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National Innovation Grant Funds American Kestrel Restoration Efforts in New York State

Support Will Help Volunteers Take Direct Action to Increase Kestrel Population

One of 48 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will enable Audubon New York to bolster the population of American Kestrels in New York State by engaging hundreds of individuals in a coordinated effort to build, erect, and monitor nest boxes.

The population of breeding pairs of kestrels in New York has decreased sharply due to a lack of nest cavities in remaining suitable habitat and loss of habitat. Even though suitable habitat for the birds' nests includes habitat found in Long Island, Buffalo, and even highway rights-of-way, the birds are declining.

The \$35,000 grant will power the partnership between Audubon New York, the New York State Department of Transportation, 14 local Audubon Chapters and 4 Audubon Centers to support volunteer-based efforts to bring back the American Kestrel. Through building and monitoring nest boxes, participants in the project will get hands-on conservation experience, as well as help to protect an iconic American bird.

"We are thrilled with this unique opportunity to work with so many Audubon chapters and centers as well as NYS DOT to make a real difference for the kestrel," said Jillian Liner, Audubon New York Director of Bird Conservation. "Volunteers across the state will be working in their communities towards a shared goal that will increase our population of breeding kestrels in New York."

Overall, Audubon New York hopes to engage volunteers in building 200 kestrel nest boxes, setting up a nest box monitoring program, and providing opportunities for them to voice their concerns to governmental and non-profit conservation groups. After getting a better understanding of the kestrel through this project, Audubon New York hopes that community members will feel a real sense of ownership and pride towards the birds' continued success.

"The New York State Department of Transportation welcomes the opportunity to partner with Audubon New York in this worthwhile effort," said Department of Transportation Acting Commissioner Stanley Gee. "We are always looking for ways in which the state highway system can support our wildlife and are excited to play a role in conservation of the American kestrel."

The Audubon New York innovation grant is part of \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative this year. Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. 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.

“Conserving wildlife through hands-on learning is of utmost importance, and we’re proud to be able to help these groups achieve that,” said *TogetherGreen* Project Manager Judy Braus.

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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. 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 about Audubon’s nationwide efforts to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, 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.