Louisiana’s coastal habitats, bottomland hardwoods, and rich agricultural lands make the state one of the richest in the nation in terms of natural resources. The magnificent Mississippi River Delta ecosystem in Louisiana supports 100 million migratory, nesting and wintering birds. Birds are the bellwethers of ecosystem health; if birds are healthy, our lands are healthy.

Audubon Louisiana’s dedicated professional staff is connecting people with nature through a combination of science, education and policy. This important work requires a generous investment of time, talent and resources. The return on investment is important and offers all of us the opportunity to help continue the legacy that is Louisiana’s heritage.

At Audubon, we believe that where birds thrive people prosper. Nowhere is this more evident than in Louisiana. And in return, birds need our protection. Thank you for support of our birds and Audubon Louisiana.

Dr. Douglas Meffert
Audubon Louisiana Executive Director
Dear Audubon Louisiana Friend,

As the inaugural chairman of Audubon Louisiana, I am pleased to report that our nascent three-year old state office is off to an excellent start. We have built a strong and diverse board of community leaders with statewide representation; we have a talented, dedicated staff led by Dr. Douglas Meffert, and we have raised sufficient gifts and grants to allow us to get up and running.

Our state office was reestablished at a critical time. I say “reestablished” because there was a state office headed by my great-grandfather E.A. McIlhenny at the beginning of the 20th century. His mission was to control the slaughter of birds by market hunters, especially the Snowy Egret. The Snowy and the Great Egret were almost driven to extinction for their beautiful white plumes used in the millinery trade.

Today Audubon Louisiana’s mission is even more urgent: we must turn the tide on the loss of precious habitat in which our birds and other creatures nest and thrive. Louisiana loses approximately 10,000 acres each year due to land loss and marshland subsidence. We also are losing important bottomland hardwood habitat to urbanization, farming, and clear cutting as our population grows.

We are working hand in hand with other organizations to address the problems. We own 26,000 acres in Vermilion Parish and have formed the Rainey Conservation Alliance (RCA) with surrounding landowners (including my family) to work cooperatively on projects designed to protect some 185,000 acres of private land from land loss. The RCA has served as a successful demonstration that stewards of land can work together to address projects on a large scale.

Audubon Louisiana helped craft the state’s Coastal Master Plan for addressing our vanishing coastline. We monitor and lobby to ensure funds from the Deepwater Horizon spill go to the best ecosystem restoration projects in Louisiana and the Gulf. We foster a citizen science and stewardship program for our beaches and shorebirds. We initiated urban conservation programs in New Orleans, and Baton Rouge and bottomland hardwood conservation efforts in north Louisiana.

While our accomplishments are many, we have a long way to go. Your support, both vocal and financial, is key to our fight to preserve this critical habitat and all of the species that are dependent upon it. If left untended, our future generations will not witness the magnificence of Louisiana’s natural beauty.

Please join Audubon in this effort! Based on sound science Audubon will provide the vision and resources to ensure man and nature live in harmony, but we need your help to win.

Yours in conservation,

Audubon Louisiana Advisory Board Chair

Our Mission Statement:
“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.”
Louisiana’s Gulf Coast is home to hundreds of bird species and this shoreline is an important stopover for many Neotropical songbirds during their annual spring and fall migration. Like the birds, Louisianans love the coast and enjoy its beauty and bounty. Audubon is working to reverse the acres we lose every year for birds and people. Audubon’s efforts to protect the coast and beach-nesting birds help local communities and visitors peacefully share our seas and shores with birds.

More than 85 hours of volunteer time were contributed by 18 volunteer stewards in Grand Isle for the Audubon Coastal Stewardship Program in 2014, and our monitoring program increased Grand Isle Least Tern population by 14% from 2013.
Our Coastal Stewardship Program hired two full-time seasonal biologists to work in Grand Isle and Cameron Parish to identify and rope off nests of Least Terns and Wilson’s Plovers, whose camouflaged nests are invisible to beach goers, trucks, and ATVs. Our biologists monitor the nests, conduct presentations to school children and engage local residents, and visitors in environmental stewardship of this shared resource.

Shorebirds are some of the fastest declining bird species in the United States. Keeping track of these species and identifying which ones use Louisiana beaches is a part of Audubon’s Coastal Bird Survey (ACBS). We recruit and train volunteers to survey the beaches and record their sightings through the online eBird database. Beach areas in Grand Isle, Terrebonne Bay, and Cameron and Vermilion Parishes have been surveyed by more than 25 volunteers.

ACBS volunteer, Jed Pitre, said: “I care very much about shorebirds and I do the ACBS to help support Audubon’s mission. The surveys also afford me the opportunity to observe shorebird behavior, which is always fascinating!”

We need volunteers for the Audubon Coastal Bird Survey! Please contact Dr. Erik Johnson at ejohnson@audubon.org for information.
Louisiana’s growing population and the increased need for housing, roads, and energy creates many challenges for birds. Audubon believes that “bird-friendly communities” can exist in urban areas by designing the natural and man-made environment to promote bird and wildlife conservation opportunities in addition to recreational use. Statistics show that one in five adults enjoy watching birds, making it one of the fastest growing outdoor recreational activities in the U.S.

