



## PRESS RELEASE

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**Media Note:** Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at

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## GEORGIA AUDUBON IS NOW BIRDS GEORGIA

**(Atlanta, Ga.) November 30, 2023** - The Georgia Audubon Board of Directors has voted to change the name of Georgia Audubon to Birds Georgia. This decision comes in response to troublesome revelations about the organization's namesake – John James Audubon – which prompted the board to empanel a Name Task Force to explore what the “Audubon” name means in light of the organization's work, mission, and constituency and how it might impact their ability to attract younger, diverse audiences in the years to come.

“Our work was not to sit in judgment of the man, but to understand how the Audubon name was either enabling or frustrating our ability to fulfill our mission of building places where birds and people thrive,” says Marc Goncher, vice-chair of the Board of Directors and chair of the Name Task Force. “From the process, we learned that there are fellow bird conservationists and prospective bird lovers who feel unwelcome when we use the Audubon name. As our state continues to diversify and new generations join the birding community, we foresee a declining awareness of the Audubon brand and reduction in positive association with what it was intended to represent. We also heard clearly that our name needs to reflect what our organization is all about ... birds.”

The task force spent six months researching, discussing, and seeking to understand all points of view before forming a recommendation to present to the board. In this time, Georgia Audubon hosted a webinar and discussion with Gregory Nobles — biographer of *John James Audubon: The Story of an American Woodsman* — to better understand the man and his life. The task force also sent a survey to more than 10,000 members, donors, partners, and constituents to gather input on the Audubon name and how it relates to Georgia Audubon's work, mission, and constituency. Additionally, the task force, leadership, and staff held numerous conversations with stakeholders to gather further feedback including hosting two listening sessions, one in-person and a second virtually, for constituents to share their thoughts.

“Our new name, Birds Georgia, states clearly what our work is all about, and it better reflects our values of inclusivity and openness to all people. There are many threats facing Georgia birds and their habitats, and it will take all of us working together to overcome these challenges. Birds Georgia looks forward to

building upon the successes we achieved as Atlanta Audubon Society and, later, as Georgia Audubon, to achieve our vision of building a conservation-minded and fully-engaged Georgia where birds prosper, habitats flourish, and understanding grows. As we seek to engage the next generation of birders in the critical fight against conservation challenges, we must broaden and diversify the communities we work with across the state. We will be better able to do that as Birds Georgia,” says Executive Director Jared Teutsch.

Audubon has not always been part of the organization’s name. Established in 1926 as the Atlanta Bird Club, the organization later voted to become an independent chapter of National Audubon Society and changed to the name Atlanta Audubon Society. In 2020, the organization became Georgia Audubon, reflecting a new statewide focus. The organization will celebrate its Centennial Anniversary in 2026.

“While we may be changing our name to Birds Georgia, we are not changing our mission or the critical work we do to protect birds across the state,” says Board Chair Paige Martin. “The Board of Directors listened to the feedback we received and felt that Birds Georgia more intuitively states who we are and what we do. The new name is also more welcoming to people from all backgrounds. At a time when birds need our help more than ever, we do not want our name to be a barrier for anyone who would like to join in our work building places where birds and people thrive.”

Birds Georgia is among several independent Audubon chapters changing its name in light of revelations about John James Audubon. Other chapters, including Seattle, Portland, Madison, Chicago, Golden Gate, Detroit, Washington D.C, and others have either recently rebranded or announced their intent to move away from the Audubon name.

Birds Georgia will continue to be an independent chapter of National Audubon Society leveraging the nationwide network of bird conservation organizations to conserve birds and their habitats in Georgia and beyond.

**About Birds Georgia:** *Birds Georgia is building places where birds and people thrive. We create bird-friendly communities through conservation, education, and community engagement. Learn more at*

*[www.GeorgiaAudubon.org](http://www.GeorgiaAudubon.org).*

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