

## **2017 Project Abstract**

For the Period Ending June 30, 2021

**PROJECT TITLE: Local Planning and Implementation Efforts for Bird Habitat**

**PROJECT MANAGER: Rob Schultz**

**AFFILIATION: Audubon Minnesota**

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**FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

**LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05e as extended by M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2**

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$ 280,000**

**AMOUNT SPENT: \$ 236,796**

**AMOUNT REMAINING: \$ 43,204**

### **Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results**

Through Bird City Minnesota, Audubon Minnesota has engaged communities in improving the habitat and protecting birds. Nine communities completed the certification program, while many more have been using this conservation roadmap to leverage resources and achieve results in making their communities friendly for birds and wildlife.

### **Overall Project Outcome and Results**

Bird City Minnesota has worked to enhance conservation efforts to protect birds and habitats in Minnesota communities. A total of nine communities have received the Bird City Minnesota designation, while many other communities have showed interest and start working to complete the requirements of the program. Bird City Minnesota requirements lead communities in taking steps to accomplishment conservation efforts that improve habitat through restoration, reduce threats to birds, and engage local citizens through projects, training and birding events. Many of the communities that participated made substantial progress in protecting habitat in local parks and engaging citizens in hands-on conservation work that creates a healthier environment for birds. By focusing on these efforts, local communities have engaged their residents in citizen science and conservation. Through public events, residents have learned how to take simple actions that result in improving the landscape for birds and ensuring appropriate habitat.

During the course of this project, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the progress that communities were making in attaining Bird City Minnesota recognition. Staff have been flexible to support communities as necessary, made adjustments where appropriate, and encourage continued work towards completing the program even after the funding of this project has ended. Minnesotans have benefited from this work by learning simple steps that they can take in their own communities to make a difference for birds, and what they have learned in this process will benefit communities and birds for decades to come.

### **Project Results Use and Dissemination**

While the project was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been able to successfully promote the achievements of communities through significant local news media coverage for cities who have achieved the Bird City Minnesota recognition. Additionally, signage and flags are now displayed in each of the communities that have completed the Bird City Minnesota requirements and were awarded recognition. Application materials have been shared with communities to assist in their continued fulfillment of program requirements, as well as to serve as historical records of the conservation efforts taken.



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) M.L. 2017 LCCMR Work Plan Final Report

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**Date of Submission:** November 4, 2021  
**Date of Next Status Update Report:** Final Report  
**Date of Work Plan Approval:** 06/07/2017  
**Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2021

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**PROJECT TITLE: Local Planning and Implementation Efforts for Bird Habitat**

**Project Manager:** Rob Schultz  
**Organization:** Audubon Minnesota  
**Mailing Address:** 2355 Highway 36 West, Suite 400  
**City/State/Zip Code:** Roseville, MN 55113  
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**Location:** Statewide

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<b>Total ENRTF Project Budget:</b>	<b>ENRTF Appropriation:</b>	\$280,000
	<b>Amount Spent:</b>	\$236,796
	<b>Balance:</b>	\$43,204

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**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05e as extended by M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2

**Appropriation Language:**

\$280,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the National Audubon Society, Minnesota office, to engage approximately 60 communities and 400,000 citizens in bird habitat improvement through local planning and implementation efforts using the National Audubon Bird City program. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2020, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

M.L. 2020 - Sec. 2. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND; EXTENSIONS. [to June 30, 2021]

**I. PROJECT TITLE:** Bird City – Education for lasting conservation

**II. PROJECT STATEMENT:**

Through Bird City Minnesota, Audubon Minnesota will engage up to 60 communities over the next 3 years to improve habitat and protect birds. Modeled after Bird City Wisconsin, which has recognized almost 100 WI Bird City communities since 2010, and Tree City USA, Bird City Minnesota provides local governments with a proven conservation roadmap, leveraging their resources to achieve conservation results and greater community and individual awareness.

Audubon Minnesota has been piloting Bird City with several communities since 2015. The Cities of Saint Paul and Hastings worked with Audubon to test and provide input on everything from the criteria that will be required to the recognition materials that will be received to the application forms and reporting requirements. Both communities have now been recognized as Minnesota’s first Bird City communities. We are now using what we created in the initial pilot phase to refine and finalize program criteria and educational resources to allow us to work with the next set of interested communities in a secondary pilot phase through June 2017.

A 3-year investment in Bird City starting in July 2017 will allow us to take the pilot program statewide ultimately reaching 40-60 communities by 2020. Leveraging the power of local governments, Bird City will reach at least 400 staff / elected officials and 400,000 citizens involving them in hundreds of projects to:

1. Increase habitat through restoration, adding native plants and removing invasive species
2. Reduce threats by reducing window collisions, light pollution and toxins / pesticide use
3. Engage citizens through restorations, training, bird / nest monitoring and school / public birding events

A community applies to be a Bird City with the backing of the Mayor, city council and staff and assistance of partners. The community is recognized when they complete 8 bird-friendly actions in 3 categories (above). They are motivated by existing sustainability / stewardship goals, prominent public recognition and community passion. They renew their participation annually and add more and deeper actions and partnerships.

As a result:

- All bird habitat types and all Minnesota birds, whether resident or migratory species, could benefit
- Highly effective, locally led partnerships are formed, creating a long-lasting conservation ethic

Birds are an ideal focus for environmental education and conservation. They are beautiful and easily accessible, no matter where you are in the state. At a time when wildlife habitat is being severely degraded and people are increasingly disconnected with nature, working with Minnesota’s citizens, from small towns to big cities, to conserve birds and their habitats is one of the best ways to change this negative trend.

**III. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:** (250 words suggested)

**Amendment request: 08/30/2017**

Joanna Eckles is no longer with Audubon Minnesota. Molly Pederson is taking over as project manager. Molly is a full-time Executive Director and is not eligible for reimbursement for her time. This project is critically important to Audubon Minnesota’s outreach and education program and merits the supervision by our top leadership.

**Amendment request: 06/15/2018**

Molly Pederson is no longer with Audubon Minnesota. Katie Burns is taking over as project manager. Katie is the full-time Outreach and Education staff member at Audubon Minnesota and this project fits well within the scope of her work and expertise- educating and engaging communities in long-term conservation planning and actions that benefit birds, people, and the environment. Amendment Approved by LCCMR 6/22/2018

**Project status as of 09/01/2017:**

We have changed the staffing model for the program. We have not changed the overall total dollar amount dedicated to personnel. We also did not change any of the activities that will be performed by the project staff.

**Project Status as of 06/15/2018:**

We have had a change in project manager. Additions have been made to the list of target communities bringing the current list total to thirty-four. Project manager, in partnership with Carrol Henderson of the MN-DNR, have utilized the list to track key community contacts, schedule and present introductory presentations at which time interested communities begin the application process. A total of six applications are active with approximately half of the communities developing their application proposals and the other half working with Audubon's project manager to evaluate/review a submitted draft. We are in the process of completing an urban native plant restoration and education station at two public parks in collaboration with St Paul Natural Resources- this urban habitat activity serves as one of the city's Bird City deliverables. An educators' workshop is scheduled for the third week in August; all project applicants will receive invitations to send participants from their communities. Communities will be encouraged to further distribute the workshop invitations to their area nature centers, community centers and schools.

**Project Status as of 31 October 2018:**

We are working with the city of Crosslake to plan their Bird City recognition event for winter 2018/2019. Several communities are waiting to move forward with submitting applications until elections for city council seats and mayoral positions are complete and new individuals are brought up to speed this winter. Our current list of target communities has grown from thirty-four to forty-eight. We are working with community-based Audubon Chapters throughout the state to coordinate outreach to target communities in 2019. We are working with Headwaters Regional Development Commission to coordinate targeted outreach and engagement to Bird City target communities that lie within the five counties that HRDC services. Bird City website work is in progress. Educator workshops are being planned for spring/summer 2019 and will service the greater Metro Area as well as a number of communities along the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway.

