



Audubon CALIFORNIA

STRATEGIC PLAN: 2005-2010

THE CHALLENGE

The current pace of habitat loss and decline of native species will continue unabated unless those committed to a clear conservation vision present a convincing plan to all Californians. It will need to address California's tremendous natural diversity – our state has more native plant and animal species at risk than any other and is a recognized “global hotspot”. The plan must also address the aspirations of all Californians for economic prosperity, clean air and water, affordable housing, access to parklands, and healthy communities. Audubon California must play a significant role in developing a greater conservation voice and vision that will be relevant to California's growing and diverse population.

The Audubon community in California combines the strength of a national organization, a strong grass-roots network of 50 local chapters, and a state-wide organization supported by over 50,000 members. We are committed to conserving California's natural heritage. While we focus mainly on birds and bird conservation, we are dedicated to a broad conservation vision that will preserve and strengthen California's natural diversity in this century and beyond. Audubon has a rich history of connecting people with nature in numerous ways, all of which help build a stronger constituency for conservation.

As Audubon California completes its first decade, we recognize that, in order to accomplish our mission, we must become a more effective voice for conservation by improving the focus and pace of our conservation activities. We need to play a leading role in connecting Californians to nature, not just in rural communities and preserves, but also in our urban areas. California's continued growth and changing demographics create a challenge for Audubon California as well as for other environmental organizations. We need to ensure that we make conservation relevant to the next generation, with special emphasis on delivering our message to Californians of color.

The local Audubon chapters are key partners in accomplishing our work, and Audubon California and the local chapters are both more powerful working with each other than independently. We are bound together not only by a common name but also by a common history and mission. Over the years Audubon California and local chapters have worked on projects together and share members and volunteers. Yet the chapters, as independent

organizations, identify their own priorities and follow through with conservation action. The chapters provide a strong grass-roots power to the Audubon agenda, and the effectiveness of Audubon California is enhanced by strong and vibrant chapters.

Audubon California is Audubon's voice with a state-wide perspective and responsible for crafting a conservation vision and program for California. A successful vision will inspire Audubon California members and chapters to work together for a common cause and will require that Audubon California and the chapters find successful ways to realize our joint mission. In order to fulfill our conservation vision for California, we must build and strengthen partnerships with private landowners, public agencies at all levels, scientists committed to conservation, and especially with other conservation organizations.

Success in the coming decades requires that Audubon California chart its course for the next five years. We need to adapt our work continually to meet our mission. We must identify, and commit to implementing, specific actions in order to make a direct and meaningful contribution to conserving California.

This Strategic Plan recognizes that we need to increase and improve our conservation work but that doing requires us to envision where we are going and how to get there. Success in the coming five years will then position us to have an even greater impact in the next five.

OUR STRATEGY

This Strategic Plan commits Audubon California to a five-year conservation agenda focusing on California birds and their habitats. In reviewing different habitats we emphasize efforts to assist bird species that inhabit specific priority sites. (See Appendix A.) We also recognize the critical importance of connecting people to nature and helping Californians learn about conservation through environmental education.

Audubon California will simultaneously address statewide issues and focus on a number of specific conservation projects. Both efforts are important, and they reinforce each other. We will focus on three key strategic elements:

Direct conservation – includes efforts to protect habitats at multiple sites, to protect vulnerable species, and to acquire, restore and manage land.

Policy – includes influencing public policy, helping shape public priorities, and generating public funding.

Education and outreach – includes public outreach and education at both state and local levels to build a broad constituency for conservation action.

To be successful in pursuing these strategic elements, we need to:

- 1) infuse our work with good science;
- 2) develop organizational capacity;

- 3) build strong partnerships with chapters, public agencies, private landowners and others;
- 4) communicate clearly and effectively;
- 5) increase membership and build new constituencies for conservation; and
- 6) raise money.

The following is an overview of our strategic elements.

1. DIRECT CONSERVATION.

There are four components of direct conservation: 1) conserving eight high-priority bird sites; 2) assisting Audubon chapters in conserving an additional 10 sites; 3) working with partners to develop conservation strategies for a number of key vulnerable bird species (*e.g.*, Tricolored Blackbird, Snowy Plover); and 4) working with private landowners to restore habitat on private lands.

