

Audubon's Framework for Mission Success

-Executive Summary-

The mission of Audubon is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats, for the sake of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity.

Audubon is a conservation organization whose primary strategy is engaging people to take action to achieve conservation outcomes. Audubon focuses on birds as indicators of our success in conserving wildlife and their habitats and in providing a healthy environment for humans. We choose birds because they are excellent indicators of other biodiversity; they signal potential danger to people, like a canary in a coalmine. Birds needs are well understood and they are easy to study using volunteers and scientists as a team; and they have an amazing ability to inspire people and motivate action as they have done since Audubon was founded over 100 years ago.

Audubon's Strategic Plan, adopted by the Board in 2001 and as it incorporates our 20/20 vision, includes 10 strategic recommendations that focus on several overarching themes: setting priorities for bird conservation around key habitats and focused issues; engage increasing numbers of people through education programs and a network of community based centers and chapters; establish state offices as the primary implementation structure; and align all of our efforts including science, policy and communications around the priorities.

Audubon has, over the last several years, developed several frameworks and targets that when taken together form a larger structure for setting priorities, aligning our programs and measuring our performance implementing that strategic plan. This summary defines that structure.

Audubon's Conservation Outcomes

Audubon has established **four bird and habitat conservation outcomes** that reflect our mission and provide a compass bearing for our organization to follow as we prioritize our work and allocate resources. For each outcome, we have target sets of species, habitats, and landscapes upon which we focus our conservation work. The Conservation Committee of the National Board of Directors has approved the following statements of our conservation outcomes and targets.

OUTCOME 1: STABILIZE AND INCREASE POPULATIONS OF AT-RISK SPECIES OF BIRDS

TARGET: WatchList species are Audubon's targeted "at-risk" species in North America.

OUTCOME 2: PREVENT PERSISTENT DECLINES OR RANGE CONTRACTIONS IN POPULATIONS OF COMMON NATIVE BIRDS

TARGET: "Vulnerable Common Birds," defined as those common species that may be declining in population or range, face known or presumed threats (e.g., habitat loss, increased collision hazards, etc.), have a high percentage of their population concentrated in a given biome or Bird Conservation Region, or are congregatory, are Audubon's targets for conservation action.

OUTCOME 3: PROTECT AND RESTORE SITES ESSENTIAL FOR VULNERABLE SPECIES

TARGET: Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are Audubon's top priority sites for conservation action.

OUTCOME 4: IMPROVE AND PROTECT THE HEALTH OF LANDSCAPES THAT SUPPORT OR COULD SUPPORT BIRDS OF THE AMERICAS

TARGET: Audubon's "priority landscapes" for conservation action are:

- a) Broad geographic or ecological entities - such as the Mississippi or Everglades ecosystems, or defined watersheds or riparian areas
- b) Networks of IBAs and adjacent lands critical to particular species - such as waterbirds
- c) Urban, suburban and agricultural areas where Audubon can reach and educate key audiences

Audubon's Strategies

Audubon applies a number of integrated programs to effectively engage people as our primary strategy to achieve the conservation outcomes:

- Science
- Education and outreach
- Policy
- Direct on-the-ground habitat protection and restoration

We always start with sound science - applying it through a variety of programs and services to inspire and inform people about the environment and what they can do to make a difference. We strive to build a constituency of people that cares about protecting birds, wildlife and habitat for future generations as outlined in our 20/20 Vision.

Ultimately, we mobilize this constituency to take conservation action whether it be advocating effective public policies that protect our environment; applying the principles of Audubon at Home to one's daily life; participating in Citizen Science monitoring projects; volunteering in restoration programs; or contributing their volunteer time and resources to Audubon. Engaging people as a primary conservation strategy is unique to Audubon and differentiates us in the world of conservation.

Measures of Success

Audubon has agreed upon a general framework for "Measures of Success" that serve as a tool for aligning Audubon's programs and for evaluating if our "people" strategies are effective in reaching our stated conservation outcomes. The Measures of Success are divided into three categories:

- Protecting Birds and Habitat
- Engaging People
- Building Capacity/Organizational Readiness

The first two measures, protecting birds by engaging people, are what we talk about as our conservation programs. The third Measure of building capacity relates to our internal goals of building a strong and sustainable organization capable of doing effective conservation work. This includes things like establishing and strengthening our community based programs (Chapters and Centers), raising money, and attracting and retaining good volunteers and staff.

Conservation Planning Framework

Audubon has also adopted a simple framework for conservation planning that is tied to the organization's conservation outcomes and that will guide us in developing and implementing the most effective strategies to reach these goals.

The four components of the Conservation Planning Framework include:

1. Setting conservation outcomes and priorities
2. Developing strategies based upon threats to the conservation targets
3. Taking action based upon Audubon's unique niche and capacity

4. Measuring Success based on the metrics for “birds”, “people” and “capacity”.

The framework is designed to: focus on conservation outcomes; provide a framework for developing and implementing conservation strategies that will most effectively leverage Audubon’s unique strengths, resources and organizational capacity; align and integrate policy, education and outreach, and science activities across local, state, national and hemispheric levels as strategic actions to achieve conservation outcomes; and be responsive to changing circumstances and opportunities.

Bringing Audubon’s Conservation Planning Framework and Measures of Success Together

The Planning Framework is a tool that can be used at different scales whether it be at a site, state, landscape, ecosystem or migratory flyway level. The framework helps us evaluate all aspects of Audubon’s work and ensures that our activities are focused on achieving our stated conservation outcomes.

Audubon’s Measures of Success for “bird”, “people” and “capacity” are integral to the four basic components of this planning framework, “setting goals and priorities”, “developing strategies”, “taking action”, and “measuring success”.

The first component of the conservation planning framework is to identify and prioritize the conservation goals and targets. The “bird” component of the Measures of Success adopts four overarching bird and habitat conservation outcomes for the organization as a whole with corresponding species, habitat, and landscapes targets for each outcome. These can then help guide us in setting specific targets for the scale at which we are planning, the first step in the planning framework.

The second component of the planning framework is to identify the threats and sources of threats to our conservation targets. Identifying the appropriate strategy that integrates on-the-ground conservation, policy and education/outreach initiatives and that will focus specific actions to reduce the threats and/or restore habitat is a critical part of that component. Audubon’s strategies are focused on engaging people in the solution. The “people” Measures of Success correlate directly to how successfully our activities are engaging people to take conservation action (with an emphasis on actions that will ultimately lead to our conservation goals). These measures also track how well we are building diversity.

The third component of the framework is determining which of the strategies or actions that are needed should and can Audubon do best, where we should strengthen our capacity, and where we should look to partners for help. This involves a critical assessment of our own organizational capacity or readiness. The final “capacity” piece of our Measures of Success provides a self-assessment tool for evaluating the capacity and alignment of your program against where you need to go (your goals).

The fourth component of the framework is actually monitoring and measuring success against the metrics that have been developed for “birds”, “people”, and “capacity”. Data collection and monitoring should be related directly to these measures and allow us to assess whether if at the end of the day all our activities are really getting us somewhere in terms of the conservation goals.

Audubon's Conservation Planning Framework And Measures of Success

