



# Audubon

## MEMBER RECRUITMENT HANDBOOK

*A how-to guide for Audubon Chapters*

By Audubon Chapters & Staff

June 2006

**This Guide is designed to assist any Audubon entity (Chapters, centers, sanctuaries, programs, etc.) with member recruitment. Throughout the Guide, for the sake of clarity, we have referred to the entity as a Chapter. However, while still allowing for each entity's unique situation, the principles and ideas in this handbook are applicable to all Audubon entities.**

This handbook is designed to be used in different ways to meet various needs. For instance, if you're looking for information on a specific topic, consult the Table of Contents.

If you want to pick up some novel ideas immediately, you can read through the "Other Ideas" section at the end of each topic. For words of wisdom, look out for our collection of "Tips" found throughout these pages.

As you use this guide in whatever manner best suits your style, we hope you'll find it informative and useful. In fact, we produced it in a loose-leaf format so we can update it often and so you can add your own favorite ideas and notes.

Please share with us any new ideas that *you* have so we can improve this handbook for others.

### **Acknowledgement**

Our sincere thanks go out to the many Chapter members and other Auduboners across the country who spoke to us in person or on the phone; or sent us letters, cards, newsletter or email to help create this handbook.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Across the country, nearly 500 local Audubon Chapters give the National Audubon Society a vital, direct link to the American public.

Chapters initiate and support community-based projects, act on local issues and concerns and elevate them to national attention, while providing an inviting and nurturing atmosphere for local citizens to gather and work together for a better environment.

In short, no one personifies the National Audubon Society better than you: the members of a local Audubon Chapter.

### **We're looking for a few good conservationists**

Local recruitment is an important, challenging, and fruitful task for an Audubon Chapter to undertake for a variety of reasons. Whether your own Chapter currently recruits tens or hundreds of members each year, you know that each newly recruited local member is a priceless resource to the Chapter – as a source of funds, volunteer work and knowledge.

Most importantly, a new recruit is a person who shares your concern toward saving our environment and who, like you, is motivated to act!

Individuals who join through a Chapter are also very special to the national organization. They provide an added base of financial support; they're more likely to renew and donate year after year than other members; and their numbers give Audubon clout in the media and on Capitol Hill.

Sharing the best you have to offer... As an active member in your Chapter, you know how demanding Chapter activities can be – even when you're not busy trying to recruit new members. Some Chapters – particularly those in urban areas – have easier access to people, media and resources, while others aren't as readily "plugged in" to these resources.

This Member Recruitment Handbook is meant to help level the playing field, so to speak, by providing Chapters that have fewer resources and smaller membership bases with a tool that can help them develop a successful Chapter membership recruitment program easily and inexpensively.

While this handbook was created and edited by Audubon's staff, it is foremost a resource created by Audubon Chapters for Audubon Chapters. Nearly all of the ideas, suggestions and recommendations compiled here have already worked for the many Chapter members and regional Audubon officers who passed them along to us.

### **Five Key Benefits of Chapter Membership Recruitment:**

1. Brings in a higher Chapter-recruitment dues share (for the first year).
2. Adds more volunteers to take on Chapter responsibilities.
3. Builds a larger base of financial support.
4. Strengthens Audubon's political clout and influence.
5. Supports the overall mission of the National Audubon Society fulfilled through grassroots activism and education of the public on environmental issues.

# SECTION I

## Planning Your Membership Recruitment Campaign

**You can't do it alone: The importance of a membership committee.**

A Chapter's membership chairperson and its president (or executive director) must ultimately play the critical role in developing and running a membership recruitment effort. Keep in mind however, that no one can do it alone – nor should anyone be expected to.

There are many facets to a Chapter's membership chairperson position. This person is responsible for membership activities ranging from recruitment to accounting and record keeping to retention. In order to lessen the burden of these diverse activities, it may be easier to divide the membership chair person in two:

**Membership Development Chairperson**

- Focuses on growing membership

**Membership Administration Chairperson**

-Focuses on managing the Chapter's membership database

This division of labor will allow the Chapter to develop a Chapter recruitment plan (led by the Membership Development Chair), while continuing with the day-to-day record keeping and accounting of its membership file (maintained by the Membership Administration Chair). If that is not practical for your Chapter, perhaps you could seek out a volunteer or intern to help out when needed.

In addition, to tap into the best available resources your Chapter can bring to bear on your membership plan, consider setting up a **Membership Committee**. Find out which members have talents that will be valuable – an artist, a retired marketing executive, an accountant, an experienced organizer, etc. – ask them to serve on this team.

Last, local recruitment efforts should not be the sole responsibility of the Membership Committee, but rather a combined effort among the Chapter's leadership. The President and board members should stress the value of Chapter membership to both the current membership body and the public at large.

All of the Chapter's public programs and activities should promote membership and have membership brochures and applications on display, regardless of which committee organizes the actual program (education, conservation, or another). And the Chapter's newsletter should contain a membership application in every issue.

