

2005

Annual Report



NEW JERSEY
AUDUBON
SOCIETY

Fostering environmental awareness and a conservation ethic while preserving wildlife and natural systems since 1897.

New Jersey Audubon Society Mission Statement

New Jersey Audubon Society (NJAS) is a privately supported, not-for-profit, statewide membership organization. Founded in 1897 and one of the oldest independent Audubon societies, NJAS has no formal connection with the National Audubon Society.

NJAS fosters environmental awareness and a conservation ethic, protects New Jersey's birds, mammals, other animals, and plants, especially endangered and threatened species, and promotes preservation of New Jersey's valuable natural habitats.

In order to achieve its purpose, NJAS, through its Board of Directors, professional staff, members, and volunteers, endeavors to:

- Develop, encourage, and support sound conservation practices, programs, and legislation.
- Disseminate information on the natural environment through education programs, information services, and publications.
- Advance knowledge, through field research, of New Jersey's flora and fauna and their relationship to the habitats on which they depend.
- Acquire, establish, and maintain wildlife sanctuaries and educational centers.

The objectives of the Society are implemented by its professional staff under the leadership of its President and supervision of an elected, voluntary Board of Directors. ●

President's Message

Hope is the thing with feathers...
Emily Dickenson

Dear Members and Friends:

In 2005, we at New Jersey Audubon were moved both by what nature took away and by what it resurrected. I'm speaking about the catastrophe of Katrina and the rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Both events, which occurred in our southern states, bear a direct correlation to the mission that New Jersey Audubon has staunchly pursued for more than a century, and both undeniably demonstrate the urgency of our cause.

The protection of natural habitats is critical to the survival of every species on this planet. Loss of wetlands, forests, and grasslands undermines nature's balance, placing our own health at risk and threatening wildlife populations with collapse. Years ago, when Ivory-bills flew freely above the swampy bottomland forests that once blanketed the south, millions of acres of marshlands and barrier islands afforded natural protection for our coastal states. As Katrina demonstrated, that protection has been eroded, contributing to the devastation caused by the storm.

In New Jersey, habitat loss not only leaves coastal and interior regions vulnerable to flooding and erosion, but it is one of many factors leading to an overall decline in the integrity of our ecological communities. A proliferation of invasive species and a burgeoning deer population have also taken their toll, as was concluded in our Forest Health report

published early in the year. Exploitation has also tipped nature's scale so severely that extinction now looms for one of our own: the Red Knot, whose dependency on the over-harvested horseshoe crab clearly demonstrates the fragility of nature's interconnected web of life. This once-thriving species may soon take the place of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker as "lost to future generations."

Yet our hearts tell us that hope really is the thing with feathers. If a

woodpecker long thought to be extinct can re-emerge from the Arkansas wilderness, then, perhaps, we can still preserve and restore enough of New Jersey's natural heritage to leave a rich lasting legacy for all who follow.

In 2005, the New Jersey Audubon Society actively campaigned for federal listing of the Red Knot as endangered. We completed our Important Bird and Birding Areas program site nominations and initiated the planning process that will help preserve these



Red Knot eating horseshoe crab eggs.

PHOTO BY KEVIN T. KARLSON

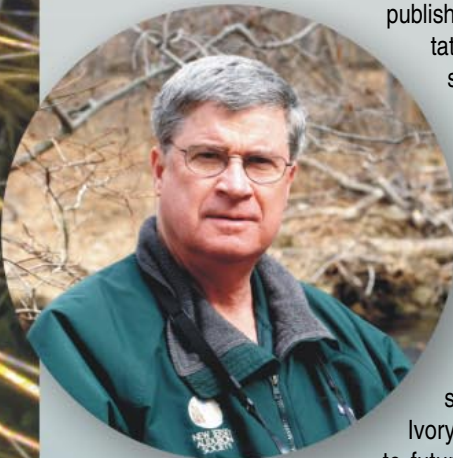
critical sites. Our staff worked in partnership with officials in Franklin and Harmony townships, private landowners, and the South Jersey Transit Authority on grassland preservation and restoration efforts to protect numerous threatened and endangered species. We launched a statewide effort to secure critical habitat funding and, thanks to our donor-supported advocacy efforts, New Jersey became the first state in the nation to attain matching funds for federal challenge grants supporting wildlife conservation.

