



**NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
STRATEGIC PLAN**

RECOMMENDATIONS

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

June 18, 1995

UPDATED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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and

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— Preamble —

The mission of the National Audubon Society is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity. Yet transcending this mission is an ideal: a world where the conservation ethic is automatic, not coerced. Conservation cannot be limited to a few individuals or organizations. To preserve the biological diversity of this planet—humanity's ecological inheritance, which is being so rapidly dissipated—conservation must be an attribute common to all people. We envision a world where humankind accepts the obligations of being part of nature, especially the obligation of stewardship. We seek to shape a culture in which the violation of nature is socially, politically, and morally unacceptable. In short, we seek a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic.

Audubon works toward a future in which public policy and individual choice are framed by environmental consciousness and sensitivity. We work toward a future where environmental conflict and divisiveness are supplanted by cooperation and respect; a future where debate and dialogue are shaped by environmental literacy, not by political rhetoric and dogma; a future where economic strategies are not simply sustainable but environmentally restorative as well; a future where nature is a common, not a special, interest; a future distinguished by the harmony of environmental, social, and economic concerns.

We recognize that this culture of conservation is only a concept, a vision. A true cultural transformation may be decades in the evolution, but we are not afraid to begin. We aspire, therefore, to germinate and nurture a global society bound together by a commitment to resource conservation and a passionate respect for nature. Toward this end—toward speeding the birth of a culture of conservation—we invest our hopes, our labors, and our dreams.

June 1995

INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan serves two ends. First, it is a blueprint for achievement of the National Audubon Society's mission: to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity. The Plan seeks to integrate Audubon's unique and unmatched strengths – its network of volunteers and activists, its dedicated staff, its national reach and community presence, its respected name – to accomplish this essential purpose. But the Plan also follows a higher calling: to create a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic. By inspiring individual and collective action, Audubon strives to make unsustainable exploitation of the natural world socially, politically, and morally unacceptable. Engaging people in protecting birds and other wildlife is therefore the essential corollary of Audubon's mission.

Audubon's Strategic Plan was first approved in 1995, following a multi-year collaboration involving all of Audubon's constituents: members, chapters, directors, staff, and outside consultants. The fundamental conclusions reached were that Audubon should sharpen its focus on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats; that it should invest in its distinctive grassroots structure; and that it should use as primary tools education and advocacy, supported by sanctuaries, science, and communications. Audubon's Board reviewed and reaffirmed this core strategy in 2001.

The Strategic Plan remains valid and vital in 2007. The natural world still faces threats that menaced it in 1995, and global climate change has emerged as an overriding peril. If any time called for a culture of conservation, that time is now.

Audubon retains the strengths it marshaled then, but tempered by 12 years of experience gained and challenges overcome. Since 1995, Audubon has identified more than 2,100 Important Bird Areas across the United States and is spearheading their protection. With 24 state offices and 490 chapters throughout the country, Audubon's presence in communities is unique and growing. Our network of educators and centers connects people with nature – physically, intellectually, emotionally, and morally – and provides a force for building a conservation constituency. Our policy advocates in Washington and in key states play a pivotal role in advancing environmental protection – and in defeating short-sighted attempts at resource exploitation. Our dedicated staff of 700 and active volunteers numbering thousands give Audubon energy and life. The parts are in place: no organization has greater potential to protect the natural world and to create a culture of conservation. This Strategic Plan charts a course to unify the parts and attain Audubon's potential.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Audubon should focus its efforts and resources on a limited set of priorities directly relating to birds, other wildlife, and their habitats to the continuance and prosperity of humankind. These priorities should be the platform from which to promote the culture of conservation and an environmental ethic.**
- 2. Audubon should use ongoing programs and coordinated, targeted conservation initiatives as the vehicles for focusing resources on Audubon Habitats and Audubon Issues that directly affect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats.**
- 3. Audubon should strengthen its distinctive grassroots network and enhance the partnership among members, Chapters, State Offices, Centers, staff, and the Board to promote effective conservation. This partnership should function as a dynamic team capable of finding solutions, attracting new and broad constituencies, and fostering a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic in its communities and beyond.**
- 4. Audubon should use education as a primary tool to develop an appreciation, awareness, and understanding of birds, wildlife, and their habitats and their essential connection to people and to move people to take conservation action.**
- 5. Audubon has historically developed and maintained successful local education and nature centers. Audubon should expand upon this tradition by creating a network of Audubon Centers that are community focal points for fostering a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic, focused on birds, other wildlife and their habitats.**
- 6. Audubon should influence public and private policies and practices as a primary tool to conserve birds, wildlife, and their habitats. Audubon should work at all levels, propelling action from the local through the national and international levels.**
- 7. Audubon should develop a human resources strategy that encourages teamwork and collaboration, emphasizes Audubon values, and makes Audubon an even more rewarding and inspiring place to work and volunteer.**
- 8. Audubon should integrate all major activities and competencies (sanctuaries, science, communications, and membership) to support these recommendations and to help develop a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic.**
- 9. Audubon must improve its financial strength and practices by increasing income, investing only in strategically important activities, and appropriately leveraging the Audubon name.**
- 10. Audubon will conduct a five-year and annual planning process that sets priorities among elements of this Strategic Plan and will measure progress in meeting them.**
- 11. Audubon's Board of Directors is ultimately accountable for keeping Audubon focused on its strategy. Board members must be committed to and have a passion for Audubon's vision and values.**