A. Conservation of Eight Priority Sites.

Audubon California proposes to meet specific goals at eight high-priority sites through direct conservation action. We also will encourage and support involvement by chapters at these sites.

Our aim is to focus on sites where Audubon California already has impact and to use our Audubon Sanctuaries and Centers to encourage conservation in areas beyond those we control. We have an opportunity to ensure not only that our Sanctuaries and Centers are well managed for native species but that we can work with private landowners and other partners so that surrounding areas also provide benefits for native species. We can use our Sanctuaries as laboratories to improve land stewardship techniques. In leading by example, we can develop techniques that will benefit surrounding landowners and land managers.

Audubon California is currently emphasizing the following geographical areas:

Kern River
Interior Coast Range (Sonoma, Napa, Solano, Yolo Counties)
Los Angeles River
Southern Orange County
Salton Sea
San Francisco Bay

The project leaders in each of these areas will need to identify three- and five-year objectives by at least March 2006 through a rapid conservation plan process. In selecting sites we have focused on areas where we already have staff capacity, and we will emphasize building and implementing a clear conservation plan for those areas.

By early 2007 we will identify and implement plans for two additional locations for conservation action. Candidates include Santa Clara River/Pt. Mugu Coast, Sierra Valley, Delta, San Joaquin/Tulare Basin, Humboldt Bay, Lower Colorado River, Surprise Valley

and Klamath Basin. In choosing two new sites we will evaluate bird conservation importance, threats, and ability for Audubon to make a significant impact.

B. Working with Audubon Chapters to Conserve Ten IBAs or Priority Sites.

Audubon California will work with chapters to support their efforts to conserve ten additional Important Bird Areas (“IBA’s”) or priority sites. We will work with chapters to complete conservation plans to guide Audubon’s actions at these sites. We expect the efforts at these sites to be chapter-led, with Audubon California assisting in developing conservation strategies, identifying potential funding sources, and finding other ways to help achieve conservation success.

C. Conservation of Threatened and Vulnerable Bird Species.

Audubon California will evaluate opportunities to become deeply involved in efforts to conserve vulnerable bird species. These efforts will include developing conservation agreements or strategies aimed at reducing activities such as wind power or vineyard conversion that threaten bird species. We will need to evaluate opportunities to ensure that our involvement is critical to attaining conservation goals and that each action we take will be highly likely to succeed. For example, Audubon California has recently joined with several other parties to develop a Tricolored Blackbird Conservation Agreement for a multi-year conservation strategy among various public and private partners, including representatives from private industry. Audubon California will also participate in broad bird conservation partnerships such as Partners in Flight and habitat joint ventures as a way to support bird and habitat conservation.

D. Working with Private Landowners to Restore Habitat.

Building on our pioneering work in Yolo County through the Landowner Stewardship Program, Audubon California will target opportunities to work with private landowners to restore habitat and ensure long-term land conservation. We will focus our efforts in areas where Audubon already has a presence and there is a potential to work with multiple landowners to have a conservation impact. We will also seek to develop a network of Audubon stewards to help private landowners play a leading role in conservation. Potential sites include Imperial Valley, Surprise Valley and Sierra Valley, among others.

2. PUBLIC POLICY, SHAPING PRIORITIES AND RAISING PUBLIC FUNDS.

Audubon California is the only statewide organization whose primary mission is bird conservation. We must play a leading role in raising public consciousness of bird and habitat conservation in California. We will also play an active role in influencing public policy to support bird conservation and work to guide public funding to top bird conservation priorities. Our work in this area should also reinforce our conservation efforts at our priority sites and help garner the resources necessary to achieve our conservation goals.

Specific goals for the coming five years include:

- a) Play a leading role in raising \$1 billion for acquisition and restoration of conservation lands in California at the state and county levels.
- b) Identify opportunities to advance bird and land conservation based on priority habitat types identified and develop a strategy for shaping public priorities, public funding, and where possible, legislative approaches to advance those priorities.
- c) Play a leading role in defending and building public support in California for state and federal Endangered Species Acts.
- d) Reduce bird mortality from wind energy through effective regulation of wind power sites and operating regulations.
- e) Strengthen state-level guidelines for wetlands protection.
- f) Help direct \$50 million in public funding to assist private landowners to conserve lands within IBA's and protect threatened or vulnerable bird species.
- g) Use Audubon Centers and Sanctuaries to introduce policy makers to Audubon and increase conservation activism and voter participation.

3. EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH.

Audubon California is committed to expanding the number of Californians we inspire to become involved in conserving California's natural heritage. Audubon California and Audubon chapters operate nature centers, summer camps, classroom programs and field trips to help connect children and adults to nature. Audubon California recognizes that our state's growing and diverse population needs to appreciate and identify with natural California. At the same time, we realize that our programs and messages be based on sound science and also be relevant to the lives of all Californians. Equally important to the number of people we reach is the quality of the message we provide.

Audubon California currently has two Centers: Debs Park and Richardson Bay. We want to ensure that they help advance Audubon's conservation mission in the immediate vicinity of each site (*i.e.*, Debs Park with the Los Angeles River watershed and Richardson Bay with our San Francisco Bay Program) and beyond.

Audubon California's Starr Ranch Sanctuary runs a successful science-based education program for both children and adults in Orange County. The programs teach the scientific method and engage participants in age-appropriate research related to conservation issues affecting Starr Ranch. Audubon California plans to infuse the same commitment to science and restoration into its other educational programs.

We will build a stronger education network through workshops open to Audubon staff and chapter educators, incorporating conservation goals into our work. We intend to work with our chapters in exchanging lessons learned and best practices. We want our education programs to include the best work of both Audubon California and other organizations. Meeting that goal will require us to invest in our science and education staff and to have staff members work as a team to help strengthen our programs. Before considering developing a new Audubon Center, Audubon California will strengthen its existing education programs at Richardson Bay, Debs Park and Starr Ranch.

Our education and public outreach goals in the coming five years include the following:

- a) By January 2007 we will implement a series of measures to help evaluate the impact of our educational and outreach programs.
- b) All program content will be academically rigorous and based on the best scientific information available. By 2007, all pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade programming will meet the equivalent California Science, Math and English standards for that age and ability. Programs will be bilingual where appropriate.
- c) We will support a pilot Audubon at Home program with chapters and Audubon Centers in Southern California (January 2007). We will help identify three pilot programs, assist in a chapter-led effort to raise public funds, and help develop materials specific to California.
- d) By March 2007 Audubon California will facilitate opportunities for chapters and state staff to work more closely together on program development and delivery and staff development.
- e) By 2008 we will evaluate developing one additional Audubon California Center (Cooley Landing is the priority site) and will begin working with one or more chapters to support developing an additional chapter-led Center.
- f) By 2010 Audubon will serve 150,000 Californians through educational programs at chapter events, Centers and Sanctuaries.
- g) As an ongoing effort in all our educational programs, we will motivate participants to action on behalf of the environment through direct conservation, personal behavior changes, increased voter participation, or policy activism. Our programs will develop new conservation leaders, both youth and adult.

IMPLEMENTATION.

1. Infuse Our Work with Good Science.

In order to have greater impact and credibility, it is important that Audubon California's work be based on sound and rigorous-tested scientific information. We need to increase our scientific capabilities, as well as be able to engage in broader state-wide science and conservation issues. Our aim is to have a Director of Conservation Science to help us identify and explain key science questions or issues in our conservation work and to build relationships with scientists from various sectors – academic, non-profit organizations and public agencies.

Specific goals are to:

- a) Hire a Director of Conservation Science by March 2006 to be our voice for science and be responsible for ensuring that our work is guided by science.
- b) Make information about California's Important Bird Area more widely available and encourage the conservation of these sites.
- c) Reinvigorate Audubon California's Science Advisory Board by Fall 2006.

2. Develop Organizational Capacity.

Audubon California is committed to focusing on our highest priorities and strengthening our current projects and programs. We recognize that this will mean not pursuing all opportunities. We are also interested in building our capacity in a measured way and keeping an eye on priorities. Success will require utilizing all Audubon resources, at the chapter, state and national levels, as much as possible.

We will also focus on strengthening our business systems, including financial, human resource, and management systems. We must invest in the training and support of our staff and volunteers. We also need to ensure that our annual budget and objectives are coordinated with this Strategic Plan.

