

# Buffalo Audubon Strategic Plan

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2019 - 2022



**Buffalo Audubon: Background** Established in 1909, Buffalo Audubon is dedicated to the promotion of the appreciation and enjoyment of the natural world through education and stewardship. A regional, independent organization and chapter affiliate of National Audubon, we currently steward over 1,000 acres of land throughout Western New York, with our office headquarters located at Beaver Meadow Audubon Center in Wyoming County. We connect people to nature through delivery of educational programs for all ages, and seek to engage participants as advocates and stewards for and of the natural world.

Education delivery and outdoor experiences at Beaver Meadow have been our historical foundation, yet Buffalo Audubon is also engaged in large scale conservation and habitat improvement projects in Niagara and Erie Counties, currently including invasive species management at Buckhorn Island State Park, and the construction of a 14,000 square foot island in the City of Buffalo's Niagara River Corridor for Common Tern habitat. These projects present long term opportunities to engage the public in meaningful community science efforts while increasing visibility. As Buffalo Audubon looks toward its future, we recognize and embrace the need to engage and represent new audiences while continuing to build on and celebrate the legacy of Beaver Meadow.

### **Introduction and Process**

The eight-month strategic planning process was led by a committee composed of four BAS board members, the BAS executive director, and the strategic planning consultant. In preparation for the planning process, the committee developed five strategic themes [page 2] and survey instruments for BAS staff, current and former BAS board members, BAS members, and representatives of BAS partners and funders. Additionally, the consultant provided an audit of the organization's bylaws, and the executive director provided an assessment of the current state of BAS. The consultant prepared a report summarizing the survey and assessment results for distribution to all board members for their review prior to a day-long retreat. At the retreat, the full board developed new mission and vision statements [see below] and at a subsequent board meeting, a set of core values [see below]. During the retreat, the board agreed on strategic goals to address each of the five strategic themes as well as specific strategies to achieve the goals [pages 3-7]. Following the retreat, the committee built out action steps for each strategy [pages 8-13] and established metrics, accountabilities, and timelines [pages 3-7]. The committee presented the final Three-Year Strategic Plan to the board at its June meeting, and on June 12, 2019, the board adopted the plan.

<b>Mission</b>	<b>Buffalo Audubon Society leads and inspires Western New Yorkers to connect with and protect the natural world through bird-focused activities, advocacy, and habitat restoration.</b>
<b>Vision</b>	<b>A WNY Community where birds and people live and flourish together</b>

**Core Values**

- **Wonder:** We value giving everyone the opportunity to learn about and experience the awe and wonder of birds and the environment.
- **Reverence:** We respect, honor and celebrate the natural world and strive to be prudent caretakers of the habitat.
- **Dedication:** Staff and volunteers are committed to the mission of BAS and each other, striving for quality and excellence in all that we do.
- **Diversity:** The activities of BAS embrace the diversity found in the natural world, human communities, and individual perspectives.
- **Legacy:** We honor our 100-year history and the passion and perseverance of our founders.

**Strategic Themes**

1. **Tying Together a Region:** Buffalo Audubon faces a unique challenge in that our geographic service area (WNY) encompasses a large urban population. We are perceived as an urban organization throughout the National Audubon Network, yet, in reality, we have not engaged this population through diverse and relevant programming to the degree possible, nor do we have a physical presence through conservation efforts in urban areas.
2. **Developing Strategy for Land Management:** Buffalo Audubon currently owns seven unique preserves throughout the region; yet, there are no management plans or maintenance schedules in place, nor are there mission-relevant goals in place for these spaces outside of Beaver Meadow. Some are in need of significant improvements to allow for promotion of public use, and others are ecologically precious and would not benefit from increased human presence.
3. **Creating a Culture of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Environmental organizations as a whole have struggled to engage diverse populations in recreation, education and stewardship activities. Buffalo Audubon has not been an exception, though we seek to actively and meaningfully engage people of all backgrounds and abilities, and to deliver programs and opportunities that are developed through a lens of equity and inclusion.
4. **Building a Sustainable Organization for Growth:** Buffalo Audubon has a staff and board with a great deal of talent and expertise, but sometimes lacks the structure that would allow it to flourish. We seek to define systems for both internal and external communications, committee activity, and perhaps most critically, specific fund development strategies and support systems. Additionally, we have become somewhat reliant on our

investments to close operating gaps. While we collaborate with like-minded organizations, these collaborations have not always been as strategic nor as productive as they might be.

5. **Raise Awareness of Our Work Across Region:** Buffalo Audubon is a chapter affiliate of National Audubon and has the opportunity to leverage their work in conservation, advocacy, and education with a focus on making the planet better for birds AND people. We have struggled to define our unique role in the WNY environmental community, as well as to define how we should approach advocacy. We may have an opportunity to align with National Audubon initiatives to better define ourselves locally. As we “tie the region together,” we will discover other opportunities to improve / capitalize on our branding / messaging.

