



# Audubon Science

## AUDUBON AT HOME

### Taking small conservation actions every day

**A**udubon At Home helps people create healthier surroundings and protect birds and other wildlife by taking small actions in their daily lives. It is the role of Audubon Science to help people make the connection between their individual actions and the subsequent impact of their choices on bird conservation in particular, and the environment in general. This includes integrating our goals for Audubon At Home with Audubon's broader bird conservation objectives (see side bar).

Audubon At Home (AAH) assumes that our commitment to bird conservation should be reflected in our daily actions. Since our daily routines rarely bring us into close contact with the birds that need our help, our environmental sensibilities often retreat into the background as we deal with the pressing demands of modern life. The role of AAH is to help people integrate their concern for the environment and desire to help native birds into their everyday lives.

In so doing, AAH helps people help birds and the habitats that support them through what they do in their homes, yards, and neighborhoods. In our homes, many of the personal consumer and lifestyle decisions that we all make during the course of each day may have indirect yet significant effects on bird conservation. For example, daily choices include which coffee we drink (shade grown or sun grown), what kind of clothing should we wear, or what kind of vacation we take. By applying the principles of reducing our consumption of materials and energy resources, reusing items when possible, recycling when not, and finally being proactive in evaluating environmental impacts of alternative courses of action, these AAH suggestions can help us live a more sustainable existence, and decrease the pressure on birds and other wildlife.

The ways that we landscape and maintain our yards can have a direct and important impact on the environmental health of our selves, our families, and local bird populations. AAH provides guidance to individuals as they create safe and sustaining habitats in urban, suburban, and rural areas where birds and other wildlife can find sanctuary and thrive. Since its initiation in 1997, AAH has adopted five primary principles to achieve this aim, namely reducing pesticide use, reducing water use, pro-



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PROMOTING A CULTURE OF CONSERVATION BY CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

## AUDUBON'S BIRD CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

- Prevent persistent declines or range contractions in populations of common native birds.
- Stabilize and increase populations of at-risk bird species.
- Protect and restore critical habitat for vulnerable species.
- Improve the health of landscapes that support American birds.

## PUBLICATIONS

- *With Audubon New York Lawn Pesticides: An Unacceptable Risk.*
- *Audubon Guide for a Healthy Yard and Beyond* (1 million copies).
- *Healthier Choices: The Audubon At Home Guide to Healthier Pest Control* (500,000 copies).
- [www.audubonathome.org](http://www.audubonathome.org) contains resources and specific action plans.

tecting water quality, removing exotic invasive plants, and planting native species.

AAH provides tools for people to implement the above principles through its web pages, print publications, and on-the-ground examples with a variety of locally based pilot programs. AAH has published some groundbreaking materials (see sidebar) to inform people about alternatives to traditional domestic landscaping practices including specific examples. These publications have helped launch AAH activities in Washington, Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Colorado, New York, and Mississippi. A partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service launched a multi-year strategy to promote and engage urban residents in conservation at home.

In addition to helping people protect birds at home and in their yards, AAH recognizes that the benefits of these actions can be magnified if they are implemented on a wider scale across neighborhoods and communities. To maximize the effectiveness of these community-based efforts, AAH seeks to link them strategically with bird-conservation initiatives developed on a broader scale. This begins through educating citizens about the connections between their local birds, habitats, and the broader landscape, and planning local actions that contribute to sustaining local, regional, and global bird populations. This work includes creating habitat for priority bird species, as well as habitats that can buffer or connect higher quality habitats such as Important Bird Areas. By coordinating local efforts with regional and global bird conservation goals, AAH ensures that our combined efforts are helping the birds that need the most help in any given area.

The future of AAH within Audubon Science includes developing new tools to improve our effectiveness in creating healthier landscapes that support birds around our homes, yards, and neighborhoods. Meanwhile, translation of some of our successful publications into Spanish is broadening our audience, and we are planning a Citizen Science project that will enable those engaged in habitat enhancement to monitor the species using them over time. A major focus for the future will be to integrate Audubon At Home into all parts of the Audubon organization to maximize its potential to engage all people everywhere.

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Rob Fergus, National Audubon Society