Audubon California will consider hiring the following staff positions *when and if* we are able to securing multi-year funding for them. Any new staff position should include a clear set of expected results of our investment. Potential positions include:

- a) Communications and marketing position (June 2006).
- b) Director of Conservation Science (March 2006).
- c) Estuarine Biologist for San Francisco Bay (January 2006).
- d) Additional position for Landowner Stewardship Program (March 2007).
- e) IBA Coordinator (March 2006).
- f) Grants Management/Finance position, based on evaluation of financial needs (to be considered for December 2006).
- g) Second chapter outreach position (to be considered for Summer 2007)

Audubon California will work with National Audubon Society to build finance, legal and human resource capacity, either in California or elsewhere in the West.

3. Build Strong Partnerships with Chapters, Public Agencies and Other Organizations.

The impact of our work will be much greater if we strengthen our partnerships with Audubon chapters, non-governmental organizations, landowners and public agencies.

Specific goals include:

- a) Evaluate hiring a second Chapter Outreach Coordinator within 12-18 months.
- b) Focus on building ties with chapters and chapter leaders to further our work. We will improve communications with chapters by reinstating a regular newsletter, electronic communications, council meetings and one-on-one meetings with individual chapters. We will actively explore other electronic communications and tools to improve communications between staff and chapters and among chapters.
- c) Form and build ties with key public agency, legislative and political leaders.
- d) Participate in key bird conservation partnerships such as California Partners in Flight and habitat joint ventures as our ability to do so develops.

- e) Help expand chapter capabilities and cultivate new conservation leaders by cooperating with chapters on regional, statewide and national policy and conservation issues.

4. Communicate Clearly and Effectively.

Having the ability to tell our story, share the successes of Audubon California and Audubon chapters, and becoming better at mobilizing our network of chapters and partners are all important to accomplishing our Strategic Plan.

Specific goals include:

- a) Build a communication and marketing strategy based on our Strategic Plan (June 2006).
- b) Redo Audubon California's website (July 2006), send quarterly electronic postcards to 50 percent of the members and "key influentials" (January 2007). Publish two newsletters a year that are delivered to our full membership (on-going).
- c) Beginning in January 2008 and continuing biennially thereafter, publish a "State of the Birds Report", including trend data, to build public awareness and educate public officials and other key opinion leaders about bird and habitat conservation.
- d) Evaluate creating a partnership with State Parks to provide visitors with a message about the importance of bird, bird conservation and ways to get them involved in their communities.

5. Increase Membership and Reach Out to New Constituencies.

Audubon's conservation impact will be strengthened by growing membership and support and reaching out to new constituencies. This will be done as a series of experiments in California, in cooperation with National Audubon Society, which manages membership and constituency development for the entire organization. We will pilot a number of tests for growing local and statewide membership and messages to reach new constituents.

Specific goals include:

- a) Initiate a pilot program to broaden the constituency for conservation. It should be focused on reaching out beyond the existing environmental community, such as to faith-based organizations, rural audiences, urban and minority communities (January 2006 planning & July 2006 launch).
- b) Develop and test statewide, and possibly local, messages and media (*e.g.*, newsletters, e-mail, web, phone calls, meetings, radio and print media) to key constituencies (*e.g.*, members, donors, chapters, visitors to Centers, prospective members, people of faith, people of color).
- c) Develop and test a rationale for marketing and communicating our new Strategic Plan. Develop a standard speech for the Strategic Plan with a rationale that resonates with members, donors, potential members and chapters and that also unifies and aligns our various programs and constituencies.

- d) Develop a membership growth plan for California that helps us grow 10 percent each year. Evaluate, test, and measure variations that include non-traditional memberships, non-magazine memberships, electronic memberships, and a plan for new members once they join.

6. Raise Money.

In order to meet our conservation vision for California, Audubon California must focus on building a donor base that focuses on growing the number of individual major donors, with an emphasis on unrestricted giving. Specific goals include:

- a) Raise \$2.27 million in fiscal year 2006 (ending June 30), \$2.5 million in fiscal year 2007, \$2.7 million in fiscal year 2008, \$2.9 million in fiscal year 2009, and \$3.1 million in fiscal year 2010 in operating funds for conservation.
- b) In order to diversify our funding sources, increase the percentage of public funds supporting the operating budget from 11.7 percent in fiscal year 2006 to 14 percent in fiscal year 2007 and 25 percent in fiscal year 2010.
- c) Develop a plan to build Audubon California's total endowment to \$25 million by fiscal year 2010, with an annual target of 25 percent of annual operating income coming from endowment.