Recommendation 1:

Audubon should focus its efforts and resources on a limited set of priorities directly relating to birds, other wildlife, and their habitats to the continuance and prosperity of humankind. These priorities should be the platform from which to promote a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic.

1.1 Audubon should focus on these priorities:

- Audubon should strive to conserve birds, wildlife, and their habitats by protecting and restoring particular habitats and ecosystems for the continuance of biological diversity ("Audubon Habitats").
- Audubon should address fundamental issues that impact habitats and ecosystems important for birds and other wildlife ("Audubon Issues").
- To meet the complex requirements of protecting entire ecosystems, Audubon should fully utilize its diversity of skills and tools, grassroots network, education and policy skills, as well as form alliances with other organizations and interest groups.
- Audubon should stress that the conservation of habitat is essential to the continuance and prosperity of humankind.

1.2 To realize these priorities, Audubon has adopted four conservation goals:

- Stabilize and increase populations of at-risk species of birds.
- Prevent persistent declines or range contractions in populations of common native birds.
- Protect and restore sites essential for vulnerable species.
- Improve and protect the health of landscapes that support or could support birds of the Americas.

Recommendation 2:

Audubon should use ongoing programs and coordinated, targeted conservation initiatives as the vehicles for focusing resources on Audubon Habitats and Audubon Issues that directly affect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats.

2.1 Audubon must maintain a set of "core competencies," directly related to ongoing programs, that are supportive of its long-term environmental and conservation goals.

- Core competencies are areas of institutional expertise and skill, resident among staff and members, that are essential to protecting habitats and addressing fundamental issues (for example, conservation science).
- Ongoing programs are high priority, enduring Audubon initiatives that reflect and support the organization's environmental and conservation goals (e.g., migratory birds). Programmatic themes should be clearly defined, have long-term goals, be aligned with education and policy objectives, and reflect member, chapter, and staff priorities.
- The President and Board will regularly review the core competencies and programs to ensure that they reflect Audubon priorities.

2.2 Conservation initiatives should be coordinated, targeted, long- or short-term efforts to achieve specific conservation objectives.

- They should be a driving force of the organization with well-defined goals, including key milestones and deadlines. Audubon should carefully determine and meet the resource needs of each initiative, and should communicate and celebrate successes.
- They should have comprehensive internal and external communications plans to reach the desired audiences with the important messages.
- They should be led by teams that include staff, Board members, chapter leaders, and members. When appropriate, outside experts should be hired to support these initiatives.
- Education and policy should be the primary tools for Audubon initiatives, but they should use whatever resources are required (including science, land purchase and/or management, public relations, etc.) to achieve the desired goals.

