

Audubon

FALL 2019

SPECIAL REPORT

BIRDS CAN'T FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE. WE CAN.

389 bird species are at risk of extinction in a warming world. Many can still be protected—if we act now.

Your Guide to Climate Action

Feeling like you alone can't make a difference? That couldn't be further from the truth. Here's where to begin and how to amplify your efforts to make lasting change in the world.

LEVEL 3 Rebuild the Machinery PAGE 78**LEVEL 4** Join a National Cause PAGE 82

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Level 1

Start the Conversation

We are facing a climate crisis of epic proportion—one that threatens life on Earth as we know it. For people and birds to have any chance of adapting, the response needs to be no less massive. But that doesn't mean you can't start at home. Personal actions reduce our own contributions to climate change, sometimes significantly. Just as important, they have a ripple effect: When people see others in their community taking action, they are much more likely to do so themselves. The technical term for this is "social norm," but let's just call it doing your part to help save the world.



Find Your Climate Story

We all have one, and identifying yours is the first step in becoming an advocate for climate action.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT things you can do to fight climate change is also one of the simplest: Talk about it. Research shows that discussing global warming with family and friends reinforces that the crisis is real and the science unequivocal. And yet, nearly two-thirds of Americans say they rarely or never have those conversations.

Facts alone won't cut it—to really connect, you need a story with heart. "When you share from your own experience, when you lead with that, it does something different in the conversation," says Jothisna Harris, community engagement manager with the nonprofit group Climate Generation. "We all are eye-witnesses, and we all have a story to tell."

Your climate story might involve changes in your backyard, a favorite place that's threatened,

or how you moved from apathy to activism. To find it, carve out time for quiet journaling with these tips in mind:

Build an emotional connection through shared values like compassion and love of family.

Focus on a pivotal moment in your relationship to climate change. How did that moment feel, sound, smell?

Tie it to the big picture with a fact or two, such as how much your town has warmed or how high seas are likely to rise.

Then share your story, starting with those close to you and then work your way out. "The sharing of it does something inside of you," Harris says. "It feels like, 'My voice is important and what I have to say does matter.'" (You can find more inspiration or submit your story at climatestories.org.)

Coping Skill

BE REALISTIC Once you grasp the urgency of this crisis, it's easy to feel bad about not doing more—an understandable but counterproductive mindset, says climate psychologist Renee Lertzman. We do the most when we accept our shortcomings and view each day as a chance to live closer to our values.

How to Be Solar Contagious

Spread climate solutions by taking visible actions in your community.

SOLAR POWER IS INFECTIOUS.

Among the biggest factors driving a homeowner's decision to install rooftop panels isn't politics or income—it's whether the neighbors have them.

Or so says research led by Yale economist Kenneth Gill-ingham. Once one array goes up in a neighborhood, it triggers a significant jump in nearby installations. "Word-of-mouth plays a key role," he says. "When people talk to others about the solar they put on their roof, they make it clear that putting solar on your roof is not a crazy idea: It's something people do."

This effect is stronger when solar panels are clearly visible

to passersby. And if you really want your neighbors to catch solar fever, invite them over for a cookout or open house to see your system and further spread the word. Minnesota-based solar installer Robert Blake has seen firsthand that these home parties work. "The best way to sell a solar system is to have a customer do it," he says.

Studies reveal a similar neighbor-to-neighbor influence on other environmental behaviors, from buying alternative-fuel cars to using less energy. "It's the new keeping up with the Joneses," Blake says, "and that's a great thing for our society and our communities."



REMINDER: WE HAVE ONLY ONE EARTH

You are here.

Travel time: 70,000 Earth years

Proxima Centauri, the closest star that might have a hospitable planet.



Four Tips for a Climate-Friendly Yard

America's largest irrigated crop isn't corn or soy—it's grass. Lawns cover more area than Georgia, and their upkeep deepens the climate crisis. Try these tactics to curb emissions.

1 Kill the grass. To make room for climate- and bird-friendly habitat, you've got to lose that thirsty monoculture. Here's one way: Cut the grass as short as possible, cover with cardboard, dampen, add five inches of mulch, and wait two months before planting anything. Or just rent a sod cutter.

2 Plant native species. Plants adapted to your region don't need fertilizer or much water. They also provide valuable food and habitat for birds while pulling carbon out of the atmosphere. Plus, strategically siting trees and shrubs around your home can halve cooling costs in summer and similarly shrink your winter heating bill—and all the emissions they required.

3 Go fertilizer-free. Synthetic fertilizers take a huge amount of energy to produce. They also typically provide more nitrogen than plants need, and microbes convert that excess into nitrous oxide, which, like CO₂, traps heat in the atmosphere. Organic fertilizer is a little better, but using all-natural, composted materials is best.

