



AUDUBON SOCIETY
NORTHERN VIRGINIA



FY 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2020

This Annual Report reviews the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia's major activities in the July 2019 through June 2020 fiscal year.

In March, we switched to an online format so that we could continue to provide the community with educational presentations about birds and the environment during the pandemic. We were pleased to discover that a much larger audience participates in our online programs, enabling us to share not only the beauty and wonder of birds but also our core message – the importance of conserving and restoring natural ecosystems for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity.

Thanks to the efforts of ASNV supporters and other conservationists, seabirds have a new nesting area, Virginia will protect migratory birds from unintentional harm resulting from construction projects and more natural

landscapes will be created at government facilities.

Our citizen science surveys and bird walks offered guided experiences in nature and created a better body of knowledge on which to make decisions about protecting birds and habitat.

Volunteer Ambassadors with our Audubon at Home program consulted with people in their yards and community spaces, sharing how and why creating wildlife-friendly habitat is good for the spirit and the planet.

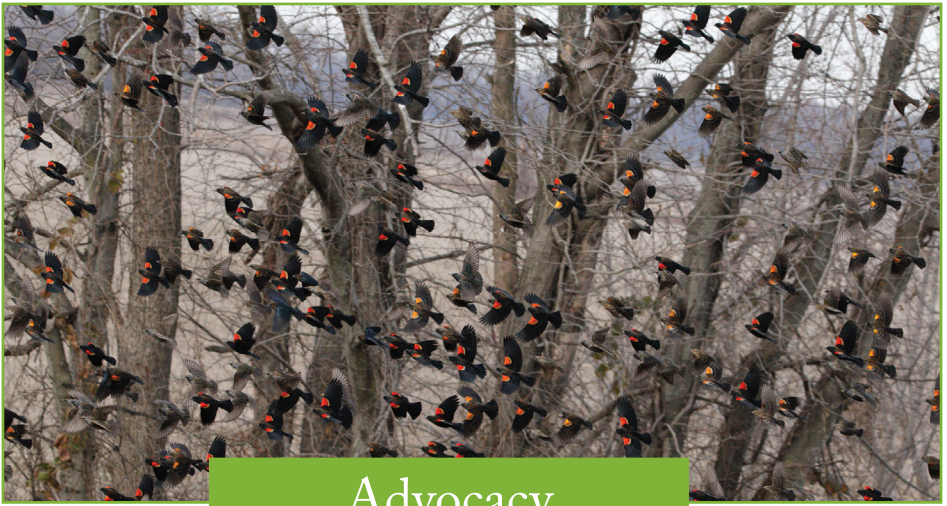
And ASNV's scholarships and grants to educators and schools helped prepare our children to become better stewards of our environment.

Thank you to all our members, donors, staff and volunteers for a great year!

*Tom Blackburn, President
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia*



Jack-in-the-pulpit. Rusty Moran



Advocacy

With your help we were able to protect seabird habitat and so much more.

ASNV joined with National Audubon Society, American Bird Conservancy, Virginia Society of Ornithology and numerous citizens to convince the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide alternative nesting sites for 25,000 seabirds displaced by the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel expansion. The new nesting sites on Rip Raps Island and specially-prepared barges were successful, with large numbers of birds raising their young.

Supporters like you enabled us to protect birds in Virginia. Enacted in 1918, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is a bedrock of conservation legislation that protects more than 1,000 bird species. Recent changes in the Federal interpretation of the act eliminated important protections for birds. ASNV led the other five Virginia Audubon chapters in supporting legislation that restores those protections for birds throughout the state. ASNV will continue to work with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources on

implementing these important protections in Virginia.

After 16 years of effort by conservation-minded citizens and elected officials, Fairfax County adopted a policy to install natural landscaping on county properties. Longtime ASNV member and tireless advocate for this issue, Glenda Booth, told the Board of Supervisors, *“Fairfax County can be a leader and an example in maintaining and restoring the biological foundation on which we all depend.”*

ASNV volunteers continued to advocate for birds and their local habitats in the following ways:

- Along with other conservation organizations, we are trying to prevent a loss of grassland habitat at the Lorton landfill where an indoor ski slope facility is under consideration. The landfill is one of our area’s rare nesting sites for Grasshopper Sparrows.
- A commercial scuba diving company

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

proposed constructing a facility in a Prince William County quarry that is an important winter stopover for a large population of Redhead ducks. Along with members of the birding community, we successfully opposed the project.

