

First Session of the 131st Maine Legislature

LEGISLATIVE & ADVOCACY

— 2023 Summary —

Dear Maine Audubon members and supporters,

The First Session of the 131st Maine Legislature was one of the busiest and most successful we've ever had. Super-powered by the addition of our new Policy Advocate, Ches Gundrum, Maine Audubon was able to work on—and help pass—more legislation that benefits wildlife and habitat than any session in recent memory! It was a whirlwind, with many successes to celebrate but also some issues to continue working on in future sessions. We look forward, as always, to your continued support. We can't do it without you.

Yours in conservation,



ELIZA DONOGHUE, ESQ.
Director of Advocacy and
Staff Attorney

Legislature By the Numbers

Maine Audubon
submitted
testimony on

56 bills

More than
3,600
messages

were sent to
legislators by Maine
Audubon members and
supporters

We had
1,084
signatures

on our Loon Lead Tackle
petition, our largest
petition ever

IN THE NEWS

Environmental groups highlight bill to protect habitat for endangered Maine species

"Incremental habitat loss, one poorly sited driveway or septic system at a time, can have a big impact on vulnerable species, species that are really on the brink, where every population and often every individual really counts."

Maine Audubon Advocacy Director Eliza Donoghue, on Maine Public Radio

JANUARY 27, 2023

Maine Voices: What Would Fishing in Maine be Without the Wildlife?

"Fishing in Maine just wouldn't be the same without the other wildlife, like loons, that go with it, and we owe it to ourselves and to the creatures we fish alongside to ensure that our activities aren't harmful. We're four generations of Maine fishermen, but there are many more to come."

Jon Lund, Will Lund, Maine Audubon's Nick Lund, and Elliott Lund, writing in the Portland Press Herald

APRIL 23, 2023

Students Who Proposed State Butterfly Visit Preserve

"And it's been a really cool process, figuring out how laws get made...it started with just a letter that got sent out and turned into this."



Laura Seaver, Loranger Memorial School teacher, on NewsCenter Maine



































JUNE 8, 2023



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 **Maine Audubon Priority Bill**
 **Environmental Priorities Coalition***
Priority Bill

Bill Number	Description	Priority	Position	Submitted Testimony	Result
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE					
LD 1621	This bill requires fair and equitable access to Dept. of Environmental Protection decision-making processes.				Carried over to next session
LD 2004	The 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act is amended under this bill so that the Wabanaki Nations can benefit from most existing and future federal laws that apply to the other 570 federally recognized tribes.				Vetoed
LD 2007	This bill advances self-determination for the Wabanaki Nations and recognizes the inherent sovereignty of the tribes in Maine.	 		No public hearing	Carried over to next session
HABITAT					
LD 392	This bill adopts rules to support beach nourishment and planting native sand dune vegetation in the name of climate resiliency.				Signed into law!
LD 425	This bill would have ended the ban on single-use plastic shopping bags.				Did not pass!
LD 572	This bill would have removed the 5 cent fee for bags in retail stores.				Did not pass!
LD 649	This bill affirms the right of Mainers to plant native plants and other "low impact" landscaping.				Became law!
LD 1156	This "Maine Trails Bond" invests \$30 million toward the design, development, and maintenance of non-motorized, motorized, and multi-use trails statewide.				Carried over to next session
LD 1246	Expands the circumstances in which state agencies consult on strategies to avoid and minimize impacts to endangered and threatened species habitat from new development.	 			Signed into law!
LD 1285	Funding for the popular land protection program, Land for Maine's Future, would be extended through 2025.				Carried over to next session
LD 1363	This bill directs the Dept. of Environmental Protection to develop rules to allow for safer regulation of future spodumene mining in Maine.				Signed into law!
LD 1919	This bill establishes a wildlife sanctuary at Blue Hill Falls in Hancock County.			No public hearing	Carried over to next session
LD 1934	This bill directs the creation of recommendations to improve technical assistance to municipalities, including land use planning.				Signed into law!
LD 1969	A Land for Maine's Future Trust Fund to better advance land conservation efforts in the state is established under this bill.				Signed into law!

* Maine Audubon is a proud member of the Environmental Priorities Coalition, a partnership of 37 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations.