**With cooperation and a commitment to membership development, your Chapter can succeed in growing and maintaining an active and diverse grassroots base.**

## Developing a Focus

Before moving forward with a membership campaign, it's a good idea to take a look at where you are right now and where you want to go in the future. One of the best ways to determine this is to do a S.W.O.T. Analysis which identifies your Chapter's inner *Strengths* and *Weaknesses* and outside *Opportunities* and *Threats*. By reviewing and understanding your current situation, you'll have a solid foundation from which to plan your future membership development course.

One of the most common misconceptions that individuals have about membership development is that it is a completely independent activity. It's not. People do not become members just because you have a beautiful brochure, a well-worded appeal letter or a nice gift to offer. All these tools are very useful, that's true; but ultimately people become members, and remain members, because they feel connected to the Chapter as a whole. This connection involves all aspects of the Chapter – from its programs to its newsletter – right down to the welcome a prospective member receives when he or she first encounters the Chapter at a meeting, on a field trip or at an event.

Therefore it is very important to consider all the benefits your Chapter has to offer and be aware of the areas it needs to improve. In addition, knowing what opportunities and obstacles to membership development exist in your community, can help you to better plan how to take advantage of them (opportunities) or work around them (obstacles/threats).

***A Chapter assessment survey is included in Appendix A. You should consider completing this survey, before developing your membership plan.***

When you finish, ask yourself – “are there any discrepancies in my answers?” For example, do you list your Chapter's primary mission as “activism”, yet most of your Chapter's planned activities are educational or social in nature? Is your goal to attract more young professionals into the Chapter, yet most of your field trips are scheduled on weekday mornings (when these people would likely be working)?

If there are differences in your responses, think about how you can rectify them. Does the Chapter need to change its programs to better reflect its goals (i.e. more armchair activism and lobbying to reflect its activist mission) or does it need to reconsider its goals to reflect its activities (the Chapter has strong education programs; we need to highlight this aspect to our community).

If the Chapter wants to reach out to particular groups in the community, does it need to change its current programming to make itself more accessible to these groups?

Consider which Chapter activities get the most member, non-member and community response and involvement. Then ask yourself – “Is membership promoted at these activities? What could the Chapter do to encourage more people to join? What membership techniques have or have not worked in the past?”

By reviewing your current Chapter situation with S.W.O.T., you can better focus your membership planning and efforts around the activities that will best reflect your Chapter's goals and needs.

**Some questions you may ask:**

**Chapter Focus:**

- What do we, as a Chapter, do best?
- Where could we improve?
- Which Chapter activities get the greatest turnout?
- How would we characterize the make-up of our current membership?
- What members do we want to attract that we are not attracting now?

**Outside Focus:**

- What groups or issues in the community can we tap into to grow our Chapter?
- What obstacles are present in the community that prevent us from reaching our full potential as a Chapter?
- Who or what "competes" with our Chapter for members'/potential members' time and attention?

**Setting Realistic Goals**

You'll want to set ambitious goals without setting yourselves up for a disappointing failure. Look back at past results and determine how much farther you can go with the resources available to you and how much more it should produce. It's better to project slight on the conservative side and have the opportunity to adjust your expectation upward.

For example, say you set up a booth at three ecology festivals last year and recruited 20 new members on the spot. If you can attend twice as many fairs this year, don't double your recruitment expectations (40 new members). It's safer to project at 50% increase (30 new members) over last year.

Likewise, you decide to do a small direct mail campaign to 100 people. From that 100, you get 10 new members. Is the campaign a success or failure? Based on average statistics of response to a mail campaign, it's a success! Ten out of 100 people joined – that's a 10% response. In many instances, mail campaigns return on a 2.5 – 3% response.

The moral of this example is: Don't be disappointed if your membership efforts garner only a handful of members at a time. Chances are your efforts are producing a realistic return, based on your individual situation.

Past results are the best indicators of future results – so try to keep a record of all past membership campaigns. If you want to try recruitment activities that you've never undertaken before, seek out another Chapter that has done something similar and ask for some feedback and pointers as to what you might expect to accomplish.

**TIP:** Exchange newsletters with other Chapters (especially within your state) to get new ideas.

### **Your Expense Budget**

Ultimately though, the real basis for judging whether your campaign is a success is whether you got more out of it than you put in. To do this, you should track the expenses from each of your membership campaigns as well as the revenue (in membership dues and donations) they earn.

*Appendix B* provides a template for an expense budget worksheet. You can use this template to track your expenses and develop your own. The best way to estimate the realistic costs for a particular campaign is to obtain cost estimates from at least 3 different suppliers for all items or services you might need (printing, materials, etc.). By shopping around for supplies, you have a better chance of reducing your costs.

