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Grant Enables Audubon Minnesota to Expand “Bird Safe – Lights Out Minnesota” Effort

Saving Energy and Reducing Songbird Deaths

One of 41 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will enable Audubon Minnesota to continue and expand its innovative Project Bird Safe aimed at reducing the number of avian collisions with buildings. Studies estimate more than 100 million birds die each year in the U.S. as a result of hitting glass in buildings.

A \$33,000 one-year grant will help Audubon Minnesota and its local partners to implement a comprehensive, statewide program that incorporates action, education, and monitoring. Bird collisions with windows, towers and other man-made structures are a serious cause for concern.

The majority of collision victims are migratory songbirds. The potential impact on their populations, especially when combined with other challenges, has significant consequences. Over 250 species migrate through Minnesota. Preliminary monitoring around tall buildings in the Twin Cities conducted by Audubon Minnesota and partners found over 80 species that were victims of building collisions since 2007. Fifteen of these species are on the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan list of “Species in Greatest Conservation Need.”

In 2007 Audubon Minnesota helped launch Project Bird Safe. A collaborative effort, expanding on work done in other North American cities, Project Bird Safe seeks to monitor the extent of the bird collision problem in Minnesota. The project’s goal is to educate the public about avian collisions and, most importantly, implement solutions. To date, the program has successfully established lines of communication with partners, volunteers, and building managers and begun a systematic monitoring program. The “Lights Out” program was implemented to help those night migrants that strike buildings after being attracted or confused by building lighting. At present the program involves 27 buildings in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Bloomington and Rochester. In addition to its direct benefit to birds, the program saves energy and demonstrates that everyone can take positive action to help the environment.

“Building owners and managers can feel confident that they are not only saving birds, they are reducing their carbon footprint,” said Lori Naumann of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Nongame Program.

“In order for Project Bird Safe to have a greater impact on protecting bird populations, we must engage more people in conservation and expand the Lights Out program. Our goals include developing a Minnesota building and window design task force with architects, industry, and government and conservation groups. We also aim to increase the number of volunteers doing monitoring routes. This grant will help us to engage a wider audience in reducing bird collisions,” said Mark Martell, Audubon Minnesota’s Director of Bird Conservation.

Partners in the effort include the Minnesota DNR, the Bell Museum of Natural History, Minneapolis and St. Paul BOMA (Building Owner's and Manager's Association), the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, and the Audubon chapters of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Sheila Miller from BOMA Minneapolis noted, "We're encouraging our members to turn out the lights on the exteriors of their buildings and even to encourage their tenants and their cleaning companies to turn off the outside office lights."

The Minnesota grant is part of the first \$1.4 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative, a national Audubon project with funding from Toyota. Grantees were selected from scores of applicants across America. Funds were awarded to Audubon organizations that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for environmental quality.

"By bringing together a diverse group of partners working to solve a significant conservation problem, Audubon Minnesota will be implementing innovative solutions that will have a significant conservation impact. We are happy to be giving these groups the help they need," said *TogetherGreen* Project Manager Judy Braus.

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TogetherGreen will invest in both promising environmental projects and outstanding leaders that can shape a brighter tomorrow. Along with Innovation Grants to be awarded each year, *TogetherGreen* funds and promotes conservation leadership training and volunteer programs designed to equip and engage diverse groups and individuals to take action today to shape a healthier tomorrow. Information on other grantees, along with opportunities to get involved in conservation efforts, showcase successful initiatives, and honor those who are making a difference, can be found at 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.

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>.