



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grants \$325K to New Jersey Audubon

First-time funding to improve children's health through engagement with nature

Bernardsville, NJ – September 28, 2023 – New Jersey Audubon is thrilled to announce two grants totaling \$325K from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to improve the wellbeing of children in New Jersey through healthy outdoor pursuits. These grants will support New Jersey Audubon's "Children in Nature Collaborative: A Statewide Vision for Equitable and Culturally Relevant Environmental and Outdoor Learning" and its "Healthy Children, Healthy Habitats, Healthy Butterflies" program. These new initiatives center on the organization's strengths and reflect its core values by advancing efforts to connect children with nature and its attendant health benefits and restoring natural habitats for the benefit of all.

"The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's extraordinary support brings partner organizations together that envision a world in which all New Jersey's children joyfully play outdoors, inspiring a connection to the environment and resulting in long term healthy lifestyles.," states Alex Ireland, NJ Audubon, President and CEO. "This vital funding will shape a healthier future for children, enabling them to connect with outdoor green spaces and providing positive experiences in nature that every child deserves."

Research from many studies over multiple decades suggests that connecting with nature improves physical and mental health in children and adults. However, access to green spaces is unevenly distributed throughout New Jersey, leading to inequitable health outcomes for children lacking opportunities to benefit from nature. Funding through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has enabled New Jersey Audubon to spearhead the New Jersey Children in Nature Coalition that serves as the education, outreach, and engagement engine for children's outdoor learning and to galvanize groups around this critical issue.

New Jersey Audubon's Healthy Children, Healthy Habitats, Healthy Butterflies initiative dovetails with the NJ Children in Nature Coalition by promoting Gardening for Wildlife and other healthy outdoor activities in urban communities with little or no access to open spaces. "There is great value in enhancing small pockets of habitat in schoolyards or on balconies and rooftops that attract migratory birds and butterflies," explains Kimberly Armenti, New Jersey Audubon's Vice President for Development and Communications. "We are excited to partner with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through this first-time funding to provide direct opportunities for families to appreciate nature and discover skills that can ensure a more sustainable future."

About New Jersey Audubon:

New Jersey Audubon (NJA) is a privately supported, not-for-profit, statewide membership organization. Founded in 1897, NJA is one of the oldest independent Audubon organizations. The mission of NJA is to connect all people with nature and steward the nature of today for all people of tomorrow. For more information on New Jersey Audubon, visit www.njaudubon.org.

Contact: Chris Neff, chris.neff@njaudubon.org, 908 396 6660