

# EARTHCARE NORTHWEST

Winter 2023



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

Our 2022-2023 fiscal year was certainly one for the history books, not just in the story of Birds Connect Seattle, but of chapters all around the country who have since joined the movement to foster more inclusive bird conservation organizations. You, our members, led the way and I couldn't be prouder.

In keeping with the theme that "birds connect," we're trying something new for this annual report. On the one hand, these kinds of documents can be impressive catalogues of an organization's yearly accomplishments. On the other, they can be so focused on the "what" that you might forget about the "why" behind all the work.

Birds are the central thread weaving together all of our programs and activities. They inspire us and remind us of the interconnectedness of all life. That's why we decided to tell the story of our year through birds as metaphors for our mission in action. In the following pages, you'll read about how our staff, volunteers, and members connected people to birds in the spirit of 1) change, 2) community, 3) joy, 4) urban conservation, 5) activism, and 6) leadership. This work takes many forms, in education programs, community science projects, and conservation action in our local community. Thank you for your partnership in bringing it all to life.

Onward,



Claire Catania  
Executive Director, Birds Connect Seattle

## MISSION, VISION, VALUES

**Birds Connect Seattle advocates and organizes for cities where people and birds thrive. We envision our local cities integrating and valuing nature, minimizing threats to birds, and protecting habitat. As a staff-led and volunteer powered organization, we value: Inspiration, Interconnectedness, Equity and Inclusion, Diversity, Humility, Collaboration, and Science.**



Green Heron | Mick Thompson

## OUR TEAM

### STAFF

Ser Anderson  
*Urban Environmental Educator  
AmeriCorps Service Member*  
  
Hanae Bettencourt  
*Education Manager*  
  
Claire Catania  
*Executive Director*  
  
Ella Denman  
*Development Assistant*  
  
Sarah Hankins  
*Nature Shop Retail Associate*  
  
Mechio Hardeman  
*Nature Shop Retail Manager*  
  
Joshua Morris  
*Urban Conservation Manager*  
  
Glenn Nelson  
*Community Director*  
  
Carol Roll  
*Development Director*  
  
Christine Scheele  
*Program Director/  
Senior Education Manager*  
  
Russell Steele  
*Bookkeeper*  
  
Sonora Troger  
*Operations Manager*  
  
Ellie Yamanaka  
*Community Engagement Manager*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Heena Ahmed  
  
Jill Fleming  
  
Anthony Floyd, *Vice President*  
  
Andres Hiltbrunner  
  
Megan Ko, *Treasurer*  
  
Visakh Madathil  
  
Nathan Maltos  
  
Andrew Schepers, *President*  
  
Amanda Virbitsky  
  
Sharon Wada, *Secretary*

# 2022-23 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



**10,010**  
transactions and 28.14  
tons of birdseed sold in  
The Nature Shop



**83,265**  
birds recorded in five  
community science  
surveys



**3,764**  
individual members  
from 2,696 households



**2,957**  
youth receiving  
environmental  
education



**220+**  
visiting or resident bird  
species inspire local  
conservation

**479**  
volunteers,  
serving in nearly 40 roles  
and committees



**3,764**  
people inspired  
through community  
outreach programs



# CHANGE

The past year has marked a significant chapter in the evolution of Birds Connect Seattle. As is often the case with profound transitions, it has been a period of both challenges and inspiring growth. With the formalization of our organization's name change to Birds Connect Seattle in June, we are not merely altering a title but embarking on a poignant journey to explore how we can collectively improve for the betterment of the birds and our world.

Amidst the winds of change, we have drawn closer to our members, volunteers, program participants, and devoted bird advocates. This metamorphosis has imparted important insight into the core values held by our community, illuminating pathways for us to enhance our efforts in safeguarding birds and broadening the embrace of our cause.

Now, as we enter on the nascent stages of our next strategic plan, we are deeply grateful for the lessons learned, as well as the significant changes we experienced over the past year. Above all, we are touched by the unwavering support and partnership of you, our cherished members, who have stood alongside us as the principal catalysts for change.

