



↑ Tundra swans at Madison Audubon Society's Goose Pond Sanctuary, where over 260 species of birds have been spotted.

## APPLYING FOR ACCREDITATION NO MATTER THE MISSION: AUDUBON SOCIETIES

By **CAITY PINKARD**

When the Madison Audubon Society in Wisconsin applied for accreditation in 2017, the organization already owned or managed 1,500 acres of land. Yet, as an organization dedicated to avian conservation, it was not always thought of as a typical land trust. “We used to get looks of surprise or confusion when we showed up to land trust meetings and conferences,” says Executive Director Matthew Reetz. “Folks don’t usually think of an Audubon that way. But, while we also do many things an Audubon chapter does, our work in land protection makes us a land trust too.”

Audubon is a network of state programs, nature centers and local chapters dedicated to protecting America’s birds through science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation. Nationwide, there are three accredited Audubon organizations, collectively protecting over 46,000 acres of land and engaging 12,000 volunteers.

At Madison Audubon, accreditation was a logical step in its mission of protecting avian populations. “Because we work in bird conservation, we like to say we’re in the ‘joy business,’” says Reetz. “Birds bring so much joy. Madison Audubon has long emphasized land acquisition, protection and restoration as part

of our mission to conserve Wisconsin’s amazing birds. In fact, it’s one of the most direct ways we can do that: by providing food, habitat and resting spaces for resident and migratory birds.”

Accreditation not only helped them live up to that mission, but also to grow as an organization. “It allowed the organization to grow in behind-the-scenes but significant ways through improvements to high-level business practices and ensuring our members and the public trust in our work,” he says. “Accreditation showed the public that when we say we’re protecting land forever, we really mean it.”

Reetz acknowledges that applying for accreditation is hard work. “Accreditation is like a long, challenging hike,” he says. “But you take one step at a time, and you eventually end up at the summit.” For Madison Audubon, the climb was worth the effort. “The value of accreditation lies in the permanence of the work, as well as the community of other land trusts who work toward similar goals,” says Reetz.

While Audubons protect birds and the places they need, many share the same vision as land trusts: protecting land in perpetuity. “Together, we are building a network of land that will always be available for wildlife and people to enjoy and benefit from,” Reetz says. “Our sanctuaries and properties are beautiful, vibrant, life-supporting places. Thanks to accreditation, the public can have the assurance that those lands will stay that way forever.” ☺

**CAITY PINKARD** is a freelance writer and the communications manager at the NDC Partnership.

# FIRST-TIME ACCREDITATION LOTTERY OPENS IN JUNE

Accredited land trusts say that there is no perfect time to apply for accreditation—you just do it!

The lottery for the 2023 first-time accreditation applications opens June 30 and closes on Aug. 11. The application process will be entirely online, with the pre-application due on Feb. 28, 2023, and application due on June 6, 2023.

To learn more about the first-time process, please visit the Commission website at [landtrustaccreditation.org/first-time-accreditation](https://landtrustaccreditation.org/first-time-accreditation).

*“Anyone who has gone through the accreditation process will tell you that it’s hard work but well worth the effort, and we certainly agree with that. It has made us a much stronger organization and positioned us well for the future.”*

**Richard B. Lander**, board member and preserve manager at Open Land Conservancy of Chester County (PA), which was awarded first-time accreditation in January 2022

## LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

An independent program of the Land Trust Alliance

[landtrustaccreditation.org](https://landtrustaccreditation.org)



# VOLUNTEER AS A COMMISSIONER

Have you ever thought about serving on the Land Trust Accreditation Commission or do you know someone who you think would be a good commissioner?

Joining the Commission is a great opportunity to work with a dedicated group of volunteer conservation leaders from around the country and be part of a national program that fosters excellence, trust and permanence in land conservation. Land trust accreditation is only possible through the dedicated volunteers who make up the Commission. The 18 commissioners—from across the country and with expertise in various areas of conservation—volunteer thousands of hours annually, governing and serving as peer reviewers.

Interested in learning more? Visit [landtrustaccreditation.org/about/jobs](https://landtrustaccreditation.org/about/jobs).

*“Serving on the Commission has been one of the best things I’ve ever done. Both the commissioners and staff are a very supportive and caring group—which is probably a characteristic of the land trust community in general—but we also have fun together.”*

**Karen Ferrell-Ingram**, vice-chair of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission



↑ Commissioner Karen Ferrell-Ingram finds some shade under a unique rock formation at Volcanic Tablelands near Bishop, CA.