



REGIONAL CONSERVATION PRIORITY: NORTHEAST FLORIDA

From Nassau to Flagler along the coast, and Marion to Hamilton counties inland, the Northeast region covers sixteen counties and is served by seven Audubon chapters and two Audubon staff – one based on the coast, one inland. The region harbors unique water resources, a variety of ecosystems, and climate strongholds that support resident wildlife and the birds of the Atlantic Flyway.

The beaches and dunes of the region’s coastal strand are the last significant nesting sites for shorebirds and seabirds on the East Coast of Florida. Extensive coastal marshes are essential nurseries for fish and invertebrates, while coastal scrub and maritime hammocks are home to resident bird species and provide essential breeding and foraging areas for migrating birds. Birds of conservation concern include the Least Tern, American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmer, Gull-billed Tern, Piping Plover, Red Knot, Worthington’s Marsh Wren, Clapper Rail, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, Burrowing Owl, Bald Eagle, Swallow-tailed Kite, and Painted Bunting.

Special places in Northeast Florida include some of the largest magnitude springs in the world whose outflows feed rivers such as the Ichetucknee, Ocklawaha, St. Johns, Silver, and Suwannee. Large sandhill lakes provide for recharge of the Floridan aquifer. These systems are being severely impacted by excessive nutrients and over-pumping of the aquifer. Mining, surface-water withdrawals, and dredging pose additional threats in the region. Local communities, dependent on nature-based economies, are suffering from the degradation of these water resources.

Special places such as the Ocala and Osceola National Forests, state forests, parks, and preserves are home to bird species of conservation concern such as the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Florida Scrub-jay, Southeastern Kestrel, Bachman’s Sparrow and Northern Bobwhite. Adequate monitoring and habitat management measures are critical for long term protection of wildlife in these areas as pressures from human activity continue to increase.

Therefore be it resolved:

The Audubon chapters in the Northeast Florida Region, in alignment with Audubon Florida and the Atlantic Flyway program, and using information derived from sound science, will work together to

strengthen Audubon's role as a conservation leader in Northeast Florida using the following strategies:

- Promoting conservation of and advocacy for bird habitat through regional sharing of resources.
- Solidifying our stakeholder status on conservation lands through communications with land managers about our activities on their lands,
- Assisting in surveying and stewardship activities throughout the region, including the EagleWatch, JayWatch, and shorebird steward programs along with rookery surveys,
- Educating resource managers about bird-related data and tools available to them through community science efforts like eBird,
- Build bird-friendly communities that provide habitat and conserve water by fostering improved landscaping practices for residential, public, and commercial properties,
- Promoting the value of treatment wetlands using the Sweetwater Wetlands/Alachua Audubon model, and
- Include conservation messaging in chapter activities, including bird walks, programs, and events currently without a specific connection to our conservation goals.
- Increase outreach to more diverse populations