

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

# 2021 Request for Proposal

## **General Information**

**Proposal ID:** 2021-386

**Proposal Title:** Bird Academy: Conservation for Kids

## **Project Manager Information**

**Name:** Katie Burns

**Organization:** Audubon Minnesota

**Office Telephone:** (605) 321-6171

**Email:** katie.burns@audubon.org

## **Project Basic Information**

**Project Summary:** Bridge achievement gaps in public schools by providing equitable access to natural resource science education, focused on bird conservation; in-classroom lessons will transition to outdoor activities

**Funds Requested:** $291,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** 2023-06-30

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Environmental Education (C)

## **Project Location**

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?** Statewide

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?** Statewide

**When will the work impact occur?** During the Project and In the Future

## **Narrative**

**Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

In 2019, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology released a peer-reviewed study that found bird populations have recently seen steep declines. For example, grassland bird populations have declined by more than 50 percent and migratory bird populations have declined by nearly 30 percent since 1970. Black Terns, Prothonotary Warblers, Bobolinks, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Red-headed Woodpeckers are all examples of birds that have faced conservation threats such as significant habitat loss in Minnesota and many have suffered steep population declines.

Last fall, the National Audubon Society released a report called Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink, which models the next 80 years as we see more fires, floods, droughts, and other extreme climate events. At the same time, many schools have cut valuable programming such as natural resources education due to economic struggles. Our kids are spending more and more time on screens and less time outside.

We know that birds respond well to targeted, well-researched conservation efforts and that today’s youth will be the community leaders and natural resource managers of tomorrow. Our future leaders will need to be educated and equipped to make informed decisions about environmental conservation needs.

**What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.**

Audubon is dedicated to inspiring positive change through our programming for birds and people. We will make programming available to all school districts, to ensure equitable access to these programs, and provide additional support for schools that desire a higher level of engagement. Providing equitable access to conservation-focused education ensures that no matter where students go to school and no matter their socioeconomic standing, they will be connected to local wildlife and natural resources.

Audubon is a leader in engaging students through experiential learning and its educational programming is a cost-effective way to offer specialized learning not readily available in the general curriculum. Birds live alongside people in every community in the world and students have a natural curiosity to learn about recognizable wildlife they see every day. Students are motivated by this curiosity and it leads to a deeper and more effective learning experience, where students may otherwise struggle to learn when feeling disconnected from the curriculum topic.

**What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state’s natural resources?**

Audubon Minnesota will engage at least 10,000 students in conservation-focused education programming beginning in fall 2021; running through spring 2023. Programming will take place inside the classroom and, when possible, will transition outdoors where students will be encouraged to ask and answer their own scientific questions about the environment. Programming will enable students to learn and practice scientific investigation, which is key to understanding science content and process. Students will be challenged to take what they learned and apply their observation skills to develop questions, formulate thoughtful explanations based on their investigations, and communicate solutions to local conservation challenges.

## **Activities and Milestones**

### **Activity 1: Engage at least 10,000 students in conservation focused environmental education in the classroom and outdoors**

**Activity Budget:** $275,000

**Activity Description:**Identify and partner with schools and education centers throughout the state to bring Audubon Minnesota’s conservation focused environmental education programming to their young learners. Audubon has had success utilizing a compilation of curriculum, materials, and resources including Flying WILD from the Council for Environmental Education and the BirdSleuth program from Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Using these tried and true tools, Audubon will tailor a program that guides students in science learning where students will learn about local conservation issues and formulate their own solutions that will benefit bird species facing conservation threats, Minnesota communities, and whole ecosystems. Programming will take place in the classroom and transition outdoors.

