

A Budget to Bring Birds Back

Audubon urges continued commitment to reduce carbon emissions, conserve lands and waters, and restore bird populations in the federal FY22 budget.



In April 2021, President Biden [released his first discretionary budget request](#), which provided topline numbers and general funding priorities for his Administration. In advance of the release of the full fiscal year 2022 (FY22) budget, Audubon is urging the Biden Administration and Congress to fully invest in solutions that fight climate change, conserve natural resources, and protect birds while rebuilding resilient communities; these solutions include federal programs that:

1. Address carbon emissions to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, including by investing in natural climate solutions that sequester carbon pollution and improve habitats for birds and other wildlife;
2. Conserve and restore at least 30% of resilient lands and waters that reduce climate risks in communities and enhance ecosystems that benefit wildlife; and
3. Bring birds back by strengthening bedrock bird programs and protections.

In order to bring birds back, we need continued federal investment in the departments and agencies that work to conserve and restore our lands, waters, coasts, and communities. Audubon is urging the Administration and Congress to fully invest in conservation and clean energy programs with multiple funding and report language requests for a variety of federal departments and agencies.

Our top priority is funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to help address the urgent conservation crisis facing birds. We urge Congress to significantly expand FWS bird conservation funding, including increased support for grant programs, conservation planning, permitting, community engagement, and more.

Audubon is recommending the funding levels outlined below and hopes to see these carried forward in the full FY22 budget proposal from the Administration and in the appropriations bills from Congress.

Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies

- \$725 million for Everglades restoration efforts and \$15 million for Everglades operations and maintenance within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) includes projects that improve water quality, water supply, and habitat connectivity in this critical ecosystem. Investing in CERP will create tens of thousands of jobs, while promoting climate resilience and improving outcomes for birds, wildlife, and communities. As more CERP projects come online, operations and maintenance needs will increase and funding should be provided to ensure these projects function as intended to produce the conservation outcomes intended.
- \$55 million for the Upper Mississippi River Restoration program within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - The UMRR program is committed to ensuring the viability and vitality of the Upper Mississippi River System's diverse and significant fish and wildlife resources and supports key bird habitat along the Mississippi flyway. This systemic program provides a well-balanced combination of habitat restoration activities, along with monitoring and research.
- \$20 million for WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program within the Bureau of Reclamation
 - This program helps diverse water interests work collaboratively to develop regional, multi-benefit water solutions for the arid west, with funding helping communities form watershed groups to develop and implement projects that respond to community water needs. Western birds like the American Avocet, Bell's Vireo, and Eared Grebe rely on sustained water resources that can be protected through these types of projects.
- \$14 million for WaterSMART Drought Response within the Bureau of Reclamation
 - This program funds projects that increase water supply reliability and resilience in the face of climate change by improving water infrastructure or management or providing benefits for fish, wildlife, recreation, and the environment. Reclamation should ensure that funded projects do not increase water scarcity at the basin scale, paying particular attention to the impacts of new groundwater pumping on surface water flows and aquifer sustainability.
- \$15 million for aquatic ecosystem restoration program within the Bureau of Reclamation
 - Robust implementation of this new program will prioritize climate resilience investments supported by multi-stakeholder engagement and result in improved watershed health.
- \$300 million for the EERE Solar Program within the Department of Energy
 - Climate change is the number one threat to U.S. birds, and to combat that threat we need to end our reliance on fossil fuels that produce carbon pollution. The Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) Solar Program provides research, funding opportunities, and resources for solar development, which is a critical tool in our fight against climate change. Audubon strongly supports renewable energy—including solar, wind, and geothermal power—and the research needed to ensure these energy sources are properly sited in ways that avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative impacts on birds and other wildlife.
- \$125 million for the EERE Wind Program within the Department of Energy
 - Renewable energy, properly sited and managed for bird safety, is key to mitigating climate change, which is the greatest threat facing birds. The EERE Wind Program invests in research and development to promote wind energy throughout the country.
- \$100 million for Office of Electricity: Energy Storage within the Department of Energy
 - Energy storage can make renewable energy available around the clock, while also improving the efficiency and resilience of the electric grid. The budget should reflect the scale of the need for research and development of storage technology, including experimenting with early-stage technologies that utilize new battery chemistries and supporting demonstration projects of large-scale systems.
- \$750 million for ARPA-E within the Department of Energy
 - The Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) supports early-stage alternative energy projects that have the potential to transform the energy system. Projects are selected through a competitive application process, and are given funding and guidance with the hopes of overcoming the barriers to commercialization that can hinder widescale adoption of promising new energy technologies. New technologies that benefit from the ARPA-E process may be essential for the transition to a clean energy economy needed to slow the causes of climate change.