2.3 To successfully achieve conservation outcomes, Audubon should work, when appropriate, with other organizations and interest groups. Alliances should be developed at all levels: local, state, regional, national, and international.

2.4 Audubon will organize two types of conservation initiatives—those related to issues and those related to habitats.

- **Audubon Issues** pertain to the fundamental factors affecting birds, wildlife, and their habitats. Examples include Global Warming, the Endangered Species Act, and the Clean Water Act. Audubon Issues may require investment in multiple locations within and outside of the U.S.

- **Audubon Habitats** are critical sites that Audubon believes in preserving or restoring through a commitment of resources and the development of alliances. Audubon Habitats may vary in size and type and should be part of an overall effort to protect part or all of an entire ecosystem. Examples of Audubon Habitats include Important Bird Areas (IBAs), landscapes that support or could support common birds, and significant regional ecosystems, such as the Everglades, the Mississippi River, the Gulf Coast, and the Salton Sea in California. Audubon should seek to anticipate the impact of Global Warming on Audubon and other habitats and develop a strategy to respond to it.

2.5 Audubon should establish a manageable number of conservation initiatives at all levels and interconnect them to maximize Audubon's impact on environmental issues and conservation, and enhance its image as a unified, coordinated organization.

- **Local initiatives** should involve members, Centers and one or more Chapters, when appropriate. Members and Chapters should be involved in as many initiatives as their skills and resources enable them to pursue effectively.
- **State initiatives** should involve members, Centers and Chapters of a particular state with support from Audubon staff. Each state should be able to conduct two to three initiatives simultaneously.
- **Regional initiatives** should involve several states that share common environmental issues or critical habitats.
- **National initiatives** should involve as many members, State Offices, Chapters, Centers and staff as possible and practical.

2.6 Audubon will focus its activities in the United States and the balance of the Western Hemisphere, recognizing the critical importance of these areas outside of the United States to both migratory and endemic birds and to other wildlife. Audubon will continue to serve as the United States partner of BirdLife International and will seek to increase its budget for work outside the United States, including work with other organizations, so that international bird conservation ultimately represents 10% of the operating budget.

Audubon's approach in areas outside of the United States will be to:

- Work with Audubon Chapters, BirdLife partners, and other organizations on a partnership basis to support their activities related to migratory and endemic birds, other wildlife and their habitats.
- Maintain flexibility in its relationship with these Chapters and organizations to accommodate a variety of needs.
- Place first priority on areas where Audubon is currently active or has good contacts, and then test and expand from there.
- Increase awareness throughout the Audubon network and constituencies in the United States about the importance of international efforts to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats.

2.7 Audubon should develop a grassroots-driven and scientifically-based process to identify state, regional, and national conservation initiatives.

- Members, Chapters, state boards and councils, and staff in each state should work together to compile a list of state priorities. Regional initiatives can emerge from this process as multi-state issues are identified and prioritized by members, Chapters, and staff.
- Members, Chapters, and staff should develop a list of potential national initiatives. This list will likely begin with the state and regional priorities.
- Several criteria should be used to identify initiatives where Audubon's efforts can have an impact. The criteria should include threats to birds, scientific validity, funding potential, Audubon's unique strengths (i.e., is Audubon best suited to address the issue?), relationships to programmatic themes, potential effectiveness, and member and Chapter interest and support.
- Staff should develop initiative plans with clear goals, and then members and Chapters should help to prioritize these initiatives.
- The prioritization by Chapters, members, and staff should be the basis for advising the Board on the selection of national initiatives.

2.8 Although the programmatic themes and prioritization process will help Audubon decide on its priorities and focus its resources, the President, in consultation with the Board, must maintain the flexibility to respond to unexpected, shorter-term opportunities and critical situations.

Recommendation 3:

Audubon should strengthen its distinctive grassroots network and enhance the partnership among members, Chapters, State and Center Boards, staff, and the National Board to promote effective conservation. This partnership should function as a dynamic team capable of finding solutions, attracting new and broad constituencies, and fostering a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic in its communities and beyond.