Audubon Louisiana is working with New Orleans City Park, Orleans Audubon Society, and Grow Dat Youth Farm within the 1300-acre City Park to provide an urban oasis for birds and people. New Orleans City Park is a great example of an ecological treasure within a large city and provides important stopover habitat for dozens of species of migrating warblers, tanagers, vireos, and other songbirds.

Replacing non-native plants with native species will benefit birds and other wildlife, and Audubon has created birding trails for visitors to experience the joys of nature next to Grow Dat Youth Farm, an urban agriculture farm for at-risk high school kids. This collaborative project provides environmental stewardship, educational opportunities, and conservation for birds.

5,000-10,000 caterpillars are required to feed a clutch of Carolina Chickadees. You can help chickadees and other birds by planting native trees.
Audubon Louisiana partners with the Baton Rouge Audubon Society, and the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) at their Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center in urban Baton Rouge to promote habitat preservation and bird conservation. During the summer Audubon Louisiana’s Director of Bird Conservation, Dr. Erik Johnson, engaged 50 children, ages 7 through 14, every week in the Swamp Stompers camp. While learning about the importance of ecosystems and nature, the kids witnessed local and migratory birds being banded and released, thus creating interest and excitement for future generations of citizen scientists.
Important Bird Areas (IBAs) provide critical habitat for species of vulnerable birds. IBAs are priority sites needing long-term protection, and are identified by Audubon as the U.S. partner of BirdLife International.

Audubon has identified 23 IBAs in Louisiana, comprising a total of 17,623,352 acres that support globally or continentally important populations of species of conservation concern during the nesting, wintering, or migratory seasons.

The goals for the program are to identify the areas that are most essential for sustaining bird populations, and then to focus conservation efforts on these places. Areas are monitored for changes to birds and habitat as the number one reason for population declines is disturbance, damage, or outright loss of the habitats that birds need to survive and reproduce.
Audubon Louisiana is focusing conservation efforts on IBAs, including the Chenier Plain IBA that encompasses the Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary. We are also focused on a series of IBAs along the Mississippi River to reconnect this vital ecosystem driver to its delta, harnessing its land-building power to restore critical habitats. These efforts protect and enhance habitats for Prothonotary Warblers, Piping Plovers, Green Herons, and Seaside Sparrows, among many other species of concern.
Audubon’s 26,000-acre Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary in Vermilion Parish is part of the Chenier Plain IBA. It is home to thousands of wintering ducks and geese, and is a stopover site for many migratory birds such as Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and the Cerulean Warbler. For the past two years, five endangered Whooping Cranes have wintered on the sanctuary.
The Rainey Sanctuary is part of the Rainey Conservation Alliance (RCA), a collaborative effort composed of four different landowners (E. A. McIlhenny Enterprises, Sagrera Lands, Vermilion Corporation and Audubon Louisiana) created to collectively manage, conserve, and restore 185,000 contiguous acres of coastal marsh. To encourage coastal restoration efforts with other landowners, the RCA published a booklet on permitting basics entitled: *A Louisiana Marsh Manager’s Permitting Handbook* which can be found on our website at: La.audubon.org/rainey-conservation-alliance.
Audubon Louisiana is the voice of birds for our state. With your support we are protecting bird species across the state through sound conservation. Where birds thrive, people prosper. Thank you for your support!
## Seeds for Success

Audubon Louisiana is honored to recognize the individuals, foundations, and corporations who have supported our work. Without your donations, following our mission to save birds and habitat in Louisiana would not be possible. Thank you for planting the seeds of success for future generations of people and birds! We are grateful for every donor and every gift.

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The Grinnell Legacy Society honors Audubon friends who have left a legacy for birds and other wildlife with their estate plans. Named after George Bird Grinnell (1849 –1938) an American anthropologist, historian, and naturalist who founded the first Audubon Society, these visionary members are ensuring conservation for future generations of birds, wildlife, and people.

Cathie Coates, a community activist and Audubon Society member joined the Grinnell Legacy Society after naming Audubon Louisiana in her will. Cathy loves birds, nature, and adventure and has travelled all over the world. Through her travels, Cathy developed a deeper appreciation for the birds and landscapes we have in Louisiana. Cathy says: ‘Birds are important both because they are a pleasure to watch and because they tell us about our environmental health. I want to be sure that on future spring and fall days, there will continue to be many species passing through our state. I appreciate that Audubon protects birds for the enjoyment they bring and the science they promote.’

You too can leave a legacy in Louisiana by joining the Grinnell Legacy Society with an estate gift through your will, retirement plan, charitable trust, or life insurance. If you would like more information or have already included Audubon Louisiana in your estate plans, please contact Harriett Pooler at 225-456-3106 or hpooler@audubon.org so we can welcome you into the Grinnell Legacy Society.
Audubon Louisiana Board of Advisors 2014

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Moonrise Over Wetlands by Karen Westphal