## Bald Eagle Facts

Bald Eagle plumage undergoes a great deal of change during the first five years of the raptors' lives. Around age five, they finally reach their signature white head and tail, dark body, bright yellow beak, and light eyes. After age five, it is nearly impossible to age a Bald Eagle, which can live 20-30 years in the wild.

Bald Eagles were at the brink of extinction in the 1960s due to the insecticide DDT. Now, 60 years later, thanks to the work of bird advocates like you, they have returned to healthy breeding populations across North America.

Bald Eagle | Emily Norton for Canva

# COMMUNITY

Birds Connect Seattle envisions a community where we all uplift one another, learn from and celebrate our differences, and share our common interest in birds and nature. Much like the community-minded Bushtit, our strength lies in our collective unity. As a thriving community boasting nearly 15,000 nature enthusiasts, volunteers, program participants, dedicated partners, and impassioned advocates, we are ideally positioned to organize for our mission.

Our community plays a pivotal role across three fundamental spheres. Firstly, our members provide the vital financial resources that enable us to operate our programs at their current scale and frequency. Without their generous support, our programs could never become a reality. Secondly, our volunteers infuse our initiatives with people power, whether through species counts, engaging classroom presentations, offering top-notch customer service in our Nature Shop, or contributing in countless other invaluable ways. Lastly, our community serves as the megaphone for spreading the message of avian conservation and its connection with human health. Through their outreach efforts, we are able to attract a diverse array of audiences, inspiring the next generation of bird enthusiasts and advocates to take flight alongside us.

## Bushtit Facts

If you've ever seen a swarm of small grey puffballs flitting around in bushes or low trees, you've likely seen a flock of Bushtits. These highly communal birds flock in groups of up to 30 or more while simultaneously calling out to one another softly to let others know where they are. They are communal nesters, meaning a mated pair will often help feed or care for nestlings in other nests, while the same is provided to their young.

Interestingly, Bushtit flocks will often mix with other small birds including chickadees, kinglets, and warblers while foraging for insects—diversifying their flock.



# JOY

Birds bring joy. They offer connection and comfort from nature. They fill the air with morning songs. They make guest appearances at bird feeders and baths outside our windows. They surprise us with their interesting antics and silly behaviors. They amaze us with their ability to fly, dive, dabble, torpor, and adapt.

In this remarkable year, we rejoined in-person, rediscovering the collective delight of birdwatching. Birds Connect Seattle orchestrated a multitude of field trips and Neighborhood Bird Outings, each offering a unique opportunity for people of all bird knowledge levels to unite in the wonder of birds and their diverse habitats. Some found new friendships and forged connections within our birding community, while others rekindled bonds with old friends and cherished family members during these shared experiences.

Joy wasn't just experienced in the form of birdwatching together. Our NextGen Council hosted numerous Beers for Birds trivia nights around the city, as well as piloting bird a board game night. Our summer Nature Camp expanded to a second location, bringing the joy of birds (as well as bugs, trees, art, nature, and beaches) to more children and families than ever. With additional Camp locations planned for next summer, we eagerly await the growth of joy in our community.

## YELLOW WARBLER FACTS

Spring migration brings a multitude of warblers to the Pacific Northwest, but few are as joyful to see and hear as the Yellow Warbler. Their song isn't hard to learn—a tumbling series of chirps that sounds like "sweet sweet sweet I'm so sweet."

They are often seen prominently perched at the top of small trees or brambles singing joyously to passersby.

Yellow Warblers are long-distance migrants. In the winter months, they spread their joy in southern Mexico and Central America, and come springtime, they join us in North America to breed and raise their young.

Yellow Warbler | Steve Byland for Canva

# URBAN CONSERVATION

At Birds Connect Seattle, our commitment to urban conservation takes flight through Bird-Safe Seattle, a cornerstone program dedicated to mitigating urban hazards for birds. Our multifaceted approach addresses issues such as window collisions, rodenticides, free-roaming domestic cats, and light pollution. In tandem, we strive to enhance the quality and interconnectedness of bird habitats.

