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CONTACT: Jan Kruse
781.259.2134; jkruse@massaudubon.org

Photo credit of great horned owlets: Frank Leung

WHO'S COUNTING ON YOU TO HELP WILDLIFE?
Mass Audubon's Annual Bird-a-thon Blends Birding Fun and Funds



LINCOLN, Mass.—Owls and our other feathered friends are counting on you, that's who! Mass Audubon's Bird-a-thon on May 15 and 16 is for people of all abilities and ages. The annual event offers birders and nature enthusiasts the opportunity to participate in friendly competition while raising funds for Mass Audubon's wildlife sanctuaries and programs. In fact, the Bird-a-thon pledges that you earn through your birding, or collect from donors, directly benefit birds. So, flock together with your family, friends, and neighbors to create a team, *or* make a pledge to help Mass Audubon protect the nature of Massachusetts.

The statewide Bird-a-thon, now in its 26th year, has grown to 24 teams and more than 675 staff and volunteers who help raise thousands of dollars to benefit Mass Audubon's efforts to protect wildlife. The 24-hour competition starts at 6 p.m. on Friday, May 15, and runs through 6 p.m. on Saturday, May 16. But you don't have to participate the entire time—rotating shifts among teammates is encouraged! The 24-hour timetable allows flexibility in schedules and the chance to locate nocturnal birds.

Mass Audubon will award numerous participant prizes. This year's Top Individual Fundraiser award is an original framed watercolor generously donated by renowned wildlife artist Barry van Dusen. The painting appeared on the cover of *Bird Watcher's Digest* in 1992 and as a limited print edition, which adds to its collectible value. Any team member who raises a minimum of \$75, or obtains 10 sponsor pledges, will receive a 2009 Mass Audubon Bird-a-thon T-shirt.

Even if you can't join a team, you can still participate by pledging money to a team member for each bird species recorded during the 24-hour event. If 20 people collected 10 pledges, each at 10 cents a species, and if the sanctuary sees 200 species, the sanctuary raises \$4,000—to help protect wildlife right in your neighborhood. Or if you prefer, make a donation in any amount. To join a team, make a pledge or donation, see a list of prizes, or get more information, visit www.massaudubon.org/birdathon. New this year: Visit the website to view an online slideshow of Massachusetts birds you're likely to see in May, featuring music by the Maria Schneider Orchestra.

Mass Audubon works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. Together with more than 100,000 members, we care for 33,000 acres of conservation land, provide educational programs for 200,000 children and adults annually, and advocate for sound environmental policies at the local, state, and federal levels. Mass Audubon's mission and actions have expanded since our beginning in 1896 when our founders set out to stop the slaughter of birds for use on women's fashions. Today we are the largest conservation organization in New England. Our statewide network of 43 wildlife sanctuaries welcomes visitors of all ages and serves as the base for our conservation, education, and advocacy work. To support these important efforts, call 800-AUDUBON (283-8266) or visit www.massaudubon.org.

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