



Embargoed for Release:
December 9, 2010

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Four Conservation Projects in New York Receive *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants Funding

Nearly \$180,000 from nationwide Audubon/Toyota Conservation Initiative will facilitate people-powered conservation action across the state

New York, NY, December 9, 2010 –Two Audubon groups—and six partner organizations—are the recipients of national Innovation Grants that will support critical habitat and wildlife restoration efforts around the state, while providing students, people of faith, and other New Yorkers with opportunities to play a hands-on role in conservation.

TogetherGreen Innovation Grants, provided through an alliance between National Audubon Society and Toyota, provide seed money for projects that use innovative approaches and technologies to engage new and diverse audiences in conservation action. Innovation Grants enable awardees and their partner organizations to inspire, equip, and engage people to tackle environmental concerns and improve the health of their communities.

“The conservation solutions pioneered by *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grant winners are inspiring models of both ingenuity and conservation commitment,” said Audubon President David Yarnold. “Each project represents an investment in our shared environment and future – and an opportunity for many of our nation’s most creative and dedicated individuals and communities to transform their dreams into effective conservation action. As our alliance with Toyota shows, when organizations work together, they can magnify conservation results.”

The four *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants projects in New York are:

- “Nurturing the Next Generation of Environmental Leaders” (Brooklyn) Armed with a \$66,100 Innovation Grant, the largest *TogetherGreen* grant awarded this year, Audubon New York, The Nature Conservancy of New York, and the Prospect Park Alliance will be able to offer high school students from Brooklyn summer enrichment and employment experiences at nature centers and wildlife sanctuaries around the Northeast. Students will hike, canoe, camp, remove invasive plant species, maintain trails, assist at bird banding stations, and help lead summer camp activities for younger children. Many will also visit colleges to learn about nature and conservation-related careers. This project will provide “city kids” with fun, nature-based experiences that also teach them critical life and workplace skills.
- “Faith in Coasts” (Jamaica Bay) With a \$50,000 Innovation Grant, New York City Audubon and the Auburn Theological Seminary will collaborate on a multi-faith education initiative to provide members of diverse communities of faith with an opportunity to practice environmental stewardship at a city wildlife refuge in need:

Jamaica Bay. Participants will take part in beach clean-ups throughout the year, with the goal of removing 6,000 pounds of trash over nine miles of beach. They will also be trained in monitoring shorebirds and horseshoe crabs, and will take part in regular monitoring expeditions on cleaned and uncleaned beaches. Over the course of the program, participants should have the satisfaction of seeing how their clean-up efforts help wildlife return to the bay.

- “Restoring Habitat, One Landowner at a Time” (St. Lawrence Valley) A \$26,720 Innovation Grant will help Audubon New York team up with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the USDA Farm Service Agency to reach out to private landowners in the St. Lawrence Valley and encourage them to enroll in stewardship programs to protect and restore habitat favorable to threatened bird species. The groups will help landowners manage their land more sustainably and will assist interested landowners in drafting individualized management and restoration plans for their properties. Participating landowners will also discover if they can be reimbursed for their efforts by one of the USDA’s conservation programs. The goal of the project is to ensure that New York’s birds have a chance to rebound and flourish.
- “Restoring American Kestrels Across New York State” (statewide) With its \$25,000 Innovation Grant, Audubon New York and more than a dozen Audubon chapters will partner with the New York State Department of Transportation to expand and leverage a massive, dispersed effort to restore American Kestrel populations across the state. Kids and adults will build, install, and monitor kestrel nest boxes in suitable habitats in their communities. Department of Transportation employees will assist by putting up and monitoring boxes along highways. Additionally, funding will help Audubon New York with educational and outreach efforts, coordinated social networking and online communications, a nest box webcam, and the development of kiosk and other outreach materials for state highway visitor centers. The hope is to engage more New Yorkers in kestrel protection and show people that birds are a lot like them – they too need a roof over their heads to support a family and survive.

“TogetherGreen support has been instrumental in helping Audubon New York launch innovative programs to reach our objectives of engaging new audiences in conservation and protecting species of concern and their habitats,” said Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director of Audubon New York. “Not only is the financial support important, but the training and communications support that come with it are most helpful,” Caccese added.

The nearly \$180,000 in New York Innovation Grants are part of almost \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants program this year. Now in its third cycle, the grants program has awarded more than \$3.5 million to over 130 environmental projects nationwide. Forty three awardees in 27 states will receive grants ranging from \$5,000 - \$66,100 this year. Funds are awarded to partnerships between Audubon groups (local Chapters or programs of Audubon’s large national network) and organizations in their communities—with more than 125 partner organizations involved in Innovation Grant projects in the coming year. Most of the projects involve audiences previously underserved or not engaged in environmental action, from urban youth to ranchers.

In addition to financial support, Innovation Grantees receive opportunities for professional development, including a multi-day workshop held at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and web-based training throughout the year. They also receive communications support, which leads to more public recognition at the local, state, and national level, and they are networked with other grantees to share best practices and learn from others.

For complete details about the 2010 *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants projects, please visit: www.togethergreen.org/grants.

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About *TogetherGreen*

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund innovative conservation projects, support conservation leadership, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment and reach new audiences. To date, *TogetherGreen* has supported 130 Innovation Grants projects, 120 Conservation Fellows, and over 750 Volunteer Days events 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. 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, including one under construction. Toyota directly employs nearly 30,000 in the U.S. and its investment here is currently valued at more than \$18 billion, including sales and manufacturing operations, research and development, financial services and design.

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 \$500 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>.