4 Forgo gas tools. Hedge trimmers, edgers, leaf blowers—all these fuelburners spew carbon emissions and air pollution that are bad for, well, everyone. Many companies make electric versions that work just as well and are better for the environment (especially if you install those solar panels). Feeling really motivated? Don't forget basic hand tools, which get the job done, only require your own energy, and rarely need costly repairs.



TAKE IT FROM ME

Inspiration from an electric vehicle owner

“Last year, my husband and I bought our first car since 2004. We wanted something that used as little fossil fuel as possible, but we were hesitant to get an all-electric vehicle that would require regular charging on our annual trip from New York City to the Midwest for the holidays. We ended up with a plug-in hybrid—the perfect compromise. The battery provides a 60-mile range per full charge for local travel, and the gas engine kicks in when we’re out of juice. Now our biggest challenge is ensuring that the electricity for each charge is green, so we opt into our utility’s wind-energy plan at home.”

Elizabeth Sorrell, vice president of engagement for Audubon and owner of a 2018 Chevrolet Volt



Make Smarter Moves

Transportation produces nearly a third of U.S. greenhouse gases, so your commute matters. Here’s how to get from A to B without emitting so much C.

Take Public Transit Public transportation isn’t just good for communities: On average, it emits about half as much carbon dioxide per passenger mile as private vehicles. If one driver in a typical household takes transit on a daily commute of 10 miles each way, it shrinks that home’s total carbon output by almost eight percent.

Skip Short Car Trips Car trips shorter than a mile add up to some 10 billion miles a year—the equivalent of everyone in Chicago driving to Las Vegas and back. Sometimes you have to get behind the wheel, but if even half of those short trips were made on foot or bike, it’d be similar to taking 400,000 vehicles off the road each year.

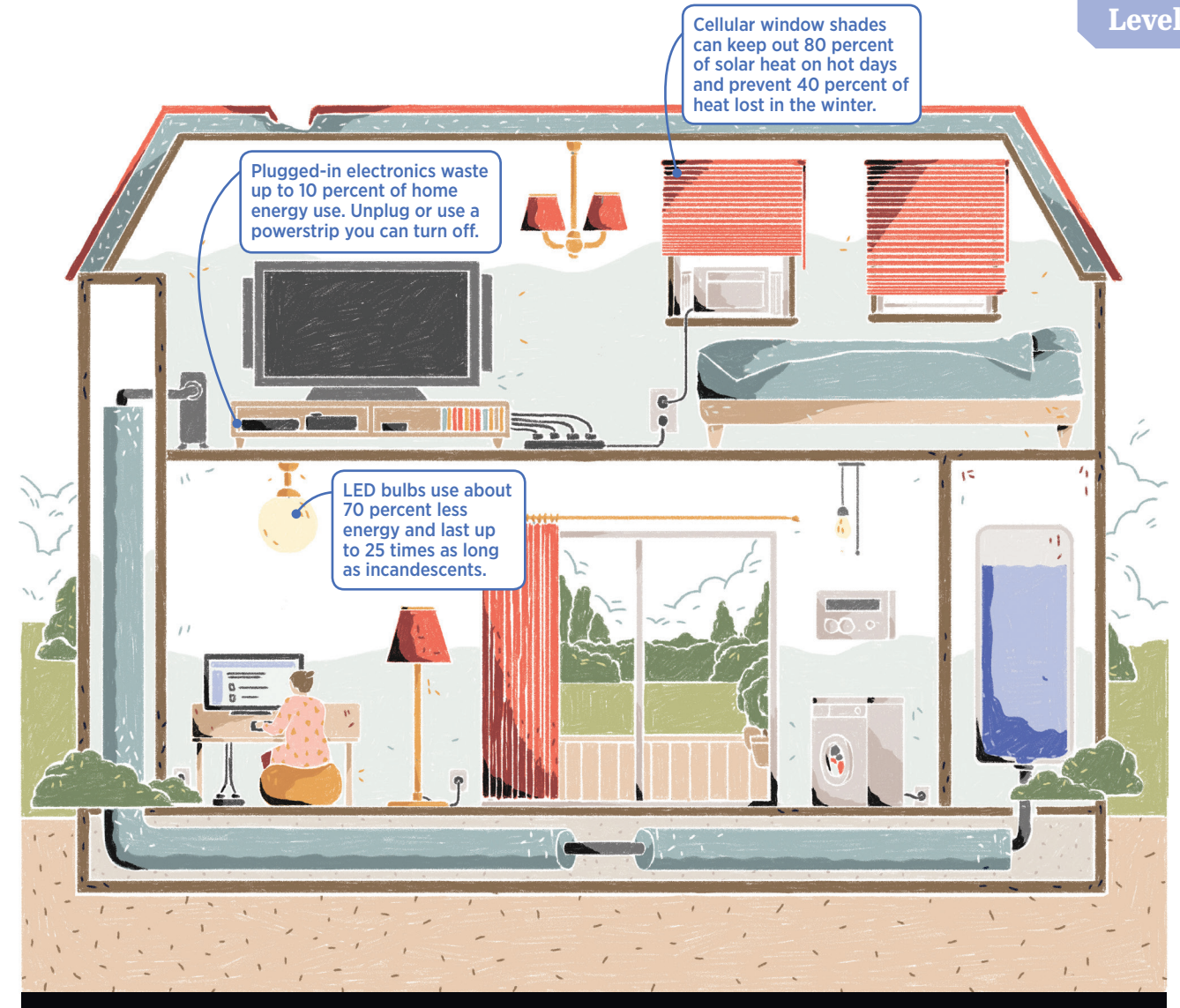
Drive with Efficiency If you can, an electric vehicle is the way to go. The average EV today is the greenhouse-gas equivalent of an