Progressive leadership goes hand in hand with an educated citizenry. With environmental education programs serving people of all ages and benefiting communities statewide, New Jersey Audubon is growing our conservation leaders of tomorrow. In 2005 we welcomed the addition of our first educational partner site, the Essex County Environmental Center, which hosts seasonal programs by NJAS staff and conveys our conservation ideals to both urban and suburban constituencies. We continued our successful professional development workshops, providing technical support for educators throughout the state, launched our new Birding and Wildlife Trails initiative, and conducted more than 3,000 field trips, workshops, day camps and festivals, cultivating a life-long appreciation for nature and stimulating economic growth through ecotourism.

Through the New Jersey Audubon Society's research efforts, our state is now better informed about the potential impacts on wildlife of coastal wind energy development. Our comprehensive bird surveys are guiding habitat restoration efforts in both urban and rural parts of the state. And, by documenting the movement of migratory and breeding birds with cutting-edge radar technology, our Oases Along the Flyway project is influencing land-use decisions, as well as the construction of cell phone and satellite towers, and even bridge design, to better protect wildlife.

I invite you to discover, through the pages of this Annual Report, what your support means to New Jersey residents, visitors, and all those who revere both the power and the resiliency of nature. Like the thing with feathers, hope also takes the form of committed and caring individuals like you. Thank you for your continued support.

Thomas J. Gilmore



Tom Gilmore
PHOTO BY JOHN CARNO

Conservation

Eric Stiles, Vice President for Conservation and Stewardship



Advocacy

In response to rapidly degrading forests throughout New Jersey, N.J. Audubon published its Forest Health Report in March 2005. The study concluded that New Jersey's healthy forests and beneficial natural ecosystems, including native plant and wildlife species and habitats, are severely threatened by factors including sprawl development, overabundant deer browse and invasive species that warrant immediate intervention. Healthy forests and ecosystems provide essential environmental, social and economic benefits to human health and quality of life.

To address these issues, New Jersey Audubon Society (NJAS) launched its *Forest Health* campaign calling for the outlawing of non-native invasive plants, management of deer to protect biodiversity, and establishment of a stable, permanent source of funding for land acquisition and stewardship.

On June 30, 2005, New Jersey became the first state in the nation to pass legislation specifically to match federal challenge grant funds for wildlife conservation. NJAS would like to thank state legislators Assemblyman John McKeon, Assemblyman "Kip" Bateman, Senator Leonard Lance, and Senator Bob Smith and federal Congressman Jim Saxton for their efforts to secure this funding. During the last five years, the federal State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program has provided between \$1 million and \$1.5 million annually to New Jersey for protecting the "Noah's Ark" of wildlife. Congressman Jim Saxton also deserves praise for his championship efforts in Washington, D.C.

In response to the 80% decline in Red Knot populations over the past ten years, leading conservation groups including NJAS filed an emergency petition in July 2005 asking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list the Red Knot as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The emergency listing petition was denied, but we will continue to pursue listing of this beautiful shorebird. The decline in horseshoe crab eggs caused by overfishing on the Delaware Bay has been conclusively shown to be the major cause of the precipitous decline of the Red Knot subspecies.

Thus, we also continue to work with our partners to secure a moratorium on harvesting of Delaware Bay horseshoe crabs. Congressman Frank Pallone, Congressman Rob Andrews, Senator Frank Lautenberg and Assemblyman John McKeon deserve special thanks for their strong support.

New Jersey has an impressive diversity of landscape and biotic communities. These habitats are critical to the survival of many rare wildlife species. Each of these species has its own particular habitat needs, but each species also shares a common threat: their habitat is quickly disappearing. NJAS and its partners were actively engaged in moving forward the adoption of Critical Habitat Rules. NJAS has worked closely with its colleagues to regularly engage the Department of Environmental Protection in discussions about the scope and level of protection afforded critical habitat. In addition, our environmental colleagues have been instrumental in getting a commitment from Governor Corzine that critical habitat rules will be an early administration agenda item. NJAS will work with the new Governor toward rules that fully protect our state's threatened and endangered species habitat.

