

Menunkatuck Audubon Society

Strategic Plan 2019-2024

Supporting measures to protect wildlife and the environment

Vision

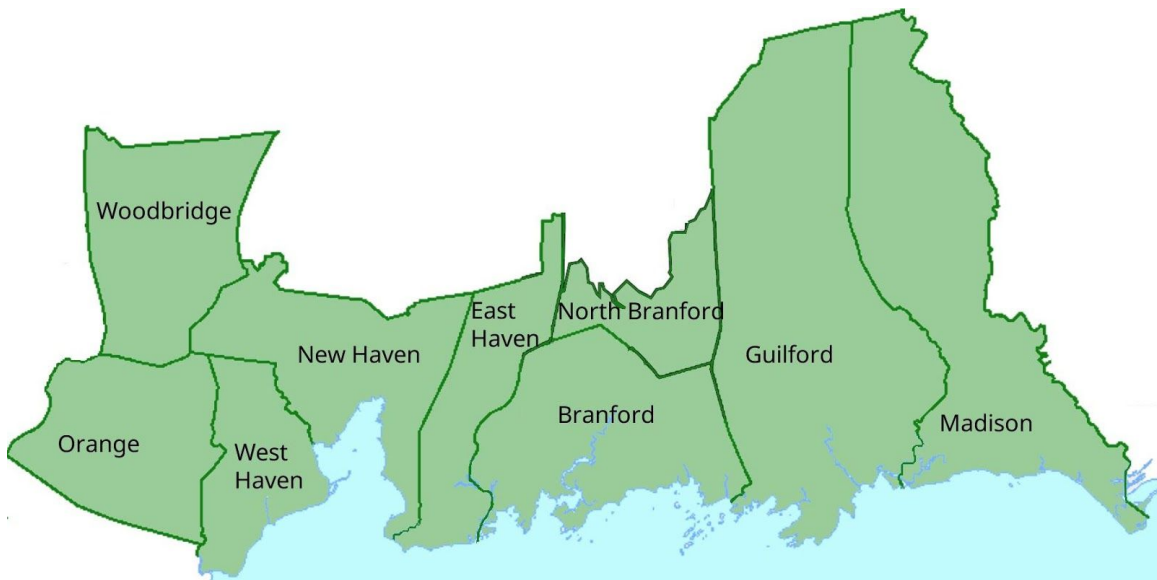
Healthy and viable ecosystems and habitat for people, birds, and other wildlife.

Mission

Menunkatuck Audubon Society is committed to work locally to preserve our natural ecosystems for the benefit of people and the earth's biodiversity.

About Menunkatuck Audubon Society

Menunkatuck Audubon Society is a chapter of National Audubon Society serving the towns of Orange, West Haven, New Haven, Woodbridge, East Haven, Branford, North Branford, Guilford, and Madison, Connecticut.



Menunkatuck is part of a network of 450 Audubon chapters throughout the United States. Its location in the Atlantic Flyway and on Long Island Sound position it to help with the conservation of many critical bird species.

Significant factors affecting our ability to meet Our Strategic Priorities

The following is a summary of a “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats” (SWOT) analysis that we relied on in developing this strategic plan:

A. Strengths

- The chapter has passionate officers and directors that work well together and has been successful in recruiting new directors
- The chapter has 700+ Audubon members and 50 local Friends of Menunkatuck.
- The chapter is well respected in the community.
- The chapter has a strong events program, website, a large email list, and Facebook page.
- The chapter is fiscally responsible. There is sufficient funding to meet mandatory administrative expenses and current program efforts.
- The chapter has a clear Mission and Vision.
- The chapter has many partners (Appendix A).

B. Weaknesses

- The Chapter has only a handful of active members; more are needed to “staff” the initiatives identified in this strategic plan.
- There has been a recurring problem of a lack of people under 45 years old needed to take the MAS forward in the future.
- There is an uncertain future with respect to funding.
- We do not have a publicity person
- There is a lack of diversity within the membership and volunteers.
- Most of our initiatives, meetings, and speakers are located in the East Shore. Getting new members from other towns to become Friends of Menunkatuck or become involved will be challenging.