internal-combustion car that gets 80 miles per gallon—a footprint that will shrink as electricity to charge them gets cleaner. Meanwhile, how you drive can make a difference in a gas-powered vehicle: Hard acceleration and braking can cut fuel efficiency by a quarter.

Opt for Offsets No getting around it: Air travel is a huge driver of climate change. A round-trip ticket on a transatlantic flight can emit enough carbon to melt 30 square feet of sea ice, per one study. But flying is also hard to avoid, so consider carbon offsets. Sold by airlines and third parties, offsets balance your climate impact with investments in green energy, forest conservation, and other emissions-reducing projects. And they’re relatively cheap—around \$10 for a cross-country trip and back. Look for programs certified through Green-e or other verifiers.

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Number of gallons of gas each person would save by swapping beans for a five-ounce steak one day a week for a year. That’s a five percent decrease in a typical home’s annual electricity use.



Give Your Home a Climate Overhaul

Having a carbon-friendly house isn’t just better for the world—it will also save you serious money. But updating your abode takes more than a weekend, so keep these steps in mind for when the time is right.

1. First, request an energy audit—find a certified pro at [hersindex.com](https://www.hersindex.com)—to learn what improvements will give you the most bang for your buck. In many cases, incentives provided by the government or your own utility can help cover the cost of your audit and upgrades. Find out what’s available at [dsireusa.org](https://www.dsireusa.org).
2. The easiest way to make your home cozier and more efficient is often by installing quality insulation and filling in the cracks and gaps around your attic, doors, and windows. With some minimal time and financial investment, these quick projects alone can reduce your home energy use by 20 percent or more.
3. Heating, cooling, and ventilation hog about half of a typical home’s energy use. Get a yearly tune-up and regularly swap filters for max efficiency. When furnace shopping, seek AFUE ratings of 95 percent and up. Check for proper sizing of your A/C and a SEER rating of at least 16. For quicker results: Buy a smart thermostat.
4. Two fixes can yield big savings on water heating, which makes up about 20 percent of home energy use: Insulate hot-water piping, and turn the water heater’s thermostat to around 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Depending on your home and needs, consider a solar water heater or on-demand tankless system.
5. When it’s time to upgrade, look for the ENERGY STAR label. Lightbulbs, appliances, electronics, and other products must meet strict efficiency standards for this U.S. EPA-backed certification. These items might cost a bit more upfront, but you will save plenty in money and energy soon enough.

Level 2

Lead Your Community

With your own carbon footprint under control, it's time to level up your impact by encouraging those around you to take climate actions. But where to start? Consider the local communities and spaces where you already have connections and influence—your child's school, say, or a social hub like a coffee shop. By merely showing up and making your case, you can lead others toward climate-friendly policies and practices. It's not always easy, but it's often productive—and rewarding. Along the way, you'll develop new relationships and skills that will help you become an ace climate advocate.



Hit the Neighborhood

Climate-action tips for greening your town.



WORK

There are plenty of things you can do to improve the office's sustainability without inserting green line items in the budget—and some of them will increase productivity, too.

Adjust the Thermostat Cooling and ventilation account for about one-fifth of office energy use, so ease up on the AC. Plus, research shows that, thanks to standards based on men's bodies, offices are routinely set at temperatures too cold for women to work optimally.

Print Strategically Paper production has many adverse effects on the environment. If you must print, do so double-sided (and in "draft" mode, which uses less ink). Your boss may also thank you: Printing costs account for one to three percent of a company's revenue.

Pack Your Lunch One study found that homemade sandwiches have lower carbon impacts than store-bought ones, thanks to far less packaging and refrigeration. (A lesson that extends past lunch.)

SCHOOL

Five days a week, kids dive into an environment that will shape their choices for decades to come. So join the PTA—then ask for these things.

Climate Change Literacy

Including climate change in the curriculum is critical. Not sure where to start? NASA's climate portal (climate.nasa.gov) provides a repository of scientist-reviewed lesson plans you can suggest.

Healthier, Lower-Carbon Meals

Diets richer in plants and lighter in meat can be better for kids' growing bodies and brains. Reducing the school's climate impact is a bonus. In Oakland, California, shifting to one vegetarian meal a week cut the district's food-service carbon footprint by 14 percent.

