



# on the wing

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OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
FISCAL YEAR 2009-2010



*THE AUDUBON STARR RANCH SANCTUARY IN ORANGE COUNTY BY SCOTT GIBSON.*

## CONTINUALLY INNOVATING

California is a beautiful, immense place, full of diverse natural wonders that are unmatched anywhere else in the world.

Protecting these treasures is a challenging task, particularly these days when funding for conservation is increasingly scarce. But the economy is just one of many obstacles. There is also the size of the place. About 80 million of the state's 100 million acres are open space, agriculture, or rangeland. Within that expanse are 145 Audubon Important Bird Areas, essential habitat for breeding, wintering, and migrating birds.

Then there are the threats—such as climate change, non-native species, water shortages, development, and pollution—which are even more difficult to address in a state that has such a diversity of bird species and habitats.

Thankfully, this is California, known throughout the world for finding innovative solutions to the most complex challenges. We embrace that spirit as we seek new and better ways of accomplishing our conservation goals.

Seeking a more productive way forward with private landowners whose properties provide critical habitat, we're working with them and seeing unprecedented results for birds and wildlife. These types of partnerships are only possible because Audubon California has led the way in testing an assortment of strategies to not only make farms more hospitable for migratory birds, but also to improve habitat along the edges of farms.

Down in Orange County, we're field testing new ways to remove non-native plants without the use of chemicals. In Kern County, we're trying to see if we can create new habitat for the Tricolored Blackbird.

We're also finding new ways to connect with people. Our centers and sanctuaries are continually creating exciting new educational programs to draw young people into the natural world. Similarly, we have facilitated funding to bolster some of the best ideas and expertise in local Audubon chapters.

Thousands of people this year made their voice heard on important policy issues through our online action alert system, and many more bird enthusiasts connected with us—and each other—through our Facebook and Twitter platforms. And people from around the world got a whole new perspective on nature watching nesting Barn Owls and hummingbirds on our live webcams.

California is a dynamic place, so doing things the same old way year after year is a recipe for ineffectiveness. If Audubon California is going to make real progress for birds and nature here, we have to continually seek new solutions to the challenges our state faces.

Please join us in our efforts to protect California's nature wonders well into the future. I would love to hear any ideas you have.

Graham Chisholm  
gchisholm@audubon.org

## THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATIONISTS

“As we share some of these best practices and find ways to coordinate our efforts, we’ll make a real difference for the next generation of conservationists.”

Wendy Dalia steps off the trail for a moment to let a line of young campers in floppy hats and baggy jeans stomp back from the shoreline where they’ve been learning about invertebrates. She smiles at a teenage group leader taking up the rear.

Dalia is the director of education at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary, and a key part of Audubon California’s effort to connect the state’s young people to the natural world around them.

“We’re starting to reach the point where kids that started in summer camp in grade school are coming back to the Center as teens and young adults to teach the next wave of kids,” says Dalia. “We would love to see some of these kids take this interest with them to college and perhaps even build a career around it.”

Audubon California is a rare organization that prioritizes nature education right alongside habitat conservation and policy work. But we simply don’t have enough nature centers and sanctuaries to offer programs to large numbers of kids ourselves. However, the Audubon chapter network in California offers dozens of terrific education programs. Dalia has begun gathering chapter education leaders together to share best practices and curriculum ideas to find ways to better serve California as a whole.

“You would be amazed at some of the great work being done out there in Audubon’s name,” she says. “As we share some of these best practices and find ways to coordinate our efforts, we’ll make a real difference for the next generation of conservationists.”



WENDY DALIA HELPS CHILDREN AT THE RICHARDSON BAY AUDUBON CENTER & SANCTUARY GET A CLOSE-UP VIEW OF NATURE.



MILES DAPRATO SEEDS A RESTORATION SITE ON A FARM IN YOLO COUNTY.

## PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

“Agriculture and food production is an integral part of the economy and the heritage of this state, and natural habitat has an important role to play in that system.”