C. Opportunities

- There are many active retired people and young people interested in conservation in the chapter area, which can be viewed as a large untapped potential.
- There are numerous like-minded conservation and civic organizations in the area with whom we can partner.
- The addition of Orange, Woodbridge, and North Branford to the chapter area expands the number of people.
- Increase frequent and reliable financial sources
- Increase publicity

D. Threats

- There is a lack of interest in or knowledge about the MAS (younger people may not be familiar with Audubon family of organizations).
- The lack of sufficient funding for public agency environmental programs may strain the Chapter's ability to be effective (for example, projects on Falkner Island could be limited by the USFWS budget restraints).
- Many organizations vie for contributions and active members, which creates a very competitive environment.
- State, federal and local policies may detract from our goals.
- There is a general lack of concern for the environment.

Strategic Priorities

A. Conservation

1. Coasts

As a chapter along the Long Island Sound coast, Menunkatuck should be fully engaged in the conservation of the birds that migrate, breed, or winter in the Sound and its adjacent areas.

State-listed species are Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) - Threatened, American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) - Threatened, Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*) - Endangered, Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) - Special Concern, and Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) - Threatened.

Goal: Protect the beach, marsh, and island habitat that shorebirds use for migration, breeding, and wintering.

Strategies:

- (a) We will increase the number of volunteers who monitor beach nesting areas along the coast. Piping Plovers, American Oystercatchers, and Least Terns nest on beaches in West Haven and Madison.
- (b) We will recruit volunteers to work with the Stewart B McKinney to improve the nesting habit for Roseate and Common Terns on Falkner Island.
- (c) We will monitor the coastal marshes in the chapter area to ensure that they are not degraded by human activity.
- (d) We will work with the Town of Guilford to develop a plan for the protection and restoration of the Chaffinch Island marsh.
- (e) We will continue streaming video of nesting terns from Falkner Island including information about the conservation status of the birds.

How we will measure success:

- At least 10 new beach monitors
- At least five volunteers to work on Falkner Island
- At least 20 volunteers to monitor coastal marshes
- A plan and timeline are developed with the Town of Guilford to protect the Chaffinch Island marsh.
- Streaming video

2. Bird-Friendly Communities

As part of the northeast megalopolis, Menunkatuck should mitigate the problems that birds of the Atlantic Flyway face in their efforts to migrate, breed, and winter. Loss of breeding habitat, especially for cavity-nesting birds; the

danger of window strikes during all seasons; and the lack of sufficient food, especially during migration and breeding all deserve our attention.

Goals: Plant 2,000 native plants each year with individuals, partners, and in our habitat restoration projects. Establish five nest box trails with 10-20 boxes per trail. Collect baseline data on bird/building collisions.

Strategies:

- (a) We will expand our Plants for Birds work to include working with chapter towns to adopt native plant requirements for municipal properties and streetscapes.
- (b) We will work with chapter towns to develop demonstration native plant gardens and recruit volunteers who will maintain them.
- (c) We will work with schools to establish schoolyard habitat programs.
- (d) We will develop a homeowner's habitat assessment program.
- (e) We will expand our Plant Sale for the Birds into the new chapter towns.
- (f) We will investigate partnering with a school or a local grower to grow native plants for the plant sale and for use in our habitat restoration projects.
- (g) We will work with the Audubon network in Connecticut to develop a local plant growing system to provide low-cost plants.
- (h) We will develop a way to provide plants for inner-city residents at low or no cost.
- (i) We will continue to experiment with methods of invasive plant control.
- (j) We will increase the number of nest boxes for state-listed cavity nesting birds including American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) - Special Concern, Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) - Special Concern, and Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) - Endangered, as well as Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) and Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*). We will continue to help provide nesting habitat for Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) - Special Concern - by supporting the Bobolink Project. We will continue to install new and replacement Osprey platforms as needed.
- (k) We will recruit new 10 nest box monitors.
- (l) We will recruit people to monitor bird/building collisions in New Haven to determine if there is a need to establish a Bird Friendly Buildings program.

How we will measure success:

- At least three towns adopt native plant requirements for town property and streetscapes
- At least five native plant demonstration gardens in chapter towns
- At least three schoolyard habitat programs established
- At least five homeowner habitat assessments completed each year

- At least an increase of 50% in the number of plants sold at the Plants for Birds sale
- A long-term partnership with a greenhouse to grow native plants for the plant sale and for use in our projects
- At least 100 native plants distributed to inner-city residents each year
- Continued invasive plant control
- At least five new nest box trails of at least 10 boxes
- At least 10 new nest box monitors
- At least 10 volunteers monitoring bird/building collisions in New Haven

B. Capacity

1. Membership

With three new towns being added to the chapter area, Menunkatuck should integrate members in Orange, Woodbridge, and North Branford into chapter activities and projects. Achieving our conservation goals requires that we represent our entire community including our urban areas and young people. Goal: Increase the number of active members and younger members in MAS programs and initiatives and develop future leadership for the chapter and for environmental activism.