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

- **Department of Interior (DOI)**

- \$74 million for Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation
 - We strongly urge Congress to exclude the Greater Sage-Grouse rider, which prohibits the DOI from using any funds to make decisions regarding the listing of the greater sage-grouse as threatened or endangered.
 - Increased funding of \$74 million for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)'s Wildlife Management Account will help sage-grouse conservation efforts in western lands, supporting rich cultures, local economies, and important wildlife and plant species. A portion of the appropriated amount should be used for on-the-ground restoration efforts to include combatting invasive cheatgrass, which contributes to wildfires in the region and threatens native plants. In addition, we support: maintaining funding for the Resource Management Planning sub-account which includes the Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) Program; an increase of \$5 million in funding for the Post-Fire Emergency Stabilization & Rehabilitation (ES&R) Program; and annual funding of the National Seed Strategy.
 - We urge funding for other programs within DOI to support Greater Sage-Grouse conservation, including the FWS budget for Conservation and Restoration; Wildlife and Habitat Management; and Partners for Fish and Wildlife accounts; DOI Hazardous Fuels Management; and scientific support of sage-grouse conservation from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).
- \$6.5 million for NMBCA
 - Since 2002, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) has been an effective matching grant program to fund projects that conserve over 4 billion neotropical migratory birds. These are over 386 species of birds that breed in or migrate through the United States and Canada and spend the non-breeding season in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- \$600 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System
 - This network of lands and waters provides opportunities for fish, wildlife, and plant restoration. Funding to protect the ecosystems and resources provided through land management, invasive species removal, and other activities in the system are important for birds and bird survival.
- \$60 million for NAWCA
 - The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) is a highly successful program that has significantly benefitted birds, other wildlife, and people for 30 years. NAWCA has funded nearly 3,000 projects that have positively impacted 30 million acres, and over 6,200 partners have contributed more than \$3.5 billion to match \$1.75 billion in grants, making it a wise investment for our wetlands, which provide critical habitat for birds across the country.
- \$90 million for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants
 - These grant programs help states and Tribal communities protect endangered species and the ecosystems they need to thrive. The funds are distributed to states and federally-recognized Tribal governments to create wildlife plans and protect the "species of greatest conservation need". This process empowers states and Tribes to create plans unique to individual needs. Not only have these grants found incredible success at protecting vulnerable species and reversing the threat of extinction for many birds and wildlife, but they contribute to a growing outdoors and recreation economy. Robust funding for this program is critically important to recovering the populations of imperiled species, like the Saltmarsh Sparrow that is disappearing as we lose saltmarsh habitat along the Atlantic seaboard to rising seas and encroaching development.
- \$51.6 million for Migratory Bird Management
 - This program at the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) includes multiple requests for managing migratory bird programs, including additional support for permitting activities, bird conservation planning, and the Urban Bird Treaty Program.
- \$15 million for the Delaware River Basin
 - The Delaware River Basin Restoration Plan was created to lead conservation and restoration effort across the Delaware River Watershed, which encompasses over 13,500 square miles of land across four states, provides crucial ecosystem, recreational, and commercial services, and supplies 13.5 million people with clean drinking water. Record-level funding for this program through the FWS will result in enhanced conservation for birds like Belted Kingfishers and Northern Harriers.

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (continued)

- \$15 million for the Chesapeake WILD program
 - This new program is designed to support local restoration efforts that improve the health of our streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay as well as the fish and wildlife that call these waters home.
- \$19.9 million for Migratory Bird Joint Ventures
 - These programs are cooperative, regional partnerships that conserve habitat for the benefit of birds, other wildlife, and people.
- \$100 million for water rights purchases at Klamath National Wildlife Refuge
 - Klamath National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) lacks sufficient water supplies to meet public use and habitat objectives. This past year, a botulism outbreak, related to low water levels, resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of birds. Acquiring water rights, purchased through willing landowners, will ensure the Klamath NWR can provide vital habitat needed for birds and wildlife, as well as high quality recreational and hunting opportunities.
- **Environmental Protection Agency**
 - Full funding for the EPA Geographic Programs, including:
 - \$375 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)
 - \$90.5 million for the Chesapeake Bay program
 - \$50 million for the Puget Sound program
 - \$40 million for the Long Island Sound program
 - \$20 million for the Gulf of Mexico program
 - \$6 million for the South Florida program
 - \$20 million for the Lake Pontchartrain program
 - The EPA's Geographic Programs protect natural resources and habitat necessary for bird survival and overlap with places where Audubon conducts restoration and research projects. Fully funding all of the EPA Geographic Programs will help restore water quality, protect birds, and build community resilience.
 - \$50 million for the National Estuary Program
 - This program develops and implements comprehensive conservation and management plans to restore estuaries across the country. The priorities vary by location, promoting stakeholder collaboration for unique issues. In addition to providing vital bird habitat, estuaries serve as carbon sinks by capturing and storing carbon pollution and provide natural barriers protecting communities from damaging coastal storms and rising seas.
 - \$10 billion for the Clean Water SRF
 - The CWSRF provides resources to help states maintain and improve wastewater treatment infrastructure that is critical to protecting public health and water quality. Infrastructure programs, like the CWSRF, can enhance resilience, create green jobs, reduce emissions, and result in clean water, particularly with a focus on natural and nature-based solutions. Natural infrastructure can provide a more cost-effective solution for managing stormwater, protecting coastal communities from more frequent and severe storms, and recharging groundwater aquifers in arid environments.
 - \$10 billion for the Drinking Water SRF
 - The DWSRF provides opportunity for state and communities to fund critical infrastructure that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive. The DWSRF allows states to choose priority projects for funding. While the DWSRF is not directly related to birds or bird habitat, it is a critical funding mechanism that helps states and communities address drinking water needs in an affordable way. Indirectly, the DWSRF program can fund projects like wetlands restoration or sourcewater protection that help provide bird habitat or repair ecosystem functionality.