Tumble around the dirt roads of Yolo County with Miles DaPrato and you'll realize pretty quickly that he can tell you everything you need to know about each property you pass – how long the land has been in this farmer's family, why that farmer chose to grow almonds, why this other farmer chose to put up owl boxes. He learned this information the old-fashioned way, in a series of person-to-person conversations over the course of years.

DaPrato is a restoration project manager with Audubon California's Landowner Stewardship Program. His job is to make connections with local property owners and to help them explore ideas for how to improve habitat for birds and wildlife on their farms and ranches.

“Agriculture and food production is an integral part of the economy and the heritage of this state, and natural habitat has an important role to play in that system,” says DaPrato. “Our goal is to be the bridge between the landowner's interest in

protecting natural resources on their land and the installation of wildlife-friendly habitat. It's a matter of trust, respect, and most importantly, practicality.”

More than half of California's Important Bird Areas are on private property, so if we want to help sensitive bird species we need to find creative ways to work with landowners. Our work in Yolo County is just the beginning. Whether it's rice farmers in the Sacramento Valley, dairy farmers in the Central Valley, potential developers at Tejon Ranch, or private families in the Surprise Valley – we're finding solutions that benefit birds and nature.

“Most farmers and ranchers I work with see themselves as stewards of the land,” says DaPrato. “I think as we demonstrate how wildlife conservation can be done alongside farming, the door will be flung wide open for the opportunities to create a vast network of habitat across the agricultural landscape.”



SANDY DESIMONE WORKS A RESTORATION SITE ON THE AUDUBON STARR RANCH SANCTUARY.  
PHOTO BY SCOTT GIBSON.

## FINDING A BETTER WAY

“While restoring the land at Starr Ranch is important, it’s even better if we can inspire others to be more considerate in how they manage their lands.”

The approach to the Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary takes you through some of Orange County’s sprawling residential developments. One second, you’re surrounded by upscale multi-story homes, then you turn a corner and you’re in the midst of nature. This is country that Sandy DeSimone, Starr Ranch’s director of research and education, knows better than most.

“The woodlands, coastal sage scrub, grasslands, and streams on Starr Ranch are a rare reminder of the old Orange County, before all the houses and freeways,” she says.

DeSimone is developing new techniques for restoring native grasslands and coastal sage scrub without the use of chemicals. She regularly welcomes researchers, students, and land managers to the Ranch to share her restoration techniques, and publishes her findings in scholarly journals.

“While restoring the land at Starr Ranch is important, it’s even better if we can inspire others to be more considerate in how they manage their lands,” she adds. “So much of the coastal sage scrub and grasslands are disappearing, and if we lose them we’ll also lose all the wildlife that depends on them.”

DeSimone is also working to address a completely different—but no less severe—threat to Southern California habitat. She helped create a partnership called the South County Land Stewards—including Starr Ranch, Rancho Mission Viejo Land Trust, Cleveland National Forest, and Orange County Parks—to work on cooperative land management and to conduct a volunteer fire watch.

“While fire is natural, the frequent, intense fires that rip through Southern California can actually convert native habitats to weedy landscapes that are less hospitable,” DeSimone explains.

## ALL ABOUT THE BIRDS

“When we find creative ways to tap into the enthusiasm that people have for birds, we can accomplish great things.”

Gary Langham peers through a pair of binoculars at a floating clump of leaves and grass in a small inlet off Clear Lake. Along with the others on the boat, he counts one, two, three, then maybe dozens of Western Grebes sitting on floating nests.

Langham, Audubon California’s director of bird conservation, is here to help members of the Redbud Audubon Society do some early scouting as part of a project he’s developed to help breeding Western and Clark’s Grebes in four northern California lakes, which together support 76 percent of the total number of nesting grebes in California. Aside from the opportunity to make a real impact for birds in need, what excites him the most about this project is the chance to partner with local chapters on monitoring and community outreach.

“This is the perfect project for us because we can use our strengths at both the state and local levels,” he says. “Audubon California can provide the science and large-scale support while these chapters can make great use of the local knowledge and expertise.”