Another way to reduce costs is to negotiate “trade” with a local supplier. Some ways you could do this are:

- Trade advertising space in your newsletter or in a program for a Chapter dinner or other event in exchange for goods or services from a local supplier.
- Ask a local graphics designer to help design a Chapter brochure in exchange for design credit or business referrals. The same could be done for a Web site designer for helping develop your Chapter Web site.
- Create and update a Chapter Resource List of vendors that have a working relationship with the Chapter or have given deals in the past. Also list any Chapter members who have supplied, or offered to supply, goods or services to the Chapter.
- Print a Chapter “Wish List” in your newsletter, listing supplies or equipment that the Chapter needs. Requests could include basic supplies such as reams of paper, file folds or legal-sized envelopes, as well as larger equipment such as office furniture, an answering machine or a computer printer.

- Offer to refer Chapter members to the supplier's business.

**TIP:** When purchasing goods and services, it's always a good idea to get pricing from at least three different vendors to give you a sense of the range of options and to compare all of the bids to relevant past experience. Remember to look not only for differences in cost, but also quality and promptness of service.

## Motivating Volunteers

Gaining another's help is something that always seems more difficult than it really is. But recruiting new members – and new volunteers – is an investment in time that will ultimately spread the burden of Chapter work and lighten the load on each member.

By volunteering yourself, you will be setting an example that is easy for your peers to follow. Here are four other steps you can take as well:

- Be sure to give your volunteers the resources and support they need.
- Constantly share information and news about your activities to keep them in the loop.
- Acknowledge and recognize each and every step that they accomplish along the way.
- Don't hesitate to set up some friendly competition among your volunteers to spur them into action, but be sure everyone gets recognized in some fashion – their abilities may vary, but their commitment to help is equally strong.

### What Volunteers Expect from You

Here's what prospective volunteers want most from non-profit organizations according to a study cited in

*Communication Briefings:*

58% - Use my time wisely

52% - Have a well-managed program

50% - Use my talents sensibly

41% - Assign me only clearly defined tasks

39% - Provide experiences that will enhance my career

31% - Thank me

*Source: HRFocus, American Management Assn.*

## Staying on Track

Once you have a plan, you should monitor your progress as regular intervals and adjust your goals and budget as needed. Your Membership Committee might plan to hold meetings as often

as every month or six weeks in the beginning to establish your bearings – and it’s good to set those meeting dates in advance. It’s always easier to reschedule a meeting than to call a new one. In addition, you might have someone on your committee who is good with numbers and can track your progress, giving brief reports at committee meetings.

### **But what should I do?**

After all this talk of developing focus, setting goals and managing your budget, you may be asking yourself – “But what exactly should I be doing to recruit members? What recruitment techniques are right for my Chapter? What should I be doing to attract, recruit and renew more members?”

Every Chapter is different – in size, member make-up, goals – and so each will tailor its membership development activities to suit its own unique situation. However, the basic foundation of any membership development plan includes the following six aspects:

1. **Making contact:** How do you guide a presence in your community?
2. **Drawing them in:** How does the Chapter connect with prospective members?
3. **Committing to membership:** How do you convince people to join?
4. **Building them up:** How do you turn new members into involved and active members?
5. **Staying put:** How do you convince current members to renew their membership?
6. **Coming back:** How do you encourage lapsed members to rejoin?

The remainder of this handbook will focus on each of these aspects, providing you with general information, concrete ideas, practical steps and worksheets to help you develop your unique Chapter membership plan.

## SECTION II

### *Making Contact -* **How to make your Chapter's presence known to your community.**

#### **Where to Find Your Next Member**

Your Chapter's next member can come from virtually anywhere – a chance encounter on a plane, a brochure placed in a local store, a referral from a current member, or a community participant in an Audubon-sponsored activity – to name a few. The more people who know about the work and activities of your Chapter, the more prospects for membership you'll have.

#### **Take One, Please....**

One of the best ways to maintain a constant presence in the community is to leave free literature where people are likely to have the time and inclination to pick it up and read it.

Here are some places you may wish to leave copies of your brochures, newsletters, flyers or issues of *AUDUBON*:

- Nurseries and garden centers
- Nature centers
- Public libraries
- Natural/Organic food stores
- Pet shops/Pet supply stores
- Laundromats
- Automatic teller lobbies in banks
- Bus or train stations
- Town Hall
- Real estate offices
- Any establishment with a "Community Bulletin Board"
- Doctors/Dentists' offices (especially copies of *Audubon*)
- Camping/Outdoors/Sporting goods stores
- Pizza parlors or other take-out food places
- Natural History Museum/Zoo/Botanical Garden
- Recreation centers/gyms
- Houses of worship
- Supermarket "Good Neighbor" Community Boards

**TIP:** If you're leaving literature in shops, be sure to ask the proprietor's permission first.

Be sure that your community's Welcome Wagon has your Chapter's literature. Newcomers to any community are always looking for new social and civic activities to join and should be particularly open to your invitation. In fact, your town or city clerk's office or a local real estate association may be able to provide a list of new homeowners to whom you can mail. Since most non-profit and commercial bulk mail is not forwarded, newcomers' mailboxes will be less crammed than usual for a while – giving more prominence and attention to your letter!

