**Audubon Great Lakes Final Report**

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**Analysis of the Situation**

Audubon Great Lakes, in accordance with the Wild Indigo programs, is looking for ways to engage with diverse audiences in the Midwest region. The goal is to educate and increase awareness about empowering conservation actions among this population and encourage them to become conservation leaders to protect the birds and people in their areas.

It’s important to know that the Audubon Great Lakes and Wild Indigo staff has made efforts in communities, such as the Calumet Region, to engage with individuals and organizations to further their reach. However, while they’ve been successful with making community connections, there is still a stigma associated with much of the region’s natural areas, which have served as essential for breeding grounds and stopovers for migratory birds along the Mississippi Flyway. In the very urbanized, industrial Calumet Region, natural areas have historically been unmanaged, illegal dumpsites, which has painted the picture that they’re dangerous and uninviting.

Through the Wild Indigo program in the Calumet Region, they’ve been able to engage with local organizations and communities – gardening clubs, social service and faith-based organizations, and schools – to reach their target audiences. Per the Audubon’s website, it states, “In the last six years, the program has engaged over 6,500 individuals and 35 community groups in Chicago, Lake County, Illinois and Detroit.”

Additionally, the Wild Indigo staff wants to specifically target African-American, Latino and multi-generational cohorts of women by breaking down barriers and perceptions that these natural areas in their region are not for them. Audubon’s success in this effort depends on the engagement of these audiences. Without the involvement of the target audiences and the general public, they can’t create sustainable programs or community leaders.

Currently at the national level, it has been decided that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act will exclude incidental take, meaning that it is not illegal to accidentally harm or kill a migratory bird (Bies, 2020). This act has traditionally protected over 1,000 migratory bird species across the United States, but this decision will make it more difficult to protect these species. If there are more conservatory leaders across the Midwest, and the nation, then there will be a greater chance that these birds will have the protection they need because organizations and local leaders can educate and create awareness in their immediate communities.

**Organization External Environment**

Within the region, the National Audubon Society Great Lakes Region has a few bird conservation competitors. The Wetlands Initiative is a Chicago-based organization that designs, restores and creates wetlands. According to the website, “We innovate, collaborate and employ sound science to improve water quality, habitat for plants and wildlife and our climate.” (The Wetlands Initiative, 2020) The Wetlands Initiative has partnered with the National Audubon Society Great Lakes on the Calumet wetland restoration in Illinois and Chicago. This organization welcomes members and donations, as well as offers other options to assist in their efforts.

Meanwhile, the Urban Bird Foundation focuses on wildlife policy, habitat protection and education. The foundation focuses on owls, hawks, and songbirds, in particular. The Urban Bird Foundation offers ways for people to get involved, such as giving a one-time or monthly donation. The foundation also has a program that allows bird lovers to Adopt an Owl. The purchase helps the foundation protect habitats, save owls and their offspring, and advocate for conservation policy (Urban Bird Foundation, 2020).

The Illinois Audubon Society is a membership-based organization based in Springfield, Illinois. Starting as an organization focused on saving wildlife and habitats while supporting legislation to protect birds, the Illinois Audubon Society now owns 3,154 acres in statewide wildlife sanctuaries. Although the organization pre-acquires Illinois open space for the State and Federal government, the income from the sale goes back into a land acquisition fund. The organization does not profit from these transactions (Illinois Audubon Society, 2020).

These competitors do not impact the client’s work, although there is similar messaging and a shared stakeholder population. Although the above organizations all focus their efforts in Illinois, with the Urban Bird Foundation expanding to Minnesota, the National Audubon Society Great Lakes covers a larger region. By covering the entire region, there is a greater opportunity to create awareness among a vast audience. Of these organizations, the only one with national reach is the Urban Bird Foundation.

The National Audubon Society Great Lakes has many supporters. After completing a social media audit, there appears to be a network of like-minded people being brought together through their concern for wetland and marsh conservation and the further understanding of migratory birds. Actual supporters of the organization are bird watcher enthusiasts, environmentalists, and those who advocate for legislation to assist in the National Audubon Society Great Lakes’ efforts.

It is our intent to create awareness among a new demographic. According to a study in The Journal of Wildlife Management, there is a link between those who enjoy wildlife recreationally, hunting and birdwatching, to pro-environmental behavior. It was stated that birdwatchers and those who hunt and bird watch are almost three times more likely to donate to conservation efforts (Cooper, et. al, 2015) Among these groups, the most dominant of bird watchers are women who consider themselves liberal and well-educated. Millennials and Gen Z adults who are politically and economically conscious are potential supporters of the organization as well.

A study by the Pew Research Center found significant information about how Americans see climate change and the environment. They found that Millennials and Gen Z feel the government has not done enough to combat climate change. It was concluded that both Democrats and Republicans in these demographics feel there needs to be more done for the environment (Funk, 2020).

Lastly, environmental activists and advocacy groups are potential supporters of the National Audubon Society Great Lakes. By collaborating with different groups and organizations, it will increase reach and awareness among those who already have an interest in birding and conservation.

