

## Trina Bayard: Bird Champion

You could say that Trina Bayard was born to be a bird expert. As a child, birds were an important part of her upbringing. “I remember being so fascinated by them, and having such a strong connection to them,” she recalls of her two pet cockatiels, who became proud parents of seven baby cockatiels. An outdoorsy childhood in Woodinville, Washington, filled with camping and hiking trips, sealed the deal.

When it came time for college, it was only fitting that she gravitated toward ecology when she attended Lewis and Clark College in Portland.

“I took an ecology class and I was so blown away that you could spend time outside studying nature and actually have a career doing so,” says Trina, who ended up receiving a bachelor’s degree in biology. She worked as a wildlife biologist and earned her PhD in ecology at the University of Connecticut (where she studied saltmarsh sparrows) before joining Audubon Washington as Director of Bird Conservation in 2012. Her position entails leading or taking an active role in partnership efforts towards landscape conservation, and bringing science to bear on decision-making regarding proposed changes in land use. “A big issue in Washington, for example, is the transport of crude oil in places like Puget Sound and Grays Harbor,” she explains. “My role is to assess the impact and highlight areas where mitigation efforts haven’t been addressed,” she says. “I often find that birds don’t get the attention and status of, say, salmon, so I am here to essentially be a champion for the birds.”

One recent win for the birds of Washington, and one that Trina is especially excited about, is the designation of Willapa Bay and Long Beach Peninsula as a Site of International Importance for shorebirds. “The value of this nomination is that it helps communicate to the public that this geographic area plays an important role,” she explains. “I feel that Southwest Washington is a place that tends to be out of sight, out of mind for Washingtonians, and now we get to reward and help local people with their stewardship.”

When Trina talks about birds, it’s easy to see that she’s following her true calling in life, and her enthusiasm is contagious. “I get so fired up about birds because they add a whole layer of richness to being outside and help you connect to the earth,” she says. “When you really pay attention to all that birds do to survive and thrive, from finding food and habitats, to breeding, to creating social groups, it’s so inspiring. Just knowing that there’s such a rich and diverse – yet fragile – community of birds out there is a huge motivator for me when I’m doing my job, because I want to do everything I can to ensure they will be around for years to come.”