As we embark on the third year of our Seattle Bird Collision Monitoring Project and the expansion of dBird.org, we are gaining valuable insights into the local dynamics of bird-building collisions. Early findings reveal a sobering reality that tens of thousands of birds die each year within the City of Seattle due to building collisions. The good news is that these deaths can be prevented, and the data we collect through the Seattle Bird Collision Monitoring Project will help us advocate for bird-safe building regulations.

Our quest to comprehend and safeguard urban bird populations extends to our enduring community science initiative, the Neighborhood Bird Project (NBP). For nearly two decades, dedicated volunteers have ventured into parks across the area, diligently gathering data on species prevalence. Through their passionate efforts, they not only contribute to our scientific understanding but also nurture a deeper appreciation for the avian wonders gracing their local neighborhoods.



Barn Owl | Raghu Mehta | Audubon Photography Awards

## BARN OWL FACTS

Similar to a few other owl species, Barn Owls do not migrate. Instead they live year-round in cities and suburbs, often using empty buildings for daytime roosts. Barn Owls have incredible hearing, which they use to hunt rodents, their primary food source. It's believed they can hear a mouse's heartbeat in a 30ft sq room.

Barn Owls, along with other raptors, often fall victim to secondary poisoning when the rodents they feed on have ingested poisons used by humans for rodent control. Reducing or eliminating our use of rodenticides and pesticides is one way to improve the health and wellbeing of our urban bird populations.



Belted Kingfisher | Harry Collins

# ACTIVISM

Local elected officials and decision-makers shape our urban environment. Policies are instrumental in safeguarding and nurturing our urban tree canopy, ensuring equitable access to healthy environments and recreational spaces, controlling the use of hazardous rodenticides, and establishing building regulations that prioritize birds and wildlife. For birds to thrive alongside us in our cities, their needs must be considered in local policies and management decisions. Birds Connect Seattle is a voice for birds through advocacy and activism.

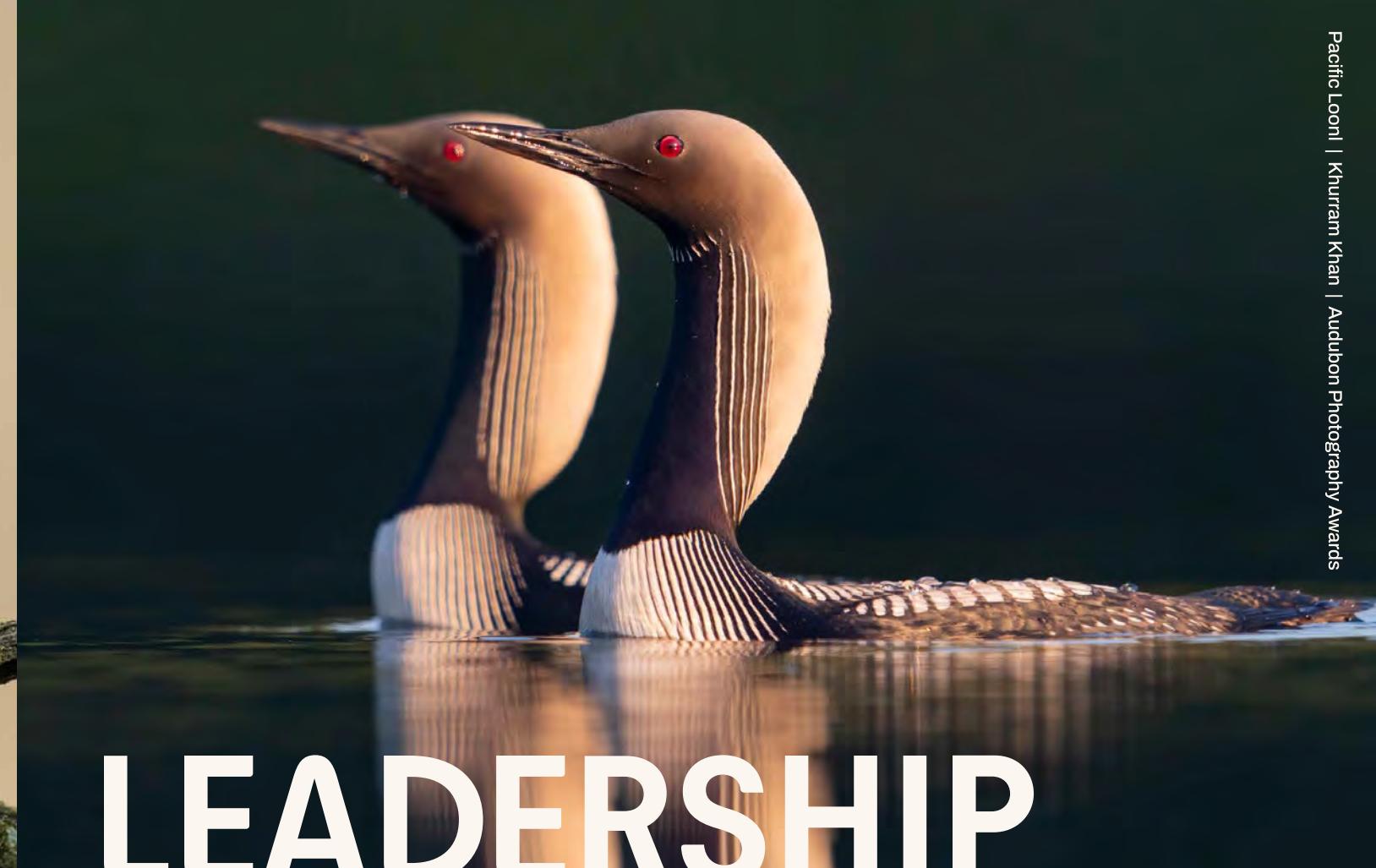
Birds Connect Seattle devotes substantial effort to developing working relationships with local decision-makers. Our aim is to ensure that the concerns of both our organization and our vibrant community are thoughtfully considered in the development of policies that impact our shared environment.