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Bill Number	Description	Priority	Position	Submitted Testimony	Result
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RENEWABLE ENERGY

LD 1227	This bill funds dual-use agriculture/solar pilot projects—one strategy among many to responsibly site solar energy projects.				Carried over to next session
LD 1591	This bill encourages the siting of renewable energy projects on lands contaminated by PFAS and away from non-contaminated farm and forest land.				Signed into law!
LD 1881	A compensation fee program to account for impacts to high-value farms and forests from new renewable energy development is created by this bill.	MA			Signed into law!
LD 1895	This bill sets an energy purchase schedule, as well as other commitments to help ensure responsible offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine that benefits Maine people & helps protect wildlife.	MA EPC			Signed into law!

WATER

LD 10	This bill adds certain plants to the Maine list of aquatic invasive species, making it illegal to sell, import, or transport them.				Signed into law!
LD 92	This "Clean, Drain, Dry" bill requires boats to be cleaned before transport between water bodies, preventing invasive plants from hitching a ride.				Signed into law!
LD 164	This bill provides funding to protect water quality and employ other measures to keep Maine lakes clean.				Signed into law!
LD 379	After initially opposing it, Maine Audubon helped to improve this bill to study the impacts of wake boats.				Signed into law!

WILDLIFE

LD 57	Eight species of bird, bat, and insects were added to the Maine Endangered Species Act list under this bill, which will expand available resources for their conservation.	MA			Signed into law!
LD 239	This bill establishes the Pink-edged Sulphur as Maine's official State Butterfly.				Signed into law!
LD 258	The State's annual budget includes \$7.5 million for culverts that help allow for the safe passage of wildlife.				Signed into law!
LD 670	Guidelines will be developed to decrease bird strike risk in publicly-funded buildings, thanks to this bill.	MA			Became law!
LD 958	Lead poisoning is a leading cause of loon mortality; this bill phases out the sale and use of small-size painted lead tackle.	MA			Signed into law!
LD 1648	This bill will establish a new method for the valuation of land under the farm and open space tax law, to encourage a wide array of conservation practices.				Carried over to next session
LD 1845	This bill aims to reduce the impacts on outdoor lighting on wildlife and Maine's dark skies.				Did not pass

Highlights from the First Session of the 131st Legislature



Blackpoll Warblers were added to the Maine Endangered Species Act list.

Work to Do

Though we were successful in helping pass a large number of bills, there is still plenty of work to be done with the 131st Maine Legislature. Next session, we'll continue our shared work to secure a just and equitable future for the Wabanaki Nations by recognizing the sovereignty of the Wabanaki Tribes. A bill to establish a wildlife sanctuary at Blue Hill Falls has also been "carried over" to the next legislative session for more work, as well as a bill to fund the Land for Maine's Future program. We'll also be looking closely at legislative strategies to provide technical assistance to municipalities, specifically in land use planning.

Be sure you receive our alerts. Sign up at maineaudubon.org/act.

Conserving Maine's Threatened and Endangered Species

A pair of priority bills helped improve protections for Maine's most vulnerable wildlife species. LD 57 added eight new species to the Maine Endangered Species Act list, including Bicknell's Thrush and Saltmarsh Sparrow. LD 1246 increased the circumstances in which state natural resource agencies consider and mitigate impacts to listed species from new development.

Bringing Nature Home

With the passage of LD 649, Maine affirmed the rights of landowners to pursue native plantings and other low-impact landscaping techniques.

Protections for Loons

We were successful in helping to close a loophole in existing law that permitted dangerous lead tackle to be used on Maine lakes (LD 958), and are now part of a stakeholder group to study a new threat: Wake boats, which threaten loon nests and cause other damage by producing larger waves than typical boats (LD 379).

Building Bird Safe

In what might be one of the most pleasant surprises of the session, Maine is now one of just a few states to begin to address—through legislation—the issue of bird-glass collisions, which kill as many as one billion birds around the country each year (LD 670).

Offshore Wind

With the passage of LD 1895, Maine jumpstarts the development of a homegrown offshore wind industry, which will deliver the clean energy we need to meet our climate goals and stabilize energy prices. Moreover, LD 1895 secured investments in research, monitoring, and conservation of wildlife species and habitats that may be impacted by offshore wind energy development, as well as required plans for avoiding and minimizing wildlife impacts. Floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine is one of our best tools to combat climate change. We're proud to have played a big role in making this bill as strong as it is.