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Lawton Man Singled Out for Environmental Leadership Honoree Receives Audubon/Toyota TogetherGreen Fellowship

New York, NY, December 1, 2008—A Lawton man is the recipient of a new national fellowship designed to advance the work of individuals with outstanding potential to help shape a brighter environmental future.

Eric Beck is one of only 40 people selected from competitors nationwide for the *TogetherGreen* Conservation Leadership Program, part of a new conservation initiative of the National Audubon Society with support from Toyota. Fellows receive specialized training in conservation planning and execution, the chance to work and share best practices with gifted conservation professionals, and assistance with project outreach and evaluation. Each Fellow will also receive \$10,000 towards a community-focused project to engage local residents in conserving land, water and energy, and contributing to greater environmental health.

Beck will focus his efforts on supporting and expanding the Oklahoma Important Bird Areas program through education and volunteer activities that both create a measurable conservation difference by protecting habitat and encouraging people to enjoy and observe native wildlife, including threatened species like the Lesser Prairie Chicken and the Northern Bobwhite.

The former Field Technician for the Sutton Avian Research Center's Lesser Prairie Chicken Project and current Coordinator for the Oklahoma Important Bird Areas program has been involved in conservation efforts for four years. A lifelong volunteer, he has organized many different bird counts, including three Christmas Bird Counts in Atoka County, Oklahoma. Beck has also dedicated over 200 volunteer hours to the Oklahoma Important Bird Areas program in the last year and half, and achieved designation for two state-level Important Bird Areas. Without Beck's tireless dedication, the Oklahoma Important Bird program—and the habitat and wildlife it protects—would have suffered badly.

“Eric is the kind of person who can make a real difference in the health of our environment and the quality of our future,” said Audubon President John Flicker. “Each of our *TogetherGreen* Fellows demonstrates exceptional environmental understanding and commitment, combined with tremendous potential to inspire and lead others. Together, they represent the talented and diverse leadership the environmental community will need to tackle the huge challenges and opportunities confronting us now and in the years to come.”

“By sharing my knowledge and experience and working to create opportunities for others involving conservation, I can do my part to plant the seed of knowledge,” said Beck. “I truly believe the more that people think about conservation and their impacts on our shared world, the cleaner and safer our world will become.”

Beck has been affiliated with Oklahoma Audubon since 2004. Half of the *TogetherGreen* fellows come from within Audubon's far-reaching national network; half channel their environmental efforts through other organizations.

Beck is currently pursuing a Bachelors degree in biology from Cameron University, and served in the U.S. Army for 3 years. His experience working and volunteering for Oklahoma Audubon inspired him to publish three articles in the Bulletin of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society.

“Toyota believes in the power of grassroots efforts to develop the environmental leaders of tomorrow,” said Patricia Salas Pineda, Group Vice President, Toyota Motor North America. “These 40 *TogetherGreen* Fellows will receive invaluable training for the future while immediately making a difference today with on-the-ground community projects.”

A complete list of *TogetherGreen* fellows can be found online at www.TogetherGreen.org/fellows.

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About *TogetherGreen*

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in spring, 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer and individual action opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. As of October, volunteer days have begun in 40, tallying in excess of 11,000 volunteer hours. Funding totaling \$1.4 million was recently awarded to innovative conservation projects nationwide, while www.TogetherGreen.org helps users take individual conservation action and share and celebrate success stories. The *TogetherGreen* initiative and grants programs are funded by a \$20 million Toyota gift to Audubon, the largest in the conservation group’s long history.

About Audubon

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

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants, with another under construction in Mississippi. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Through its corporate initiatives, manufacturing operations and philanthropy, Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. In 2007, Toyota contributed more than \$56 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit <http://www.toyota.com/community>.