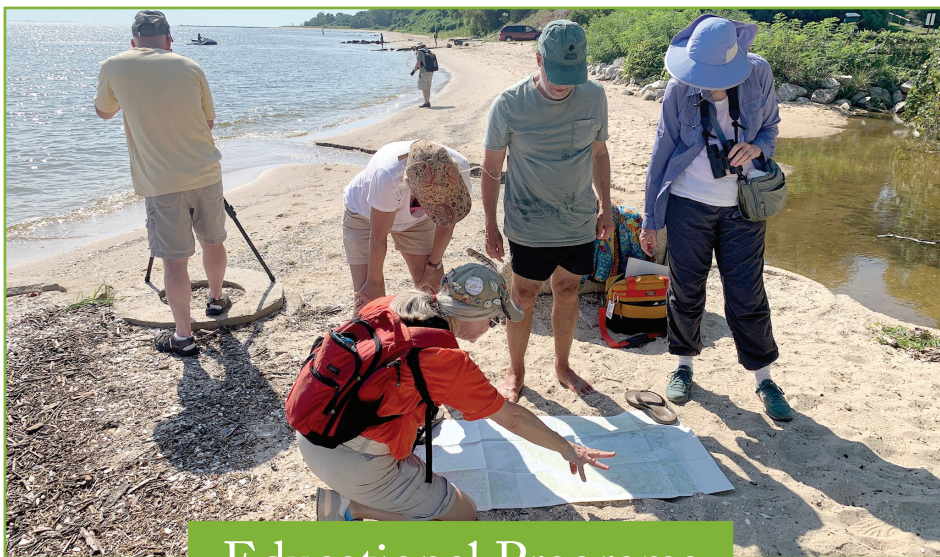
- ASNV opposed doubling the width of the W&OD Trail in parts of Arlington because the project would cause a loss of green space.
- Concern for its adverse impact on wildlife led us to argue against the installation of lighting on the W&OD Trail in Arlington.

During this year’s Virginia General Assembly, ASNV volunteers

- **Opposed the spraying of essential insects:** ASNV volunteers testified before a committee in support of Delegate Kathy Tran’s bill to limit spraying for fall cankerworms – an important food source for migrating birds. Even though the bill failed to move, we continued our efforts to educate officials about our environmental concerns with spraying.
- **Advocated for clean energy in Virginia:** We supported legislation in Virginia that removed restrictions on the installation of solar panels on houses. We also advocated for legislation that provides for a transition to renewable energy in Virginia.

- **Promoted policies to protect birds by limiting the population of unowned cats:** Outdoor cats kill more than 2.6 billion birds per year in North America. We continued to advocate for state and local policies that limit this destruction. The Virginia Attorney General has concluded that “Trap Neuter, Return” policies violate state laws. We opposed a bill introduced in the 2020 Virginia legislative session that would have legalized TNR programs that result in outdoor colonies of unowned cats. We were able to prevent passage in the 2020 legislative session, but the bill will be reconsidered in 2021.

- **Advocated for bird-safe building design:** ASNV submitted recommendations to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development recommending adoption of bird-safe design in the Uniform Statewide Building Code. Regionally, ASNV urged adoption of bird-safe windows and other bird-safe design features for the new Amazon facilities in Arlington, the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus in Alexandria and the Humphreys Engineer Center in Ft. Belvoir. Nationally, ASNV encouraged Virginia’s U.S. Senate delegation to support the Bird-Safe Buildings Act and Recovering America’s Wildlife Act, both of which were incorporated into H.R. 2, an ambitious infrastructure funding act.



Educational Programs

People throughout Northern Virginia wanted to learn more about birds and the environment. Registrations for our classes demonstrated that there is a significant demand for education about birds and other wildlife, ecology and how to create natural habitat.