Birding and Wildlife Trails Program

2005 began with a press conference to launch the nomination process for the Delaware Bayshore Birding and Wildlife Trails program, and from there it was a whirlwind year. With the help of our partners at the N.J. Department of Transportation, N.J. Department of Environmental Protection, and the N.J. Office of Travel and Tourism, we met our goal of publishing the first New Jersey Birding and Wildlife Trails guide by October. Copies of the guide are available at our nature centers or by calling 1.800.VISITNJ.

The Trails team continues to work on the complementary business brochures and Web site, and the whole package will be available in February of 2006. In addition, the next project, the New Jersey Meadowlands

Birding, Wildlife and Fishing Trails guide, is well underway and expected by June of 2006.

The Delaware Bayshore guide was launched at the Nature Tourism Rally on October 11, 2005, at Wheaton Village in Vineland. Approximately 150 people attended the event which featured presentations, a panel discussion, humor, and a reception with live music by South Jersey's own Snake Brothers. We were especially touched by a letter from Senator Frank Lautenberg commending the program, which was presented by a member of his staff, Jennifer Sneed, who has taken a strong interest in the Trails project.

The next morning, an exhausted Trails team stumbled back into the office only to find the phone ringing off the hook with requests for the guide. The rally had been broadly covered in the Cumberland County press, and residents were eager to get their hands on the free guides. We continue to receive positive feedback from those who have received the guide and explored the trails.

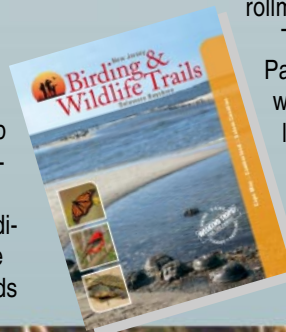
Stewardship

The 2005 season was productive, highlighted by five staff additions and initiation of several exciting projects.

NJAS co-founded the N.J. Habitat Incentive Team (NJHIT), a collaboration between sportsmen and conservation organizations to effect habitat improvement on private lands through increased enrollment in government conservation programs. NJHIT goals target development of wildlife habitat plans and assisting landowners in the enrollment process.

The Raritan Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership grew from NJHIT. Working with partner organizations, NJAS co-launched this initiative focused on identifying critical farmland wildlife habitat within three geographic areas in central New Jersey historically representing some of the state's

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Conservation Continued

most significant grasslands. NJAS is developing the science-based conservation plan for the project.

The final draft of management recommendations is expected from the Pinelands Forest Advisory Committee in 2006 following deliberations throughout 2005. NJAS has participated on the reconstituted FAC since 2004.

NJAS increased participation in the grassland restoration at Atlantic City Airport, researching restoration materials and methods, developing recommendations for the project's implementation, and collecting vegetation data to measure success. Results from the first year of restoration showed prolific sprouting of native grasses and shrub cover reduction to targeted levels. Vegetation data, combined with the Research Department's bird surveys, will measure avian response to management.

NJAS continued working with Franklin Township, Somerset County, on implementation of the habitat management and passive recreation plans developed in 2004. Over 70 acres of grasses were planted on Township property and adjacent private land in 2005. Nearly 250 acres will be completed over 3 years. NJAS also worked with local Boy Scouts on projects targeting implementation of the passive recreation plan.

Forty sites out of 120 nominations have been accepted as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Following review of all nominated sites, a document detailing IBAs will be published, complete with conservation efforts necessary to protect and manage sites. Recently, the IBA program has transitioned into conservation planning,



NJAS encouraged Harmony Township farmers to apply for Landowner Incentive Programs and Farmland Preservation. PHOTO BY JOHN PARKE

concentrating on outreach, development of habitat demonstration projects, forest stewardship workshops, and technical assistance to private landowners.