**Flyers** – Most up-to-date computer word processing programs combined with a decent printer will enable you to generate professional-looking flyers for an upcoming event. You can also consider printing up a modest inventory of larger poster-sized (11" x 17" or 17" x 22") flyers with a blank space at the bottom to be filled in the news of an upcoming event. This is a cost-effective way to produce an eye-catching promotional flyer that reinforces a vivid, consistent image over time.

These larger posters, if backed by cardboard or a durable heavyweight paper, can be reused over and over again, saving money and paper. Print the Chapter name and logo (and mailing address, Web site address and/or mission) on the top third of the poster and use the bottom two-thirds as a bulletin board – pinning or taping up information about new events, Chapter meetings, field trips, etc., as they occur.

Another novel idea for both saving paper and printing costs AND getting information about your Chapter meetings widely distributed comes from the Audubon Society of Fargo-Moorhead. The last page of its Chapter newsletter is a simple flyer describing the following month's program. The Chapter asks its members to post the flyer in their workplace, supermarket, college, etc., to promote attendance. An example template for a newsletter flyer is in the box below.

**XYZ Audubon Society (Logo)**

*Fly by Night: Owls in our midst*

a presentation and slide show  
by John Smith

Thursday, May X, XXXX  
8:00 pm – 9:00 pm  
Main Street Community Center  
100 Court Street  
Cityville, NY 12345

**Free and Open to the Public**

For more information, call XYZ Audubon Society  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

## Publicity – Free and Easy

By definition, publicity – as opposed to advertising – is a free way to get your message out. With the exception of a few inexpensive advertising opportunities, we will focus on easy ways to get valuable publicity absolutely free! Be sure to share this section with your Publicity Chairperson.

### Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Every radio and television station broadcasts free announcements for non-profit or government agencies. Your Chapter can issue announcements to notify the community of a Chapter event, to provide general public information of interest, or to solicit membership support outright!

PSAs are short – 60 seconds at the longest – though a shorter 15 or 30-second spot has a better chance of being used more often. The format is simple and will only take a short time to put together.

Using Chapter letterhead, center at the top of the page “Public Service Announcement” followed by the length in seconds. Double space your announcement and edit it carefully so that it can be read slowly and clearly in the time you’ve allotted. The box below shows an example of a 15-second spot that comes an event with a general membership pitch:

<p style="text-align:center"><b>Sandlewood Audubon Society</b> (Letterhead)</p> <p style="text-align:center"><b>Public Service Announcement</b> Length: 15 seconds</p> <p>Contact: Jane Doe (xxx) xxx-xxxx</p> <p style="text-align:center">The Sandlewood Chapter of the National Audubon Society will kick off its fall birdseed sale at the annual Harvest Festival at the Essex County Fair on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>. To buy seed or receive information about Audubon activities and membership, stop by their booths at the fair or call 555-1234.</p>
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Educational, non-profit radio stations, including most college stations are the best choices to get your PSA aired at good listening times. Local commercial radio and local cable and broadcast television are also reasonable choices.

The following page contains a template for a PSA checklist. This template can be used to help you keep track of various PSA you submit.

**CHECKLIST FOR SUBMITTING A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)**

(Use 1 sheet for every PSA you submit)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PSA CONTENT:**

Purpose (meeting, field trip, event, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

When (date & times): \_\_\_\_\_

Where (address & directions): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact info. (name & phone): \_\_\_\_\_

PSA Wording (version to be read):

Include the Chapter name.

PSA read out loud and timed.

Length of PSA (in seconds): \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATION:**

TV/Radio Station Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Deadline Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Submission Method:  Mail  Fax  Phone  Email

Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Followed-up to make sure station received it.

Dates and/or # of times PSA will air (if available from station):

## Press Releases

You should use a press release when you're trying to get news coverage by making a newsworthy issue public or by reacting to a current story in the news. Your Chapter can use a press release to promote an event by giving it a "news peg" – an angle that makes it newsworthy.

For example, let's say you want to attract citizen volunteers (and potential new members!) to an April clean-up day along a local riverbank. You could issue a press release with the headline "Local Audubon Chapter Launches Annual Spring River Clean-Up Day" or "High Turnout Expected for First Annual River Clean-Up Day".

In addition, your press release should answer the basic questions or "Who", "What", "When", "Where", "Why" and "How" and try to do so in the first paragraph – reporters see many press releases every day, so you want to grab their attention right up front.

Your release should have the words "**PRESS RELEASE**" or "**NEWS RELEASE**" printed under your letterhead and should indicate a release date (usually "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" with a contact person and phone number in the upper right corner.

