

From the Executive Director

Happy New Year, Michigan Audubon members and friends!

I recently saw a photoshopped image of an escalator covered with ivy with the words “Nature Will Win” written over the image. My first thought was, *English Ivy, though?* The plant species taking over the escalator in this meme is that well-known, aggressive invasive species that threatens native ecosystems, growing along the ground as well as into the forest canopy, onto buildings, etc. The intention of this message, I think, was not to say that invasive species would win out, but that the natural world would adapt and prove more powerful than the collective threats to it. While this nod to the power of nature is something we can all get behind, it does not mean our work is or ever will be done — the daily work of our choices, our activism, our investment in the natural world and the things we know are worth preserving. The recent delisting of the Kirtland’s Warbler is one such example of an against-all-odds conservation success story. It is through the cross-pollination of group, individual, and government efforts that make changes happen.

There is an ever-expanding awareness (for better or worse) of the state of the environment and what that means to and for us all, especially as scientists around the world are amplifying a call to global action over the climate crisis. We are in the Anthropocene epoch, wherein species are becoming extinct 100 times faster than they would without human impacts. I think about this often, not only as a director of a conservation organization dedicated to conservation, education, and research of birds and their native habitats but also as an individual who has been paying attention and who cares about the preservation of wild places and wildlife. Awareness-raising is wonderful, but what we are more aware of often pains us to come to terms with.

How can we turn things around — as a nation, a world, a species, an interconnected part of the whole — is a daunting question for many of us. The avian realm is constantly giving us clear feedback about ecological balance (or imbalance) around us, in the habitats it is adapted to and specialized within, and never before have we relied so greatly on the compelling feedback of birds to push farther and harder in terms of advocacy and legislation, education, and research. In September of 2019, the New York Times featured a story titled *Birds Are Vanishing From North America*, detailing the reality of how the number of birds in the United States and Canada has declined by 3 billion, or 29 percent, over the past half-century.



How do we turn it around? We carry on. We question our habits, our thinking, our lifestyle. We learn and do more.

For Michigan Audubon, speaking both as director and as someone who historically supported the organization as a volunteer and member, I am proud to say that this organization is contributing to the greater, cumulative, and collective efforts of conservation, education, and research.

I’ve witnessed the patient, informed, and dedicated follow-through of conservationists — people who aren’t solely birders for the sake of enjoyment, but who give back to the world of birds through their advocacy, volunteerism, choices, and involvement with efforts and groups that are representing the importance of ecological balance, respect for the insights of science, and reverence for the natural world.

I am reminded of Jane Goodall’s book, *Reason for Hope*, one I read nearly 20 years ago that remains with me in a vague yet encouraging way. I urge you to resolve in this new year to self-reflect on the ways you give and can give more to the greater work of conservation in our state. To do more for birds than spot them. To see the connectedness and the ways in which we can improve and work together in carrying on. Ecology teaches us that everything is, after all, connected. I think that applies to the habitats of human thinking as much as it does to our beloved native ecosystems in this beautiful, Great Lakes state. For example, as you’ll read in our conservation feature on page 4, Michigan Audubon invites you to join us in pledging to keep cats indoors.

Thank you for being a member and for continuing to trust our organization to do the work of our mission with your support and the reverberation of *your* individual impact.

Heather L. Good, Executive Director

PS: If you have a feline friend, consider making a conservation pledge to keep your cat indoors.