In addition to our advocacy efforts within the local government, we actively engage our community in the mission of conservation. We provide accessible opportunities for individuals to participate in local advocacy, whether it involves advocating for tree policies or for bird-safe building regulations. We firmly believe that advocating and championing birds need not always hinge on city policies alone.

At Birds Connect Seattle, advocacy is not just a means to an end; it's a core component of our identity. We are dedicated to effecting positive change, one relationship, one policy, and one individual action at a time.

## BELTED KINGFISHER FACTS

The Belted Kingfisher is a bold and boisterous bird found along both salt and freshwater shorelines, making it well-suited to our area. You can listen for their distinct and loud rattling or chattering call, or their high-pitched greeting or warning scream. The Belted Kingfisher has a sydactyl foot, where two toes are fused together, which helps them dig their nest cavity 3-12 feet deep in a dirt bank. Whether it is screaming, digging, diving, or fishing, there is very little that gets in the way of the Belted Kingfisher and their end goal.



Pacific Loon | Khurram Khan | Audubon Photography Awards

# LEADERSHIP

For more than a century, Birds Connect Seattle has proudly stood as a local beacon of bird conservation leadership. As the largest Audubon chapter in the state and one of the oldest conservation nonprofits, our organization's legacy is firmly rooted in championing the protection and appreciation of birds. While our recent name change thrust our modest yet mighty organization onto the national stage—a role we were unaccustomed to—we recognized the profound importance of the change we could effect, and indeed did. Throughout this transformative year, we have remained resolute in adhering to our guiding principles, making inclusivity not just a part of our name but a central tenet of our programs.

While we have proudly led the charge within the national birding community, we place paramount importance on nurturing our organization's own leaders. We continue to provide an array of training opportunities to empower our volunteers, including essential CPR and First Aid training. Furthermore, we offer an inclusive leadership series known as "Hoot Camp," where our staff, board members, and dedicated volunteers come together to hone their skills in conservation communication, embrace diversity, and bolster field safety.