**Project Status as of 30 April 2019:**

The city of Crosslake has been confirmed as the newest Bird City and plans to host its recognition event in May 2019 to coincide with its first International Migratory Bird Day festival. More than ten communities are in various stages of organizing local advisory groups and composing applications for submission this summer and fall. Audubon Minnesota met with 20 people representing 11 chapters and a membership of 22,000 to encourage them to participate in the program. To provide chapters and interested parties with more in-depth information, we will be hosting several webinars and/or additional meetings to address specific needs in the coming months. We are continuing to work with Headwaters Regional Development Commission and recently retired MN-DNR non-game staff member, Carrol Henderson, to coordinate targeted outreach and engagement to Bird City target communities that lie within the five counties that HRDC services. Carrol Henderson and Audubon Minnesota's Bird City program manager are working with Duluth to plan Flying WILD workshops for professional educators as well as two workshops focused on developing eco-tourism best practices and leveraging natural resources for residents and visitors. Audubon Minnesota has completed two Flying WILD workshops for professional educators, engaging twenty-nine individuals total.

**Project Status as of 31 October 2019:**

Formally recognized Bird Cities to date include St Paul, Hastings, Bemidji, Crosslake, La Crescent, Austin, Wabasha, and Duluth. Audubon Minnesota is currently in various beginning stages of engaging and enrolling 21 additional communities throughout the state (See attached Excel spreadsheet of Bird City target communities). Audubon Minnesota is working to leverage its network of volunteer-led Audubon Chapters in geographies where a target community falls within an Audubon Chapter's boundaries. We are working with lead staff of the

Headwaters Regional Development Commission to 1) introduce and enroll communities in Bird City in the NW area of the state where HRDC is already present and engaged and 2) HRDC leadership is being trained in presenting/hosting the Birding Tourism workshops “Birds Mean Business” to communities within their working territory. These workshops will take place in spring of 2020, a time period that was identified as highly preferential by HRDC. Carrol Henderson, who originally had planned to facilitate the “Birds Mean Business” workshops has been unable to do so for much of this last year due to personal travel and medical needs. Bird Cities of Duluth, La Crescent, Austin, and Wabasha are requesting more time to prepare for and host a “Birds Mean Business” workshop with target dates in early 2020. Audubon Minnesota established a Migratory Bird Conservation Task Force made up of conservation professionals from MN DNR, USFWS, and Carrol Henderson (recently retired from the non-game division of MN DNR). This task force meets monthly to assist in the evaluation of new Bird City applications and supports the progress of Bird City by providing field support in communities where these professionals and their respective staff are already working. The task force members are currently working to identify and engage community leaders in Bird City target communities in an effort to help support forward movement in each community’s application completion and submission. We have received requests from each of the newly enrolled Bird Cities to host the Flying WILD workshops for educators in their communities and we anticipate that this trend will continue as more communities become enrolled. We will co-facilitate Flying WILD workshops with environmental education leaders in Duluth, Austin, and Wabasha during fall/winter 2019/2020. Audubon Minnesota is working on the addition of a Bird City Byway model in collaboration with Crosslake-Bird City and the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Chairperson. This Bird City Byway model addresses newly identified barriers to participation that some smaller communities have reported and also facilitates a different style of community supported engagement leveraging an existing structure and network.

**Project Status as of 30 April 2020:**

As a result of the impacts of COVID-19, Audubon Minnesota has been managing changes to the program and to our organization. The largest impact has been the cancellation of all in-person events intended to take place this past spring. The following are list of events cancelled due to COVID-19:

- Presentations about Bird City and Bird City events for Brooklyn Center, Rosemount, Savage, New Brighton, St. Michael, and West St. Paul
- Educator (Flying WILD) workshops for Duluth, Stillwater, and two near the Twin Cities; there likely would have been between 40 and 75 total educators participating.
- Birds Mean Business workshops for Duluth, La Crescent, Stillwater, Wabasha, Mille Lacs Community Byway

**Project extended to June 30, 2021 by LCCMR 6/18/20** as a result of M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2, legislative extension criteria being met.

**Project Status as of October 31, 2020:**

Due to the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Audubon Minnesota continues to have very limited ability to work with communities to promote and advance the Bird City Minnesota initiative. Preparations are underway to award the next Bird City Minnesota recognition virtually to the City of La Crescent City Council on Monday evening, November 23<sup>rd</sup>. The presentation will be made by Audubon Minnesota executive director Rob Schultz and advisory board chair Debbie Reynolds. The City of La Crescent has successfully completed all requirements to receive the recognition.

**Project Status as of April 30, 2021**

While the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to significantly limit Audubon Minnesota’s ability to work with communities to promote and advance the Bird City Minnesota initiative over the winter and Spring months, we successfully presented the Bird City Minnesota recognition to the City of La Crescent on Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> – our first such virtual presentation using Zoom.

We are pleased to report that there has been steady advancement by the City of Stillwater to complete the requirements for recognition. A Bird Festival has been planned during the month of May with the anticipated vaccination rates increasing in Minnesota. The Stillwater Bird Festival is the final requirement that Stillwater has before qualifying to become Minnesota's next Bird City. A formal presentation has been scheduled with the Stillwater City Council to occur on Tuesday, June 15, 2021, to present the recognition to Stillwater.

### **Overall Project Outcomes and Final Results as of June 30, 2021**

Audubon Minnesota presented the Bird City Minnesota recognition to the City of Stillwater on Tuesday evening, June 15, 2021. This was an in-person presentation that was televised in the community and had an estimated 80-90 people in attendance. Community volunteers were thrilled to receive the recognition and reported on the wonderful success of the Stillwater Bird Festival that occurred in May, 2021. Following the presentation, Rob Schultz met with local volunteers to learn more about their future plans to continue progress in Stillwater on additional bird-friendly community initiatives. While the Stillwater Bird City recognition was the last to be awarded during the active grant period, other communities such as New Brighton and Wabasha continue their work to be recognized as Minnesota Bird Cities. We expect to award Bird City Minnesota recognition to the City of Wabasha at the Wabasha City Council meeting on Tuesday, December 7, 2021.

### **Amendment Request: 06/30/2021**

- Katie Burns is no longer with Audubon Minnesota. Rob Schultz will be serving as the project manager until the close of the project.
- Notice of change of address: Audubon Minnesota's office has moved: 2355 Highway 36 West, Suite 400, Roseville, MN 55113
- We also request to extend the completion dates of Activity 1: Outcome 1 from June 2020 to June 2021.
- We are requesting to modify the budget to reflect the following changes:
  1. Audubon Minnesota's website platform was updated and now has all necessary features, including mobile-friendly navigation, to highlight Bird City accomplishments and materials. The lead communications manager will be able to address all website management in-house. We will transfer the \$14,751 for website consultation to the communications manager's salary budget.
  2. An additional \$11,134 was added to the Activity 1: Personal line from the Activity 2 Budget Personnel line.
  3. \$124 is needed for additional Equipment/Tools/Supplies in Activity 2 to cover bird city recognition supplies. We will move that money from Equipment/Tools/Supplies in Activity 1.

*LCCMR staff note 1/28/22: due to the changes in project managers over the course of this project, this amendment request process was begun in spring of 2020 and has been consolidated into one final amendment request to balance the budget and update the project manager, address, and other information.*

***Amendment approved by LCCMR on 2/1/22***

### **Final Overall Project Outcome and Results**

Bird City Minnesota has worked to enhance conservation efforts to protect birds and habitats in Minnesota communities. A total of nine communities have received the Bird City Minnesota designation, while many other communities have showed interest and start working to complete the requirements of the program. Bird City Minnesota requirements lead communities in taking steps to accomplishment conservation efforts that improve habitat through restoration, reduce threats to birds, and engage local citizens through projects, training and birding events. Many of the communities that participated made substantial progress in protecting habitat in local parks and engaging citizens in hands-on conservation work that creates a healthier environment for birds. By focusing on these efforts, local communities have engaged their residents in citizen science and conservation.