-- Develop list of target schools and education centers throughout the state in July 2021
-- Outreach to schools and education centers throughout the state will begin in September 2021 and continue through spring 2023
-- Programming to begin as early as fall 2021 and run through spring 2023
-- 45-90 min in-person programs facilitated in public school classrooms, libraries, nature centers, and state parks throughout the state reaching 10,000 students

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| Develop prioritized list of potential partner schools and education centers throughout state | 2021-09-30 |
| Pre- and post- evaluations administered to student participants to assess knowledge base and gains | 2023-05-31 |
| Pre- and post-evaluations administered to teachers | 2023-05-31 |
| 10,000 Minnesotan students engaged in conservation focused programming | 2023-05-31 |
| Outreach to schools and education centers; scheduling programming | 2023-05-31 |

### **Activity 2: Survey student knowledge and compile to measure project success; disseminate results and project summary**

**Activity Budget:** $16,000

**Activity Description:**The Audubon outreach team will work with teachers to administer pre- and post- program evaluations with students to determine their comprehension of the bird conservation lessons delivered through this project. Lesson planning will directly contribute to students’ science learning experience. Through use of evaluation technology, Audubon will collect and measure data reflecting changes in knowledge, attitudes, and comprehension. Data from the evaluations will be pivotal for determining program success and evaluating teaching methods. Audubon’s outreach team will assess the evaluation data in summer 2022, after the spring 2022 school year has ended, in order to determine if any changes should be made to programming that will improve the student learning experience.

Throughout the project implementation, data will be compiled and analyzed. At the end of this grant, Audubon will develop an online report of a compiled data summary, teacher feedback, and highlighted student responses and insights. The report will be hosted on mn.audubon.org, source content for social media posts, and will be shared with teacher associations, school administrators, Minnesota media outlets, and natural resource organizations and agencies.

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| Develop database for inputting project information and reports | 2021-10-31 |
| Populate database with information gathered from project implementation | 2023-05-31 |
| Use evaluation technology to measure student understanding and knowledge | 2023-05-31 |
| Distribute project report with relevant partners, nonprofits, media outlets, and agencies | 2023-06-30 |
| Synthesize and summarize information into an online report | 2023-06-30 |

## **Project Partners and Collaborators**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Organization** | **Role** | **Receiving Funds** |
| Education Partners | MN public schools, libraries, nature centers, and state parks | Administrators, program coordinators, and educators will be key in scheduling programs | No |

## **Long-Term Implementation and Funding**

**Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this be funded?**Audubon Minnesota’s education programming has always been a pillar of our conservation work. For the last forty years, every project and program related to outreach and education has been evaluated and improved according to successes and challenges. Audubon’s on-going education efforts will be greatly informed by implementing Bird Academy and we will incorporate any lessons learned. Audubon will update curriculum as necessary and continue to develop innovative ways to engage Minnesota students through private fundraising and state and federal grants, as needed and appropriate.

## **Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Appropriation** | **Amount Awarded** |
| Implementing Conservation Plans for Avian Species of Concern | M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 03k | $124,000 |
| Maximize Value of Water Impoundments to Wildlife | M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 06f | $195,000 |
| Local Planning and Implementation Efforts for Bird Habitat | M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05e | $280,000 |
| Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas - Final Phase | M.L. 2014, Chp. 226, Sec. 2, Subd. 05f | $300,000 |
| Controlling Reed Canary Grass to Regenerate Floodplain Forest | M.L. 2016, Chp. 186, Sec. 2, Subd. 08e | $218,000 |
| Creating a Statewide Wetland Bird Survey | M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 03f | $146,000 |

## **Project Manager and Organization Qualifications**

**Project Manager Name:** Katie Burns

**Job Title:** Outreach Manager

**Provide description of the project manager’s qualifications to manage the proposed project.**Katie Burns joined Audubon Minnesota five years ago and she is equipped with a unique skillset that combines extensive knowledge of Minnesota bird conservation, science education, and school curriculum requirements. Her leadership in education and outreach supports Audubon’s mission through school and community engagement activities and events, focusing on environmental education, conservation and restoration of the ecosystems. Audubon Minnesota’s Outreach program offers businesses, schools, community groups, and individuals with opportunities to make a difference and support Audubon’s initiatives in a variety of ways. Over the course of her career Katie has worked directly with dozens of schools and thousands of students.

Katie came to Audubon with more than 6 years of experience in environmental education from The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota. She has experience in event planning, project development and volunteer program management in the nonprofit sector. Katie enjoyed 6 years of conservation and population medicine field research working with local, state, and federal agencies with project focus on grassland bird species distribution and habitat preference in South Dakota, flying squirrel and elk population studies in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and surveillance studies for avian influenza and Newcastle disease in migrating waterfowl throughout the upper Midwest.