NJAS is working with landowners in Harmony Township, Warren County, to inform them about government conservation programs for private lands. Since October 2005, NJAS has distributed 94 information packages to landowners, receiving over a 34% response. NJAS submitted nine applications to enroll nearly 300 acres of land into conservation practices. NJAS also forwarded information on eight properties (totaling 385 acres) whose owners are interested in farmland preservation to appropriate agencies. ●

Education

Dale Rosselet,
Vice President for Education

Environmental education is a process; it is a means to help people become more environmentally literate. Environmental education does not persuade; it informs. Environmental education is for all ages; it permeates through actions taken in the home, those done at school and in our workplaces; those accomplished at our places of worship and throughout all levels of government. Environmental education provides the means to understand basic ecological systems that support life on earth; teaches the skills that an informed citizen may need to make quality of life decisions, and provides opportunities for people of all ages to develop behaviors that benefit the environment.

In 2005, New Jersey Audubon Society (NJAS) staff provided nearly 3,000 quality environmental education programs. These included nature day camps, teacher professional development services, weekend adult workshops, programs for scouts, and nature-based festivals. Although each activity had a slightly different goal in mind, all employed experiential learning; they provided direct contact with the environment to engage not only the mind, but also the heart.

Adult Programs

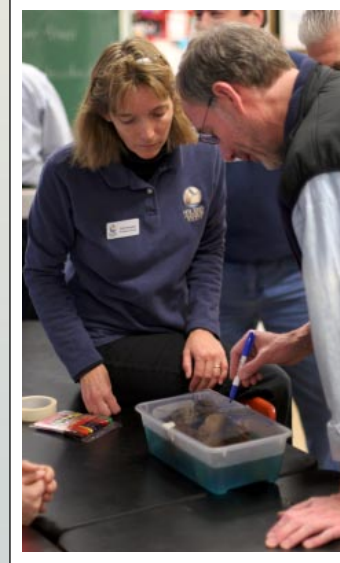
Over 37,000 adults were motivated to participate in some of the most diverse environment-based programming in the state. Each of our NJAS centers provided the backdrop for a multitude of experiences including birding and natural history field trips, domestic and foreign travel, seminars, workshops and other programs. Adult participants took a *Natural Habitats Trolley Tour*

in Cape May to learn what actions they could take to enhance personal or community open space to benefit wildlife. They *Tango[ed] with the Timberdoodles* to learn the life history of American Woodcock and watch their fascinating courtship display at

Plainsboro Preserve. They joined Weis Ecology Center staff to learn about the Highlands by exploring abandoned iron mines in *Caving 101: the Ins and Outs*.

Teacher Programs

NJAS continued to take a leadership role in providing environment-based professional development opportunities for teachers throughout the state. Between NJAS workshops, in-service professional development days and conferences, our staff reached a total of 700 teachers serving pre-K through college-aged students. With budget cuts and gas prices playing a major role in the ability of school districts to take field trips, NJAS staff developed *Audubon On Call*, a means for providing professional development on school grounds which focuses on the interdisciplinary nature of ecological systems and how this fits into each school's curricula.



Teacher-workshop with Dale Rosselet
PHOTO BY JOHN CARNO



In 2004, approximately 100 acres at the Atlantic City Airport were treated and seeded with native grasses and forbs. By mid-summer 2005, the seed had germinated and grown at least a foot tall in many treatment areas. PHOTO BY TROY ETEL



PHOTO BY MIKE ANDERSON

Youth Programs

Youth programs range from those designed to engage young children like the *Little Sprouts* sessions at Rancocas Nature Center to family-oriented programs such as *Skunk Cabbage Safari* at Lorrimer Sanctuary. In addition, our NJAS centers have ongoing relationships with school districts to provide both onsite programs at our nature centers and outreach/assembly programs at the schools. Staff round out their day with after-school scout programs; helping boy and girl scouts achieve their badges in the environmental realm. Altogether, 34,000 youths attended NJAS programs in 2005. Six of our nine education centers as well as our new partner center in Essex County conduct summer camps. These range from weekly nature day camps for younger children to overnight experiences for teenagers. The first year of the Essex County camp served 91 five- and six-year-olds from Clark School in East Orange. For many, this experience was their first in nature, and they went from being afraid of the woods and all its inhabitants to becoming nature ambassadors for new children attending the program.