Through public events, residents have learned how to take simple actions that result in improving the landscape for birds and ensuring appropriate habitat.

During the course of this project, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the progress that communities were making in attaining Bird City Minnesota recognition. Staff have been flexible to support communities as necessary, made adjustments where appropriate, and encourage continued work towards completing the program event after the funding of this project has ended. Minnesotan’s have benefited from this work by learning simple steps that they can take in their own communities to make a difference for birds, and what they have learned in this process will benefit communities and birds for decades to come.

**IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:**

**ACTIVITY 1: Engage and enroll 40-60 communities statewide in Bird City Minnesota**

**Description:** Identify and engage community leaders (council, business, tourism, community groups) throughout the state to participate in Bird City Minnesota. Develop materials, resources and tools to guide communities to improve habitat and reduce threats and to disseminate to their citizens, allowing the program statewide reach.

- Initially we will create a list identifying communities throughout the state of Minnesota that have high potential for Bird City involvement due to strong birding and nature partners and established birding resources such as known birding hotspots and Important Bird Areas (IBAs).
- We will use pilot application materials developed over the past two years before ENRTF funding to develop a website / online system for participating communities to apply and renew their Bird City applications, get resources and materials to guide their actions and that will allow us to track results over time and recognize communities for their actions.
- We will make an estimated 80 visits to communities throughout the state to make presentations, conduct training and meet with community groups to promote the Bird City program and its benefits to human and environmental health. Travel will include visiting potential and participating communities to promote the program and recognize successful Bird City communities.

Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 142,770  
 Amount Spent: \$ 135,346  
 Balance: \$ 7,424

Outcome	Completion Date
1. A prioritized list of potential Bird City Minnesota communities based on a variety of factors and including contacts and potential local partners.	October 2017
2. A website /online system for Bird City communities to apply and renew their participation, access information, materials and resources, learn from other Bird City communities and track their results over time.	March 2018
3. At least 40 Bird City Minnesota communities enrolled in the program, fulfilling a minimum of 8 actions each in 3 categories (habitat improvement, protection from threats and citizen engagement). Travel to Bird Cities to honor and provide training.	June 2021

**Activity 1 Status as of 15 June 2018:** To date, we have successfully identified a total of thirty-four target communities using a set of specific criteria that spotlight communities already engaged in the GreenStep program as well as one or more best practices found within the Bird City program requirements. We will continue to evaluate communities throughout the state using this method to build out our list of target

communities. We have an established project webpage for Bird City within the Audubon Minnesota website where interested communities or individuals can go to learn about what the Bird City program is and how it works, view examples of successful Bird City application proposals/applications, examples of official resolutions that all participating communities are required to adopt, examples of best practices, a list of official Bird Cities in Minnesota, and directions for contacting Audubon Minnesota's Bird City program staff to begin the application process. We are in the process of making changes to the webpage to enable participating Bird Cities to renew their participation on an annual basis using feedback we received from our pilot Bird City communities of St Paul and Hastings, which we worked with in the development of this program prior to this project's start date. Due to multiple transitions in staffing at Audubon Minnesota, we experienced a delay in the beginning stages of the project, which has resulted in fewer introductory Bird City presentations to target communities than we would have hoped to have completed by this time. To date, we have given Bird City presentations to five communities. This delayed start to project activities has also impacted the timeline for a number of tasks related to the Bird City webpage, which we expect to have completed by project status update in April of 2019.

**Activity 1 Status as of 31 October 2018:** We have added fourteen additional communities to our target list, bringing the total to forty-eight and we are focused on engaging this list in order to determine community interest and readiness to proceed in the program application process. As identified in our June 2018 status update, we are currently working on webpage updates and expect that have the website components completed by our April 2019 status update.

Audubon Minnesota is currently working with the Headwaters Regional Development Commission to map out communities where HRDC can support the Bird City project through 1) targeted outreach to elected officials and community leaders about the opportunity to participate and leverage existing community goals, 2) work with local stakeholders to identify and implement Bird City "Best Practices" actions which also complement existing local priorities, 3) assist communities they serve in the Bird City application process, and 4) work with Audubon Minnesota, the DNR, and regional tourism organizations on designing and delivering successful tourism workshops. Next steps for implantation of this collaborative plan are set to take place in spring 2019. HRDC is already working with the City of Bemidji and other organizations on Bemidji's Bird City "Best Practices" actions.

Audubon Minnesota recognizes that Bird City's core goals also align with the goals of many of our state's community-based Audubon Chapters. We have begun outreach to Audubon Chapter leaders in the greater Metro Area as well as in areas near Bemidji and Rochester. We are working to schedule Bird City presentations to the Chapters in an effort to inform their membership about how Bird City can be a valuable tool for reaching their conservation and community engagement goals in the communities they serve. Chapters that are interested in working with one of the communities in their service area to become a Bird City will be given a packet of resources and information on how to proceed.

**Activity 1 Status as of 30 April 2019:** Our current list of target communities totals fifty. We expect to grow this list as we progress through the coming year. Since our last project status update in October of 2018 we have approved the city of Crosslake and a formal recognition event will take place at Crosslake's International Migratory Bird Day event on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The three pilot communities we worked with -St Paul, Hastings, Bemidji- have remained engaged. Bemidji recently submitted their report to Audubon Minnesota and we are currently working through the report, sorting data that feeds into the outcomes of the Bird City program goals. St Paul and Hastings Bird City community advisory groups are working to collect information and data for their respective annual reports, which we anticipate receiving in early summer 2019. We are expecting application submissions this spring and summer from nine communities that have successfully organized working community group to shepherd the application work plan, raised the funds needed for the application fee, and received support from their Mayor and city council members. Three additional communities are working on scheduling an introductory public meeting that will aid in gauging each community's overall interest and capacity for participation in the program.

We are continuing our outreach to target communities, working to schedule introductory presentations that are open to the public and include targeted invitations to key community leaders, local business owners, chamber of commerce, and natural resource management professionals.

**Activity 1 Status as of 31 October 2019:**

Audubon Minnesota has a target list of Minnesota communities that currently totals 58. We have attached the working list of target communities in Excel spreadsheet form to this update for your reference. Of the 58 communities, eight are currently enrolled in the Bird City program. Each of the nine communities enrolled in the Bird City program have completed the minimum requirements of This list of target communities changes over time as new communities are identified and added to the list or previously identified communities on the list are removed after efforts to engage them revealed strong evidence that not enough community interest and support exists to move forward with further Audubon Minnesota investment of time and resources.

We are currently working directly with 21 communities that have shown interest in enrolling in the program. In each of these 21 target communities we have provided introductory information sessions on the program to key community members. These 21 communities are in varying stages of organizing their advisory groups collecting information needed for the application, and raising funds for the application fee. Of the 21 target communities we have introduced the Bird City program benefits to, 17 have shown strong interest and organized forward movement in community organizing focused on producing an application.

We are currently working with Bird City-Crosslake advisory group and the Chairperson of the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway on a Bird City Byway model. Crosslake’s Bird City advisory group will be working with Audubon Minnesota and the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway board of directors to introduce the model to the other communities on the byway, working towards each community participating as a collective. This new challenge for Crosslake’s Bird City advisory group is part of their plan for reach a “High Flyer” status in the Bird City program. Audubon and the Chairperson of the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway see this model as a great way to engage byways throughout the state and each byway could then leverage this recognition in their focus on cultivating more eco tourist dollars.

We have made changes as needed to our website where Bird City program information and resources are house. These changes have stemmed from feedback and requests we have received from both participating Bird Cities and communities that are in the process of learning more about the program while considering enrollment. Star examples of event flyers, examples of resolutions, media releases, star application examples, and the full list of Bird City program Best Practices with associated actions are all accessible online.