In addition to her impressive professional qualifications, Katie is also an avid outdoorswoman. Katie enjoys cooking wild game recipes, ice fishing, birding throughout the country, riding her horse, trail running, nature photography, camping, and essentially any activity that gets her outside. These experiences not only ground Katie’s conservation ethic, but they also provide Katie with fascinating stories that she employs when engaging students to pique their curiosity.

**Organization:** Audubon Minnesota

**Organization Description:**Audubon Minnesota was established in 1979 and is the state office of the National Audubon Society, one of the oldest conservation organizations in the world. For the last 40 years, Audubon Minnesota has been at the forefront of critical conservation issues that will impact us for generations to come.

While we are one of 23 Audubon state offices, we establish our own statewide conservation projects, generate our own funding, and have an 11-member state Board of Directors who meet quarterly. Our state office mission is, “To conserve and restore natural ecosystems in Minnesota, focusing on birds and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biological diversity.” Today there are 24,000 Audubon members in Minnesota and 13 geographically-based chapters from the Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Chapter in Bemidji to Zumbro Valley Audubon Chapter in Rochester.

During the past decade, we have augmented youth-focused education programs to work with thousands of students, teachers and community leaders each year to expand bird-focused conservation and clean water activities. Students have been inspired by Audubon’s clean water work to restore prairies, create art murals, understand why the Mississippi River is a point of pride for their cities, and much more.

## **Budget Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category / Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Gen. Ineli gible** | **% Bene fits** | **# FTE** | **Class ified Staff?** | **$ Amount** |
| **Personnel** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Outreach & Education Manager |  | Program manager: Lead program implementation, school coordination, manage database, manage reporting |  |  | 100% | 2 |  | $164,000 |
| Outreach Educator |  | Education staff: Work directly with schools, project implementation, reporting |  |  | 100% | 2 |  | $96,000 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$260,000** |
| **Contracts and Services** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Equipment, Tools, and Supplies** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Tools and Supplies | Student survey technology | Before and after programming, administer student knowledge and understanding |  |  |  |  | $6,500 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$6,500** |
| **Capital Expenditures** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Acquisitions and Stewardship** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Travel In Minnesota** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Miles/ Meals/ Lodging | Statewide travel to school, both rural and urban, for (2) staff implementing project plan | $4,750/year for (2) full-time program staff: Mileage @$.58/mile x 25,000 mi. (Total: $14,500 or $250/year) - Hotel stays @ $100/night (average), not exceeding state rate at each location. (25 nights/year, x2 years = $5,000) |  |  |  |  | $19,500 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$19,500** |
| **Travel Outside Minnesota** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Printing and Publication** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Printing | Booklets and learning materials | Printing for handouts and conservation-related educational materials; 10,000 handouts @ $.30 each ($3,000); $1000/year educational materials ($2,000) |  |  |  |  | $5,000 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$5,000** |
| **Other Expenses** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Grand Total** | **$291,000** |

### **Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category/Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request** |

### **Non ENRTF Funds**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Specific Source** | **Use** | **Status** | **Amount** |
| **State** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **State Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Non-State** |  |  |  |  |
| Cash | Beim Foundation | Student educational programming - funds limited to seven-county Twin Cities Greater Metro Area; results pending May 2020 | Potential | $24,000 |
|  |  |  | **Non State Sub Total** | **$24,000** |
|  |  |  | **Funds Total** | **$24,000** |

## **Attachments**

### **Required Attachments**

#### ***Visual Component***

File: [7474c3ef-662.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/map/7474c3ef-662.pdf)

#### ***Alternate Text for Visual Component***

Audubon Minnesota handout describing the program; photos of students served by educational programming included.

#### ***Financial Capacity***

File: [a124265c-38e.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/financial_capacity/a124265c-38e.pdf)

### **Optional Attachments**

#### ***Support Letter or Other***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| Bird Academy-Board Support Letter | [0d1b59b2-c2a.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/0d1b59b2-c2a.pdf) |

## **Administrative Use**

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**
 No

**Does your project have patent, royalties, or revenue potential?**
 No

**Does your project include research?**
 No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**
 No