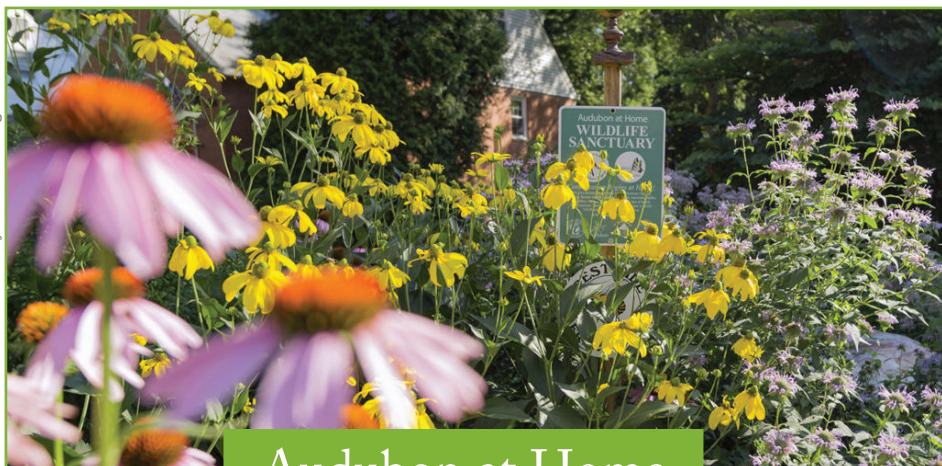
Our donors, staff and volunteers made it possible for more people to benefit from our programs. We were pleased to discover that when we switched to online programming in April we had a large increase in the number of people who attended our classes. Some classes sold out, so we upgraded our online capacity to accommodate a larger audience. We are especially grateful to Bill Young for donating his considerable expertise and time to our efforts.

Participants enjoyed our innovative experiential learning program.

Recognizing that not all education occurs

in the classroom, we offered the first of several experiential learning classes with an overnight trip focusing on Chesapeake Ecology in August of 2019. The program, led by ASNV Board member Dr. Tom Wood, included a walk through one of the northernmost natural stands of bald cypress, a guided tour of the Calvert Marine Museum and a private charter on one of the few skipjacks remaining on the Chesapeake Bay.

Thanks to funding from our donors, everyone could enjoy free Audubon Afternoons. ASNV's long tradition of Sunday afternoon events with a chance to socialize, share snacks and hear an interesting presentation was interrupted by the pandemic. We switched to online programs for the last two events of FY 2020, thereby preserving our schedule.



Audubon at Home

People need time in nature, now more than ever. Our Audubon at Home Ambassadors discovered a surge of interest in native gardening this spring. Many more residents have been spending time at home, tending their gardens, watching birds and wondering how to make their yards more wildlife friendly.

Requests from homeowners and others led our Ambassadors to visit 107 properties, offering advice about habitat improvements to attract wildlife and enhance the environment beyond the perimeters of each property. As a result of these visits, **in this fiscal year we certified 1,217 acres as new Wildlife Sanctuaries, including Oak Spring Garden, the estate of the late Bunny Mellon** – a considerable achievement during any year but especially so in this one.

Partnerships and new audiences helped expand our message about native plants.

- Plant NOVA Natives and Audubon at Home joined together to present a well-attended conference with the Northern Virginia Landscapers Association and

Merrifield Garden Center to educate landscape professionals on the value of native plants.

- With our partner Green Muslims, we co-hosted a webinar “Create Helpful Habitat with Native Planting” during Arab-American Heritage Month.
- AAH volunteers participated in the Mount Vernon Environmental Expo and made presentations to garden clubs, homeowners associations, churches and the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Thanks to previous success and word of mouth, Audubon at Home expanded.

With the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service as the sponsor and The Clifton Institute as a partner, ASNV established a new AAH chapter in Rappahannock and Fauquier Counties. Dawn Filipowicz and Renee Kitt will be the new Co-ordinators. We also reached out to a former Arlington AAH Ambassador about setting up a habitat program modelled after AAH in Prince George’s County, Maryland.



Citizen Science and Conservation

Your support helped us to better understand how to preserve and enhance ecosystems. Our volunteer citizen scientists developed critical data that can be used by researchers to better understand our changing environment and how to protect it.

