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With time comes changes. Certainly, changes in our thinking, attitudes and beliefs evolve over time. National Audubon has been in a struggle the past two years about being affiliated with the Audubon name as it relates to the man John James Audubon. What do you first associate with the name Audubon? Most people, currently, think of birds and the conservation organization. When National Audubon was founded in 1905, 50 years after John James Audubon's death, it was due to his work as a naturalist, illustrator and his contributions towards ornithological studies. However, over time, people have come to understand that he was also an enslaver with harmful attitudes toward Black and Indigenous people.

During a recent meeting with the regional Audubon Great Lakes leadership group, I learned more about the process National Audubon went through to decide whether to retain the Audubon name. A great deal of time was spent weighing the pros and cons. Research and opinion polls were conducted and analyzed. On March 16th of this year when it came to a vote of the NAS's board and it was decided to retain the Audubon name.

The decision was made taking into consideration the complexity of John James Audubon's past as well as the more immediate need to continue the crucial conservation work for birds and other wildlife as well as climate action. In light of this decision however, NAS has made a renewed commitment toward Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging with a \$25 million pledge over the next five years in order to address the inequalities and injustices that exist in the conservation movement.

Some Audubon chapters will be changing names and dropping Audubon from their title while still being affiliated with the NAS. While frustrations were expressed about the decision to retain the Audubon name during the March meeting I attended, it was wonderful to hear that the last thing people want is for this issue is to tear the organization apart. The commitment to birds and conservation, it was decided, is more important than a name.

ALAS has also made the commitment to looking hard at how we as a chapter, can improve equity, diversity and inclusion in all that we do. Over the past several months ALAS has put together a committee to discuss this. The board approved the following statement at the March meeting:

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Aldo Leopold Audubon Society (ALAS) shall commit to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion across race, gender, age, religion, identity, ability, and experience in our programs, activities, and outreach.

The Aldo Leopold Audubon Society is committed to creating an atmosphere that reduces the impact of racism, and systemic inequities in our community. We are committed to increasing the diversity of our board, volunteers, members, and supporters, and fostering an inclusive network. Respect, inclusion, and opportunity for people of all backgrounds, lifestyles, and perspectives will harness the greatest passion to shape a healthier, more vibrant future for all who share our planet.

Furthermore, it will consciously strive to create a welcoming atmosphere where all people are invited to safe and rewarding experiences. It will provide activities that educate people about the effects of environmental degradation and introduce them to positive experiences in nature. Protecting and conserving nature and the environment transcends political, cultural, and social boundaries.

You will be hearing about and seeing changes in the future as we back our policy with actions that demonstrate our commitment. If you as a member would like to contribute to this process, we would like to hear from you! You can contact a board member or email us at AldoLeopoldAudubon@gmail.com.