### *Here are some pointers on getting your press release noticed and even used as a basis for a newspaper article:*

- Use letterhead paper or have your logo and a heading at the top of the page.
- Indicate the date of issue.
- Indicate the release date ("immediate," or "A.M." or "P.M." [day], [date]).
- Provide a Chapter contact name and phone number.
- Underline or bold face the headline and make it succinct and informative.
- Indent paragraphs five spaces.
- Double-space the text of the release.
- Try to keep the release to one page and no more than two.
- For a release of more than one page, head each page with a shortened version of the headline.
- Put the important summary information in the first paragraph.
- Include quotes from individuals to make it "news-like."
- Make sure the first few paragraphs can stand alone (the newspaper will likely edit from the bottom up).
- Center three pound signs - # # # - below the last line to indicate the end of the release.

Call your local media and compile a list of the relevant people to send the release to along with their mailing and email addresses, telephone and fax numbers. Also find out the paper's deadline for submission and its preferred method of receiving press releases.

**NOTE:** Most newspapers do *NOT* like to receive submissions by fax because faxes are difficult to scan into a computer for editing.

Appendix C contains a template you can use for compiling a local media list with all relevant information. Once it's compiled, you'll have a valuable reference tool at your fingertips whenever you need to contact the local media for any reason (press releases, PSAs, advertising, etc.). You'll be able to locate the appropriate medium and contact person quickly and easily.

Remember! Your list is only as good as the information it contains. Be sure to update the list frequently, so it does not become outdated.

Following is an example of a press release and a checklist of steps to go through when preparing and sending your press release, to make sure you have covered all the bases. You can copy this template and use one sheet for each press release you send.

**EXAMPLE OF A PRESS RELEASE**

***BROOKLYN AUDUBON SOCIETY***

1234 Court Street, Brooklyn NY 12345 (123) 555-5555

**NEWS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: [ ]

Contact: [ ]

Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

**THE FIRST ANNUAL PROSPECT PARK NATURE FESTIVAL**

The Brooklyn Audubon Society is sponsoring the First Annual Prospect Park Nature Festival at the Prospect Park Pavilion on Saturday, May xx, xxxx, from 9 am – 6 pm to celebrate the Park and its wildlife.

Whether you are an avid birdwatcher, a conservationist, or just love nature, this event will be both entertaining and informative. The Prospect Park Nature Festival offers a variety of activities for children and adults that are both entertaining and educational. Festival exhibits and activities will demonstrate the great diversity of birds, wildlife, plants and habitats that can, and does exist in an urban setting.

There will be ample opportunities to enjoy nature throughout this one-day event. In addition to scheduled nature walks around the Park, there will be exhibitions of Park plant and wildlife and activities for children, including bird and animal identification games, face painting and a birdfeeder making activity. For adults there will be presentations on beginner birdwatching, nature photography, local conservation initiatives concerning the Park, and more!

In a recent interview, Parks Department Commissioner John Doe praised Brooklyn Audubon Society and the Festival, saying “Brooklyn Audubon Society has been a vital force behind the restoration of Prospect Park to its original state. The Park Festival will enable the local community to truly appreciate the tremendous natural bounty they have in their own backyard”.

The Brooklyn Audubon Society (BAS) is the local Chapter of the National Audubon Society serving the Borough of Brooklyn. Founded in 1925 and with a current membership of over 2,500 members, BAS’s mission is to promote and preserve the birds, wildlife and habitat of Brooklyn through grassroots education and conservation programs.

For more information, contact Chapter President Joe Schmo at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, [jshmo@bas.org](mailto:jshmo@bas.org), or see the Brooklyn Audubon Society website at <http://www.bas.org>.

###

## CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING/SUBMITTING A PRESS RELEASE

**SUBJECT/TITLE OF RELEASE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Written by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 List of publications compiled and updated.

**CONTENTS OF PRESS RELEASE PACKAGE:**

- Press Release:**
  - Answers who, what, when, where, why and how.
  - Contains Chapter name, address, phone, email and website for more info.
  - Typed, double spaced.
  - No longer than 2 pages.
  - Spelling checked.
  - Copy on file.

- Contact Information for the paper/station:**
  - Chapter contact name, phone, email: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Best time to call/availability: \_\_\_\_\_

- Photo (if used):**
  - Photos clear and centered.
  - Size and Finish (glossy/mat): \_\_\_\_\_
  - Black and white or color: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Photo credit name: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Photo caption (1-2 sentences): \_\_\_\_\_

- Envelope:**
  - Return address with contact name.
  - Typed: "press release enclosed".

**Mailing:**

Date Sent:	Publication Name:	Contact Person:	Phone/Email:	Submission Method: (mail, email)	Deadline:	Follow-Up Date:

## Visit our Website

The Internet is increasingly becoming the outlet through which organizations can spread their message to the widest range of people for the lowest cost. And Audubon Chapters are no exception.

A website is an excellent way to publicize Chapter activities to your local community and beyond, reduce postage costs and save paper. Investing a smaller amount of time and effort can return great benefits. So what are you waiting for?

