

Mid-year Update

January – June 2022

It's been a hot year. As temperatures rose, so did our efforts to conserve birds and their habitats. New federal policies and funding gave hope for saving birds and ourselves from a changing climate. Habitat Hero-certified gardens are saving water while Audubon-certified ranches are fostering resilient grasslands. Our sagebrush and Colorado River policy work is focused on saving remaining habitat and increasing its resilience. Although we have had many wins, the need for our work will continue long into the future. Thank you for supporting it.

Alison Holloran
Executive Director, Audubon Rockies



Yellow Warbler. Photo: Evan Barrientos/Audubon Rockies



Community Naturalist

Volunteers contributed more than 2,100 hours to community science projects. These included bird monitoring in San Juan National Forest, Wyoming BioBlitz 2022, and bird banding.

Transformative experiences with nature and science are the heart of the Community Naturalist program. In southwest Colorado, we introduced high school students to birding and eBird. At our four summer camps in northeast Wyoming, we helped kids build scientific skills and explore nature. Collectively, we helped build the scientific literacy of 1,300 children.

Partnerships helped us recruit more than 6,000 event attendees. As a partner of Lights Out Colorado, we initiated Colorado's first proclamation for migratory birds. We also partnered with Wyoming State Parks on a variety of events and projects to get youth and adults outdoors.

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Habitat Hero

We launched a new bird and pollinator monitoring project at two Habitat Hero demonstration gardens in Cheyenne, Wyoming. As part of this community science project, we are recruiting and training volunteers to conduct the surveys.

With 50 volunteers, we planted a healing garden at the Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center in Loveland, Colorado. The garden demonstrates how important green spaces are for not only birds, but also people. Comcast Colorado and Ken Garff Ford provided generous funding.

High school students planted native plants in the renovated children's garden at Gardens on Spring Creek in Fort Collins, Colorado.

We hosted 27 virtual and in-person events that were attended by 6,336 participants.



Conservation Ranching Initiative

We completed soil enhancements and native reseeding on a degraded pasture of an Audubon-certified ranch in Colorado as part of a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant.

We initiated soil monitoring on certified Colorado ranches in partnership with the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

We conducted bird and vegetation monitoring on 18 ranches.

We co-hosted six workshops across the Great Plains with Ranching for Profit and Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. We presented at more than 10 other workshops.

We certified 10,000 acres, bringing the number of ranches enrolled by Rockies staff to 31, encompassing more than 2.5 million acres.

We raised more than \$100,000 for habitat improvement projects.



Bullock's Oriole. Photo: Evan Barrientos/Audubon Rockies



Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) began updating land management plans to support sage-grouse conservation on 67-million acres of public land. More than 24,000 Audubon members urged the BLM to protect sage-grouse habitat. With partners, Audubon staff submitted science-based comments as well.

In June, the BLM held its first onshore oil and gas lease sale since early 2021. Following comments submitted by Audubon, the Biden administration removed more than 340,000 acres of leases in priority sage-grouse habitat from the auction block.

We recruited experts to testify against a bill to permanently make sage-grouse farming legal in Wyoming and organized chapter opposition to it. The bill's final language has grouse farming ending in five years.

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Western Rivers Initiative

We worked with the Colorado Water Conservation Board to include river condition data collection and access, stream restoration strategies, and nature-based solutions in the draft Colorado Water Plan update.

We rallied 2,468 members to support the Wildfire Prevention Watershed Restoration Funding Bill. The bill passed and is providing \$20 million to restore watershed resilience.

We engaged more than 500 people in Colorado's water issues at outreach events. Through our water legislator webinars, we hosted the Speaker of the House Garnett and other water decision-makers.

We worked with ranchers and chapters to establish drought-resilient and freshwater habitat projects. To learn how birds respond to these projects, we piloted a bird survey in the Yampa River Valley.



Gillmor Sanctuary

We completed restoration and construction of seven new water management units. This included adding 10 water control structures and repairing four berms.

We led field tours for the Utah Division of Water Rights, Salt Lake City Council members, and Utah's Speaker of the House to familiarize them with the importance of Gillmor Sanctuary, birds, wetlands, and Great Salt Lake.

We launched a new series of Gillmor Sanctuary work days for volunteers to become active stewards of the sanctuary. Volunteers prepared dikes for restoration by removing invasive tamarisk.

We removed most of the tamarisk from a water management unit, saving great expense in the future.