3.1 Audubon has strengthened its field structure by opening State Offices and has adopted the goal of having a sustainable Audubon presence in every state. State Offices represent a primary vehicle for program delivery, membership recruitment and retention, and donor cultivation. Each State Office should achieve the Essential Elements of a State Office policy adopted by the Board, attached to this Plan as Appendix A.

3.2 Each State Office will be charged with the task of developing its own strategic plan within the context of this Plan to guide the State Office in implementing its programs and priorities. Each State Office will also establish a State Board to which the National Board has delegated specific functions to be performed. The National Board has adopted Governance Guidelines for State Programs, attached to this Plan as Appendix B.

3.3 Audubon should expand its system of State Offices.

- The State Director is one of the most important positions within Audubon.
- All National Audubon Society activities within the respective state should report to State Directors who are accountable for the implementation of the strategic plan and the larger Audubon mission.
- Audubon should expand its network of State Offices until there is a sustainable Audubon presence in all 50 states. When appropriate, certain Offices may serve more than a single state.
- The capacity of State Offices will vary based on maturity and available resources, but ideally, State Offices will have people dedicated to each of the following:
 - Developing member and Chapter skills such as Chapter leadership, fundraising, membership retention and growth, and campaign management.
 - Supporting a state IBA program.
 - Implementing state, regional, and national conservation initiatives and policy advocacy.
 - Promoting and facilitating the development of Audubon Centers.
 - Supporting Audubon education, communication, and policy activities and assisting with the implementation and evaluation of chapter and member programs.
 - Leading fundraising efforts.
 - Developing and maintaining business systems, including managing the state program's finances, and ensuring compliance with Audubon's policies and procedures.

- Overseeing Audubon sanctuaries and education Centers in the territory.
- New State Offices should be established gradually based on specific criteria, including member support, funding, important conservation needs, number of members and Chapters in the area, the size of the geographic area, and political dynamics.
- Funding State Offices is one of the highest priorities for Audubon. Members and Chapters should also commit to funding the State Offices, as staff will spend a substantial amount of their time supporting members and Chapters. State Offices should be self-supporting.

3.4 The agreement between Chapters and the national organization was redefined by the National Board in adopting the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Chapter Committee in January 2005. This followed a two-year effort by the Ad Hoc Committee to engage chapter leaders and members in a discussion of the National/Chapter partnership. As a result, the Board approved an amended Audubon Chapter Policy at the same time, attached to this Plan as Appendix C. The Board has also adopted Essential Elements of a Chapter, attached to this Plan as Appendix D.

All parts of Audubon are unified by a common philosophy, a commitment to a shared mission, shared membership, two-way financial and programmatic support, the cooperation of staff and volunteers, and mutual trust and respect. The effectiveness of the National/Chapter partnership depends on each of these elements and an acknowledgement of the extent to which National and Chapters depend upon each other.

3.5 By developing a stronger partnership among members, Chapters, councils, staff, State and Center Boards and the National Board, Audubon can expand its national network of local environmental groups and individuals to work, independently or together, to support Audubon's goals.

Examples of important roles that can be played by members, Chapters, State and Center Boards, and councils include:

- Developing and supporting initiatives involving local issues and habitats.
- Developing and distributing educational materials that contribute to building a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic.
- Working with Audubon staff to establish and support an Audubon Center, where appropriate.
- Identifying and supporting state, regional, and national initiatives in partnership with Audubon staff.
- Organizing a member and Chapter mentoring network that enables all parts of Audubon to work together and learn from one another.
- Helping to support State Offices and Centers.

3.6 All parts of Audubon should provide ongoing opportunities to engage individual members in local, state, regional, and national initiatives and enable active members to train other members.

3.7 National Audubon will work cooperatively with independent state Audubon societies to advance common interests and objectives.

3.8 Audubon should actively collaborate with a wide variety of other organizations and interests to achieve its goals. Alliances can bring complementary skills, broaden the diversity of conservation activities, and extend the culture of conservation and an environmental ethic throughout the community.

3.9 Audubon should establish new Chapters, programs and Centers in areas where coverage is low or where local population growth has been rapid and opportunities exist for a recognized presence in the community.