If you want to get started, here are some tips:

1. **Set your goals.** What are the most important things you want your website to do? Of you want to provide information about Chapter meetings, events and field trips; posting a bi-monthly event calendar would be a good solution. To encourage people to support particular environmental issues locally or regionally; create a “campaign” or “action update” page. To encourage membership; post a printable membership form.
2. **Look at other Chapter Web sites.** This is an easy way to get good ideas and see what will work best for your Chapter.
3. **Outline your goals on paper.** Your home page or welcome page (the first page visitors will see) should be a *LURE* for visitors – **L**ogical, **U**ser-friendly, **R**elevant, and **E**nvironmental. Visitors should be able to easily find and access the information you’re providing.
4. **Remember!** A website must be updated regularly. Notices for events that have already occurred will turn visitors off. So keep you site simple from the start. This will make it easier to update in the future. By sketching out the basic design of your website pages, you’ll get a better idea of how it will eventually look and work online.
5. **Find the most computer literate person in your Chapter to manage the site.** Give them the title of Webmaster – they’ll love it!
6. **Do some initial research to find a good Internet Access Company.** Ask friends or other local organizations with websites for suggestions on which company provides the best access and service for the lowest cost.
7. **Get good advice!** Visit the following websites for help:

You can promote Chapter activities elsewhere on the Internet by posting meeting and activity information on free online bulletin boards, mailing lists, chat rooms and social networking sites. Local community and nature-oriented online services are the best place to start.

You can also expand your Chapter’s reach on the web by developing website “links” with other local or like-minded organizations. A link on another website allows a web “surfer” to go from

one group's website to another's with a single click of a mouse. Some groups you could consider developing links with include:

- National Audubon Society, the state office, other Chapters in your state, any nearby Audubon Centers or Sanctuaries, Audubon campaigns or programs.
- Other conservation/environmental organizations.
- Other wildlife/birding organizations.
- Local civic groups.
- Local vendors/suppliers with whom your Chapter does business.

The more links you have with other organizations on the web, the more visitors you'll have to your website and the more reach you'll have in spreading the Audubon message.

**NOTE:** Before linking to another website, be sure to ask for permission from the organization; and request that it set up a reciprocal link to your homepage on its website.

**To set up a *FREE* Chapter email address** try the larger Internet providers and database services, such as [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com); [mail.google.com](mailto:mail.google.com), [www.aol.com](http://www.aol.com), etc. All these services offer free email service and provide step-by-step instructions for beginners. All your Chapter needs to get started is access to a computer with a modem and a telephone.

If you are inexperienced with the Internet, it is likely that there is someone in your Chapter who is computer savvy and can provide information and assistance. There are also numerous books and websites that can provide you with basic information and step-by-step instructions to get you up to speed on the "Information Superhighway". Your local bookstore or library (many provide computers and Internet access to patrons) are the best places to start.

### **Advertising:**

If your Chapter has some money to spend, you may be thinking about buying inexpensive ads in local weekly papers. But be wary of paid advertising!

It's tempting to think that spending a few advertising dollars will help spur a reciprocal "contribution" of free publicity later. More likely however, a commercial news medium will be *less* willing to give you free publicity once it knows that you are willing and able to pay for it.

<b>TIP:</b> Avoid paying for ads where you are able to get free publicity.
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## **Other Ideas for Making Contact**

*Opportunities for publicity are nearly endless.  
Here are some ideas gathered from Chapters around the country:*

1. Develop a 5 – 7 word phrase that sums up your Chapter’s mission and use it in every press release and public service announcement.
2. Get your Chapter an email address and print it in all your publications.
3. Reinforce your Chapter’s presence by scheduling public meetings for the same night and time every month (e.g. “Our Chapter meets the first Tuesday of the month at 8 PM”).
4. Ask for Chapter volunteers to identify 5 public places where they are willing to bring membership materials for display.
5. Create an attractive bookplate or bookmark with your logo, Chapter name and phone number that you can place inside covers of any books you sell or at the checkout desk of your local library. *See example template on the following pages.*
6. Create a Rolodex or business card with the Chapter address, phone number, website and email address and contact person. *See example template on the following pages.*
7. Create a small wallet-sized card with Chapter information and a calendar.
8. You can emblazon the name and phone number of your Chapter on any product you sell or give away.
9. List your Chapter in the Yellow Pages under “Organizations” and “Environmental”.
10. List your Chapter in the White Pages under the full Chapter name and under “Audubon”.
11. Make sure your town or city hall has information about your Chapter to distribute.
12. Make your Chapter an advisor to the community by issuing press releases or public service announcements that offer seasonal commentary or expert advice (e.g. “Keeping your Birdfeeders Stocked through the Winter”).
13. Create an informational booklet on a matter of local environmental interest and make it a free offer to the public (“For your **FREE** copy, write or call...”).
14. Provide public information on how to celebrate holidays in an environmentally friendly fashion.
15. Create a transparency or slide with your Chapter’s name, address, phone number and logo, against a colorful background or photograph, to be used as a visual background for a television announcement (PSA).
16. Organize a group of members to answer phones for a local PBS station during its fundraising drive to draw attention to the Chapter.
17. Put a weekly show – about birds, wildlife and habitat, with questions and answers – on your local public access cable station.
18. Issue press releases or write letters to the editor commenting on local environmental issues or news.
19. Donate copies of *AUDUBON* and Chapter newsletters to local doctor’s offices, libraries, senior or youth centers – any place with a waiting room or reading room.

