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**Audubon Vermont receives *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grant;
Staff Biologist Awarded *TogetherGreen* Fellowship**

*Dual Support Expands Group's Critical Work with Private Landowners and
Keeps People and Birds on Common Ground*

New York, NY, November 19, 2009—One of 48 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will support Audubon Vermont's Champlain Valley Bird Initiative, a program to engage landowners in managing their property for the benefit of grassland and shrubland birds, many of which are showing dramatic population declines. Much of the region's habitat is privately owned, so working with private landowners is critical to large-scale conservation efforts.

Additionally, Mark LaBarr, a conservation biologist for Audubon Vermont will coordinate the Champlain Valley Bird Initiative, was singled out for his environmental leadership as one of 40 individuals nationwide selected as a 2009 *TogetherGreen* Fellow.

Audubon Vermont's nearly Innovation Grant will allow the group to identify and reach out to landowners - and their neighbors - with large properties in a number of Champlain Valley pilot towns. The Audubon Vermont innovation grant is part of \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative this year. Working together with the National Resources Conservation Service, the University of Vermont and various local land trusts and town groups, Audubon Vermont will conduct habitat assessments for landowners providing practical recommendations for protecting and enhancing habitat responsibly for bird species in their forest.

The model for the Champlain Valley Bird Initiative is based on Audubon Vermont's highly successful, *TogetherGreen*-supported Forest Bird Initiative, which has empowered Vermont landowners to sustainably manage over 40,000 forested acres. For each assessment, a landowner will receive information on the existing habitats on their land, as well as practical recommendations for protecting and enhancing habitat responsibly for bird species in their forest.

With his *TogetherGreen* fellowship, Mark will work with the town of Charlotte, Vermont, to create a model and demonstration site for how private landowners can manage their land to benefit birds. The town has a 290 acre Park and Wildlife Refuge that supports a number of priority bird species, including the Eastern Towhee, Bobolink, Golden-winged Warbler, and Brown Thrasher. A major challenge is that a significant part of this habitat is covered with invasive honeysuckle and buckthorn.

LaBarr will work with the Park Oversight Committee, as well community members, to develop a plan to help protect the park's bird species by tackling the spread of honeysuckle and buckthorn and replacing them with native shrubs. He will also involve community members and the local Audubon Chapter in a volunteer monitoring network that will measure the effects of the invasive plant removal, as well as the management of other habitats, on priority bird species. This will provide an adaptive approach that will allow them to modify management actions as necessary.

“Mark 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.”

The *TogetherGreen* Fellowship offers 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 receives \$10,000 towards a community-focused project to engage local residents in conserving land, water and energy, and contributing to greater environmental health. Half of the *TogetherGreen* Fellows come from within Audubon’s far-reaching national network; half channel their environmental efforts through other organizations.

The 2009 Fellows and Innovation Grant recipients were selected from scores of applicants across America. Innovation Grant funds were awarded to local Chapters or programs of Audubon’s large national network – each working in partnership with one or more outside groups. Grant recipients were chosen for innovation and effectiveness of projects designed to contribute to significant gains in habitat, water, and energy conservation. Many projects will work with inner-city audiences and those previously underserved or not engaged with the environmental community. Qualified fellows applicants must have at least six years of experience in conservation, environmental education, policy, or environmental issues, as demonstrated through current and past work experience, academic studies related to conservation, and/or volunteer work. Fellow candidates must have a passion for conservation, the desire to learn and grow, and demonstrate a proven ability in reaching previously unengaged audiences.

A complete list of all 48 Innovation Grants is available at www.togethergreen.org/grants.

A complete list of all 40 2009 *TogetherGreen* Fellows can be found at www.togethergreen.org/fellows.

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About *TogetherGreen*

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to build the promise of a greener, healthier future through innovation, leadership and volunteerism. Nearly 90 projects totaling more than \$2.5 million dollars have received Innovation Grants to protect land, water, and energy resources nationwide. To date, 80 environmental leaders-half from within Audubon and half from outside organizations-have received *TogetherGreen* Fellowships to protect land, water, and energy resources nationwide. For more information, visit www.togethergreen.org.

About Audubon

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

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. Since 1991, Toyota has contributed more than \$464 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit www.toyota.com/community.