3.10 Audubon should continue to maintain its regional focus through a variety of mechanisms.

- State Offices should work in collaboration to address bio-regional issues.
- Members and chapter leaders should continue to have the opportunity to meet in regional and topical conferences.
- A regionally-nominated board member structure will continue.

Recommendation 4:

Audubon should use education as a primary tool to develop an appreciation, awareness, and understanding of birds, wildlife, and their habitats and their essential connection to people. Education has the power to transform lives and society by informing, inspiring, changing attitudes, and motivating action. It therefore is an essential tool for expanding the constituency for conservation, fostering an environmental ethic and, ultimately, protecting the Earth's biodiversity. Education has been a critical part of Audubon's conservation strategy for more than a century; in 2006, Audubon developed a Strategic Plan for Education and Centers. Audubon Centers will be a major, but not the only, vehicle for achieving our Education goals.

4.1 Audubon's education programs should embody a number of important goals and qualities.

Programs should:

- Connect more people with nature – physically, intellectually, morally, and emotionally.
- Grow and strengthen Audubon's national conservation constituency by active and purposeful outreach to influential, under-represented, and core constituents.
- Unleash the power of individuals and communities to create a healthier and more sustainable future for people, birds, and other wildlife by providing members, supporters, and partners with strategies, tools, motivation, and skills to take conservation action at all scales.
- Establish education as a core element in achieving and sustaining conservation goals by bringing current knowledge about engaging stakeholders to conservation professionals working in science, policy, communication, and education.
- Promote a new era of collaboration to expand the reach and impact of all Audubon programming through strategic international, national, regional, and local alliances.

4.2 Educational activities should be closely affiliated with Audubon's conservation and policy priorities and its grassroots structure.

- All Audubon conservation initiatives should include appropriate education components with programs, publications, and media strategies reflecting validated educational methodologies.
- The grassroots network is an effective means to design, distribute, and monitor Audubon education programs, thereby reaching hundreds of communities. Audubon should develop and share "best practices" among members, Centers, and Chapters.
- Audubon should continue to strengthen and enhance Audubon Adventures and promote it more widely to schools and education programs across the country. Audubon should also develop ways to measure the impact of the program with target audiences and as a promotional tool for Audubon, in addition to looking at the number of people reached.
- Audubon magazine should continue to be a major vehicle for educating our members and additional readers about birds, wildlife, and their habitats, and for promoting the culture of conservation and the environmental ethic represented by Audubon.

4.3 A critical part of the education strategy is the design of a process to track and evaluate the impact of Audubon's education efforts, as well as devising a process for sharing learning and disseminating

information about "best practices" through the Audubon family. Audubon will measure the success of its educational programs not only by the number of Centers or how many people we reach, but by metrics linked to achievement of our conservation goals and how successfully we engage people in our mission.

- 4.4 Audubon should take a leadership role in supporting legislation to promote site-based environmental education policy and funding at the local, state and national levels.**
- 4.5 Audubon should build the capacity of its education network to deliver high-quality educational programming linked to its conservation goals, through ongoing training, partnerships and evaluation.**

Recommendation 5:

Audubon has historically developed and maintained successful local education and nature centers. Audubon should expand upon this tradition by creating a network of Audubon Centers that are community focal points for fostering a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic. Audubon should promote conservation action through the appreciation, awareness, and understanding of birds, wildlife, and their habitats, and their importance to the continuance and prosperity of humankind.

5.1 Audubon will work to establish a network of Centers to carry out the Audubon mission and goals. Audubon Centers will vary widely in type and scale, from large, fully staffed nature Centers to “storefront” offices providing high-quality educational programs and outreach. The core value of Centers lies in their capacity to engage people with nature and provide experiential learning in the places where people live.

5.2 Audubon Centers should be dynamic, multi-faceted hubs for conservation work and nurturing a culture of conservation and environmental ethic in a community. The goal of Centers should be to affect people through their involvement in Audubon conservation activities and programs focused on birds, other wildlife and their habitats.