Cost-Effective Building Updates

Asking for upgrades like LED lighting or nontoxic products can lead to positive health outcomes. And any swaps that require less energy or fewer chemicals reduce emissions and maintenance fees.

PLACE OF WORSHIP

Consider this advice from Rev. Abby Mohaupt, senior adviser for education and training at GreenFaith, an interfaith organization focused on environmental action.

Assess the Everyday Easy opportunities for lowering any religious institution's carbon footprint include community gatherings, building operations, and the grounds. Ask how post-service meals are sourced, Mohaupt says, or where the mosque is getting its energy.

Align the Messages GreenFaith encourages incorporating environmental teaching into religious practice. "Changing lightbulbs and getting rid of Styrofoam are bigger and harder questions than we sometimes think," Mohaupt says. "They have to go hand in hand with education and liturgy."

Spread the Word When your spiritual home is ready for public leadership, [GreenFaith.org](https://greenfaith.org) has tips for how to partner with other religious and secular groups.

CITY HALL

Lindsey Constance, a city council member in Shawnee, Kansas, cofounded the Metro Kansas City Climate Action Coalition. Here are her tips for making council requests.

Bring Solutions "Come with a suggestion or idea rather than just a problem," Constance says. "We hear problems all day long! Even if it's not the right answer, it shows that you are willing to get in there and help problem-solve, too."

Ask for Efficiency The first thing to press for are efficiency improvements, so request a city-wide energy audit. Replacing old and inefficient HVAC units, windows, and insulation will save the city money, so it's an easy sell.

Consider Co-benefits Officials aren't always motivated by the environment, so pitch co-benefits. Native plants in parks and medians cut costs because cities don't have to water or mow them. And in addition to acting as a carbon sink, they mitigate rain runoff.

Hack Your Local Food System

Farm-to-table is the buzzword, but too often farm-to-landfill is the reality.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE estimates that annually 30 to 40 percent of the food supply is wasted; one study equated that to 133 billion pounds of food worth \$161 billion. What's more, food occupies 22 percent of the space in landfills, which in turn produce 20 percent of the methane the United States sends into the atmosphere. In other words, food waste offers a huge opportunity to make a climate difference.

In Pittsburgh, the nonprofit 412 Food Rescue fights waste by linking places with surplus food with organizations that need it. Its app, Food Rescue Hero, works like Uber: Volunteers get push notifications when a nearby food rescue is ready. From 2015 to 2018, the group saved more than \$14 million worth of food. Now the program is spreading to other urban areas with a goal of reaching 100 cities by 2030. Here are three ways cofounder and CEO Leah Lizarondo suggests reducing food waste in your city (until 412 Food Rescue comes to town).

- 1) Be a food-rescue hero, even without the app. Many businesses are receptive to Good Samaritans willing to take their waste to a shelter. Schools, restaurants, and hospitals are excellent places to start.
- 2) Petition your city to introduce a composting program. Or start composting yourself; farmers' markets often have compost stations for easy drop-off.
- 3) Ask your local grocer to mark down items on the verge of hitting their expiration date. Remember, these dates are guidelines, not gospel. Food is often fine beyond them (within reason, of course).



Coping Skill

STAY FOCUSED People confuse worrying about climate change with taking action, says psychotherapist Rosemary Randall. Getting involved with an organization, like Audubon, can help—it's easier to make a tangible impact with a group, and that reaffirms your sense of agency. Terror is not a durable motivation. Much healthier: Social justice and preservation of the natural world.

Plan for the Displaced

Climate change is already causing people to relocate. As more hometowns become inhospitable, yours might be able to help.

COASTAL POPULATIONS ARE ON THE FRONT LINES of climate change. According to Mathew Hauer, a demographer at Florida State University, 13 million Americans could be displaced by sea-level rise and natural disasters by 2100. About half will be Floridians (and a quarter Miamians). Louisiana, California, and the Carolinas will also be hard hit. But those facing floods, fires, and drought in the country's interior might also need to abandon their homes, Hauer says. Abroad, the World Bank has estimated that 143 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia could be forced from their own countries by 2050. Surely a significant number will set out for the United States.



Is Your Town Ready?

Here are some questions your community should be asking itself. And, conveniently, the answers.

Q: Should we expect to receive climate migrants?

People tend to move to familiar places nearby where they have friends or family, and where they're going to be in a good economic situation. So if you're in midsize, coast-adjacent, job-rich cities like Orlando, Atlanta, or Austin, you'll probably see an influx first.

Q: Is there one main thing to focus on?

Yes, affordable housing, since many of the people forced to move won't be wealthy (those with money will have more options). Right now the United States is generally struggling to build affordable housing, so if you're ready to advocate, that's a good place to concentrate your efforts.