- **137 birders – the most ever!** – participated in our **38th Annual Manassas-Bull Run Christmas Bird Count**. From first-time birders to sector leaders, these citizen scientists counted over 20,000 birds of 86 species. We appreciate our participants' efforts and we owe a special thank you to Carolyn Williams for her many years as the leader of sector 6.
- **Eighteen teams of volunteers tallied ducks and geese across the region for our annual Winter Waterfowl Count.** Many species of waterfowl are declining in our region which is one reason why this count is so important.
- **ASNV volunteers conducted the Occoquan and Meadowood Wildlife Surveys, the International Migratory**

Bird Count and the Butterfly and Dragonfly Surveys. When official surveys were canceled in April because of the pandemic, individual citizen scientists continued the work by surveying birds and wildlife on their own.

Joining with our partners, we are restoring lands.

- **Thanks in part to its long-standing relationship with ASNV, the Bureau of Land Management is restoring a meadow in Meadowood Special Recreation Area.** They have recently hired two technicians and are renovating a small meadow with our advice.
- **After consulting with local birders and ASNV, Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) has begun a project to promote grassland and meadow restoration in Fairfax County Parks.** FCPA has begun restoration of Dead Cow Pit in Laurel Hill Park by removing woody vegetation. In addition, ASNV and partners are working with FCPA to identify larger patches of grass or meadow in the

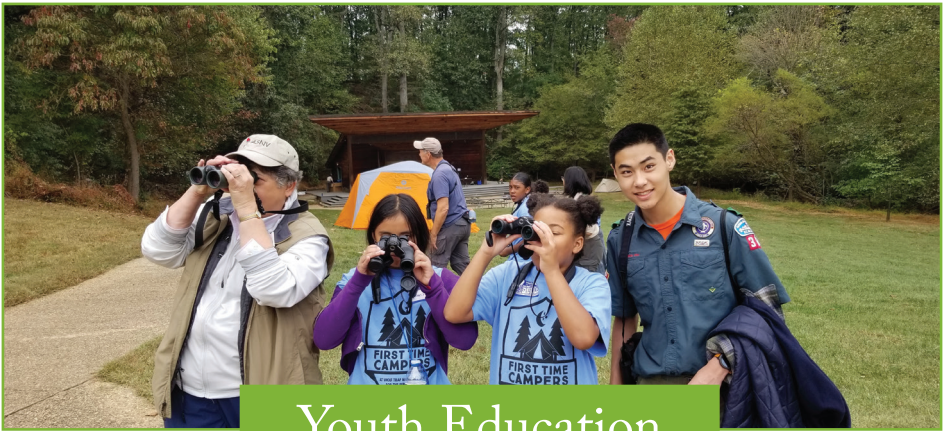
county. It may take a patch of 40-60 acres to attract Eastern Meadowlarks or Grasshopper Sparrows to nest.

Many of you birded with us. ASNV sponsored or co-sponsored 22 bird walks this year with our partners the Northern Virginia Bird Club, Reston Association, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and The Bird Feeder in Reston. These walks took place throughout Fairfax, Arlington, Fauquier, Loudoun and Prince William counties, making them accessible to a wide range of people in our region.

International trip participants learned about the birds, wildlife and environment of Colombia. We organized a 10-day international field trip to Colombia for 13 participants in January. The group observed over 250 bird species as it explored tropical forest, wetland and high elevation habitats.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Rusty Moran



Youth Education

Young people are critical to a healthy future for our planet. ASNV encourages them to gain knowledge and enthusiasm for nature so they can become active stewards of our environment.

Your support helps prepare teachers to guide the next generation of environmental stewards. Thanks to our donors, ASNV has offered educator scholarships to National Audubon's Hog Island Camp in Maine for many years. This year's winner, Phoebe Riegel, a 5th grade teacher at William Ramsay Elementary School, will be well-prepared to teach her students about the environment. She will receive ASNV's all-expense-paid scholarship to attend "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week" next summer. Phoebe plans to use her experience to integrate conservation and habitat content with English Language Learning strategies.

Students throughout our region wanted to take action on their environmental concerns. Thanks to the support of our donors, ASNV was able to offer conservation mini-grants to support their projects. Students at Cub Run Elementary School in Centerville, Fairview

Elementary School in Fairfax Station and Woodlawn Secondary Program in Arlington will have funding for projects to reduce plastic pollution, construct and maintain bluebird boxes and investigate bird behavior. These projects are scheduled to begin next spring.