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (continued)

- **U.S. Forest Service**

- \$85 million for the Urban and Community Forestry Program
 - This grant program provides funding for projects that increase resilience through reforestation and management or support disaster mitigation planning for urban forests. The program specifically focuses on innovative natural infrastructure ideas to provide systemic forest solutions.
- \$80 million for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Fund
 - This fund encourages collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration. By leveraging local resources with national and private resources, the fund supports forest health, wildfire risk reduction, ecological demonstration projects, and local economic benefits for priority forest landscapes throughout the country.
- \$77 million for FIA
 - The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) reports on status and trends in forest area and location throughout the country. This information is necessary to understand tree growth, health, mortality, harvests, wood production, and forest land ownership.
- \$1 million for Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat
 - This includes forest planning activities, engagement in the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Engagement Strategy and the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, and a national position that coordinates on sage-grouse issues with the DOI and the states. We support the resources necessary to ensure sage-grouse remains a priority, including funding to focus toward on-the-ground habitat restoration and rehabilitation for this critical species.

Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

- \$50.45 million for CZM and Services
 - The Coastal Zone Management (CZM) program supports state and local work to manage and enhance important coastal habitats. Through the CZM program, NOAA approves a coastal program for each U.S. state, territory, and commonwealth to ensure responsible management of coastal areas.
- \$88.5 million for Coastal Management Grants
 - This NOAA program provides grants to protect, research, and restore coastal habitat. This funding enhances areas like wetlands, barrier islands, and living shorelines that benefit birds like American Oystercatchers, Piping Plovers, and Red Knots. In addition, these programs fund projects that buffer storm damage, absorb floodwaters, and prepare coastal areas for resilience in the face of sea level rise.
- \$60 million for the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund
 - These grants provide federal funding to strengthen coastal infrastructure and support coastal research, resiliency, conservation, and restoration work.
- \$91.9 million for the National Sea Grant College Program
 - The National Sea Grant College Program funds applied research at the region's colleges and universities that contributes to a scientific understanding of coastal problems and to the design of practical solutions to those problems.
- \$42 million for the NEER System
 - The five National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERR) are led by state agencies, enable the protection and restoration of natural resources to support tourism and recreational and commercial fisheries, and emphasize education for young people. The NERR program should be funded at \$32 million for NERR system operations and \$10 million for NERR System procurement, acquisition, and construction.
- \$72 million for Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas
 - The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries protects over 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. Marine protected areas are key to providing habitats for seabirds, fish, and other marine life that benefit coastal communities and economies.
- \$70 million for the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund
 - The Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund offers competitive grants to protect, conserve, and restore West Coast salmon populations. The fund supports and supplements state level efforts to stem the decline of salmon and habitat that myriad species of birds, fish, and other wildlife rely upon.
- \$270 million for the Community-Based Habitat Restoration Program
 - This NOAA program provides funding and technical assistance for restoration projects that restore and sustain fisheries. The work conducted here supports coastal wetlands and aquatic habitat improvements, while also building community resilience, creating green jobs, and promoting recreational opportunities.

State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

- \$139.6 million for the GEF and \$41.5 million for the InterAmerican Foundation
 - The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and the InterAmerican Foundation are extremely important for integrating societal, economic, and biodiversity needs to stem the loss of bird species and biodiversity while improving the quality of life for people in Latin America and the Caribbean. These programs enable the creation of full lifecycle stewardship essential for saving migratory species like the Cerulean Warbler, Western Sandpiper, and Least Tern.
- \$1.5 million for the Migratory Bird Program National Nongame Bird Plan
 - This funding provides leadership for migratory bird conservation with specific emphasis on birds of greatest conservation concern. This program coordinates conservation business plans and strategies that are essential to addressing the FWS's priority birds of conservation concern.