Q: What else can my town do to prepare?

Climate migrants will require services of all kinds. Schools need to be ready to welcome new students. City social services need to be ready to provide counseling. If there's a local nonprofit experienced with refugees, get involved. If not, start one yourself.

How to Write a Letter to the Editor

It's more productive than a Facebook rant.

Pick Your Newspaper If you want to influence a specific decision maker, choose a paper they read. A local or regional print publication is a good bet.

Get to the Point Make one point in your letter, and make it well. Keep it between 150 and 250 words.

Make It Personal Tell your climate story to emphasize why you care. Include no more than the one fact needed to support your main point.

Don't Hold Back Tell readers what you want to get done or them to do. Be precise and aggressive.

But Don't Be Too Aggressive Do not attack individuals or groups of people. Stick to your point.

Find a Proofreader Before submitting your letter, have a friend read it for clarity and errors.



Support Green Projects

After a natural disaster—or in preparation for what's to come—many communities are rebuilding infrastructure. Business as usual means concrete and rebar, but some are opting for sustainable solutions.

Prioritizing Parks

After flooding on North Dakota's Red River deluged the city of Fargo repeatedly from 1997 to 2014, Audubon Dakota teamed up with the Fargo Parks District and other partners on the Urban Woods and Prairies Initiative. Flood-buyout properties along the river's banks offered an opportunity to improve habitat, add natural park space, and increase flood resilience. By lining the river with parks instead of private property, the partnership created a protective buffer of natural prairie vegetation adapted to the river's cycles. So far, 23 nature parks covering more than 1,000 acres have been built along the river in Fargo and its cross-river neighbor, Moorhead, Minnesota.

Skippping Seawalls

For decades conservationists have been working to restore San Francisco Bay's wetlands, which had been developed for farms, factories, landfills, military bases, and freeways. The goal is to create 100,000 acres of wetlands by 2030 to naturally mitigate rising seas. What's more, these marshes will largely eliminate the future need for seawalls, which can crumble over time while also interrupting the natural movement of water, destroying vital coastal habitat. So far, 20,000 acres have been restored, and in 2016 voters supported Measure AA, a tax backed by Audubon California that's expected to raise \$500 million over 20 years to fund the ongoing work.

80

Number of years it can take a new building to overcome the climate impacts of construction. When possible, retrofitting existing buildings—for example, by upgrading HVAC systems—should be the priority for cities and towns.



TAKE IT FROM ME

Inspiration from a first-time city council member

“I unexpectedly had the opportunity to run in a special election. I was a newcomer to St. Paul, though a lifelong Minnesotan. I had about 10 days to actually make a campaign. What should people considering this think about? Local politics can feel entrenched—like, oh, I have to have been a homeowner for 25 years in this community and have super-deep networks to jump in and try to lead. I didn't have any of that. I struck out on my own to say: I believe what our community really needs right now is a new perspective for the future.”

Mitra Jalali Nelson, Ward 4 council member in St. Paul, Minnesota, one of 25 cities selected so far for the National League of Cities' Leadership in Community Resilience program

YOUR GUIDE TO CLIMATE ACTION

Level 3

Rebuild the Machinery

Ready to really start making an impact? Good, because now it's time to tackle the entrenched systems and political stagnation that can greatly contribute to climate change at the state and regional levels. It's here that we need to advocate for things like fast and innovative grid transformation, forward-thinking climate policies, and institutional reform. There's no question that driving change is challenging work. The key is recruiting allies and being thoughtful about your strategies and goals. With the right partnerships and planning, you can wield influence that once might have seemed unimaginable.



Gather Your Forces

You can't just mobilize—you have to organize.

PASSING LEGISLATION REQUIRES POLITICAL MUSCLE, and to develop that we need to organize a movement that brings people into the fold. "Organizing means we're reaching out to people who are not yet with us, and that's hard work," says Jane McAlevey, an activist and union organizer, about running a successful advocacy campaign. "We need to get out of our comfort zones."

Activists often make the same mistake, McAlevey says: "Rushing into campaigns without asking, 'How are we going to win?'" The answer: power. And new allies can help build it. "Whether it's how to protect migratory patterns for birds or regulations on air pollution, we can't make change in the silo of the environmental movement," she says.

So how do you get others to join your cause? McAlevey advises groups to consider whom each

member knows in the area you're targeting. In other words, sort through your mental Rolodex of the people in your book clubs, sports teams, trade unions, parent-teacher associations, local media, clergy—and then chart the connections, mapping how they might be able to help and if they have related concerns. "Don't just rely on who comes to the chapter meeting," she says. "That's not enough people." Simultaneously, think about what you specifically want to achieve, and whom you need to influence to get there.

Once your allies are united, it's time to schedule meetings and talk policy with lawmakers. Try to arrange these gatherings in your own community. "It can be in a living room or at a synagogue, wherever you want to meet," McAlevey says. "It's harder for a policymaker to dismiss you when they're actually dealing with people face to face."

