles that nest on the Seashore's beaches. According to the National Park Service, more than 220 sea turtle nests were recorded, by far the most nests ever documented at the Seashore. Birds also continued their recovery with eleven Piping Plover chicks surviving to fledge (learn to fly) from nests on the Seashore's beaches.

> Since the North Carolina legislature overturned the long-standing ban on hardened structures on the North Carolina coast the first project has been proposed for Rich Inlet at the northern end of Figure Eight Island. Audubon biologists have been studying shorebirds and





waterbirds at North Carolina's southeastern inlets for five years and our research shows that many state and federally-listed birds and other species rely on inlets throughout the year. Hardened structures such as terminal groins eliminate critical habitat such as intertidal flats where migrating and wintering shorebirds feed. We submitted extensive comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Study for Rich Inlet and continue to closely monitor this project.

> Audubon North Carolina has been monitoring several proposed wind farms in the state, including an industrial wind farm proposed near Pantego. In 2012 Audubon submitted comments to the N.C. Utilities Commission expressing deep concerns about constructing a wind farm

within the Pungo-Pocosin Lakes Important Bird Area and summarizing how other wind projects have impacted waterfowl and other birds. Our staff has also been working with Audubon's national policy office on national energy policy efforts, including providing input on the 2012 Siting and Eagle Guidance documents with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2012 was an active year for offshore wind policy activity in North Carolina, and Audubon North Carolina was involved in the review of government planning efforts for the state. Our position remains that prior to any permits being issued, all proposed projects must undergo rigorous review, including examining existing data and studying how birds use these areas.

DONAL C. O'BRIEN,
JR. AUDUBON
SANCTUARY
AND CENTER AT
PINE ISLAND





The Donal C. O'Brien, Jr. Audubon Sanctuary and Center at Pine Island is undergoing a dramatic transformation in preparation for public visitation. After more than 100 years in private ownership, this 2,600-acre complex of marshes, uplands, dunes, and maritime forest, along with the historic Pine Island hunting lodge, will be opened to casual visitors and the community to visit in the near future. Audubon North Carolina will offer immersive experiences, public programs, and on-site research opportunities throughout the year. Our overarching goal, supported by the local community, is to maintain the complex as a sanctuary for both wildlife and people. Audubon staff and stakeholders are designing a conservation and usage plan for the sanctuary that will ensure that visitors make a minimal impact on Pine Island's habitats, birds, and wildlife. Currently a nature trail is open for self-guided exploration and this summer we will offer weekly public programs.

Accomplishments

- > In January 2012, National Audubon Society's Board of Directors approved plans to move forward with the next steps in developing Pine Island as North Carolina's first Audubon center.
- > Audubon North Carolina hired an owner's representative to help advance the plans for design and renovation of Pine Island in preparation for public visitation.
- > The sanctuary's staff upgraded the boat launch and docks which helped enhance kayaking possibilities in the vast marshes of Currituck Sound.
- > During the summer of 2012 more than 1,000 people attended programs in kayaking, nature photography, and birding at Pine Island.



CREATING BIRD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Most Americans live in cities or suburbs, and people can play a critical role in fostering healthy wildlife populations and communities. Rural regions have an outsized opportunity to contribute. As the leading voice for birds, Audubon can inspire the one in five adults who watch birds to make daily lifestyle choices that add up to real conservation impact.

Accomplishments

> With an estimated one billion birds perishing after colliding with building glass every year, Lights Out programs are gaining traction throughout the country. Audubon Society of Forsyth County, a local chapter in Winston-Salem, implemented North Carolina's first Lights Out Program in 2011, organizing volunteers to track dead and injured birds during spring and fall migration, generating media coverage about the issue, and encouraging building managers to turn off their lights during migration. The success of Lights Out Winston-Salem has inspired similar Audubon chapter programs in Charlotte and Greensboro. These efforts were included in a Toyota/Audubon Volunteer Days Grant awarded to Audubon North Carolina in 2012.





> The ten local Audubon chapters in North Carolina continue to play leadership roles in connecting people with nature and protecting the environment in their communities and beyond. Chapter members monitor many Important Bird Areas, surveying bird populations and providing vital data to Audubon's research efforts for priority species such as the Cerulean Warbler. They work with local and state parks to bring the joy of birding to everyone through events such as Eno River State Park's now annual Bird Festival. They work with local communities to encourage bird-friendly backyards, such as Cape Fear Audubon's Bird Friendly Habitat Award Program. And chapters like Highlands and High Country collaborate with schools to enhance and maintain bird and wildlife habitats on school grounds.