Of particular interest in 2005 was the growth we experienced in the Youth Division of the World Series of Birding (WSB). There were 23 teams in the three age groups, with over 140 youths participating from six states. In response to the event, a young woman from Newark wrote a particularly poignant poem about her impression of the experience.

"Birding" by Eshica Showell

*As I faced the challenge face to face
I stepped onto the grassy plain
Feeling the cool wind circling around me
Birds and soil were only to remain*

*Glancing upward at the new born sun
Both feet were forced onto the ground
Never before had I felt such peace
Not knowing that tranquility could be found*

*With binoculars in my hand,
I accepted the challenge
Raising them high to reach my
brown eyes*

*I became the Sherlock of the woods
I found everything Mother Nature
tried to hide*

*Now it's over,
what am I going to do?
Back to the violence
that once surrounded me
Wishing that birding
would never end
I lost that feeling to be free*

NJAS accomplished all of these programs in 2005 with a trained staff of 21 educators statewide. In addition, the Society has over 100 volunteer associate naturalists who played an essential support role in providing field trip leadership. These individuals put countless hours into planning and conducting many of our adult field trips and natural history programs. Likewise, of the 80,000 people who walked through our doors in 2005, their first contact was often with a bookstore naturalist or a bookstore desk volunteer who acts as receptionist for the center. These staff and volunteers not only share their love of nature with visitors, but also point people in the right direction for acquiring the skills and tools they will need to discover nature on their own.

Discovery, exploration, awareness and immersion in nature really do make a difference in our attitudes. According to Richard Louv, author of *Last Child In the Woods* (2005), "The most effective way to connect our children to nature is to connect ourselves to nature.... If children sense genuine adult enthusiasm, they'll want to emulate

that interest – even if, when they're teenagers, they pretend to lose it." To that end we launched *Take a Kid Birding®* through Cape May Bird Observatory. This program encourages adults to make a conscious effort to take a child's hands and open his or her eyes to the natural world.

Think about making your own commitment to this cause – it could change the future. I invite you to visit our education Web site at (www.njaudubon.org/Education/) to learn more about New Jersey Audubon Society's natural history and environment-based education and recreation opportunities for all ages and levels of expertise. ●



Take a kid birding!

Research

David Mizrahi, Ph.D.,
Vice President for Research

In Flight with New Jersey Audubon Society's Research Department

Every January I report to our members about the work of New Jersey Audubon Society's Research Department. This task gives me an opportunity to reflect on our previous year's ups and downs – to applaud the successes, contemplate the disappointments, and look with excitement toward the future. It's an invigorating process and one that has great benefits. Here's the view from my perch.

Our endeavor to develop data sets and analyses that support conservation of important stopover areas for migratory birds continues on a number of fronts. First and foremost, we continue to collaborate with state and international biologists to document the plight of shorebirds using Delaware Bay during spring migration stopovers.

The data we collect continue to indicate that, in recent years, Semipalmated Sand-



pipers staging in Delaware Bay accumulate energy reserves more slowly and attain lower weights compared with the late 1990s. Aerial surveys conducted by the N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife suggest that this species has declined in Delaware Bay over the last 15 years. NJAS's Conservation Department and others are using data collected by the state on Red Knots, coupled with our findings, to influence closure of horseshoe crab harvesting in the Delaware Bay region.

NJAS's fledgling Citizen Science Program, headed by Dr. Nellie Tsipoura, is also contributing to the effort. For the last three migration seasons her volunteers conducted surveys of migrating shorebirds.

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Research Continued

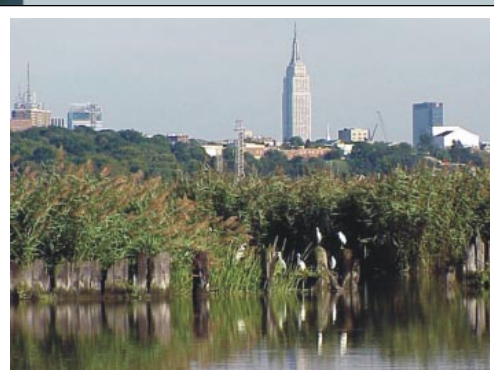
Their efforts are providing much-needed information on the abundance and distribution of migrating shorebirds along the entire Atlantic and Delaware Bay coasts. These projects continue to receive support from the N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and NJAS members.