In a year marked by unprecedented inflationary pressures, we remained steadfast in our commitment to invest in our most valuable asset—our talented and diverse staff. This investment allowed us to retain our dedicated team members and attract fresh talent to join our mission.

## PACIFIC LOON FACTS

Pacific Loons are adaptable birds—skilled in both the air, and the water. With their heavier weight and less buoyancy, Pacific Loons are able to dive and fish at deeper depths than other loons. While they require a long runway to get in the air, they have been clocked flying at over 37 mph, very fast for a bird of their size.

Pacific Loons are the most social of all loon species, sometimes flocking in groups of a few thousand birds. They migrate just offshore at low altitudes but make long-haul journeys to reach their summer breeding grounds or winter feeding grounds.

# BIRD UNIVERSITY

The next generation of the master birder program is beginning. Classes are structured around Washington's distinct ecoregions and the birds that live there. Bird University will be offered online, with small-group study and field instruction to help you dive even deeper into your bird knowledge and understanding.

This year's Bird University courses feature:

- PNW Coast and Pelagic Birds with Dr. Peter Hodum
- Puget Trough and Cascade Birds with Jack DeLap and Dr. Ursula Valdez
- Columbia Plateau and Blue Mountains Birds with Jason Fidorra
- Okanogan Birds with Stefan Schlick
- Birding by Ear integrated into all ecoregions by Whitney Neufeld-Kaiser

TAKE ONE COURSE OR ENROLL IN THE ENTIRE SERIES! AS WITH ALL ADULT CLASSES, MEMBERS RECEIVE A 20% DISCOUNT ON CLASS FEES.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

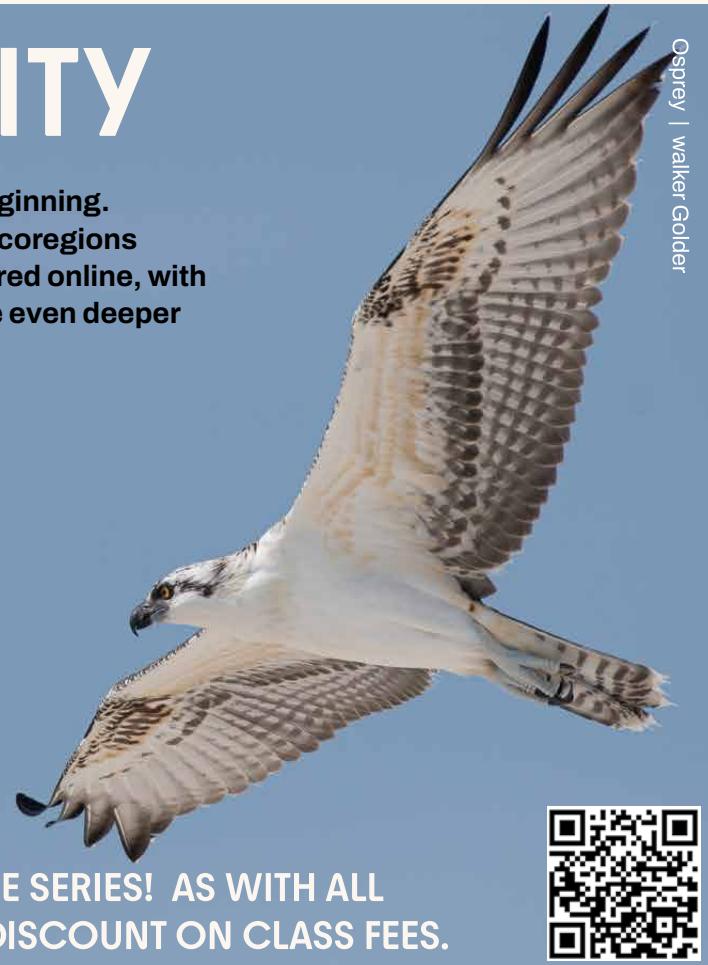
Register for the at-home count and participate in this local community science event from the comfort of your home. The valuable data gathered by volunteers is part of a national effort to help us understand wintering bird populations and support research initiatives.

If space is still available, you are also welcome to sign up to join a team for an in-field count.

