

**BIRD CITY WISCONSIN:** Making our communities healthy for birds ... and people

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## **9 More Wisconsin Communities Win Recognition as “Bird Cities”**

*Bird City Ranks Reach 29 in Program's 1st Year; More Applications Sought in a Program that Rewards Communities for Creating Healthy Habitat for Birds and People*

The Bird City Wisconsin project announced today that it was recognizing nine additional communities in its unique statewide program to encourage urban bird conservation. The awards brought to 29 the number of cities, villages, towns and counties committed to making their communities a better place for people, birds and other wildlife.

The newest Bird City communities range widely and include the cities of La Crosse, Manitowoc, Middleton and West Bend; the villages of Newburg, Elm Grove and Trempealeau, along with Taylor County and the Town of Grafton.

Each will receive a special Bird City Wisconsin flag, plaque and street signs to be erected at their boundaries. The emblem was designed by renowned local landscape painter Tom Uttech and his wife, designer Mary Uttech.

In making the announcement, BCW coordinator Carl Schwartz pointed to the group's success in surpassing its goal of recognizing 25 communities in its inaugural year, as well as in raising the profile of International Migratory Bird Day, which was celebrated at more than a dozen public events this spring.

Noel Cutright, BCW Steering Committee member and founder of the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory, added that the BCW program "provides an excellent vehicle for communities to harness the human connection with birds -- reaching beyond bird watchers to new and essential audiences." Cutright said BCW recognition was a new tool for bringing others into the fold of bird conservation.

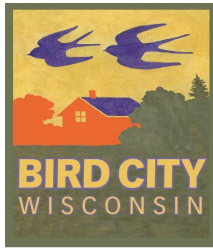
Simultaneously, Bird City announced that it would enter its second year by accepting a new round of applications for initial certification, with a deadline of Nov. 1. Bird City's recognition is renewable each year and runs from April 1 to March 31. Communities approved last December are being urged to renew their recognition by Jan. 15. Those communities announced in April and today have been awarded recognition through March 31, 2013.

Schwartz said that efforts are under way by conservation groups and local officials in more than 20 additional communities to meet the program's standards and seek recognition.

The initial group of Bird Cities included the cities of Mequon, Stevens Point, Green Bay, Racine, Evansville, Muskego, Oshkosh, New London, Lake Geneva, Brookfield and River Falls; the villages of Bayside, Chenequa, Hales Corners, McFarland and Williams Bay; the Towns of Manitowish Waters and Presque Isle, along with Ozaukee and Brown Counties.

Modeled on the "Tree City USA" program, Bird City Wisconsin developed 22 criteria across five categories, including habitat creation and protection, community forest management, limiting hazards, public education, and recognizing International Migratory Bird Day. If a community meets at least seven criteria, it becomes an official "Bird City."

There are 182 "Tree Cities" in Wisconsin, with some recognized for more than 30 years, so the Bird City Steering Committee had anticipated that many communities would take advantage of their Tree



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City status to meet BCW's category 2 requirement: "Participation in Programs Promoting Effective Community Forest Management."

While Bird City also offers communities an opportunity to demonstrate some other important accomplishment in this area, Schwartz said Tree City communities not only understood the concept of a community recognition program but also appreciated the importance of habitat improvement in bird conservation.

Schwartz said the Bird City project was using its web site, [www.birdcitywisconsin.org](http://www.birdcitywisconsin.org), to reach out across the state and guide communities through the application process. The site walks foresters, parks directors, city planners and other officials through the application process, and includes how-to details on implementing new conservation strategies. It also features details on how each of its 15 inaugural communities earned recognition, providing tips for those who will follow.

The Milwaukee Audubon Society, which is partnering with eight Wisconsin conservation organizations to take an innovative, collaborative approach to conservation, received a \$31,700 TogetherGreen Innovation Grant to expand the Bird City project statewide. It is one of 43 projects nationwide that are sharing nearly \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2010-'11. Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund innovative conservation projects, support conservation leadership, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment and reach new audiences.

In addition to Milwaukee Audubon, the Bird City partnership includes the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, the Madison Audubon Society, Wisconsin Audubon Council, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Riveredge Bird Club, and Aldo Leopold Audubon Society.

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### **About *TogetherGreen***

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to build the promise of a greener, healthier future through innovation, leadership and volunteerism. Over 130 projects totaling more than \$3.5 million have received Innovation Grants to protect land, water, and energy resources nationwide. For more information, visit [www.togethergreen.org](http://www.togethergreen.org).

### **About Audubon**

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. Visit Audubon online at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

### **About Toyota**

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants, including one under construction. Toyota directly employs nearly 30,000 in the U.S. and its investment here is currently valued at more than \$18 billion, including sales and manufacturing operations, research and development, financial services and design. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. Since 1991, Toyota has contributed more than \$500 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit <http://www.toyota.com/community>.