Strategies:

- (a) We will engage our members in Orange, Woodbridge, and North Branford with programs and other outreach activities.
- (b) We will recruit a representative from each chapter town to promote our programs, activities, and projects.
- (c) We will work with Audubon and Audubon Connecticut on the Audubon on Campus program with Yale University, Southern Connecticut State University, and other area colleges and universities.
- (d) We will expand our efforts to work with the diverse population of the chapter area.
- (e) We will develop a program of social events to engage people with whom we do not yet have relationships.
- (f) We will develop a program to provide speakers to give talks and field walks for specific communities like garden clubs, young naturalists, and urban groups.
- (g) We will develop a membership categories including a business category.
- (h) We will update our Friends of Menunkatuck membership category with a July renewal date.
- (i) We will advertise the options to purchase gift memberships to be a Friend of Menunkatuck.

How we will measure success:

- A representative from each chapter town by the beginning of the 2021 season and at least two are under the age of 45 by the 2024 season
- The number of active members increases by 15-20 by the 2022 season
- Three successful social events (over 20 attendees) annually by the 2022 season
- At least 10 business memberships

2. Finance

After completing the majority of Osprey platform replacements and with extensive streaming video Menunkatuck has exhausted two major revenue streams. We should keep or increase the current level of member donations to the annual appeal and purchases from the plant sale.

Goal: Maintain income sufficient to achieve the conservation and education priorities in this plan.

Strategies:

- (a) We will increase the number of National members who become Friends of Menunkatuck.
- (b) We will maintain the level of financial support from the annual appeal (\$9,000 average of the last five years).
- (c) We will continue to apply for grants to support our conservation and education priorities.

How we will measure success:

- At least 50 new Friends of Menunkatuck
- At least \$9,000 donated to the annual appeal each year
- At least three grants each year with an average total of \$3000

3. Board Development

The strength of Menunkatuck depends on a board committed to maintaining its strength by seeking new directors to bring fresh ideas.

Goal: Continued recruiting of talented and committed volunteers to serve on the MAS board.

Strategies:

- (a) We will recruit new board members, including some under age 45, who want to spearhead conservation projects that align with our strategic plan.

- (b) We will establish committees or teams to help spearhead projects and streamline board meetings by providing a structure for reporting progress of Menunkatuck's projects.

How we will measure success:

- At least three new board members
- A working committee or team structure that results in board meetings lasting no more than an average of 90 minutes

4. Partnership

One of the most productive ways to increase our capacity is the partnerships that we develop.

Goal: Increase the number of partnerships to include town conservation commissions, parks departments, and other like-minded organizations.

Strategies:

- (a) We will maintain our current partnerships.
- (b) We will work with the land trusts in Orange, Woodbridge, and North Branford on projects beneficial to us and them.
- (c) We will work with town conservation commissions and parks departments to advance our priorities.
- (d) We will seek out businesses with which to work on mutually beneficial projects.

How we will measure success:

- Maintain current partnerships
- At least three new land trust or conservation commissions partnerships
- At least three business partnerships

C. Education

1. Community Science

Education and decision making must be based on a sound scientific basis. We should use our membership of over 700 and 200 other interested individuals to recruit community science participants.

Goal: Increase the number of people participating in community science programs.

Strategies:

- (a) We will recruit participants for the Christmas Bird Count to do backyard feeder counts and to do longer counts in areas that require significant hiking.

- (b) We will determine if there is a safe and inexpensive way to survey the large Long Island Sound portion of the Guilford/LIS count circle.
- (c) We will recruit new nest box monitors to check the nest box trails.
- (d) We will recruit people to participate in Project FeederWatch.
- (e) We will recruit people to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count.
- (f) We will partner with the New Haven Bird Club and Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society to recruit people to participate in Climate Watch.
- (g) We will recruit people to use the Birds vs Building app to survey bird/building strikes in New Haven.
- (h) We will recruit people to participate in a study of marsh migration at the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary and other Guilford marshes.
- (i) We will continue to work with Sacred Heart University on the Project *Limulus* horseshoe monitoring program and use the results to advocate for greater protection of this species so vital to Red Knots and other migratory shorebirds.
- (j) We will develop a program to work with Scouts on birding and other related merit badges.