One of the most exciting projects that N.J. Audubon Society's Research Department is working on is called "Oases along the Flyway." This work involves using the National Weather Service's (NWS) Doppler radar to map and characterize critical stop-over habitats used by songbirds as they migrate through the region. Radar images are collected just after dark, when many songbirds take off on their annual peregrinations. These images are similar to the type seen on the Weather Channel and are utilized to identify areas that support high densities of birds or ones that are used frequently during the migration period.

By combining radar data with satellite information on land-use and land-cover patterns, we investigate what habitat and landscape characteristics are important to migrating songbirds. Currently, this work is being conducted in the mid-Atlantic region with support from state wildlife agencies in New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York and from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Our work has recently extended to studying the airways used by migrating birds. Bridges, tall buildings, cell phone and digital television towers, and wind turbines can obstruct flight paths. These obstructions are potential hazards for migratory birds as they travel between their summer and winter homes.

Avian survey results in the Hackensack Meadowlands will assist with evaluating habitat restoration and effective bird management strategies. PHOTO BY JARED EUDELL



We are currently studying nocturnal flight patterns in Cape May County to evaluate the potential effects of a small suspension bridge proposed for the lower peninsula area. In this endeavor we are using cutting-edge marine radar technology, similar to equipment found on oceangoing vessels, and advanced computer hardware and software to collect and analyze data. Once acquired, the data is used to investigate temporal and spatial patterns of bird movements in and around the project area. State and federal regulatory agencies will employ the results of our work when deciding the bridge's final design.

Starting in the spring of 2006, we will conduct a similar study near Atlantic City. State and federal agencies will use the data we collect to evaluate the potential impacts of coastal wind energy development on migrating and resident birds and bats. The pressure to develop this energy resource is increasing rapidly, and understanding its possible long-term effects on wildlife is imperative.

Although much of our work focuses on migration, it is certainly not all we do. Since 2004 we have been studying how breeding grassland birds, such as Grasshopper Sparrow and Upland Sandpiper, respond to habitat restoration efforts at the Atlantic City Airport. This and related projects are under the expert supervision of Kim Peters, one of our newest staff members, who was slated to earn her doctoral degree from Clemson University in March.

Grassland bird and habitat conservation is a major focus area for NJAS's Research and Conservation departments. Much of the work conducted on grasslands in the state is a collaboration between our two departments and partners like the N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Another focal area that takes us far from the nest is the urban landscape. Since late 2004 we have conducted a comprehensive bird survey in the Hackensack Meadowlands. This work will continue until fall 2006. The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission will use the results of our survey to evaluate avian responses to habitat restoration and develop effective management strategies for avian species.

Ecological restoration and remediation are occurring throughout the Meadowlands district and these activities could potentially release contaminants into the environment.

Understanding whether exposure adversely affects nesting success of birds breeding in the Meadowlands is important. This spring we will begin a study in the Meadowlands District to investigate these relationships.

None of the work I've described would be possible without the hard work of our staff. In addition to those already mentioned, they are: Vince Elia, Patti Hodgetts, Bob Fogg, Ken Witkowski, and our newest staff member, Mike Bisignano. Our accomplishments also would not be possible without the support of our members and friends. Thanks to all for a great 2005 and I look forward to much more success in 2006! ●



Winter Wren
PHOTO BY ROBERT LEGO

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Black-capped Chickadee
PHOTO BY WILLIAM DALTON

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Sources of Operating Funds

Contributions and Bequests: \$1,727,744 47.06%
 Investment Income: \$230,426 6.28%
 Program Fees: \$920,990 25.08%
 Sale of Merchandise (net): \$373,995 10.19%
 Dues: \$418,119 11.39%
TOTAL: \$3,671,274

Uses of Operating Funds

Education and Sanctuaries: \$1,745,884 44.44%
 Research: \$924,283 23.53%
 Conservation: \$515,215 13.12%
 Information Services: \$234,760 5.98%
 Management: \$298,266 7.59%
 Development: \$209,943 5.34%
TOTAL: \$3,928,351