- The roles and activities of Centers should be determined by local needs, interests, and environmental issues, as well as reflect the priorities of Audubon: to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats.
- Depending on its size, each Audubon Center should establish a Center Stewardship Board to oversee and assist the Center Director in the implementation of programming, fundraising, and financial management. The National Board has adopted Governance Guidelines for Audubon Centers, attached to this Plan as Appendix E.

Recommendation 6:

Audubon should influence public and private policies and practices as a primary tool to conserve birds, wildlife, and their habitats. Audubon should work at all levels, propelling action from the local through the national and international levels.

6.1 Audubon must continue to have a credible, science-based presence to have an impact on issues affecting birds, wildlife, and their habitats at the national level. By uniting our enhanced grassroots network with policy work and staff at the state, regional, national and international levels, Audubon can increase its influence on key environmental policies.

6.2 Audubon should encourage collaboration between its grassroots network and national and field-based staff to influence public, corporate, and private landowners' policies and practices that conserve birds, wildlife, and their habitats.

- Audubon policy staff working at the national, regional, and state levels should join with the grassroots network to implement conservation initiatives.
- Policy work should be supported by other parts of the organization including education, science, sanctuaries and communications.
- Members and Chapters should be encouraged to support a mentoring system that provides regular communications (and visits, where possible) and assistance on issues.
- Audubon should use the member database, training, direct mail, and electronic media to increase coordination and contact between members and the organization.
- When necessary, Audubon should bring litigation or appear in defense to protect the environment.

6.3 National policy staff and state-based staff should lead and support Audubon's policy work in several important ways. Policy staff should:

- Work with Audubon's science staff to engage the scientific community to identify, evaluate, and develop plans for addressing issues that are emerging either in a large number of local areas or in the regional or national arenas to ensure they are included in the program and policy prioritization process.
- Spearhead or be directly involved in national conservation initiatives. Each national initiative or policy priority should be supported with a policy expert who can play a wide variety of roles (e.g., research the relevant policies and legislation, communicate emerging issues to the grassroots and other staff, coordinate grassroots and staff involvement).
- Monitor national legislation related to policy priorities and facilitate the participation of volunteers and field staff in influencing the issues designated as state, regional, or national priorities.
- Support state and regional initiatives with information and expertise. Staff should be available on a short-term basis to support state and regional initiatives, and provide expertise in managing grassroots initiatives.

- Develop the skills of Chapters, State and Center Boards, and members and coordinate their involvement in policy work at all levels. Opportunities for policy training should be significantly expanded and broadly communicated to Chapters and the entire membership (e.g., Audubon members who are currently active in influencing policy outside of the Chapter system). Opportunities to gain experience through direct involvement should be created.

Recommendation 7:

Audubon should develop a human resources strategy that encourages teamwork and collaboration, emphasizes Audubon values, and makes Audubon an even more rewarding and inspiring place to work and volunteer.

7.1 Audubon values and conservation ethic should be communicated and emphasized by:

- Working with members and staff to articulate a set of Audubon values and ethics to be disseminated throughout the organization.
- Developing a thorough orientation for new staff and Board members that not only informs them of Audubon's history and current strategy, but reinforces the Audubon core values.

7.2 Audubon should be made the most rewarding and inspiring place to work and volunteer by developing a human resource strategy that includes:

- Maintaining an atmosphere of openness, sharing of information, and participation in planning and decision-making.
- Improving career planning and developing career paths to prepare future managers and leaders.
- Creating clear organizational and individual goals and establishing systems of accountability for achieving those goals, including performance reviews of real value for professional development.
- Attracting and retaining leading professionals with birds, wildlife, and habitat expertise whose presence will be stimulating.
- Providing opportunities for professional training and development, including moving staff members around the organization to broaden skills and increase exposure to different issues and habitats.
- Strongly encouraging the involvement of staff and Board members in some local chapter or state office activity (e.g., local initiatives) to improve their understanding of volunteerism, to enhance relationships among staff, chapter and state leaders, and members, and to reinforce the spirit of partnership among national, state offices, Centers and Chapters.

Recommendation 8:

Audubon should integrate all major activities and competencies (sanctuaries, science, communications, and membership) to support these recommendations and to help develop a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic. Sanctuaries, science, communications, and membership should each play an important and integrated role in supporting education and policy efforts, and in expanding the grassroots network required for Audubon to achieve its goals.