**Activity 1 Status as of 30 April 2020:**

As of June 2020, Katie Burns is no longer with Audubon Minnesota. Due to the changes in project managers and expertise of key staff working on the program, the new project manager (Ashley Peters) is working with cities to understand progress regarding Activity 1. A number of activities were interrupted and canceled due to impacts of COVID-19, while other activities have been rescheduled.

**Activity 1 Status as of October 31, 2020:**

As of September 30, Ashley Peters is longer with Audubon Minnesota. Due to the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Audubon Society has been unable to fill vacant positions. Our executive director, Rob Schultz, has assumed oversight of the program during the interim and is working with the City of La Crescent to complete their application to award the community with the Bird City Minnesota recognition in November.

**Activity 1 Status as of April 30, 2021:**

In November, the community of La Crescent was awarded Bird City Minnesota recognition at a City of La Crescent City Council Meeting. Audubon Minnesota Advisory Board Chair Debbie Reynolds and Executive Director Rob Schultz presented the awarded virtually and congratulated La Crescent volunteers who worked hard despite the ongoing pandemic to complete requirements for La Crescent to qualify for the recognition. Discussions are continuing with volunteers from Stillwater who are also working to complete the Bird City Minnesota requirements and have planned a migratory bird festival in Stillwater next month (May) as the final remaining requirement. Arrangements are underway to schedule a Bird City Minnesota recognition at a June meeting of the Stillwater City Council in anticipation of the award being completed following the migratory bird festival. The continuing effects of COVID-19 are making it difficult for communities to participate at this time.

**Final Report Summary: 15 August 2021 (Submitted November 4, 2021)**

On Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, Executive Director Rob Schultz presented the Bird City Minnesota recognition to the City of Stillwater at the Stillwater City Council Meeting and congratulated local volunteers who worked hard despite the ongoing pandemic to complete requirements for Stillwater to qualify for recognition. A subsequent presentation to the City of Wabasha is planned for December 7<sup>th</sup>.

*LCCMR staff comment 1/19/22: A total of 9 communities were awarded Bird City status. Several factors contributed to the lower than anticipated number of participants, including the COVID pandemic and staffing issues. Given these factors, a comprehensive reporting of outcomes was not possible.*

**ACTIVITY 2: Implement projects to improve habitat, protect birds and involve citizens**

**Description:**

To increase knowledge and skills of the public and students and to cultivate an on-going commitment to sustaining their bird-friendly community we will guide, train and educate residents and local officials in habitat restoration, threat reduction, citizen involvement, and birding tourism within their communities.

- Coordinating with the Minnesota DNR we will:
  - Conduct *Flying WILD* workshops for a total of approximately 50 educators in Bird City communities to help bring bird education to local youth. *Flying WILD* introduces students in grades 5-9 to bird conservation through standards-based classroom activities and environmental stewardship projects. Educators will attend a workshop, receive curriculum materials and learn classroom and outdoor activities that they can take to their students immediately.
  - Conduct 10 tourism workshops engaging approximately 200 local officials, businesspeople and other stakeholders in participating and potential Bird City communities. Workshops bring together a variety of local community members to discuss the value of promoting wildlife tourism and understanding and promoting local tourism assets
- Because Bird City communities are required to complete a minimum number of actions in specific categories, we will be able to document at least:
  - 40 participating communities
  - 400 participating staff / elected officials
  - 80 concrete actions taken by communities to reduce threats to birds including reducing chemical use, reducing light pollution, fixing dangerous windows and encouraging residents to keep pets from disturbing wildlife.
  - 120 habitat improvement projects such as restorations, addition of native plants, removal of invasive species, improvement of nesting opportunities for birds and water quality improvement projects.

- 80 citizen engagement projects from nest monitoring to planting to bird surveying involving adults, youth and families.
- 100 birding related events statewide.
- Together those actions and projects will influence at least 400,000 people.

Outcomes	Completion Date
1. ~50 trained educators bringing bird education to Bird City communities through the existing <i>Flying Wild</i> curriculum	June 2020
2. ~200 local officials trained to tap into wildlife tourism opportunities and benefits locally	June 2020
3. ~80 threat reduction projects (ex. Reducing pesticide use, fixing dangerous windows, encouraging cats indoors) involving ~8000 people in BC communities	June 2020
4. ~120 habitat improvement projects (ex. Restoration, demonstration gardens, conversion of turf grass along boulevards / parks, adopt pollinator/bird friendly policy)	June 2020
5. ~80 citizen engagement projects (ex. Nest monitoring, restoring habitat, youth birding club, accessible birding trails, multi-lingual birding resources)	June 2020
6. ~100 birding events in ~40 communities over 3 years reaching at least 10,000 people	June 2020

Summary Budget Information for Activity 2:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 137,230  
 Amount Spent: \$ 101,450  
 Balance: \$ 35,780

**Activity 2 Status as of 15 June 2018:** We currently have one workshop for educators scheduled for the third week in August. Workshop program and registration details are sent to key representatives of official Bird Cities, communities that are currently working on their Bird City application, and both traditional and non-traditional educators from schools and outdoor education community organizations that Audubon Minnesota has worked with. These workshops will provide participants with curriculum materials from *Flying Wild* as well as examples of bird conservation centric programming materials from other valuable resources that Audubon Minnesota has used in outreach and education programming throughout the state of Minnesota. Participants will have the opportunity to walk through learning activities for indoor and outdoor settings and will explore how these activities can easily be modified to localize the content or meet other needs the educator’s audience may have. This workshop is ideal for formal classroom teachers or non-traditional educators from nature centers or community education and engagement staff/volunteers. This workshop currently allows up to 30 educators to register and participate.

DNR staff, Carrol Henderson has completed a tourism workshop for key community leaders including mayors, city council members, and natural resource staff for four communities. The workshop was well received and those communities have already scheduled meetings to map out next steps they will take, using information they received during Carrol’s workshop. A total of 19 individuals were engaged.

Due to the delayed start of this project (noted in the project summary and Activity 1 Status as of 15 June 2018) we do not yet have Bird City applicants that have successfully completed their application and been recognized as an official Bird City. As a result, we do not yet have metrics to report on for the majority of the outcomes linked to this activity that participating Bird Cities would be carrying out.

**Activity 2 Status as of 31 October 2018:** We are awaiting Bird City outcome reports from St Paul, Hastings, and Bemidji and expect to have reports by the end of the year. These outcome reports will include actions taken and associated metrics for each action, such as number of citizens engaged or square footage of native plants planted. We are finding that each participating community’s Bird City committee has needed more time than originally anticipated to compile outcome reports and this is largely due to the variety of Bird City partners

within each community that are responsible for carrying out the actions, tracking progress, and finally reporting to the central committee. We understand this need and are pleased with the level and depth of community support.

Many of our target communities have been focused on elections for their respective city council seats and mayoral positions, which has resulted in communities needing to put their Bird City project applications on hold until after the elections once newly appointed individuals are in place and have been updated on the efforts. The shepherding committees for each of these communities felt it was important to have the full support of new leadership before proceeding. To date, we have received confirmation from Crosslake that their Bird City committee will be submitting their application in December of 2018.

At the request of participating target communities and prospective communities who are in the application process, the previously scheduled August educators' workshop is being rescheduled to allow more participants to participate. We are working with St Paul Natural Resources to schedule a spring/summer 2019 educators' workshop that will be offered to St Paul and surrounding area communities' traditional and non-traditional educators as well as the general public. St Paul Natural Resources has agreed to assist with the outreach/invitation process by sending the workshop registration invitations to their local partner schools and organizations. We are also working with key members of the Crosslake Bird City community team to schedule an educators' workshop for spring/summer2019 that will be offered to the public in all communities along the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway. The Director of Crosslake Community School is working with this group and has offered to host the workshop event at the school building in Crosslake. The Crosslake community group has identified three areas of focus for the educator workshop that will service the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway communities and they are as follows:

- Flying WILD curriculum experiential learning for educators
- Bird feeding stations and "birdscaping" at school sites to serve as outdoor classrooms
- Intro to community science opportunities such as Christmas Bird Count and Project Feeder Watch

We have also begun conversations with a community working group in the Wabasha, MN area to schedule an educators' workshop in 2019, but a date has yet to be set as the group is determining the best location and month to host the workshop. Each workshop will accommodate between 30 and 40 participants, which if filled to capacity would result in a range of 90-120 participants engaged.