How to Lobby Your Legislators

Remember: Your state representatives work for you.



LOBBYING ISN'T JUST FOR MAJOR CORPORATIONS. Anyone can meet with state legislators to discuss issues, and advocacy groups like Audubon often organize events called lobby days for constituents to do just that. These gatherings usually happen at the state capitol and can even require hanging out in the hall hoping for a meeting (it is called "lobbying"). But if you don't want to wait for a formal lobby day, you can also schedule your own sit-down, either as an individual or as part of a group. Whatever your approach, the key is making your voice heard. "So few people meaningfully engage in the democratic process," says Claire Douglass, national campaigns senior director for the National Audubon Society. "This is still a democracy."

1 Request a Meeting. Every state representative has a website with contact information, so send an email introducing yourself as a constituent, requesting a meeting, and noting the issues you'd like to discuss. An office scheduler might reply, but if not, follow up in a few weeks by email or by phone. For the best chance of success, have a flexible calendar, Douglass advises.

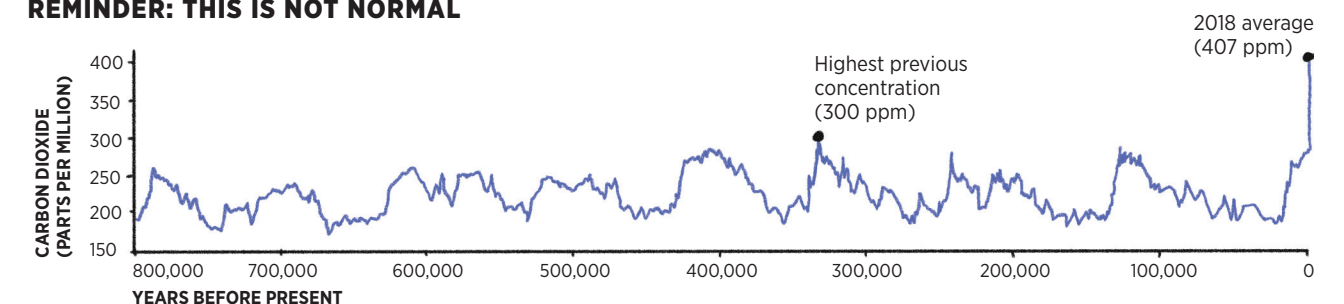
2 Have a Goal. Whether meeting your rep alone or in a group, have a clear sense of what you want to achieve. For groups, discuss talking points and strategy before you sit down, including your specific ask—100 percent clean energy reform, for instance—and who will make the request.

3 Show Your Unity. Official lobby days can be busy and crowded. Project solidarity by wearing the same colored shirts or hats. The message: We are here, and we are united.

4 Make It Personal. In your meeting, try to connect with your representative by explaining why exactly you and your community care. "Your personal story helps show, not tell," Douglass says. (See Level 1 for a refresher on how to do that.)

5 Follow Up. Send a thank-you note and remind your lawmaker about specific points from the meeting. "Thanking your legislators can have an outsize influence because so few people do," Douglass says.

REMINDER: THIS IS NOT NORMAL

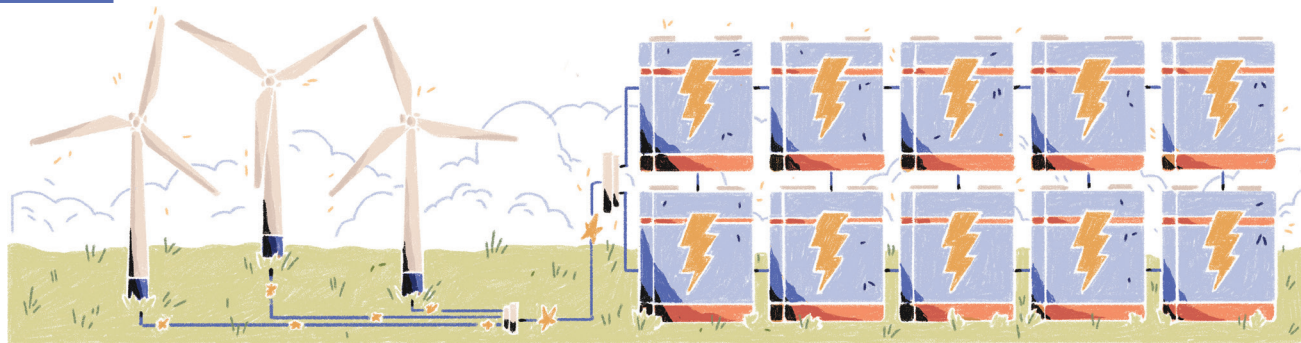


GRAPH SOURCE: NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



Coping Skill

GET OUTSIDE Advocating for major change can be exhausting, so be sure to take time for yourself. Go birding, and go often, to remind yourself of what you're trying to save. You can even turn this breather into meaningful action by joining Audubon's Climate Watch program, which tracks certain species at local levels to see how climate change is affecting them. "I have a passion for counting birds," says Leif Anderson, an avid Climate Watch volunteer. "It's a fun, easy community-science project, and it's something one person can do."