8.1 Sanctuaries. Audubon should manage land as refuges for birds and other wildlife. Audubon should also provide expertise in resource management that will support its grassroots, contribute toward achieving its policy and education goals, and foster a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic.

Sanctuary management plans and practices should continue to be periodically reviewed to ensure that they embody conservation values consistent with Audubon's mission and the respective donor's intent.

Sanctuaries are a long established strength of Audubon. Sanctuaries are the "living, breathing habitats" where people can experience the natural world and acquire an awareness and passion for nature that leads to social and political action, and they provide leverage for protection of larger ecosystems.

Sanctuaries should support Audubon by:

- Maintaining and managing habitat.
- Providing expertise through core competencies to ensure that Audubon conservation initiatives have appropriate resource management goals.
- Using sanctuaries for Audubon Centers where possible.
- Providing technical advice and training to Audubon Center staff, Chapters, members, public agencies, and private landowners for appropriate habitat management projects.
- Acquiring land to support Audubon priorities.

8.2 Science. Audubon has always been and must continue to be a science-based organization. Science should be one of Audubon's core competencies, with recognized researchers on staff. Within science, it is imperative that Audubon have expertise on the science of birds and their habitats.

To most efficiently ensure a strong scientific foundation, Audubon should:

- Assure that science plays a critical role in identifying and supporting Audubon policy priorities, initiatives, and programs.
- Encourage and nurture the utilization of Audubon facilities and sanctuaries for scientific research by scientists, volunteers, and students.
- Routinely analyze and report on the health of American birds – the State of the Birds Report.

- Support and expand citizen science efforts by creating and guiding volunteer opportunities through its network of State Offices, Chapters, Centers, and cooperating organizations.
- Marshall scientific, policy, and analytical expertise beyond Audubon to support its initiatives and programs, as needed.
- Integrate Audubon scientists into the design of all programs and materials to ensure scientific accuracy.

8.3 Communications. It is critical to Audubon’s mission that the organization substantially increase its visibility among the public, donors, and decision makers. Audubon should apply its great communications strength by using its variety of communication vehicles to reach a diverse audience in support of its mission, vision, and major priorities.

Audubon should develop an integrated communication strategy and review options to increase the effectiveness of each of its communication media and approaches in supporting the activities of the organization. This plan should review:

- Target audiences, both external and internal.
- Goals and content of messages to target audiences.
- The most effective and efficient communication media and approaches, including new and emerging communications technologies.
- How these media and approaches will advance Audubon's mission, vision, and policy priorities; strengthen its grassroots network; support its advocacy and educational initiatives; and increase revenue.
- How better to integrate communications with membership, fundraising, and marketing.

8.3 (a) Audubon magazine currently plays an important strategic role in advancing Audubon's mission, vision, and priorities, yet its effectiveness can and should be increased. The Board has adopted the following policy for the operation of the magazine: (1) the primary audience for the magazine is Audubon members; and (2) the primary function of the magazine is to enhance the relationship between Audubon members and the organization.

8.3 (b) Audubon's electronic network has the potential to support all the major programs: grassroots, policy and education. This network should be further developed to better interconnect members and staff, as well as to inform the general public about Audubon activities. Audubon should be a leader in developing the use of information systems, including the internet, into its internal and external business and programmatic activities.

8.3 (c) Audubon's public affairs activities, in addition to media efforts at the national level, should have significant resources to devote to supporting staff and grassroots media relations efforts throughout the country. It is critical for Audubon to build on its name recognition and reputation by generating consistent, positive media attention that promotes both the goals and achievements of the entire organization.

- 8.4 **Membership.** One of the greatest challenges facing Audubon is to attract a more active and diverse membership. Audubon's grassroots network requires members, volunteers and activists who can represent the interests of their communities and who are committed to supporting Audubon's mission. Audubon will engage birders, outdoor enthusiasts and concerned citizens whose age, ethnic, gender and economic diversity reflects the communities in which it works.
- 8.5 **Branding.** Audubon has developed a strategy to optimize the worth of our most valuable asset – our brand. It does so through a consistent visual design and a brand voice that reflects our core messages and communicates them in a focused, persuasive manner. Our branding philosophy should be to promote nature as our best classroom, inspire people to conserve nature, and enrich people's lives through nature and conservation.