#### **Strategic Framework**

<b>Strategic Goals: What we will achieve</b>	<b>Strategies: How we will achieve our goals</b>	<b>Metrics: How we will know that we've achieved our goals</b>	<b>Champion(s): Who will be accountable for achievement of goals / strategies</b>	<b>By When for each strategy</b>
<b>Theme 1 – Connected region</b>				
Strategic Goal 1: Tie the region together by reaching out from Beaver Meadow into WNY communities / neighborhoods	Strategy 1.1: Capitalize on location within the Atlantic Flyway with touchstones to bookend region and the Niagara River Corridor Global Important Bird Area as the central touchstone  Strategy 1.2: Capitalize on education/programming as common threads across region  Strategy 1.3: Establish an urban presence	Increase in staff, members, volunteers, donors, partners, and program participants from urban / suburban / rural zip codes across region  [baseline 12.31.19]	<b>Executive Director</b> [supported by Program and Administrative staff]	1.1 6.30.2020 1.2 6.30.2021 1.3 6.30.2022

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<b>Theme 2 – Land management</b>				
<p><i>Strategic Goal 2:</i>  <i>Bring purpose to preserves for education and engagement as well as for wildlife habitat management.</i></p>	<p>Strategy 2.1: Define land management goals and develop action plan based on previously conducted assessments</p> <p>Strategy 2.3: Manage preserves to balance accessibility and capacity for maintenance for public use with needs of the natural world</p>	<p>Improvement in occupancy-based and/or continuous-based metrics for breeding bird and migratory populations and documentation of rare/native flora.</p> <p>Increase in users of people-friendly preserves for programs, hiking, and bird-watching.</p> <p>[baseline 6.30.20]</p>	<p><b>Conservation Committee Chairman</b>  [supported by Committee members]</p>	<p>2.1 6.30.2020  2.2 6.30.2022</p>

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<b>Theme 3 – Equity, diversity, and inclusion</b>				
<b>Strategic Goal 3:</b> <i>Create a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion across the organization</i>	<p>Strategy 3.1: To prepare for a culture shift, initiate study and conversations among staff, volunteers, and board about ED&amp;I as a core value.</p> <p>Strategy 3.2: Adopt and implement organizational policies that will be catalysts for lasting and significant culture shift, including hiring, board recruitment/composition, volunteer and human resource policies, and program/service offerings.</p> <p>Strategy 3.3: Develop and execute a plan to engage in relationships with partners / collaborators that create pathways to beneficial programs and pipelines for members, volunteers, staff, and board.</p>	<p>Improvement in diversity among members, volunteers, staff, partners, donors, and program participants.</p> <p>Positive change in views about ED&amp;I as a core value among members, volunteers, staff, partners, donors, and program participants.</p> <p>[baseline 9.30.19]</p>	<b>Executive Director</b> [supported by Ad Hoc ED&I Committee]	3.1 12.31.2019 3.2 12.31.2020 3.3 12.31.2021

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<b>Theme 4 – Sustainable organization</b>				
Strategic Goal 4: <i>Ensure a capable board, staff and organizational structure to facilitate growth and the financial resources to sustain the growth.</i>	<p>Strategy 4.1: Design and implement organization, staff, and volunteer structures to support growth proposed in this plan.</p> <p>Strategy 4.2: Assess current board structures and create / modify structures to support growth.</p> <p>Strategy 4.3: Create fund development structures and plans to support growth</p>	<p>Increase in numbers of members, volunteers, and program participants.</p> <p>Increase in numbers of partnerships / collaborations.</p> <p>Increase in contributed dollars.</p> <p>[baseline 12.31.19]</p>	<p><b>4.1 Executive Director</b> [supported by Executive Committee]</p> <p><b>4.2 Governance Committee Chair</b> [supported by Committee members]</p> <p><b>4.3 Development Committee Chair</b> [supported by Committee members and Executive Director]</p>	<p>4.1 6.30.2020</p> <p>4.2 12.31.2019</p> <p>4.3 6.30.2020</p>

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<b>Theme 5 – Community awareness</b>				
Strategic Goal 5: <i>Enhance brand and impact awareness across region</i>	<p>Strategy 5.1: Assess the current state of brand and impact awareness in the WNY Region to identify strengths and weaknesses, including, but not limited to, current and historical strategies and tactics.</p> <p>Strategy 5.2: Create marketing / communications plan that reflects the research done in strategy 5.1; supports the growth objectives of this plan; and maximizes opportunities for community science and advocacy.</p>	<p>Improvement in awareness of BAS' impact on region. [baseline 12.31.20]</p>	<b>Executive Director</b> [supported by Ad Hoc Committee Chair and Committee members]	5.1 12.31.2020 5.2 12.31.2021