Strategic Plan

Measuring Success Statewide

This Strategic Plan is intended to be used as a reference source to guide the actions of Audubon California over the next five years and to gauge whether we are achieving our goals. We intend to use the following measurements to help determine our success:

- 1) Protect a specific number of acres in priority habitats identified in the top eight priority sites (figure for current six sites to be determined by March 2006).
- 2) Assist chapters in developing a conservation plan for adding 10 additional IBA's or priority sites.
- 3) Help raise \$1 billion in public funding for priority conservation sites.
- 4) Acquire \$15 million in public contracts and \$15 million in public funding for acquisition of top eight priority sites.
- 5) Raise \$15 million in private operating funds and \$5 million in private capital funds to support our conservation work.
- 6) Reach 150,000 Californians through Audubon California or Center or Sanctuary educational programs by 2010 (estimated baseline 75,000 annually).
- 7) Issue a biennial "State of the Birds" report beginning in 2008 to highlight and shape issues related to bird conservation in California.
- 8) Conduct IBA reviews with a state technical committee composed of various representatives and agency-leading bird experts to build a broader coalition for IBA implementation (prioritization to be completed by December 2006).
- 9) Hold Audubon Assemblies every 18 months and develop an Audubon California intranet site and electronic postcard system to strengthen communications with chapters, activists and donors. Determine how to measure impact.
- 10) Launch pilot marketing program (July 2006).

DRAFT EXAMPLE OF MORE SPECIFIC MEASURES

Strategic Plan

Measuring Success By Program and Project

Audubon California further intends to develop guides for measuring our success in specific programs and projects. The following is an example.

Kern River

- 1) Assure that no development occurs in the 100-year floodplain north of Highway 178.
 - a) Acquire fee or easement on Onyx Ranch (2006), Alexander (2007), Smith (2006).
 - b) Acquire easements on key buffer parcels: Nicholes, Price, Hafenfeld.
- 2) Secure low-density development east of Lake Isabella.
 - a) Reduce threat by buying available developable land on Scodie Canyon (January 2007), Sprauge-Kelso (2008) and Onyx-Kelso (2006).
 - b) Secure effective development controls in the Kern Valley Specific Plan, addressing floodplain development, weed management and groundwater withdrawal (July 2006).
- 3) Limit residential development in Kelso Creek Valley.
 - a) Secure two Rudnick parcels.
 - b) Conduct water assessment and desert system threat assessment to determine development limits to recommend along Kelso Creek.
 - c) Explore potential BLM exchanges and conservation buyer deals to reduce impact to Kelso Creek floodplain.
- 4) Maintain and enhance 3,500 acres of high quality riparian habitat and 400 acres of floodplain wetland habitat along South Fork of Kern River in “good” condition (link to measure of key attributes).
- 5) Prevent any new habitat-altering invasive species from becoming established along South Fork of Kern River or Kelso Creek.

Appendix A

California's Natural Heritage: Habitats, Sites and Species

Audubon California will orient its conservation work around eight different types of habitats, which together provide a window to understanding California's natural heritage and particularly its birds. For each habitat type Audubon California has identified priority conservation sites that are either sites where we will be actively engaged or sites where we will support the work of Audubon chapters and other partners. In addition, Audubon California has drawn on the Partners in Flight Species of Continental Importance for the U.S. and Canada and the National Audubon Society's Water List to create a list of species that will guide our work in each of the priority sites.

1. Rivers & Streams – California's rivers and streams and their associated riparian woodlands of cottonwood, willow, sycamore and other species are critical to over 150 species of birds, including many neo-tropical migrants. River and streams are ribbons of life hosting a high diversity of native fish, amphibian and invertebrate diversity. Water is a limited resource in California, and decades of over-consumption have degraded freshwater and riparian systems and caused significant declines in biodiversity. Riparian forests have shrunk dramatically, so that less than 20 percent of California pre-settlement riverine forests remain, causing steep declines in bird populations.