Opposition for conservation efforts, especially those focused on migratory birds, is the Trump Administration. In 2017, the Trump Administration issued a new opinion, opposing the Obama Administration, stating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act does not prohibit incidental takes. The Trump Administration believes the gas, oil, and timber industries will lose investments if it’s interpreted that incidental or accidental actions can be applied to these industries (Percival, et al. 2018).

**Organization Internal Environment**

The Audubon Society Great Lakes chapter serves the communities in the Great Lakes region and the species of birds that call the areas home. The organization strives to positively impact the native birds of the Midwest and their habitats while encouraging citizens to explore and appreciate the diversity of the ecosystems in the area.

The organization's goal is to conserve and restore the habitats that humans share with wildlife, specifically with different species of birds in the Great Lakes region. By using science to inform the public and push for legislative change, Audubon Great Lakes can create a large community that cares about and pushes for better outcomes for natural species. The organization hopes that collective communities can take the lead on advocating for and managing the ecosystems that birds need in order to thrive.

One major limitation that the organization has internally is the lack of staffing available. The organization relies on plenty of volunteers to lead workshops and special events and also create engagement by reaching out to targeted groups, including policy-makers.

Audubon Great Lakes has deployed the Wild Indigo program in order to make connections with key communities in areas that have a high potential for growth when it comes to habitat quality. The Wild Indigo program has created a number of community-based events and activities including social service and gardening activities. By making a palpable effort in the local communities in the Great Lakes region, the organization can grow awareness of the environmental issues for years down the line.

**Analysis of Publics**

There are five key publics that the Audubon Great Lakes should target. Media is the first public because Audubon needs media to get the word out about efforts, events, and information in the community in order to increase awareness about initiatives and environmental education. The media can be helpful to this organization because it has reach in local communities.

Activists are another significant public that affects Audubon. Without them, the organization would cease to exist. They make it possible for Audubon to have events and make significant strides toward conservation in communities.

The third public is the legislature because Audubon needs proactive legislation to protect wildlife and their habitats in the Midwest. Legislation is important because it can make the difference between animals and their habitats being disrupted or protected.

Another public is local communities. Organizations and individuals in local communities are the main target for Audubon when encouraging people to get out and experience, help and protect nature locally and nationally.

The final public is internal entities. This includes volunteers, staff and upper management who help keep Audubon on the right track and have a vested interest in taking care of their local environments and educating others.

The main public, the community, has a variety of wants, needs and expectations. One side of the community includes people who are passionate about being outside and spend plenty of time participating in recreational activities or advocacy efforts for the environment. The community is also made up of people and families that don’t necessarily spend lots of time outside or have much prior knowledge about the condition of the environment or how birds fit into the Great Lakes ecosystem. Therefore, the different variations within the public will have different needs. For some, events that can provide a fun family outing would be the perfect way to spark the interest in a certain crowd of people that might not have a ton of experience outdoors. Meanwhile, more in-depth programs and volunteer events might offer traditional environmentalists an opportunity to get involved.

People who have been actively concerned and involved in the efforts to assist the environment expect an organization like Audubon Great Lakes to provide quality information and take specific steps to improve the outlook for ecosystems in the area. Therefore, this crowd will expect interactive programs and initiatives that have a plan to make positive changes.

The Millennial and Gen Z generation communicates with each other and brands through various digital platforms. These groups are more susceptible to receiving information from email campaigns, social media and streaming service advertisements. According to a survey administered by SendGrid, it was concluded the median ROI for email marketing is five times greater than social media marketing. It is also an open line of communication between consumer and brand, making these groups more likely to interact with brands that interact with them (PRNewswire, 2017). It has also been found that more Millennials flock to their smartphones to watch movies and videos online. 80% of Millennials subscribe to at least one over-the-top service and watch at least seven hours of video per week (Limelight Networks, 2016). An international study of Gen Z recently revealed this generation’s inextricable link to technology and its importance. 66% of Gen Z from the study believe the internet will bring us closer together. 56% say they are friends with someone they’ve only met online. This suggests Gen Z is open to being included and involved in digital communities, as well as cultivating virtual relationships (Engine, 2020). 88% of young adults ages (18-29) are more likely to use social media than any other generation. Those with some college-level experience and living in the highest-income households are also more likely to frequent social media (Clark, et al., 2019).

The target demographic for this public is men and women ages 18-35 who live in the Great Lakes Region. This group of people are socially and politically conscious and have an affinity for the environment and conservation efforts, in line with a recent shift in the birding community. Birders have become younger and live in urban areas. The group is far more diverse than generations before. Birding and wildlife conservation have become more accessible to diverse groups due to the vast amounts of information available through online social networks. Equipment for birding has become more affordable leading more Millennials to wooded areas and wetlands to capture footage of birds and wildlife in their habitats. In 2017, a magazine focused on the travel industry, stated urban birding as a new hot trend (McIntyre, 2017). It has also been found that Millennials have begun trending up in charitable travel and ecotourism. They are leading in sustainable travel, spending share of over $200 billion annually in the U.S. (Clark, et al., 2019).

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