Audubon Minnesota served as a resource for St Paul Natural Resources in a pilot project where a total of six bird- and pollinator-friendly gardens were established at community recreation centers. Audubon staff worked with St Paul Natural Resource staff to develop aspects of the program curriculum as well as connect SPNR staff to the National Audubon Society's Plants for Birds online resource database, which aided plant species selection. SPNR staff facilitated trainings at each center site where recreation center staff were trained to use the newly designed curriculum for programming that focuses on educating youth about urban ecology with special topic focus on water conservation, native plants, and benefits to birds, pollinators, and whole ecosystems. The six sites are located throughout the city of St Paul and resulted in the installation of 1,365 square feet of new native plant habitat, a total of 100 community volunteers engaged during the planting stage of the project, a total of 262 youth engaged in education programming at community rec center sites. SPNR and Audubon Minnesota plan to explore ways that we can share this model with community recreation centers in other communities along with associated resources and lessons learned during the development process.

#### **Activity 2 Status as of 30 April 2019:**

The three pilot communities we worked with – St. Paul, Hastings, Bemidji – have remained engaged. Bemidji and Hastings recently submitted their reports to Audubon Minnesota and we are currently working through these report, sorting data that feeds into the outcomes of the Bird City program goals. St Paul's Bird City community advisory group is still working to collect information and data for their respective annual report, which we

anticipate receiving in summer 2019. St Paul's advisory group had communicated that they are struggling with collecting outcomes quickly for a program renewal report this year due to a number of changes in staff at various partner agencies that contribute data. We are currently sorting through available data and measurable outcomes from the application materials of the newest addition to the recognition program, Crosslake. We expect to have a growing set of measurable outcomes to report to LCCMR in our next project status report this fall.

We are expecting new application submissions this spring and summer from nine communities that have successfully organized community working groups to shepherd the application process, raised the funds needed for the application fee, and received support from their Mayor and city council members.

Of the nine communities preparing applications to the program, Duluth has taken a step further than most and is currently working with Audubon Minnesota to plan and host a series of workshops that support this project's deliverables. A collective made up of key representatives from Duluth's tourism board, the city's natural resource management staff, local nature center, Hawk Ridge, and the Duluth Audubon Chapter have committed to working together to plan, promote, and host the following workshops: 1) a Flying WILD continuing education workshop for professional educators in Duluth and North Shore area communities. 2) Natural Resource Assessment workshop by Carrol Henderson, recently retired DNR staff. 3) Eco-tourism workshop for business owners and city staff in Duluth area and North Shore communities also by Carrol Henderson. The core group will meet in early May 2019 to begin planning of each workshop with a goal of completing all three by winter 2019/2020.

While working with the city of Crosslake on their application, Audubon Minnesota hosted a Flying WILD workshop for professional educators in collaboration with the Crosslake Community School. Audubon Minnesota's outreach and education staff member, Katie Burns, is one of two facilitators of the Flying WILD continuing education workshops for professional educators for Minnesota. Katie will be facilitating the Flying WILD workshops for this project as the MN DNR staff member, Jan Welsh, who was originally slotted to serve this role has retired and the MN-DNR has made no indication of rehiring for her previous position.

The Crosslake Community School administrator offered to provide the school as the venue for the workshop and all teaching staff of the Crosslake Community School would attend the as part of their teacher in-service programming. The workshop took place in February 2019 and was also offered to professional educators from schools, nature centers, natural resource agencies, and members of the Master Naturalist program from throughout the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway.

A total of eighteen teachers (grades Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade) from Crosslake Community School participated in the workshop. Three additional educators from Brainerd, Breezy Point, and Bemidji also participated. The workshop facilitator guided participants through a number of bird and conservation centric activities that utilize the inquiry-based learning model.

Teachers are reminded that they do not need to have all of the answers and can feel confident in taking their students outdoors where asking questions and exploring are encouraged. Workshop participants were also given time to explore a variety of high quality educational resources focused on environmental science, conservation, reading, math, geography, and citizen science opportunities.

Each participant received the Flying WILD curriculum book and a completed activity kit from the Flying WILD program that they expected to use with their students/audiences within the calendar year. Participants were given online access to a free resources including a recommended list of children's books, bird house building plans, outdoor classroom development, and a number of other Minnesota based teacher resources.

All participants filled out surveys after completing the workshop.

- All reported feeling more confident in taking their students outdoors after participating in the workshop.
- All reported feeling more comfortable integrating birds, bird biology, and outdoor learning into their teaching after completing the workshop.
- The workshop received shining reviews from participants in terms of format, organization, and quality.
- Nearly all indicated that they would recommend this workshop to a colleague.

Audubon Minnesota will follow up with the participants at the end of the calendar year to collect implementation reports from each participant, which will include the activities used, dates of activities, age/grade of individuals/students engaged, and total number of individuals engaged.

Audubon Minnesota also hosted a March 2019 Flying WILD workshop in the greater metro area for professional educators from area elementary and middle schools using the same workshop model implemented in Crosslake. Additional resources were added to this workshop in order to connect educators with local resources that support their teaching goals. These additional resources were site visits to The Raptor Center and the specimen collection department at the University of Minnesota in St Paul.

Each participant received the Flying WILD curriculum book and a completed activity kit from the Flying WILD program that they expected to use with their students/audiences within the calendar year. Participants were given online access to the same free resources provided to the workshop participants in Crosslake. All participants filled out surveys after completing the workshop.

- All reported feeling more confident in taking their students outdoors after participating in the workshop.
- All reported feeling more comfortable integrating birds, bird biology, and outdoor learning into their teaching after completing the workshop.
- Participant surveys all reflected an increase in feeling comfortable integrating birds, bird biology, and outdoor learning into their teaching after completing the workshop.
- All participants indicated they would recommend this workshop to colleagues.

A total of eleven professional educators participated in this workshop. Audubon Minnesota will follow up with the participants at the end of the calendar year to collect implementation reports from each participant, which will include the activities used, dates of activities, age/grade of individuals/students engaged, and total number of individuals engaged.

### **Activity 2 Status as of 31 October 2019:**

Throughout the course of working on this project we have received a surprising amount of interest from target communities in the Flying WILD workshops for educators. Each community applying to become a Bird City has requested the Flying WILD workshop. In planning these workshops for educators we consider the local resources and expertise of each Bird City and work to leverage those as best we can in the workshops. The goal of these educator workshops is to empower educators of all backgrounds to take their students outdoors for bird-centric experiential learning where teachers are not required to have all the answers and curiosity is key to the learning process. In Duluth, Audubon Minnesota will partner with Duluth Audubon Society and Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory to host a uniquely tailored Flying WILD Plus workshop on Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. In Austin, we will collaborate with the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center to host the Flying WILD workshop on Thursday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019. We are currently working with the National Eagle Center in Wabasha to collaborate on a Flying WILD workshop for their community and surrounding area during winter 2019/2020, leveraging the winter community events that spotlight the incredible Bald eagle, swan, and other migratory waterfowl activity that occurs on the river's edge in town. The New Bird City of La Crescent is also working on plans for hosting a Flying WILD workshop in 2020 and Audubon Minnesota will likely partner with the nearby USFWS refuge to host that workshop.

Bird Cities of Duluth, La Crescent, Wabasha, and Austin have all expressed a strong interest in hosting a “Birds Mean Business” bird/eco tourism workshop. We had originally envisioned this workshop as being a useful tool for helping to onboard new communities into the Bird City program. What we have found while offering these workshops to communities is that they want to integrate this workshop into their Bird City work within the community and want to make a focused effort in inviting and successfully engaging their local tourism boards, business owners, parks management staff and other key community members who are linked to local tourism economy. Duluth, Wabasha, La Crescent, and Austin Bird City advisory groups are all working on planning meetings to host a workshop sometime in 2020. Audubon is working to support this planning process and encouraging each community to host as soon as possible in order to implement and benefit from what they learn in the workshop.