As a trained ornithologist, Langham oversees all of Audubon California’s scientific work, including our research into the effects of climate change and the mapping of Important Bird Areas. But while he understands the important role that science plays in bird conservation, he also likes to be surprised. That’s why, when he saw how one Audubon chapter had success protecting Western Snowy Plover nesting sites using children’s art, he found funding to share the idea with other local chapters.

“When we find creative ways to tap into the enthusiasm that people have for birds, we can accomplish great things,” he says.



GARY LANGHAM ENJOYING THE GREAT OUTDOORS. PHOTO BY RODD KELSEY.



# BIRDS MATTER

All of the work we do to safeguard California's natural treasures springs from our love of birds.

## MIGRATORY BIRDS

This year marked the second year of Audubon California's ambitious partnership with The Nature Conservancy, and PRBO Conservation Science to produce real improvements for migratory birds in the Central Valley and Klamath-Modoc regions of California. Highlights from this year included several habitat restoration projects at the partnering Davis Home Ranch, a 5,300-acre working farm in the Sacramento Valley; the second annual Rice and Waterbirds Workshop that drew 55 rice farmers to discuss bird-friendly farming; experiments on rice farms in the Sacramento Valley to test practices that enhance the value of rice fields for shorebird; and a strengthened relationship with the California Rice Commission to work together on behalf of migratory birds.

## SEABIRDS

We stepped up our involvement in the Marine Life Protection Act process, which will secure seabirds' food resources and protect key breeding colonies from disturbance. Our goal is to ensure that seabird colonies and feeding sites are protected as these Marine Protected Areas are selected.

## YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE

In December, nearly 3,000 voters in an online survey helped Audubon California name the Yellow-billed Magpie our first Bird of the Year. In June of 2010, we sponsored our second annual survey of species in an effort to learn more about where the species is living and in what numbers. We counted nearly double the number of magpies as the previous year, and had more than double the participation.

## TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD

Audubon California this year took over leadership of the Tricolored Blackbird Working Group—a partnership of conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, private landowners and agricultural groups. We also completed a Tricolored Blackbird habitat restoration project at Audubon's Kern River Preserve which, if successful, will serve as an important example of how we can create habitat on private lands for this species.

## ON THE GROUND

Protecting California's best habitats is a one of our main strategies to preserving California's natural legacy.



SAN JOAQUIN RIVER PHOTO BY AQUAFORNIA ([WWW.FLICKR.COM/AQUAFORNIA](http://WWW.FLICKR.COM/AQUAFORNIA)).

### AUDUBON IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Audubon California continued to make great strides increasing the protection of Audubon Important Bird Areas in California. Elements of this work are described throughout this report, but other highlights include:

- Our new research shows that Important Bird Areas will provide habitat for sensitive bird species despite climate change well into the future. Overall, 89 of the 145 sites will enable 50 percent or more of their sensitive species to persist.
- In order to protect seabirds, we have partnered with Audubon Alaska and top marine ornithologists to identify approximately 55 marine Important Bird Areas along coastal North America from Canada to Mexico as a first step toward protection of these sites.
- In an effort to permanently protect the recently restored wetlands at Owens Lake, we are working with Eastern Sierra Audubon, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and the State Department of Fish and Game, among others, to reach a lasting conservation agreement.
- We recently completed a study identifying tidal marsh and streamside forest restoration opportunities at the mouth of the Santa Ynez River in northern Santa Barbara County with the support of the California Coastal Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and California Department of Fish and Game.
- This year, we began advising the U.S. Navy on how best to manage for endangered California Least Tern and Western Snowy Plover populations at Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton.

A STUDENT FROM THE AUDUBON CENTER AT DEBS PARK ENJOYS THE WILDFLOWERS AT TEJON RANCH. PHOTO BY GABRIELA CASTAÑEDA.



## SAN FRANCISCO BAY

This year, we completed a major tidal restoration project on Tubbs Island at the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge in partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Planning for our Aramburu Island restoration project in Richardson Bay went into full-gear. Fundraising and project design are well advanced for this ambitious habitat restoration of this 17-acre island in the northwest corner of Richardson Bay that has become increasingly important bird habitat.