Break Through the Electric Gridlock

To start making a real dent in climate change, we have to go big on renewables—but an outdated power grid is getting in our way.

POWER FLOWS FOR MOST

Americans through an aging morass of substations and infrastructure that make up the U.S. electric grid—actually a network of local grids linked together. Various utilities and energy companies essentially run regional monopolies, and while some have taken strides to convert the systems they oversee to cleaner technologies, many remain resistant to change. Here are six kinds of policies you can fight for, or against, to hasten the transition to a renewable future.

✓ **100 Percent Clean Energy:** To chart a clear course toward a greener grid, states are writing laws to accelerate the transition to 100 percent clean energy in the coming decades. Once passed, these laws can be used to justify other climate policies.

✓ **Energy Storage:** In an antiquated grid, fossil fuels are burned as needed to meet demand. Wind and solar, however, require batteries or other devices to hold energy produced at peak times for use later. New state laws can force reluctant utilities to pilot energy-storage projects.

✓ **Grid Resilience:** Extreme weather events have exposed the current grid's vulnerability. Hurricane Sandy, for example, knocked out power for 8.5 million people in 21 states. Bills supporting microgrids—which generate and distribute power on a smaller scale, limiting major outages—will make the grid more resilient.

✗ **Solar Caps:** When homes and businesses capture sunlight to generate their own energy, traditional power plants are threatened. Utilities have lobbied for laws in many states to limit rooftop solar by capping installation size or the excess energy that panel owners can sell to the utility.

✗ **Archaic Subsidies:** Renewable energy is getting cheaper. Yet in many states, utilities and fossil-fuel companies have pushed legislation that supports money-losing coal-fired power plants by increasing customer rates. The funds keep the plants running while delaying clean-energy growth.

✗ **Wind Moratoriums:** Citing a wide array of reasons, state lawmakers have passed legislation to hamper wind development. These moratoriums ban new turbines altogether, rather than promote the strategic siting of wind farms to maximize energy capture and minimize bird deaths.



Pressure Your Public Utility Commission

These are the gatekeepers to real grid reform.

ALL 50 STATES HAVE SOME SORT OF ENTITY that regulates utilities. While largely unknown to the average person, these commissions have significant sway when it comes to the investments utilities make. If your utility is an investor-owned, for-profit company, it's regulated by a public utility commission or public service commission. You can typically file formal comments with the commission on pending decisions and investments, but you'll have the biggest effect by hooking up with a group of knowledgeable activists—a local chapter of the NAACP, for example—that could use your help in advocating for a cleaner, more equitable system. Some states even have citizen utility boards lobbying for renewable energy; if your state has one, get involved. If you're under a municipal utility or an electric co-op, you have a direct voice in its decision making. Become a regular presence at city council or board meetings and consider running for a board position yourself.



TAKE IT FROM ME

Inspiration from a first-time lobbyist

“I didn't know what to expect on my first lobby day. I didn't know how close we would get to these individuals, or if we'd even get to talk to them. Luckily we did talk to a few of them, and the representatives, for the most part, were really nice. Going in with that uncertainty is kind of exciting. But it's also encouraging when you get there and you have this whole group that you're planning out the conversation with, knowing that you're all there to support each other and get the same message across. That was neat and comforting. I look forward to my next one.”

Sara Wrenn, member of the University of North Carolina Asheville's Audubon campus chapter, on attending a lobby day with Audubon North Carolina to advocate for renewable-energy policy



Seek Influential Allies

To broaden your regional impact, take a cue from these two cases.

Powerhouse Schools Colleges and universities often have massive carbon footprints. Whether you're a member of the local community or a student, view them as possible partners for your advocacy. Students for a Sustainable Stanford, for example, has taken on transportation at the California university. In 2016, the student group partnered with others on a program that offset all of the flights taken by varsity teams the previous year, which amounted to 2,600 metric tons of carbon dioxide. They keep pushing, too. This year, in an op-ed to *The Stanford Daily*, two members of the group urged the university to reduce its Scope 3 emissions, which includes business travel and commuters and accounted for 47,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2018.

Big Business Walmart is the largest employer in the United States and in Arkansas, where the multinational corporation is based. The retailer set a goal of powering its operations with 50 percent renewable energy by 2025. So when Gary Moody, interim executive director of Audubon Arkansas, wrote a bill to expand solar energy in the state, he wanted Walmart as an ally: Politicians might not listen to him alone, but he had a shot with the goliath company by his side, which also brought the economy and jobs into the conversation. Ultimately, support from Walmart and dozens of other businesses that came aboard helped sway state leaders. The bill was signed into law in March 2019.