Top Priority Sites:	Audubon Watch List	Western Yellow-billed
Kern River	Species:	Cuckoo
Los Angeles River	Least Bell's Vireo	Willow Flycatcher
	Song Sparrow	Warbling Vireo
Other Priority Sites:	Willow Flycatcher	Least Bell's Vireo
Lower Colorado River	Yellow Warbler	Bank Swallow
Sacramento River	Western Yellow-billed	Tree Swallow
Salinas River	Cuckoo	Swainson's Thrush
Santa Ana River		Yellow Warbler
Santa Clara River	Riparian Habitat	Common Yellowthroat
San Joaquin River	Joint Venture Focal	Wilson's Warbler
San Ynez River	Species:	Song Sparrow
	Swainson's Hawk	Black-headed Grosbeak
	Spotted Sandpiper	Blue Grosbeak
		Tricolored Blackbird

2. Oak Woodlands, Chaparral and Scrub – California's oak woodlands and scrub communities dominate the coastal ranges and the foothills of the Central Valley. These habitats cover 10 million acres, or 10 percent of the state's surface area. Woodland and scrub habitats support the highest diversity of animal and plant species of any terrestrial habitat in the state. More than 300 species of amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, as well as several thousand plant and invertebrate species, thrive in these habitats. California's chaparral and scrub habitats support many species found nowhere else in the world. California's oak woodlands and scrub habitats provide most of the world's habitat

for California Thrasher, Nuttall’s Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Yellow-billed Magpie and several other bird species.

Top Priority Sites:
Southern Orange County
Interior Coast Range

Nuttall’s Woodpecker
Oak Titmouse
Wrentit

PIF Coastal Scrub and Chaparral Focal Species:

Black-chinned Sparrow
Cactus Wren
California Gnatcatcher
Costa’s Hummingbird
Gray Vireo
Greater Roadrunner
Lesser Nighthawk
Nuttall’s White-crowned Sparrow
Mountain Quail
Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Sage Sparrow
Wrentit

Other Priority Sites:
Sequoia Foothills
Transverse Range

PIF Oak Woodland Plan Focal Species:
Acorn Woodpecker
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Lark Sparrow
Nuttall’s Woodpecker
Oak Titmouse
Western Bluebird
Western Scrub Jay
Yellow-billed Magpie

Audubon Watch List Species:
Allen’s Hummingbird
California Condor
California Gnatcatcher
California Thrasher
Lawrence’s Goldfinch
Mountain Quail

3. Bays, Estuaries and Coastline – California’s bays, estuaries and coastlines are important links between marine and terrestrials systems. Estuaries, where coastal rivers meet the sea, are highly productive areas that include eelgrass beds, tidal wetlands, mudflats, and open water habitat. Estuaries provide essential feeding, nursing and spawning grounds for many fish and invertebrates, such as Dungeness crab, salmon and herring. Bays and estuaries are critical components of the Pacific Flyway and support many species of waterfowl and shorebirds in high densities. Over 90 percent of the coastal marsh habitat in California has been lost, and most bays and estuaries are threatened by contamination and invasive species.

Top Priority Site:
San Francisco Bay

Other Priority Sites
Elkhorn Slough
Humboldt Bay
Morro Bay
Point Mugu & Ventura Coastline
San Diego Bay
Tijuana River Estuary

Audubon Watch List Priority Species:
American Golden-Plover
Black Oystercatcher
Black Rail
Black Turnstone
Brant
Brown Pelican
Clapper Rail
Elegant Tern

Heermann’s Gull
Least Tern
Marbled Godwit
Pacific Golden-Plover
Red Knot
Short-billed Dowitcher
Snowy Plover
Surfbird
Whimbrel

4. Wetlands and Lakes – California’s wetlands have dramatically shrunk, with less than 10 percent remaining. Yet they are a magnet for over 200 bird species, including tremendous aggregations of waterfowl, shorebirds and other water birds. Approximately 4-6 million birds on the Pacific Flyway depend on our state’s wetlands and lakes, including many flooded agricultural fields for migratory and wintering habitat. Mountain meadows and streams support a tremendous diversity of aquatic species, including native fish, as well as many species of birds and other wildlife. These meadows provide important nesting habitat for Sandhill Crane and Willow Flycatcher and critical migratory habitat for Rufous Hummingbirds and other songbirds that move to higher elevations following breeding in the foothills.