BOOK MARK TEMPLATE

Front:

**CHAPTER  
NAME**

[BLACK &  
WHITE LOGO  
OR  
DRAWING]

Back:

**[NAME]  
AUDUBON  
SOCIETY**

A Chapter of  
National Audubon  
Society

*Our mission is....*

**MEMBERSHIP  
BENEFITS:**

- Membership in both [Chapter] & National Audubon Society.
- A year's subscription to [Chapter]'s newsletter [name] & *AUDUBON*.
- Invitations and discounts on field trips, lectures & programs.

**JOIN TODAY!**

For more  
information call:  
[Chapter name]  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx or see  
our website:  
[www.xxxxxxxxx.xxx](http://www.xxxxxxxxx.xxx)

**Front:**

**Back (optional – dependent on cost)**

**Name**  
Title or “MEMBER”

**CHAPTER NAME with Logo**

Chapter Address  
Tel: (xxx) xxx-xxxx Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
[Chapter] Website address: <http://xxx.xxx@xxx.org>

[Chapter Name] is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, whose mission is [Chapter mission].

The Chapter holds meetings [times/yr] at [location], offers [activities/programs] for all ages. Members of the public are welcome.

Call the Chapter or see our website for more information about [Chapter name] Audubon’s activities.

**Jane Doe**

**BROOKLYN  
AUDUBON SOCIETY**

PO Box 1111, Brooklyn, NY 12345  
Tel: (718)123-4567 Fax: (718) 123-6789  
Email: [bas@bas.org](mailto:bas@bas.org)  
Website address: <http://www.bas@bas.org>

Brooklyn Audubon Society is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, whose mission is to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat in the Brooklyn Community.

The Chapter holds meetings monthly at the Prospect Park Community Center, offers field trips and educational programs for all ages and sponsors environmental activities in the community. Members of the public are welcome.

Call the Chapter or see our website for more information about Brooklyn Audubon’s activities.

**SECTION III**

## *Drawing Them In -* **Making personal contact with potential members**

The previous section focused on building community awareness of your Chapter, getting your name out to the public and making yourself known. Once people in the community know who you are and what you do, the next step is to identify those individuals who share your interests and goals, and encourage them to learn more about the Chapter and become a member.

This is best achieved through more personalized contacts. In this section, we will offer a variety of ideas on how to make personal contact with people in the community and get them more involved with Chapter activities.

### **The Main Event**

One of the best ways to get the general public involved and interested in your work of your Chapter is to set up a booth or table at a local event. Perhaps, like many communities around the country, your town sponsors a local Earth Day celebration every April. You can probably find several fairs operating in your area during the summer and fall as well. From street fairs to nature festivals to local farmer's markets, you should be able to find ample opportunities to set up and run a simple display.

### **Come Prepared**

When setting up a booth, you don't need much in the way of equipment to have an effective display. Here are some suggestions:

- Folding table and chairs.
- Folding screen, poster board or large tarp to use as a backdrop.
- Chapter or Audubon banner, flag or poster.
- A bowl or box (to be used in drawing or raffles).
- Portable TV (color best) and VCR/DVD (if you want to show videos of Chapter events).
- Heavy-duty extension cord and power outlet strip.
- Informational materials and display items (brochures, Audubon, newsletters, premium items to raffle or give out for on-the-spot membership, etc.).

### **Event Activities**

1. Here are 10 ideas for activities or services that you can provide through your display at a local fair or other event:
2. Hand out Seasonal Wildlife Fact Sheets, and encourage people to sign up to receive updated information by mail.
3. Hand out literature – newsletter, Chapter fact sheet, guide to Chapter events, local bird guide, guide to backyard bird feeding, etc. and have a sign-up sheet to receive updates on upcoming events (include email address).
4. Show a video of a recent Chapter outing.
5. Ask people to sign a petition on a local conservation issue.
6. Organize a display of local wildlife and bring one or two live samples.
7. Sell birdseed, bird feeders, indigenous plants, etc. to draw people in and fundraise.
8. Offer a free drawing. Ask visitors to fill out raffle slips (Chapter created) with their names and addresses to be put into a box for a drawing of small prize items throughout the day (suncatchers, small books, posters, etc.). Add the names and addresses to your list of potential members.
9. Have a bake sale, sell a Chapter cookbook and/or have free candy – to attract families with children, and fundraise.
10. Offer a nice premium as a free gift for joining the Chapter on the spot.

