

# Mid-year Update

January – June 2023

*Audubon is in the process of developing the “Flight Plan,” our five-year strategic plan. This guiding document will determine how and where we will tackle the major issues facing our birds and communities across the Western Hemisphere. While focusing on our new North Star Vision, “A future where birds thrive across the Americas because Audubon is a powerful, diverse, and ever-growing force for conservation,” Audubon Rockies is working to accomplish our mission and goals. Our work is critical to ensuring birds and the people in the Rockies have a place to not only live, but thrive.*

*Alison Holloran  
Executive Director, Audubon Rockies*



Western Tanager. Photo: Evan Barrientos/Audubon Rockies



## Community Naturalist

**Wyoming Naturalists filled all the survey routes of the new Intermountain Shorebird Surveys in Wyoming. Naturalists completed training for this new program, then surveyed eight locations during spring shorebird migration.**

We launched “Audubon After Dark,” a series of virtual programs catered to families. We organized new virtual trivia and storytelling programs to create community around birds.

We released new sagebrush ecosystem resource kits to support classroom, homeschool, and non-formal educators. We sold nearly 300 copies of our Rockie the Burrowing Owl children’s books.

We provided bird education programs for 40 Southern Ute Indian Tribe students for the Ignacio School District’s extracurricular Fridays.



## Habitat Hero

**Seventy-five volunteers planted 2,500 plants and seeded 1,000 square yards at an event coordinated by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, at the Griffiths 1 Solar Project in Johnstown, Colorado, a community solar project led by Cloudbreak Energy. The garden provides a living perimeter around the community solar field that will provide habitat for birds and other pollinators.**

We hosted a “Connect with Nature” webinar series that featured five topics on bird-friendly gardening. Sessions included Solar Gardens, Empathy in the Garden, and Changing the Lawn Landscape. They reached 1,535 participants.

We published a story about how a Habitat Hero in Denver organized her neighbors to plant native gardens on their entire block.



## Conservation Ranching Initiative

**We’re managing habitat enhancement projects on five ranches this summer. Five others are completed or in the planning phase. Projects include riparian enhancement, post-fire fencing to preserve riparian habitat, juniper encroachment removal, and sagebrush enhancement.**

We’re coordinating the second year of the STAR soil health program in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Agriculture. We added soil moisture probes to the seven participating ranches that will help us track improvements in soil health as a result of their management.

We are coordinating bird, plant, and soil monitoring on twelve certified ranches.

We certified 150,000 new acres of working ranches in Colorado and Wyoming.



Least Sandpiper. Photo: Mathew Malwitz/Audubon Photography Awards



### Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative

**We identified potential conflicts with birds in the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) June quarterly oil and gas lease sale. In a sign of progress, the BLM removed more than 123,000 acres from the June auction because of overlap with important sage-grouse habitat in Wyoming.**

We led a social media campaign, #SwipeSagebrush, to raise awareness for the sagebrush ecosystem. We rallied 28 agencies and organizations to participate by publishing mock dating profiles for species found in the sagebrush. These humorous posts yielded half a million impressions.

We submitted scientific comments on the BLM’s efforts to update a guiding plan for utility-scale solar energy development on public lands. This includes land in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah.



### Western Rivers Initiative

**We helped pass SB23-270, Projects To Restore Natural Stream Systems, in Colorado. We hosted two webinars about the subject with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. 1,266 Audubon advocates sent messages to their state legislators in support of the bill.**

We received \$774,000 to implement 2.2 miles of stream restoration and improve culverts on an Audubon-certified ranch in Colorado.

We have been working with Grand Valley Audubon Society on innovative wetland enhancement projects in Grand Junction, Colorado. Last spring, they received approval for a funding request for \$727,000.

We began a leadership role in the Healthy Headwaters Working Group, the only coalition in Colorado that marries stream restoration policy, science, and practitioners.



### Gillmor Sanctuary

**We co-launched a monitoring project to document the impacts of disturbance on Snowy Plovers nesting at Great Salt Lake. By filling in data gaps, we aim to inform policy to better protect the plovers’ breeding grounds.**

We started an event series to connect the public to Gillmor Sanctuary. For the first two events, we led a bird walk and a plant walk for 32 enthusiastic participants.

Volunteers of the fourth season of Gillmor Workdays removed barbed wire to protect Burrowing Owls and other birds. Thirty-eight volunteers joined for four days.

We mentored a Utah Valley University student’s capstone thesis on measuring light pollution at Gillmor Sanctuary. She established methodology and baseline data and recruited another student to carry on the project with the sanctuary and Great Salt Lake Audubon.