The process for collecting, organizing, and quantifying detailed outcomes for this project is ongoing and human resource heavy. We are working with participating communities to help them better capture and report their successes during their initial enrollment process as well as after they submit their accomplishments from the previous year. Each community’s advisory group is volunteer based and they are all working hard to accurately represent the valuable and impactful actions that are being taken where they live, work, play. Many are having to go back to their local partners to request total reach and engagement numbers when they are submitting Bird City outcome reports to Audubon Minnesota.

Each community is required to complete a minimum of 8 best practices (out of 18) in order to qualify for the program. In evaluating the eight participating Bird Cities we found that of the 18 best practices that are defined in the Bird City program, at least one Bird City is actively engaged in 17 of those best practices. When we break down these completed best practices further and total up the individual actions each community has taken, we find that collectively Bird Cities have taken 173 positive actions to: (category 3) *reduce threats birds*, (category 2) *protect, restore, and enhance habitat*, and (category 1) *educate and engage citizens in birding and conservation*.

- Bird Cities produced 34 actions focused on reducing threats to birds including reducing bird collisions with glass and other man-made structures, reducing light pollution, reducing threats posed by domestic and feral cats and dogs, reducing pesticide and other toxin use, and taking steps to reduce climate impacts. We noted that in category 3 that is focused on threat reductions, we had nearly all Bird Cities taking actions that were focused on reducing light pollution, updating lighting to be more energy efficient and less costly, ensuring that their community members have the option of purchasing green energy, and developing climate action plans as part of a large comprehensive effort to reduce carbon emissions.
- Bird Cities produced a total of 75 actions focused on protecting, restoring, and enhancing habitat for birds and other wildlife. Actions include conservation planning such as becoming a GreenStep city, providing information to property owners on how to manage landscapes for wildlife, creating and protecting nesting opportunities for birds, promoting the use of beneficial native plants on private and public landscapes, maintaining programs aimed at controlling invasive species of plants, ensuring best management of urban forests, and protecting clean water resources.
- Bird Cities produced 64 actions that engaged and educated community members and visitors in events, activities, and programming focused on birds and conservation. Actions included increasing awareness of birds in/around each community through making information about birding hotspots and birding species lists available to residents and visitors, maintaining/promoting local nest and bird hotspot cameras, involving people of all ages in conservation and stewardship projects such as nest box monitoring projects, access to birding trails, citizen science projects such as the Christmas Bird Count or Great Backyard Bird Count, and taking a host of other actions to ensure that residents and visitors have access to nature.

We are pleased with the outcomes of each community and look forward to providing greater details on their actions in terms of citizens reached/engaged, acres of habitat impacted, participation in green energy service programs and more in the coming year.

From 2017 to date, our participating Bird Cities have hosted a total of 28 birding focused events. We have requested total reach/engagement numbers for each of these events from each community's Bird City advisory group and are awaiting updated reports.

**Activity 2 Status as of 30 April 2020:**

As of June 2020, Katie Burns is no longer with Audubon Minnesota. Due to the changes in project managers and expertise of key staff working on the program, the new project manager (Ashley Peters) is working with cities to understand progress regarding Activity 2. Bird City activities have been significantly interrupted and canceled due to impacts of COVID-19, while other activities will need to be rescheduled.

**Activity 2 Status as of October 31, 2020:**

As of September, 2020, Ashley Peters is no longer with Audubon Minnesota and Rob Schultz, executive director, will be assuming oversight of the program in this final extended year of the program. Due to COVID-19's severe effect on communities in Minnesota and the inability to hold in-person events, there has been little progress in holding community events and trainings.

**Activity 2 Status as of April 30, 2021:**

COVID-19 continues to have significant effects on the public's ability to conduct in-person events. The only significant new thing to report in this category is that the City of Stillwater has planned a migratory bird day event in their community in May as their final qualifying event to become a Minnesota Bird City. We look forward to reporting the results of this event in our final report summary.

**Final Report Summary: 15 August 2021 (Submitted November 4, 2021)**

As we close out this final report, we are pleased to present that the City of Stillwater had a successful migratory bird festival event in May that attracted 150 attendees according to local organizers. While we had hoped that this number would be higher, we feel it was a success considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and public concerns about large gatherings.

*LCCMR staff comment 1/19/22: it appears as if Minnesota Audubon trained +/- 20 educators in Flying Wild curriculum, hosted approximately 30 birding focused events, and that Bird Cities took many steps to engage and educate citizens about reducing threats to birds and acted to improve habitat. Examples included establishing bird- and pollinator-friendly gardens at community recreation centers. Several factors contributed to the lower than anticipated outcomes, including the challenges of tracking participating community outcomes, the COVID pandemic, and staffing issues. Given these factors, a comprehensive reporting of outcomes was not possible.*

**V. DISSEMINATION:**

**Description:**

Over the course of the project we will have frequent opportunities to document the accomplishments of Bird City communities publicly.

- Public meetings: As each community moves through the process from inquiry to application to recognition, Audubon or a local partner will speak at one or more public meetings, usually City Council, which are typically televised.
- Earned media: As each community is recognized we will work with the contacts locally to put out a press release. Each community will also adopt a resolution recognizing International Migratory Bird Day on the

day of their choice and hold a celebration. This milestone is also an opportunity for a press release, articles and news stories.

- Recognition events: Official recognition of Bird City communities often takes place at a public event such as a birding celebration or a public meeting such as City Council. A Bird City representative will summarize the accomplishments of the community in their efforts to create habitat, reduce threats and engage people and community officials will be presented with recognition materials.
- Webpages: We will also host updates on our webpage: [mn.audubon.org](http://mn.audubon.org) and each community will be recognized on a map with details of their accomplishments. The actions of each community and, in many cases, the materials and resources they create will be available to assist others.
- Newsletters and social media: We will write about the project, the communities and their accomplishments in Audubon Minnesota's monthly on-line newsletter, in our quarterly print newsletter and on our social media outlets such as Facebook and twitter.

**Status as of 15 June 2018:** No action to report to date.

**Status as of 31 October 2018:**

- Public meetings: Audubon Minnesota is working to schedule public meetings to give introductory presentations on Bird City in target communities with dates soon to be finalized in Minneapolis, Wabasha, Rochester and Savage. We are working with Crosslake to plan their recognition event for Dec2018/Jan2019.
- Earned media:
  - An article that came out in spring of 2018 in Audubon Magazine reached more than 500,000 people across the US and included reference to Bird City Minnesota project. The article linked to Audubon Minnesota's website, where we recognize the project as being funded by ENRTF.
  - The Brainerd Dispatch highlighted Bird City in a July 2018 article and also linked to Audubon Minnesota's website where we show that the program is funded by ENRTF.
  - The Detroit Lakes paper published an article about Bird City Minnesota at the beginning of summer that included the language about funding from ENRTF.
  - Two articles in the Bemidji Pioneer mention Bird City and the June 30 celebration in Bemidji.
- Recognition events: Bemidji hosted a public event for the statewide Purple martin Fest and Nature Expo where a representative from their Bird City committee spoke about the accomplishments the community had made in terms of actions outlined in their Bird City best practices plan. We expect to have out metrics for this event in December 2018 with Bemidji's full outcomes report. Also, we are working with Crosslake to plan for Bird City event in December 2018/January 2019.
- Webpages: We host updates on our webpage: [mn.audubon.org](http://mn.audubon.org) and each community will be recognized on a map (map in development) with details of their accomplishments. The actions of each community and, in many cases, the materials and resources they create are available to assist others.
- Newsletters and social media: We have included the news articles in our newsletters when possible and have distributed them through our social networks on Facebook and Twitter; we will be increasing the number of posts as new Bird Cities are announced and Audubon Minnesota gains more capacity in the coming months.