Top Priority Sites:

Salton Sea
Sierra Valley
Surprise Valley

Other Priority Sites:

Sacramento & San Joaquin Delta
Mono Lake
Owens Lake
Sacramento Valley
San Jacinto Valley
San Joaquin Valley

Audubon Watch List Species:

Greater Sandhill Crane
Black Rail
Yuma Clapper Rail
Migratory Shorebirds/Waterfowl
Rufous Hummingbird
Tri-colored Blackbird
Wilson’s Phalarope
Yellow-footed Gull

5. Grasslands and Agricultural Lands – California’s grasslands are a vanishing part of the state’s natural heritage. Native grasslands were formerly found throughout California in valleys, lowlands, and coastal terraces. Vernal pools are seasonal wetlands embedded within grassland systems. Urban, industrial and agricultural development has reduced grasslands from over 20 million acres to less than 2 million. Species dependent on these habitats have declined as well, including Mountain Plover, San Joaquin Kit Fox and Grasshopper Sparrow. Grasslands have also suffered from invasions of non-native weeds that displace native plant species and decrease the quality of forage on the range. Well-managed rangelands and cultivated agricultural lands play an important role for birds, including Swainson’s Hawk (alfalfa), Mountain Plover and Long-billed Curlew, among others. Encouraging good stewardship on agricultural lands is a priority.

Priority Sites:

Delta
Grasslands Ecological Area (Los Banos)
Jepson Grasslands
Merced Grasslands
Panoche Valley

Ferruginous Hawk
Grasshopper Sparrow
Long-billed Curlew
Mountain Plover
Swainson’s Hawk
Short-eared Owl

Audubon Watch List Species:

Burrowing Owl

CAPIF Grassland Focal Species:

Ferruginous Hawk

Grasshopper Sparrow
Mountain Plover
Northern Harrier

Savannah Sparrow
Western Meadowlark
White-tailed Kite

6. Islands and Marine Areas – California’s marine environment is characterized as a temperate upwelling region – one of only four in the world. The upwelling of cold, nutrient-rich water drives a highly productive system that supports a remarkable density and diversity of fish, seabirds, and marine mammals. Near the shore are giant kelp forests, rocky intertidal habitats, while farther offshore are canyons, seamounts and banks and a pelagic ecosystem that supports migratory fish, seabirds and whales. Globally significant seabird colonies and marine mammal rookeries are found on offshore rocks and islands. Marine protected areas conserve less than one percent of marine habitats and ecosystems.

Priority Sites:
Channel Islands
Cordell Banks
Cortez Bank
Farallon Islands
Monterey Bay

Audubon Watch List Species:
Ashy Storm-Petrel
Black-footed Albatross
Black Storm-Petrel
Black-vented Shearwater
Short-tailed Albatross
Xantus’s Murrelet

7. Deserts – California is home to three major deserts – Great Basin, Mojave and Sonoran – covering vast areas of interior California. Ecologically these deserts vary greatly in vegetation and climate. Over 200 bird species inhabit the wide diversity of desert habitats, including sagebrush, Joshua tree, creosote, saltbush, mesquite, smoke tree and palm oases. There is a variety of threats to California’s deserts, including off-road vehicle use, habitat fragmentation, and water diversion.

Priority Sites:
Cima Dome
East Mojave Peaks
Scodie & Paiute Mountains

Audubon Watch List Species:
Bendire’s Thrasher
Black-chinned Sparrow
Brewer’s Sparrow
Costa’s Hummingbird
Gilded Flicker
LeConte’s Thrasher

8. Conifer Forests – Vast portions of the North Coast, Sierra Nevada, San Gabriel, San Bernardino and various other mountain ranges host a vast expanse of conifer forest composed of coastal redwoods, fir, pines, pinyon, juniper, spruce and giant Sequoias.

Priority Sites:
To be determined.

Audubon Watch List Species:
Black Swift

Blue Grouse
Calliope Hummingbird
Flammulated Owl
Gray Vireo
Greater Sandhill Crane
Lewis's Woodpecker
Marbled Murrelet
Mountain Quail
Olive-sided Flycatcher
Pinyon Jay
Rufous Hummingbird
Spotted Owl
White-headed Woodpecker
Willow Flycatcher

CAPIF Coniferous Focal Species:

Black-backed Woodpecker
Brown Creeper
Black-throated Gray Warbler
Dark-eyed Junco
Flammulated Owl
Fox Sparrow
Golden-crowned Kinglet
MacGillivray's Warbler
Olive-sided Flycatcher
Pileated Woodpecker
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Vaux's Swift
Western Tanager