

BirdNote[®]

Tahoma Audubon Society
% Board of Directors
2917 Morrison Rd W
University Place, WA 98466

October 12, 2023

Dear Board Members of the Tahoma Audubon Society,

I write in strong support of your consideration to adopt a new name for the Tahoma Audubon Society. As has been extensively documented and written about over the past few years, John James Audubon was committed to white supremacy, bought and sold slaves, desecrated Native burial sites, and engaged in scientific fraud. Any argument that favors consideration of the “brand” (or any other reason) over these concerns falls short in my view, for two key reasons:

1. Continuing to elevate an enslaver’s name and associate it with birds and birding will inevitably discourage people of color, and Black people and their allies in particular, from wanting to associate with the organization. It sends a signal about organizational values that will make efforts to diversify the organization irretrievably difficult.
2. The association between the Audubon name and birds is not as strong and universal as many in the birding world think, particularly for people who are *not yet birders*—the very people our respective organizations need to court in order to grow the movement of people who care about the natural world and seek to protect it. A new name could better showcase the organization’s focus on birds for people who haven’t been exposed to the work of a local Audubon chapter.

In my role, I have the good fortune of being able to work and meet with prominent birders and ornithologists of all identities, backgrounds, and perspectives from across the United States and internationally. In my estimation, all of those who are truly committed to diversity and inclusion have strongly supported the discontinuation of the “Audubon” name in birding organizations. Unfortunately in my role, I have also seen the racist vitriol directed at Black birders that we have featured in our programming on public radio and podcast and I am acutely aware of the very understandable trepidation felt by many Black people and other people of color when it comes to joining organizations that are not explicitly anti-racist.

The Tahoma Audubon Society's [statement](#) on the importance of human diversity in the world of bird conservation is thorough and thoughtful. Your dedication to “providing an environment that makes inclusiveness and respect a priority” is something that all organizations should aspire to. Adopting a new name in support of that priority would not only remove a barrier to that work, but it would send a positive signal that diversity and inclusion work is something the organization values.

I applaud you for taking the step of considering this change. Please let me know if I can be of any help as you move forward in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Bayard', with a stylized, cursive script.

Nick Bayard
Executive Director, BirdNote
Tacoma, Washington