Recommendation 9:

Audubon must improve its financial strength and practices by increasing income, investing only in strategically important activities, and appropriately leveraging the Audubon name. Audubon should seek to grow revenues, particularly unrestricted funding, and to diversify funding sources and earned income through expanded marketing and licensing activities.

9.1 Audubon should emphasize the need to create an organization of fundraisers and to obtain funding before new initiatives are launched.

- Audubon should develop a strong and distinctive grassroots funding capability that involves members, Chapters, State Offices, staff, and the Board.
- Audubon should identify and procure funding sources prior to launching new initiatives.
- Audubon must promote a fundraising approach in which everyone is part of a fundraising team, not only for their programs but for the organization as a whole. It is critical that the people doing conservation work play an active role in communicating the value of these activities to funders, but these individuals should not have sole fundraising responsibility.
- Audubon should deploy professional development staff throughout the country, starting with locations of greatest revenue potential and expanding coverage as programs develop and needs arise.

9.2 Audubon must increase its overall funding, particularly unrestricted revenue sources. Audubon should develop strategies to address each major segment of the funding community. Audubon should continue:

- Increasing its support from membership.
- Expanding its major gifts fundraising program by forming volunteer field fundraising steering committees to identify new major donors.
- Targeting individual donors through the expanded State Office network.
- Expanding relationships with the business community on a national and statewide basis.
- Expanding planned giving programs and moving all bequests to the permanent endowment.
- Expanding efforts to obtain government funding at all levels.
- Determining how to coordinate each fundraising program to maximize potential while minimizing overlap and conflict.

Recommendation 10:

Audubon will conduct a five-year and annual planning process that sets priorities among elements of this Strategic Plan.

10.1 The five-year and annual plans shall include a limited number of measurable objectives, and each annual plan should link directly and transparently to the annual budget.

- The plans will be developed by the Staff, reviewed by the appropriate Board Committees, and ultimately approved by the Board.
- The five-year plan will be updated as needed during the annual planning cycle.

10.2 Audubon will measure its success to inform and ground the planning process. This will include metrics that track progress in:

- Achieving Audubon's conservation mission.
- Building a stronger and more engaged Audubon conservation community.
- Increasing Audubon's organizational capacity.

Recommendation 11:

Audubon's Board of Directors is ultimately accountable for keeping Audubon focused on its vision and strategy. Board members must be committed to and have a passion for Audubon's vision and values. The Board's roles should be aligned with this strategy and the committee structure should reflect the major components of the Strategic Plan.

11.1 From the onset, the roles and responsibilities of each Board member should be clearly defined. Each Board member should be expected to participate along three dimensions by:

- Contributing to fundraising efforts.
- Making an active contribution to one major committee.
- Playing a role in making Audubon's activities successful (i.e., policy initiatives, Audubon Centers, education programs, etc.).

11.2 Although the size of Audubon's Board and the mix of regionally-nominated and nationally-elected Board members will remain the same, the Board composition should be determined by:

- Ensuring the diversity of the Board, particularly in terms of skills needed: chapter and field, education, advocacy, science, fundraising, and business management, and
- Ensuring a balanced geographic representation of board members from across the United States.

11.3 Critical Board processes will be determined and assessed by:

- Establishing policy and monitoring performance: each major committee should focus only on organizational policy, not on management issues.
- Setting priorities: each committee should work with management to clearly define the priority-setting process for its area.
- Nominating new members: each year the nominating committee should assess the mix of Board skills and geographic representation to identify key gaps and help to fill them via the nomination process.

11.4 New Board members should:

- Be committed to and have a passion for Audubon's vision and values, and have a clear set of goals.
- Have expectations clarified before they are nominated or elected.
- Have a substantial, well-planned orientation which includes time with staff and members in the field.