



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

Contact: Carl Schwartz, Bird City Wisconsin cschwartz3@wi.rr.com (414) 416-3272

Monday, July 28, 2014

Bird City recognizes Reedsburg

State conservation project honors 6 more communities as its ranks swell to 87; new group includes Door County, Mercer, New Berlin, Whitewater, DeForest

Bayside, Wis. – Six more Wisconsin communities statewide have been saluted for their long-term commitment to working with residents to make their neighborhoods a better place for people, birds and other wildlife.

The new group once again spans the state and brings the ranks of Bird City Wisconsin communities to 87. It includes a county that is a prime regional tourist destination and which already contains three other Bird Cities, along with the Northwoods Town of Mercer, widely known as the “Loon Capital of the World.” Rounding out the new group are the cities of New Berlin, Whitewater and Reedsburg and the Village of DeForest, just outside Madison.

Andrew Struck, president of the Milwaukee Audubon Society and chair of the Bird City Wisconsin steering committee, said the communities recognized Monday demonstrate the statewide scope of this partnership-based conservation project that now draws its major support from the Bird Protection Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.

Bird City Wisconsin has recognized a total 12 new communities in 2014, its fourth year of partnership-based activity to spur avian conservation efforts in cities, villages, towns and counties statewide. New Berlin becomes the seventh Waukesha County community recognized as a Bird City, while DeForest is the seventh Dane County community so honored.

Kim Grveles, who coordinates the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ Bird Stopover Initiative, says the keen interest in birding in Wisconsin can be seen in the growing number of communities seeking “Bird City Wisconsin” status. In March, more than 150 supporters of Bird City’s conservation efforts, including staff from the Department of Tourism and the DNR’s Urban Forestry, Wildlife Management and Natural Heritage Conservation divisions, gathered in Oshkosh for a “Bird City Summit” convened as part of the annual meeting of the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative.

The conference followed on the heels of a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service report showing Wisconsin ranks second nationally in the proportion of citizens considered birders, with fully one-third of its residents 16 and older reporting they travel to watch birds, or actively watch and identify birds around home.

Nationally, there are about 47 million birders, about 20% of the population 16 and older, according to the report. They annually spend an estimated \$41 billion on trip related expenditures and equipment, generate a total economic impact of \$106 billion, support 666,000 jobs and generate \$13 billion in state and federal tax revenues.

BCW communities each receive a special Bird City Wisconsin flag, plaque and two street signs to be erected at their boundaries, marking their conservation achievements.



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

Modeled on the “Tree City USA” program, Bird City Wisconsin has developed 22 conservation criteria across five categories. If a community meets at least seven criteria, it can be recognized as an official Bird City. Working through its web site, www.birdcitywisconsin.org, BCW has recruited both public officials and interested citizens who belong to Audubon groups, nature preserves, bird clubs, natural history museums, conservation organizations and agencies, garden clubs, eco-minded businesses, and chambers of commerce that can be effective partners for developing and implementing Bird City strategies.

Jim Knickelbine, executive director of the Woodland Dunes Nature Center nestled between Manitowoc and Two Rivers (both Bird Cities), says: “This program makes it easier for we who work with the municipalities and recognizes them in ways that we can’t.”

Bird City has strongly promoted the NRF’s Great Wisconsin Birdathon <http://www.wibirdathon.org/> an all-out birding blitz where teams raise money for conservation while attempting to find as many bird species as they can in a single 24-hour period in May. This year’s event -- in which at least 11 Bird City communities directly participated – saw 745 donors and 217 birders raise more than \$55,000 for priority bird conservation projects in Wisconsin. The 2014 event also included an exciting new Oriole Count that the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology helped create to teach groups of students, Scouts, 4Hers and other young people about bird conservation.

Seed funding to launch Bird City in 2009-‘10 was provided by the National Audubon Society and Toyota through a TogetherGreen Innovation Grant sought by the Milwaukee Audubon Society in partnership with a half-dozen other Wisconsin bird conservation organizations.

Melissa Hopkins, director of Together Green for National Audubon, has said: “The efforts of Wisconsin conservation groups are proving that this is a model program worthy of replication at the national scale.”

Environment for the Americas, which coordinates IMBD events across two continents, says of Bird City: “One of the requirements to become a Bird City is hosting an IMBD event. (Wisconsin) has become a leader in promoting bird conservation actions and community education.”

BCW coordinator Carl Schwartz said Bird City’s community participation is resulting in:

- Improved habitat conditions for breeding and migrating birds.
- Sound management of urban forests.
- Reductions in bird fatalities caused by domestic cats allowed to roam outdoors, and by window strikes.
- Active and coordinated engagement in conservation activities.
- A strong sense of community pride in conservation accomplishments.

Schwartz said Bird City accepts applications for initial certification three times each year. The next deadline is Nov. 1. Efforts to earn Bird City status are under way in dozens of additional communities. Recognition is renewable annually with certification valid from April 1 to March 31.

Schwartz said the Bird City project was using its web site, www.birdcitywisconsin.org, to salute each recognized community and to guide others through the application process.