High school student Elliot Frank of Vienna was concerned about how to reduce the high number of bird fatalities caused by window strikes. He decided to tackle the issue for his Eagle Scout project. With the help of ASNV mentors and his fellow scouts, Elliot produced an informative and engaging video on bird-window collisions that he has offered to ASNV. You can view it on the ASNV website.

Young people learned about the outdoors and birds. In October, ASNV volunteers led bird walks for over 60 elementary school children who participated in the Friends of Wolf Trap National Park First-Time Campers program. The program is an important way to help the students, many of whom have limited opportunities, to learn about and enjoy nature.

Our Membership & Finances

The Audubon Society of Northern Virginia is the largest independent National Audubon Society chapter in the nation with more than 4,500 members, and is fiscally sound going into FY2021.

Our donors were extremely generous in FY 2020. We received over \$63,500 in donations in FY 2020 – the most successful fundraising year we have ever had. This grassroots support, which comprises more than 50% of our annual income, made a huge difference to our ability to implement our mission of protecting birds and the environment through advocacy, citizen science and nature education.

Other sources of income provided important support for our programs and activities. ASNV earned \$17,300 in program income from education classes, field trips and Audubon at Home. We also received support from the National Audubon Society and budgeted \$21,000 from our cash reserves toward ASNV activities.

Our revenues enabled us to provide classes, programs, grants and scholarships. ASNV Program Manager Laura McDonald, ASNV Program Assistant Louise Edsall and Audubon at Home Program Assistant Jill Spohn are vital to our ability to carry out our many activities. The largest share of our expenses was devoted to Programs and Advocacy (\$39,500) and Administration (\$23,900). We also spent \$17,200 on communicating with our audience through our website,

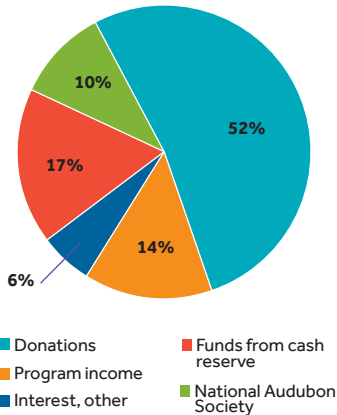
newsletter and social media. These expenditures made possible our array of classes, bird and nature walks and surveys, Audubon Afternoons, conservation and youth education grants, Audubon at Home consultations, our Important Bird Area Project work and many other activities that protect and support birds and the environment.

We depend on volunteer support. The financial support does not include the tremendous value of volunteer time that is essential to making our programs possible. A BIG “Thank You!” goes to all our dedicated volunteers who plan and lead walks, serve on the Board and committees and do many other activities!

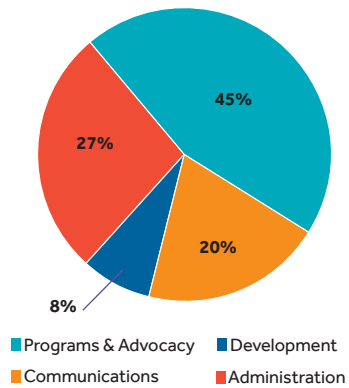
We are fiscally sound. We ended the fiscal year well in the black, with \$244,200 in assets. Our investment portfolio, which was invested conservatively, survived the stock market crash and recovery in good shape and earned \$5,570 in dividends.

We adopted a conservative budget for FY 2021. The pandemic has created significant uncertainty about the level of donations we will receive in FY 2021. As a result, we adopted a more modest budget based on a significant reduction in donations and deferred several categories of expense. We budgeted \$77,800 in revenue plus \$21,000 from reserves, and \$99,100 in expenses. If we receive donations that are higher than we budgeted, we'll be able to restore funding for the deferred items.

FY 2020 FUNDING



FY 2020 EXPENSES



*Our deepest thanks
to all of our donors and volunteers
this past year - you are the ones who make it possible!*

\$1,000 or more

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Marissa Mintzer
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Dixie Sommers



Chicks in a nest, Dixie Sommers



*“If you will stay close to nature, to its simplicity,
to the small things hardly noticeable, those things
can unexpectedly become great and immeasurable.”*

Rainer Maria Rilke



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