LOOKING OUT OVER OWENS LAKE DURING A BIRD SURVEY. PHOTO BY ANDREA JONES.

## SACRAMENTO VALLEY

In the last year, we have intensified our efforts to improve habitat in the Sacramento Valley for the millions of migratory waterbirds that rely on this area. We are actively working with rice and alfalfa farmers in the region to devise bird-friendly farming practices. Through the Migratory Bird Conservation Partnership, we have conducted workshops with growers, established a working partnership with the California Rice Commission and are implementing practices on at least six rice farms covering more than 20,000 acres. At the Davis Home Ranch, a 5,300-acre working farm in the Sacramento Valley, we have launched restoration projects that will serve to demonstrate how agriculture and bird conservation can work hand in hand.

## SAN JOAQUIN RIVER

Thanks to the settlement of years of litigation, the San Joaquin River this past year began receiving water again throughout its length, reviving habitat areas that have been dormant for decades. Audubon California is using this new spirit of cooperation to work with private landowners to restore bird habitat along the river. We're also playing a strong role in the newly-formed San Joaquin River Partnership, which seeks to maximize conservation opportunities while building support for the larger restoration.

## CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE

Conservation, education, and research come together at a number of our sites:

### RICHARDSON BAY AUDUBON CENTER & SANCTUARY/ SAN FRANCISCO BAY

This past year, we strengthened programs at the Center while providing service to more than 15,000 community members. We fine-tuned educational programs, making each more appropriate to its audience and ensuring that all our programs have strong science and conservation elements. We worked with five new underserved schools as part of our new Audubon's Birds program and Adopt-A-Beach programming, and provided in scholarships for bus and field trip expenses for underserved schools. Our pilot youth leadership program had a successful year with students operating several test restoration sites. We had 155 young people participate in our Youth Naturalists program, and we hired two former Youth Naturalists to serve as summer interns. The program has come full circle.

### AUDUBON CENTER AT DEBS PARK

This year, the Audubon Center at Debs Park served more than 11,000 members of the community as the Center focused on refining existing programs. The Arroyo Green Team, a group of local high school and middle school youths, restored degraded coastal sage scrub habitat in the park and organized community work days. We also created partnership programs with two local preschools and one day care provider. In total, we documented nearly 15,000 visits to the center, and most programs, including summer camp, saw marked increases in attendance.

### AUDUBON KERN RIVER PRESERVE

Our Audubon Kern River Preserve continued its work protecting and celebrating one of California's Globally Significant Important Bird Areas. In 2009, we acquired the last 106 acres of the adjacent Alexander Ranch with \$600,000 raised last year from private donors. Further from the Preserve itself, we purchased 290 acres along Kelso Creek with private funding. Protecting the Kelso Creek watershed is important as it is upstream of the Kern River Preserve and part of our long-term vision to protect the South Fork Kern River Valley. This land is being transferred to the Bureau of Land Management for long-term management. Volunteers continue to be integral to the work we do at the Preserve—at festivals, monthly outreach events, and stewardship workdays on the third Saturday of each month. In all, 70 volunteers donated over 2,000 hours this past year toward various projects including the pond turtle project, bird feeding, habitat restoration, weekend cleanups, and festivals. The quarterly nature festivals brought more than 1,000 of the nearly 8,000 visitors to the Preserve last year.

A YOUNG STUDENT AT RICHARDSON BAY.



### AUDUBON STARR RANCH SANCTUARY

This Orange County sanctuary continues to serve as a model for research-based, land management in southern California. We're now working on exotic control on 460 upland acres: 160 of those total acres on coastal sage scrub restoration and about 300 acres on native grassland enhancement. This work and associated research provided the platform for a number of lectures to outside organizations and classes, as well as peer-review publications. A total of 5,600 visitors came to Starr Ranch last year, many for educational programs such as Starr Ranch Junior Biologists and Adult Research Classes. The teen Junior Biologists program continued to provide a rich nature experience in southern Californian wildlands. Many thousands of people experienced the beauty of native wildlife on Starr Ranch through the wonders of the live streaming bird webcams, which passed 1 million page views from 110 countries.