5 Number of phone calls needed to make a South Carolina representative “feel like their doors are being blown off,” says Tara Spicer, a Republican strategist in the state, which has a medium-size population. Adjust for the size of your state accordingly, and start dialing.

Level 4

Join a National Cause

Make no mistake: The most important climate action you can take at any level, but especially the national one, is to vote for political candidates who are ready to take meaningful steps toward curbing carbon emissions and tackling climate change. The second-most important action involves deeper, harder work: supporting a movement that is inclusive of all and representative of those without power. Our path to a greener future must be one in which everyone has a say—most of all those who are already suffering from a warming planet. Climate change is a crisis, but it can also be an opportunity to create a more just world.



Build a Broader Movement

When it comes to creating nationwide change, there is strength in both diversity and numbers.

FROM INDIGENOUS PROTESTERS

challenging a crude-oil pipeline at Standing Rock to the dawn of the youth-led Sunrise Movement, the disenfranchised and under-represented are speaking out and leading the way in the fight against climate change. As they do, they remind us of the importance of supporting an equitable climate movement—one that includes, benefits, and empowers everyone.

Our existing fossil-fuel-based economy has not distributed advantages—or social and environmental burdens—equally. The transition to a cleaner economy built on renewables provides us with the opportunity to create a different paradigm. To achieve this, people advocating for climate action everywhere need to thoughtfully and deliberately make a “just transition” central to their work. That means elevating the needs and concerns of frontline communities

already living through the effects of climate change, as well as the solutions they have to offer.

This starts with respectfully listening, and being aware of the messages sent by our own actions and words. “People who are historically accustomed to being excluded, or worse, must hear and know, explicitly, that we are welcoming, that we want to learn from them, and that they will be safe with us,” says Deohn Ferris, Audubon’s vice president of equity, diversity, and inclusion. “It’s important to act on our intentions and to speak them out loud.”

As a climate advocate, you play an important role in making sure all communities receive the social and environmental justice they need and deserve. Whether writing a letter to the editor, appearing before the city council, or lobbying state legislators, these concepts will inform your advocacy.

Seek grassroots partners.

From passing a local ordinance to crafting city-wide legislation, frontline communities are often left out of conversations they should be steering, says Anthony Rogers-Wright, who works with the Climate Justice Alliance and was the policy lead on the Green New Deal, a vision for U.S. legislation that addresses both inequality and climate change. He points to the local Green New Deal recently adopted by Seattle as an example. “It was the front lines dictating and building grassroots power over a long, sustained process that eventually led to its passage,” he says.

Equalize economic opportunity.

As legacy jobs like coal mining go away, those who relied on them need to benefit, too. “When we think about just transition, we think of it as not only providing solutions through our energy use, but also creating economic opportunities for communities,” says Kerene Tayloe, director of federal legislative affairs for We Act, a social- and environmental-justice nonprofit. Do your part by advocating for programs that provide paths to green jobs, like wind-turbine technicians and solar installers, and supporting local minority-owned businesses.

Elevate the voices of youth.

Younger generations have the biggest stake in the decisions we make today. “We are renting the planet from young people,” Rogers-Wright says. But while student activists have grabbed plenty of headlines, the framing is often exclusive. “When we are evoking this narrative of young people, [we must make sure] we’re talking about all of the young people,” he says—not just those who are white.

Fight for equitable funding.

Those working on the front lines need proper financial support. You can lobby city councils and other groups to provide funding that helps bridge the gap between marginalized communities and wealthier ones. “Once those resources can be shared in a more equitable way, then we can speak for ourselves and really push forth an agenda that will not only save our communities but, in honesty, save the country,” Tayloe says. “Because if we have clean air in Harlem, if we have clean air and water in Flint, all those other places will benefit, too.”

Coping Skill

PRACTICE PATIENCE Climate denial tends to be rooted in a person’s identity or ideology; all the facts in the world won’t change a denier’s mind, according to atmospheric scientist and communication whiz Katharine Hayhoe. So avoid frustrating fact-versus-fiction arguments. Instead, start with shared values—economic security, or a faith-based sense of stewardship—and discuss how a changing climate could put that common ground at risk. Then start exploring solutions to protect what you both care about.



TAKE IT FROM ME Inspiration from a former presidential candidate

“Climate change is something everyone can be engaged in at every part in our democracy. State legislators are just as important as members of the U.S. Congress. Municipal candidates are very important—particularly for dealing with land-use issues and transportation issues, which are so important in reducing our carbon emissions. People at the dinner table are important, and in their churches and synagogues. Talking to your friends and neighbors is important. We influence each other. We’re all leaders now—we’re all publishers, we all have social networks. And I encourage people to share their views with others. This is all-hands-on-deck, from the president down to Audubon members.”

Jay Inslee, governor of Washington
and 2019 Democratic candidate for the
president of the United States