



Audubon Minnesota News

March 8, 2007

Lobby Day 2007 – Big Audubon Turnout!

Not to boast, but Audubon members are amazing. This year, about 50 Audubon activists showed-up at the Capitol for Minnesota Environmental Partnership's annual Citizen's Lobby Day. Audubon usually has more members at Lobby Day than any other conservation group in the state. We are a member-based organization, well-organized, educated on the issues and engaged. Because of this, lawmakers often know Audubon members in their districts by name.

This level of participation is what makes our efforts at the Capitol not only worthwhile but effective. Audubon members' opinions on policy issues and their willingness to "get involved" and share their opinions with decision makers allows us to take leadership positions on key issues.

Thank you to all the members that participated in Lobby Day this year. I have about half of the names, my apologies to those of you not mentioned – please e-mail me and remind me you were there!

Great job to our Audubon activists: Jerry and Donna Bahls, Mary Ellen Vetter, Jack and Pat Telfer, Bill Bruins, Don Janes, Bill Bryson, Rick and Joan Meierotto, Paul Moore, Michael Johnson, Gene Larimore, Linda Kofstad, Don Kratch, Greg Juenemann, Carol Bertelson, Sue Leaf, Kathy Iverson, Mike Menzel, Rose Hood, Michael Huber, Dayle DeClerq, Linda Peck, Lois Norrgard,

Jane Bennett, Karen Eckman, Holly Peirson, Laura Erickson, Paul Suskin, Steve Weston, Doug Mayo, Mark Peterson and Gary Botzek.

Off-Highway Vehicle Legislation Update

On March 6th, Audubon Minnesota presented testimony on legislation that would tighten up on management of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) in Minnesota's state forests. Mark Peterson, Audubon's Executive Director testified before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee. He sent the same simple message we have been delivering for six years: motorized recreation belongs on designated trails in Minnesota.

"The damage done to the wilderness character of our state forests by unmanaged OHVs is well documented," Mark Peterson, Audubon's Executive Director, told the committee. "They have destroyed sensitive wetlands, riddled many state forests with user-created trails, caused erosion, diminished quiet and solitude, and disturbed and destroyed precious bird habitat."

Audubon's specific concern is that many of the state's "bird species of greatest conservation need" are concentrated in the northern part of the state. These bird species have been identified by DNR as either being rare, declining or vulnerable. The biggest threats to these species are habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation -- all of which are exacerbated by unregulated OHV use.

Audubon is supporting legislation that would require all state forest trails to be closed to OHV use unless clearly signed as "open." In addition, we recommend designating at least 50 percent of each state forest as a "traditional use" area closed to OHV trails, which includes hunting, trapping, hiking and cross-country skiing – all non-motorized activities. This legislation, with some needed amendments, passed the Committee and the chances look good for the legislature to favorably address the issue before they adjourn in May.

Bird Safe-Lights Out Program Makes the News

Minnesotans are all abuzz about the possibility of the Twin Cities becoming a "lights out" city. We have the opportunity to both save both birds and energy and lessen light pollution.

Millions of birds are killed every year in collisions with tall, lighted buildings during migration. Audubon is asking Metro-Area building owners to join other North American cities, such as Toronto, Detroit, New York City and Chicago in dimming their interior and exterior lights at night during migration periods, from March 15 through May 31 and August 15 through October 31.

Many of Minnesota's 250 migratory birds migrate at night and for unknown reasons, the collective light and individual spotlights from tall lighted buildings draw birds off their flight path. Many birds are killed or injured in building collisions or simply drop from exhaustion after circling the buildings.

To learn more about this issue, read this Star Tribune article [Skyscraper 'Lights Out' is for the birds, in a good way](#) and follow that up with a quick look at their [Editorial: Time for a dim view of nighttime lighting](#)

Hey Friends, Today (March 8) is International Women's Day! Call Your Representative.

Women play vital roles in communities and ecosystems around the world. Constraints such as illiteracy and over-all lack of access to education and basic health care, including family planning, hinder the ability of many women to fully contribute to the health and well-being of their families and the ultimately, the environment.

Demographers will tell you that lack of adequate family planning services contributes to rapid population growth. Population growth threatens habitat for birds and wildlife around the world. This year, world population will grow by more than 73 million people—most of them in the poorest and most environmentally vulnerable countries. These women want and need access to adequate healthcare. Unfortunately, U.S. funding for international family planning programs has declined by more than 30 percent since.

Last week, U.S. Representatives McCollum (D-MN), Oberstar (D-MN), Payne (D-NJ), Ramstad (R-MN) and Shays (R-CT) introduced the Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act of 2007 (HR 1225), a bill that bolsters U.S. international family planning assistance through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

What Can YOU Do?

[Celebrate International Women's Day! Please join us and citizens from around the country as we ask Members of the U.S. House of Representatives to cosponsor HR 1225 for the benefit of women, healthy families and the environment.](#)

Cool the Planet, Save the Arctic: Climate Crisis Action Day - Tuesday, March 20, 2007

Audubon, Alaska Wilderness League, Wilderness Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Sierra Club have teamed up to sponsor the Climate Crisis Action Day in Washington D.C. This is your opportunity to ensure that Congress hears your concerns about global warming, the climate and America's fragile Arctic wilderness.

Scientists from all over the world recently declared the evidence for global warming "unequivocal." Warning of stronger storms, rising sea levels, more frequent heat waves and droughts, the scientists called upon the governments of all nations to take urgent action against runaway emissions of greenhouse gases.

Perhaps nowhere is the evidence for global warming more evident today than in the arctic where permafrost and sea ice is melting at an alarming rate. Polar Bears live exclusively in the Arctic and are totally dependent on arctic sea ice for their survival. If current global warming trends continue, it is likely that the Arctic will be ice-free in summer as early as the middle of this century, and in the next 20 years all Arctic sea ice will likely diminish by 80 percent. This is not good news for the threatened polar bear population. The rapid warming of the Arctic and melting of the sea ice presents imminent threat to polar bears, which could become the first mammal to lose 100 percent of its habitat to global warming.

In addition to the threats from melting sea ice, much of the most important onshore denning habitat for polar bears in the United States is located in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, a landscape that has been threatened with oil drilling proposals for three decades. The good news is that because of the hard work of grassroots advocates, pro-drilling members of Congress have failed to open the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas development. Unfortunately, until we succeed in passing wilderness legislation that will protect this vital habitat for polar bears, proponents of drilling will continue their efforts to turn our nation's last great wilderness into an industrial complex. Fortunately, with the recent introduction of the Arctic Wilderness Act, we have an incredible opportunity to permanently protect the Arctic Refuge from drilling once and for all.

This is an opportunity to prevent the worst outcomes for our planet that global warming threatens, before it's too late.

Congress must act now to cap emissions of global warming gases from dirty utilities, smoke-belching factories, and gas-guzzling cars, trucks and SUVs. A cap on emissions would level the playing field for clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies that have been within our grasp for years but crowded out by subsidies for fossil fuel.

Let's call on Congress to pass the Arctic Wilderness Act and legislation to stop the threat of global warming.

[Click here to urge your congressional member to fight global warming.](#)

Record Numbers for the Great Backyard Bird Count

More bird checklists were submitted for this year's 10th annual Great Backyard Bird Count! National Audubon Society and Cornell Ornithology Lab team-up every year to use citizen science in an effort to keep tabs on bird populations and distribution across the continent. The count provides trend information as populations grow and shrink, their ranges expanding or contracting. This year, in Minnesota, 114 bird species were identified.

[Click here to learn more about the results of the Great Backyard Bird Count.](#)

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Audubon Mission: Working with others to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats,

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