Learn more and register: [birdsconnectsea.org/cbc](https://birdsconnectsea.org/cbc)



Megan Bonham | Audubon Photography Awards



## SHAPE OUR FUTURE

We want to hear from you, our valued members, as we formulate our vision for the future through our next strategic plan, which will begin in July of 2024.

Please complete our Community Survey  
[https://bit.ly/BCS\\_Survey2023](https://bit.ly/BCS_Survey2023)



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering commitment and financial support. At Birds Connect Seattle, we uphold the principles of transparency and accountability as we diligently steward the resources you entrust to us in service of our local community. As a local, nonprofit organization, Birds Connect Seattle relies on generous individual donations and membership dues from donors like you. In addition, we fund our programs through grants, investment earnings, retail sales, and program fees. These diverse revenue streams provide us with a secure financial foundation and reliable resources to fulfill our mission.

In 2022-23, Birds Connect Seattle made investments in a few critical one-time expenses to our building to improve functionality, safety, and our environmental footprint. This included installing a new heat pump, insulation, and decommissioning our oil tank. While our investment portfolios yielded modest returns compared to previous years, we persevered in the face of unforeseen challenges, including unprecedented inflation affecting the essential goods and services upon which our programs depend. Significant investments were made to expand priority equity initiatives. We were fortunate to be able to rely on our healthy financial reserves during this fiscal year.

## FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2022–JUNE 30, 2023

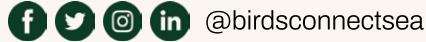
PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT		BALANCE SHEET	
<strong>REVENUE</strong>		<strong>ASSETS</strong>	
Contributions	\$ 348,784	Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$ 164,170
Membership Dues	\$ 123,480	Investments	\$ 2,903,105
Grants & Restricted Contributions	\$ 97,500	Receivables	\$ 5,133
Bequests	\$ 32,500	Merchandise Inventory	\$ 290,112
Retail Sales (net)	\$ 198,627	Prepaid Expenses	\$ 8,446
Program Fees	\$ 170,267	Land, Building, & Equipment	\$ 279,601
Investment Return	\$ 96,559		
Property Sales	\$ 28,343		
	<strong>TOTAL REVENUE</strong> \$ 1,096,060		
<strong>EXPENSES</strong>		<strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong>	\$ 3,650,567
Programs*	\$ 1,026,497		
Administration	\$ 180,360		
Funding the Mission	\$ 195,046		
	<strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong> \$ 1,401,903		
<small>* Includes the work of Urban Conservation, Education, Community Science, Community Engagement, and The Nature Shop</small>		<strong>LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</strong>	
		<strong>Liabilities</strong>	
		Payables & Accrued Expenses	\$ 95,309
		Deferred Revenue	\$ 188,670
			<strong>Total Liabilities</strong> \$ 283,979
		<strong>Net Assets</strong>	
		Without donor restrictions	\$ 1,303,116
		With donor restrictions	\$ 2,063,472
			<strong>Total Net Assets</strong> \$ 3,366,588
			<strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</strong> \$ 3,650,567

\* Includes the work of Urban Conservation, Education, Community Science, Community Engagement, and The Nature Shop



## BIRDS CONNECT SEATTLE

8050 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast  
Seattle, WA 98115  
[birdsconnectsea.org](http://birdsconnectsea.org)



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# HOLIDAYS AT THE NATURE SHOP

The Nature Shop is open Tuesday–Saturday 10AM–5PM for all your shopping needs: binoculars, bird feeders, apparel, games, greeting cards, and more!

### **Limited-Time Member Special**

10% off all binoculars,  
spotting scopes, and tripods\*

Members also receive 20% off all books and bird seed 365 days a year

*Shop online anytime at:*  
[birdsconnectsea.org/thenatureshop](http://birdsconnectsea.org/thenatureshop)

\*Available through December 23, 2023 for in-store purchases only. The discount cannot be combined with any other discount or sale. Excludes accessories, replacement parts, repair fees, or special orders. The Nature Shop will be closed for in-person shopping December 24–January 1.