How we will measure success:

- At least 10 additional participants for the Christmas Bird Count who will do backyard feeder counts and long woods hikes
- At least 10 new nest box monitors checking the nest box trails
- At least 10 people participating in Project FeederWatch
- At least 10 people participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count
- At least 20 people participating in Climate Watch
- At least 10 people using the Birds vs Building app to survey of bird/building strikes in New Haven
- At least 20 people to participating in a study of marsh migration at the Guilford Salt Meadow Sanctuary and other Guilford marshes
- At least five Scouts will earn merit badges

2. Community Education

Menunkatuck should use its local presence to provide a wide array of community education opportunities.

Goal: Continue our current education programs and offer them in our new towns.

Strategies:

- (a) We will continue the monthly community programs in the East Shore area during September through June.

- (b) We will establish a series of community programs in the Orange/West Haven/Woodbridge area.
- (c) We will recruit a volunteer birder to revitalize our field trip program to offer field trips each year.
- (d) We will continue to stream video from our bird cameras and provide information about the birds.
- (e) We will continue to work with the Meigs Point Nature Center on mutual programs.
- (f) We will investigate working with the New Haven Parks department to offer educational programs at city nature centers.

How we will measure success:

- Ten monthly community programs each year in the East Shore area
- At least five community programs each year in the western part of the chapter area
- At least five field trips each year
- At least 10% growth in the views of our bird cameras
- At least three programs at the Meigs Point Nature Center each year
- At least two educational programs at New Haven nature centers each year

3. Advocacy

Menunkatuck should use its role as part of the Audubon network and its respected position in the community to advocate for policies for the conservation of birds and other wildlife and the restoration and preservation of their habitats.

Goals: Continue and expand the empowerment of citizens with the knowledge and means to be effective environmental advocates for policies that protect birds and habitat at the local, state, and/or federal level.

- (a) We will support Audubon and Audubon Connecticut policy positions.
- (b) We will use our email list to promote at least one policy issue per month.
- (c) We will bring attention to a policy issue at each community program with the pre-program slideshow, in an announcement, and with fliers.
- (d) We will promote policy issues on our social media channels.
- (e) We will host at least one event with an elected official each year.
- (f) We will recruit five volunteers to meet with elected officials or their staff and provide information about policy issues.
- (g) Two board members will attend at least one in-district event hosted by one of our senators or member of Congress and ask questions about policy issues.

How we will measure success:

- Monthly community programs, email, and social media channels used to publicize policy issues
- Five volunteers to meet with elected officials
- At least one event with an elected official each year
- Two board members attend at least one in-district event hosted by one of our senators or member of Congress

Appendix A - Partners

Audubon Bent of the River Center
Audubon Connecticut
Branford Land Trust
City of New Haven Department of Parks, Recreation, and Trees
City of New Haven Public Schools
Clinton Land Trust
Connecticut Audubon Society
Connecticut Butterfly Association
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
EverSource
EPA Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee
Faulkner's Light Brigade
Friends of Hammonasset
Guilford Dockmaster
Guilford Garden Club
Guilford Land Conservation Trust
Madison Land Conservation Trust
National Audubon
New Haven Bird Club
New Haven Land Trust
Old Lyme Land Trust
Old Saybrook Land Trust
Regional Water Authority
Rings End Lumber
Sacred Heart University Project *Limulus*
Southern Connecticut State University Marine Studies
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service McKinney NWR
UConn CT Sea Grant, CIRCA, and CLEAR
West River Watershed Alliance
Yale University Peabody Museum and School of Forestry and Environmental Science

Potential Partners

Local Garden Clubs
Massaro Farm
Orange Conservation Commission
Orange Land Trust
Save the Sound

Appendix B - Important Bird Areas in the Chapter Region

East Rock Park, New Haven

Falkner Island Unit of McKinney NWR, Guilford

Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison *

Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven

Quinnipiac River Tidal Marsh, North Haven, New Haven, Hamden *

Sandy Point, West Haven *

West River Memorial and Edgewood Parks, New Haven, West Haven

* - Globally Important

Appendix C - Audubon Priority Species

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*

American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Black Skimmer *Rynchops tiger*

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens*

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

Brant *Branta barnacle*

Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*

Cerulean Warbler *Setophaga cerulea*

Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris*

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*

Least Tern *Sternula antillarum*

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodius*

Red Knot *Calidris cants*

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Saltmarsh Sparrow *Ammodramus caudacutus*
Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Seaside Sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus*
Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*
Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*
Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*
Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

Appendix D - Menunkatuck Priority Species

Horseshoe crab *Limulus polyphemus*
Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*

Adopted by the Menunkatuck Audubon Association Board of Directors on June 12, 2019