*TWO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM SACRAMENTO GET HANDS-ON TRAINING IN CONSERVATION DURING A SLEWS RESTORATION DAY AS PART OF A JOINT PROGRAM OF OUR LANDOWNER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM AND THE CENTER FOR LAND-BASED LEARNING.*

## SUPPORTING LOCAL LEADERS

Audubon California is committed to working closely with our 48 Audubon chapters in California to promote conservation in local communities throughout the state. Examples of our work with chapters are mentioned throughout this report, but here are some other highlights:

- Audubon California this year secured funding from *TogetherGreen's* Pennies for the Planet program and a private donor for four chapters to use children's art as signs on the beach to make people aware of sensitive Western Snowy Plover nesting sites. Signs were chosen through children's art contests conducted through local schools.
- Audubon in 2010 continued to invest in its California chapters with a record \$315,000 in grants and other funding. California chapter projects ranged from restoration of wetland habitat to engaging inner city youth in restoring habitat for Cactus Wren in Los Angeles.
- Chapter citizen science volunteers helped collect data on at-risk birds such as Yellow-billed Magpie and Long-billed Curlew, and participated in Christmas Bird Counts, Great Backyard Bird Counts, and Breeding Bird surveys.
- Audubon California has provided resources and support to a number of chapters engaged in reviewing and commenting on potential impacts of renewable energy development on birds and habitat.

AUDUBON CHAPTERS ARE KEY TO A NEW PROJECT TO HELP BREEDING WESTERN AND CLARK'S GREBES AT FOUR NORTHERN CALIFORNIA LAKES. PHOTO OF GREBES AT CLEAR LAKE BY FLOYD HAYES.



A TREE FULL OF YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIES. PHOTO BY RICH HANSEN.

## ADVOCATING FOR BIRDS AND NATURE

Audubon California continues to advocate for policy changes that benefit birds and nature. Here are a few highlights:

- No single issue dominated the State Legislature as much in 2009-2010 as water. As lawmakers burned the midnight oil in a special session to agree on the framework for resolving long-standing problems with the Sacramento Bay-Delta water system, Audubon California was a constructive player helping put in place a legislative package that addressed environmental damage, water shortages, and infrastructure needs. We successfully fought for specific provisions ensuring no net loss of bird habitat from any Delta improvements made as a result of the new legislation.
- In response to an unprecedented rise in poaching violations in California, we sponsored and passed new legislation (Assembly Bill 708) to establish mandatory minimum and higher maximum fines for illegal take of wildlife. The new legislation also includes potential for revoking licenses of repeat offenders.



*AUDUBON CALIFORNIA AND LOCAL CHAPTERS ARE WORKING TO PROTECT MOUNTAIN PLOVERS, A SENSITIVE SPECIES WHO HABITAT IS UNDER THREAT FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES, INCLUDING RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT. PHOTO BY GREG SMITH.*

- Continuing our long support for California State Parks, we took a lead role in putting Proposition 21 on the November 2010 ballot. The initiative was intended to provide over \$500 million annually for state parks wildlife areas and marine protected areas. Audubon California not only provided funding to help place Prop. 21 on the ballot, but it also rallied volunteer signature gatherers and lent assistance to the public awareness effort. Unfortunately, the initiative failed, but we will continue to seek a permanent solution for state parks.
- In the 2010 legislative session, we continued our efforts to reduce the dangerous effects of lead on birds and other wildlife by helping author and support Assembly Bill 2223, which would have prohibited the use of lead shot in state wildlife areas. Although we were ultimately unsuccessful in getting this important protection passed, we did succeed in raising awareness of this threat to California birds. We view this effort as part of a longer-range effort to rid our natural environments of the dangers posed by lead ammunition and shot. We will certainly continue to press forward.

# OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

**JULY 1, 2009 TO OCTOBER 31, 2010**

Audubon California is deeply grateful to all the individuals, foundations and businesses whose generous contributions support our work.

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MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD BY MARTIN MEYERS.



## AUDUBON CALIFORNIA

In Thousands

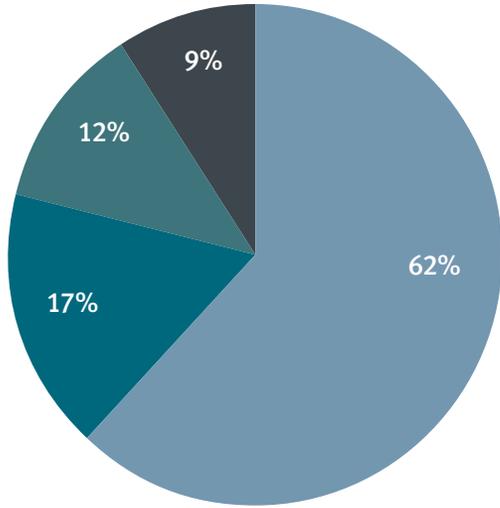
	Fiscal Year '09	Fiscal Year '10
<b>REVENUE</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>
Contributions* .....	\$4,559	\$3,819
Government Grants.....	\$690	\$1,014
Investment Income .....	\$995	\$745
Earned Income .....	\$559	\$585
<b>Total Revenue .....</b>	<b>\$6,804</b>	<b>\$6,163</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Salary and Fringe .....	\$3,851	\$3,768
Consultant/Legal/Travel .....	\$804	\$813
Promotional/Events.....	\$72	\$70
Facilities, Operations and Mgt** .....	\$1,265	\$743
Support Services Allocation** .....	\$812	\$769
<b>Expenses Total .....</b>	<b>\$6,804</b>	<b>\$6,163</b>
<b>ENDOWMENT AND OTHER FUNDS RAISED</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>
Endowment and Reserve Funds Raised .....	\$958	\$86
Purchase of Conservation Lands and Easement.....		
Public dollars raised .....	\$-	\$-
Private dollars raised .....	\$800	\$-
Funds for Future Use .....	\$467	\$518

\* Contributions include dollars raised for land acquisitions and funding from reserves

\*\* Includes expenditures for land acquisitions

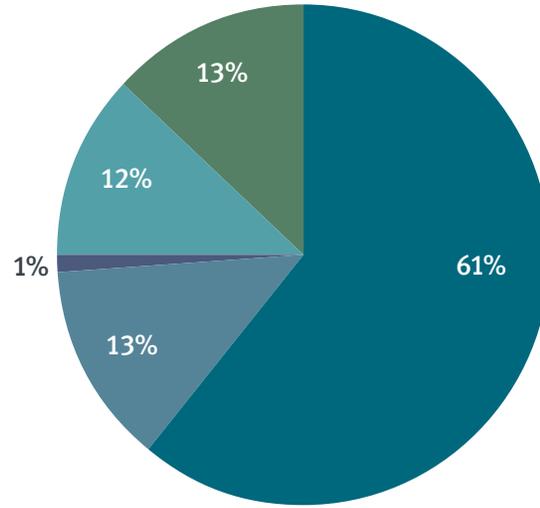
\*\*\* Fee paid to National Audubon Society for administrative services

### FISCAL YEAR 2010 REVENUE



- Contributions \$3,819,000—62%
- Government Grants \$1,014,000—17%
- Investment Income \$745,000—12%
- Earned Income \$585,000—9%

### FISCAL YEAR 2010 EXPENSES



- Salary and Fringe \$3,768,000—61%
- Consultant/Legal/Travel \$813,000—13%
- Promotion/Events \$70,000—1%
- Facilities/Operations/Management—\$743,000—12%
- Support Services to National Audubon Society—\$769,000—13%

LONG-EARED OWL PHOTO BY ALISON SHEEHY.



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FRONT COVER: RED-TAILED HAWK BY JACQUELINE DEELY.



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