> The number of North Carolina birders participating in backyard birding and citizen science projects continues to grow, as demonstrated by the results from the 2012 Great Backyard Bird Count. North Carolina ranked fourth among states submitting the most checklists, with 5,116 lists submitted. And Charlotte, Raleigh, and Durham were among the top ten cities in the nation submitting the most checklists. During the 2011-2012 Christmas Bird Count, North Carolina participants tallied 223 species and 1,023,975 individual birds.

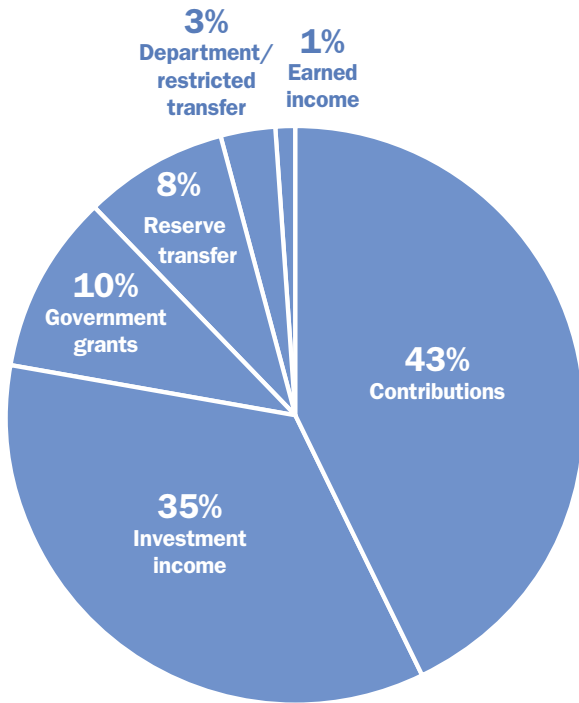
> Audubon North Carolina's state office and chapters are overseeing an exciting effort to promote Bird-Friendly Communities throughout the state. This initiative is designed to give birds "one more day" on their journeys in the state and beyond by helping people make their yards, places of business and worship, schools, and public spaces bird-friendly.



YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

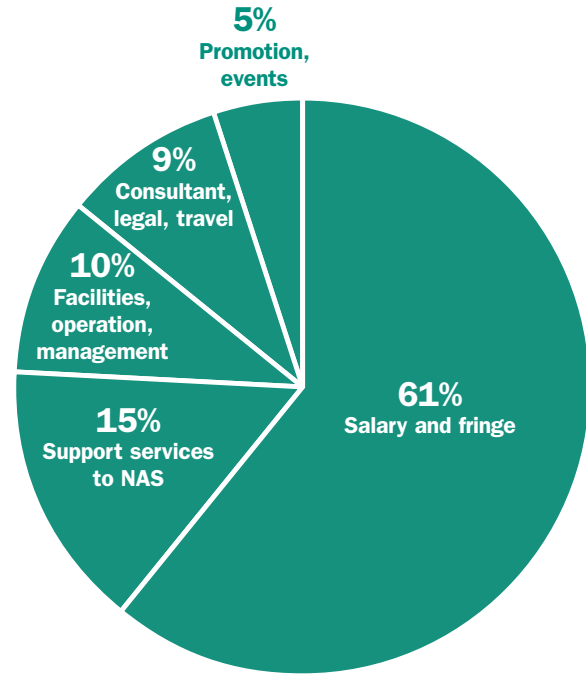
Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2012 (July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012)

We could not do our work without your support! As the voice for birds in the state, Audubon North Carolina's conservation work extends from the coast to the mountains. We influence policy, land use, and decisions made by private landowners as we work to protect birds and their habitats. This year financial support from individuals, foundations, and government grants totaled \$719,388. All of these dollars directly translate into significant accomplishments. We thank all of the people and organizations who believe in and support Audubon's bird conservation work. You make the difference!



FISCAL YEAR 2012 REVENUE

Contributions	525,915	43%
Investment income	469,316	35%
Government grants	149,082	10%
Transfer from reserve	109,465	8%
Department/restricted transfer	44,391	3%
Earned income	18,121	1%



FISCAL YEAR 2012 EXPENSES

Salary and fringe	806,755	61%
Support services to NAS	197,808	15%
Facilities, operation, management	125,801	10%
Consultant, legal, travel	117,087	9%
Promotion, events	68,839	5%



WINGS OF SUPPORT

Audubon North Carolina is deeply grateful to all the individuals, agencies, organizations, and foundations that supported our work this fiscal year, from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012. Thank you for your commitment to protecting birds and wildlife in North Carolina.

Gifts up to \$999

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Through grants, contributions, and matching funds, these organizations and institutions substantially supported Audubon North Carolina's programs.

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