### **Networking with Other Groups**

Many Chapters around the country have been invited to send a speaker to the events of other local organizations. This is a wonderful way to connect with other civic-minded individuals and offer this membership to various constituencies.

And you don't have to wait to be asked. If your Chapter has a talk or short program to offer, why not contact other local organizations and see if they'd be interested in having a Chapter representative speak to their members. Many organizations hold general meetings several times a year and just like your Chapter; they are always looking for individuals to speak to their members about new and interesting topics.

## **SECTION III**

## ***Making Personal Contact with Potential Members***

### **Some organizations to be considered:**

- Rotary Clubs
- Gardening Clubs
- Birdwatching Clubs
- Local Museum of Natural History
- Nature Stores (like Nature Company, Wild Bird Unlimited)
- Church Groups
- Local Bookstore (in conjunction with Audubon field guides, etc.)
- Nurseries/Gardening stores
- Senior Groups/Retirement homes or complexes
- College Classes and Clubs
- Boy/Girl Scout troops, 4-H
- High Schools
- Local PTAs (especially about children's programs)
- Professional organizations

### **Let's Work Together**

Your contract with other local organizations need not be solely in the form of speaking engagements. Very often Chapters are looking for ways to reach out to a variety of groups in the community while also looking for volunteers to assist with their projects. Why not try to accomplish both objectives by combining these activities?

Encourage other organizations/groups in the community to participate in Chapter activities. You could even consider developing particular activities to appeal to certain groups. Here are some ideas:

- Involve outside groups with your ongoing programs: Scouts, high schools and college environmental clubs in Birdathon, Christmas Bird Count; Earth Day or conservation projects. Senior and civic groups or retirement home residents in conservation campaigns, Project Feederwatch, Christmas Bird Count, etc.
- Organize daytime birding field trips or bird identification workshops for retirees.
- Develop a youth program in high schools to make kids aware and involved with nature.
- Offer Chapter volunteering and internship opportunities.
- Sponsor a wildlife or birding course at a community college or adult education center.
- Develop children's activities, workshops or summer programs to attract families.

## **Calls and Requests**

Don't forget – people who contact your Chapter – to ask questions, offer an opinion, request information or register a complaint – are also potential members. These individuals have, in effect, identified themselves as people interested in your cause and motivated to take action – meaning they are among your most likely member prospects.

Whoever answers your Chapter phone can immediately seek the caller's name and phone number and then ask "Are you currently an Audubon member?". If not, you'll have at least a name and phone number to follow up with in the future, and you can also try to get an address. Of course, any printed material mailed out in response to a call or letter can be accompanied by a membership application.

See Appendix D for a Template of a Chapter telephone log.

## **Your Members**

Your membership is an excellent source for identifying and drawing in potential members. Here are some ways to tap into your membership. Ask your members to recommend family members, friends or acquaintances who may be interested in joining the Chapter. As the old saying goes "Birds of a feather, flock together". Your members are individuals interested and involved in your mission and activities. It stands to reason that many of their family and friends have similar interests.

Start building a list of potential members with member assistance. At each general meeting, ask members to write down the name and address of one person they know that may be interested in joining Audubon. You could also include a form in your newsletter for members to write down and mail in the names and addresses of individuals, whom they would like to offer to the Chapter as potential members.

Your members can also be very helpful in recommending other community organizations or groups to whom the Chapter could network with or involve in its activities. One way to determine these connections is to survey all new members when they first join and your current members periodically, asking them to what other organizations they belong.

Again, you can use your newsletter to do the work by including a questionnaire sheet within the newsletter. Respondents can then be contacted and asked to help the Chapter schedule a talk or program with the organization or group they recommended.

Your members may have valuable membership development ideas that your membership committee or Chapter leadership has not thought of. Ask members to participate in a 10 – 15 minute "brainstorming" session about membership at a Chapter meeting to collect their thoughts.

## **Brainstorming**

Some of the best creative ideas emerge from idea-generating meetings known as “brainstorming sessions”. Here are some tips on how to have the most productive brainstorming exercise:

1. Seat everyone in a circle or around a table and appoint one or two persons as “scribes” who will write down all the ideas mentioned on a large sheet of paper, easel pad or flip chart.
2. Pick one topic for ideas at a time (for example: “Ways to Involve Families in the Chapter”).
3. Set aside a limited time (5 – 7 minutes) for everyone to call out ideas – one at a time, please – to be written down for all to see.
4. Let every idea get posted without any discussion as to its merits. (Allowing discussion to judge ideas at this point will slow down the “idea train” and may inhibit people from participating further.
5. Once the time for generating ideas is up, ask everyone to “vote” for the 10 best ideas they see on the chart.
6. Mark the number of votes each idea receives next to the idea on the chart.
7. Open up a free discussion to expand upon and refine the handful of ideas with the most “votes” and save all the ideas generated for future reference.