**Status as of 30 April 2019:**

- Public meetings: Audubon Minnesota has completed introductory public presentations for Crosslake, Breezy Point, Jenkins, Pequot Lakes, La Crescent, and West St Paul. Audubon Minnesota is scheduled to

give an introductory public presentation in Wabasha, MN on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. A number of communities that have expressed interest in participating in the project have decided to move forward with the process of community organizing and developing the application without hosting an introductory presentation. These communities have received all application materials along with a newly updated guide for application and a “10 Reasons Why” benefits to the community info sheet. We are working with community organizing groups in Alexandria, Duluth, Savage, Rochester, and Rosemount to confirm program schedules.

- Recognition events: The city of Crosslake has their first International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) festival scheduled for May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and they have planned their official Bird City recognition ceremony as part of the IMBD event. Audubon Minnesota’s outreach and education staff, Katie Burns, who also manages this project will be there to help celebrate the newly awarded designation and will present the community with a recognition plaque and a variety of other recognition materials. Hastings, Bemidji, and St Paul all plan to acknowledge their respective Bird City accomplishments from the past year at their International Migratory Bird Day annual events and Audubon Minnesota will compile outcome data from each of these as we receive reports from each community. A number of communities that are in the process of completing or submitting applications to the program already have plans to promote Bird City, spotlighting what the community is working to achieve at each of their spring and fall season festivals that are focused on birds and connecting citizens with the nature where they live. We look forward to reporting on the outcomes of these events in the coming year.
- Chapter leader meetings: As we move into summer and fall 2019, Audubon Minnesota is working closely with Audubon chapters across the state to determine interest in the program. In March, Audubon Minnesota’s Communications Manager, met with 20 people representing 11 chapters and a membership of 22,000 to encourage them to participate in the program. To provide chapters and interested parties with more in-depth information, we will be hosting several webinars and/or additional meetings to address specific needs in the coming months.
- eNews: May 18 will be the celebration of Crosslake’s Bird City Minnesota designation and Audubon Minnesota shared the news with 19,800 e-newsletter subscribers.
- Social media: Audubon Minnesota shared information through social media and had more than 3,200 impressions and those impressions resulted in several public inquiries about the program. Again, as more Bird Cities complete their requirements, our public relations will increase substantially as the number of designations multiply.
- Website: Updates continue as needed.
- Handouts: We updated handouts for the program are currently creating additional materials according to what each community needs as they coordinate with partners.
- Media relations: Audubon Minnesota’s Communications Manager continues to build and maintain relationships with local and regional reporters, writers, and television hosts. The goodwill from various media outlets will be important when we call on them to tell the inspiring stories from Bird City accomplishments and as new cities join the program. Outlets include the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *Minnesota Monthly*, *Minnesota Public Radio*, *Duluth News Tribune*, *Prairie Sportsman – Pioneer Public Television*, and a number of freelance writers than cover environmental and conservation news regionally and nationally.
- Earned media: Brainerd Dispatch and the Echo Journal (Pines and Lakes) both published an article announcing the Crosslake Bird City celebration. Audubon Minnesota will publish a news release on May 18 to highlight the community engagement and the area’s commitment to addressing threats, creating habitat, and building awareness through Bird City.

**Status as of 31 October 2019:**

- Public meetings: Audubon Minnesota is currently engaged with a total of 21 target communities, working to move them forward in the enrollment process of the project after providing an introductory session. Please reference attachment of target communities to view the current list. In addition to these introductory meetings, Audubon Minnesota Bird City staff have participating in follow up meetings that several communities have held, which focus on the process of enrolling in the Bird City program. Newly added Bird Cities of La Crescent, Wabasha, and Duluth expressed a strong desire to have Audubon representation at their Bird City advisory group meetings during the initial organizing of the group and application to allow for quick and efficient answering of questions and concerns stemming from the Bird City application. Participating in these meetings has helped us to identify language within the application that needed to be modified in order to clarify what was needed of the applicant. Thus, helping Audubon to improve the application materials and process for future applicant communities.
- Earned media: We are always thrilled to see local media outlets celebrate Bird City Minnesota when a new city joins the program. During this reporting period, the Brainerd Dispatch featured two key articles highlighting the Crosslake Bird City celebration. In June, the Bemidji Pioneer covered the third annual Bird City celebration hosted by the Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society. More recently, media outlets covering southeast Minnesota reported on the announcement of the City of Austin as a Bird City. Austin's International Migratory Bird Day/Bird City activities and the Hormel Nature Center, were highlighted by KTTC, a Rochester TV station. The local newspaper and radio station also featured reports about the designation and day of celebration on October 5, 2019. Community members were quoted in these articles and interviewed for radio and TV, thereby serving as a platform for local conservationists to raise invite more people to join public outreach, restoration, and threat reduction efforts.
- Recognition events: Since our last report the community of Crosslake successfully held their first International Migratory Bird Day event, which also served as their official Bird City recognition event. Communities of La Crescent, Wabasha, Austin, and Duluth have all successfully completed the requirements of the Bird City program and are recognized as Bird Cities, but each is working on the planning of their formal recognition events. Audubon is working with each new Bird City to plan their respective events in 2020.
- Online communications: The nature of the Bird City program requires that we reach community leaders to tell them about opportunities through our program. Through emails from Audubon Minnesota, we have reached 5700 individuals who are already interested in Audubon programs. We have also worked with a wide range of partners including the Duluth Audubon Society, GreenStep Cities, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, and a number of others to spread the word about the program. These communications have resulted in an additional 2,400 community leaders learning more about Bird City. In addition to emails, Audubon Minnesota has also used our social media platforms to highlight Bird City celebrations and to encourage new communities to join the program. Between May and October 2019, we had more than 5,000 social media impressions for Bird City workshops and celebrations.

**Status as of 30 April 2020:**

As a result of COVID-19, most communications planned for promoting and supporting public events related to Bird City have been canceled and it is unclear if we will be able to resume them due to the pandemic. Because there were not any recognition events held or public meetings or newspaper reports of those meetings or events, there were very few public communications sent out between December 2019 and April 2020. Audubon Minnesota is assessing the best way to move forward with these communications in light of recent changes.

**Status as of October 31, 2020:**

As our communities continue to struggle with the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the ability to hold in-person meetings and events, much of our work with the Bird City Minnesota program has been paused. In November, a virtual presentation is being planned in which Audubon Minnesota board chair Debbie Reynolds and executive director Rob Schultz will present the community of La Crescent with the Bird City Minnesota award following their successful completion of the requirements.

**Status as of April 30, 2021:**

In November, Audubon Minnesota board chair Debbie Reynolds and executive director Rob Schultz presented the La Crescent City Council with the Bird City Minnesota recognition via Zoom due to the ongoing public pandemic. Throughout the winter months, the City of Stillwater has been wrapping up its final requirements to be presented the Bird City Minnesota award, which is planned to occur in mid-June.

**Final Report Summary: 15 August 2021**

Audubon Minnesota executive director Rob Schultz appeared in person at the City of Stillwater City Council meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup> to present the Bird City Minnesota recognition, which was aired live on local cable television in Stillwater. This has been our first opportunity in more than 15 months since the pandemic has started to conduct an in-person presentation due to the effects of COVID-19. The event was covered by the Stillwater Gazette, which reported on the award presentation. An additional Bird City Minnesota presentation is scheduled for the City of Wabasha on December 7, 2021.

**VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:**

**A. Preliminary ENRTF Budget Overview:**

**\*This section represents an overview of the preliminary budget at the start of the project. It will be reconciled with actual expenditures at the time of the final report.**

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Overview Explanation
Personnel:	\$241,251	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revised:</li> <li>▪ Lead project coordinator: \$137,400 (75% salary, 25% benefits; 65% FTE for each of 3 years)Lead engagement coordinator: \$89,100 (75% salary, 25% benefits; 34% FTE for each year of 3 years)</li> </ul> <p>Original (with changes marked):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lead project and education coordinator: \$137,400 (75% salary, 25% benefits; 65% FTE for each of 3 years)</li> <li>▪ Lead communications and outreach coordinator \$94,000 (75% salary, 25% benefits; 34% FTE for each year of 3 years).</li> </ul>
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	\$13,549	Website consultation / design \$249; DNR Birding Tourism Workshops \$12,000; DNR Educator Training \$1,300
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:	\$13,200	Bird City recognition, support, education materials and supplies.
Printing:	\$	
Travel Expenses in MN:	\$ 12,000	Lodging and travel based on Commission Plan
Other:	\$	

<b>TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET:</b>	\$280,000	
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**Explanation of Use of Classified Staff:** N/A

**Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000:** N/A

**Total Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation:** 3.99

**Total Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF Appropriation:** N/A

**B. Other Funds:**

Source of Funds	\$ Amount Proposed	\$ Amount Spent	Use of Other Funds
<b>Non-state</b>			
The Saint Paul Foundation	\$20,000	\$	Funding for development of light pollution reduction programs and tools.
<b>State</b>	\$	\$	
	\$	\$	
<b>TOTAL OTHER FUNDS:</b>	\$	\$	

**VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:**

**A. Project Partners:**

Audubon Minnesota, up to 12 Audubon chapters in Minnesota, Minnesota DNR Non-game wildlife program, Conservation Minnesota

**Partners receiving ENRTF funding**

- (Audubon Minnesota - \$226,500) Katie Burns will lead the project and education coordination. Ashley Peters will lead the communications and outreach coordination.
- (Minnesota DNR - \$13,300) Carrol Henderson will collaborate to assist with implementation of tourism workshops and implementation of Flying Wild workshops for leaders / educators in participating and potential communities.

**Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding**

- The Red Wing Audubon chapter (Board & members) will work with the City of Redwing as a potential pilot city
- 11 other Audubon chapters (Board & members) throughout the state will work locally to promote and implement Bird City program as opportunities arise
- Conservation Minnesota (Community Conservation Coordinators) and Explore Minnesota Tourism (Christine Lawton, Colleen Tollefson) will help promote Bird City Minnesota throughout the state.

**B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:**

**C. Funding History:**

Funding Source and Use of Funds	Funding Timeframe	\$ Amount
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) 5 Star and Urban Waters (NFWF \$50,000, Audubon and partner match \$50,000)	2015-2017	\$100,000

**VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

- The project is for 3 years; to begin on July 1, 2017, and end on June 30, 2020.
- Periodic project status update reports will be submitted April 30 and October 31 of each year.
- A final report and associated products will be submitted by August 15, 2020.

**IX. VISUAL COMPONENT or MAP(S):**

Re: Update as of April 30, 2019- Flying WILD workshops for professional educators made possible by this grant-funded project.





Re: Status update as of October 31, 2019.



Austin, MN Bird City recognition event



Austin Bird City flag 2019



Austin new Bird City news 2019



Crosslake new Bird City 2019



Crosslake new Bird City 2019



Crosslake new Bird City 2019



Wabasha new Bird City 2019- pic advisory group lead



Bird City Minnesota award presentation to the Stillwater City Council on June 15, 2021

**X. FEE TITLE ACQUISITION/CONSERVATION EASEMENT/RESTORATION REQUIREMENTS:**

**A. Parcel List:** DOES NOT APPLY

**B. Acquisition/Restoration Information:**

Fee Title Acquisition DOES NOT APPLY

Conservation Easement Acquisition DOES NOT APPLY

Restoration DOES NOT APPLY

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
M.L. 2017 Project Budget**



**Project Title:** Local Planning and Implementation Efforts for Bird Habitat

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05e

**Project Manager:** Rob Schultz

**Organization:** Audubon Minnesota

**M.L. 2017 ENRTF Appropriation:** \$280,000

**Project Length and Completion Date:** 4 Years, June 30, 2021

**Date of Report:** June 30, 2020

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Activity 1 Budget	Activity 1 Budget 6/25/2021	Amount Spent	Activity 1 Balance	Activity 2 Budget	REVISED Activity 2 Budget 6/25/2021	Amount Spent	Activity 2 Balance	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>	<i>Engage and enroll 40-60 communities statewide in Bird City Minnesota</i>				<i>Implement projects to improve habitat, protect birds and involve citizens</i>					
<b>Personnel (Wages and Benefits)</b>	<del>\$97,560.00</del>	\$123,445	\$123,445	\$0	\$128,940	\$117,806	\$97,857	\$19,949	\$241,251	\$19,949
Lead project and education coordinator \$137,400 (75% salary, 25% benefits; 65% FTE for each of three years)										
Assistant Project Coordinator \$112 (75% salary, 25% benefits)										
Administrative support \$639 (75% salary, 25% benefits)										
Ashley Peters – Lead engagement coordinator \$88,000 (75% salary, 25% benefits; 34% FTE for each year of 3 years).										
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts</b>										\$0
Website consultation: \$249. ( <i>\$15,000 had originally been budgeted, but after updates to the Audubon Minnesota website, there is no need for outside contracting of online communication.</i> )	\$15,000	\$249	\$249	\$0					\$249	\$0
Minnesota DNR - 10 Birding Tourism Workshops at \$1200 each = \$12,000 total			\$0		\$12,000	\$12,000	\$0	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
Minnesota DNR - Flying Wild curriculum materials for 50 educators in Bird City Communities (~\$26 per educator) = \$1,300 total			\$0		\$1,300	\$1,300	\$915	\$385	\$1,300	\$385
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies</b>										
Bird City recognition (estimated ~\$200 per community for 2 highway signs, one flag and one plaque x 60 communities) plus ~\$20 each for support and education materials and supplies such as books, materials (ex. window collision reduction & cats indoors brochures, native plant guides, bi-lingual birding guides) total \$220 per community for 60 communities = \$13,200 total	\$13,200	\$13,076	\$8,902	\$4,298		\$124.00	\$124	\$0	\$13,200	\$4,298

<b>Travel expenses in Minnesota</b>										
Lodging and travel based on Commission Plan: In-state travel to promote and visit Bird Cities (~11,000 miles annually) with 80 visits to potential and participating communities (1/2 within 50 mi, 1/4 within 150 mi and the remaining 1/4 within 300 mi) - estimate \$12,000 total	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$2,750	\$3,250	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$2,554	\$3,446	\$12,000	\$6,696
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>	<b>\$131,760</b>	<b>\$142,770</b>	<b>\$135,346</b>	<b>\$7,548</b>	<b>\$148,240</b>	<b>\$137,230</b>	<b>\$101,450</b>	<b>\$35,780</b>	<b>\$280,000</b>	<b>\$43,328</b>



# BIRD CITY MINNESOTA

## *Engaging Minnesota Communities In Bird Conservation*



Bird City Minnesota has worked to enhance conservation efforts to protect birds and habitats in Minnesota communities. A total of nine communities have received the Bird City Minnesota designation, while many other communities have showed interest and start working to complete the requirements of the program. Bird City Minnesota requirements lead communities in taking steps to accomplishment conservation efforts that improve habitat through restoration, reduce threats to birds, and engage local citizens through projects, training and birding events.



Many of the communities that participated made substantial progress in protecting habitat in local parks and engaging citizens in hands-on conservation work that creates a healthier environment for birds. By focusing on these efforts, local communities engaged their residents in citizen science and conservation. Through public events, residents learned how to take simple actions that result in improving the landscape for birds and ensuring appropriate habitat.



During the course of this project, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the progress that communities were making in attaining Bird City Minnesota recognition. Staff have been flexible to support communities as necessary, made adjustments where appropriate, and encourage continued work towards completing the program event after the funding of this project has ended. Minnesotans have benefited from this work by learning simple steps that they can take in their own communities to make a difference for birds, and what they have learned in this process will benefit communities and birds for decades to come.

