

Embargoed Until:
October 21, 2008

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TogetherGreen Awards Innovation Grant to Support Forest Habitats

Private Landowners Take Steps to Protect Habitat for Birds and Other Wildlife

One of 41 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national Innovation Grants will engage private landowners in implementing bird-friendly land management techniques that support the health of Vermont's Northern Forest for birds and communities. Landowners need practical recommendations—this grant will expand Audubon Vermont's ability to fill that need. With *TogetherGreen's* support, the Forest Bird Initiative has great potential to engage landowners, protect important habitat, and develop a model incorporating science and education that can be pursued across the Northern Forest and around the country.

A \$49,000 grant will allow for the expansion of the Forest Bird Initiative. This pioneering program has already conducted conservation planning for 750,000 acres of forest, through the partnership of Audubon Vermont, Vermont Coverts - Woodlands for Wildlife, and the Vermont Woodlands Association. Together, the groups will enroll the owners of 35,000 additional acres in the next year and find ways to implement similar efforts beyond Vermont.

In the 26-million acre Northern Forest, where 85 percent of the land is privately owned, individual forest management decisions can have a significant impact on birds and their habitat. Protecting this area is critical—it serves as important nesting habitat for the greatest diversity of breeding bird species in the country, many of which are experiencing dramatic population declines. In many cases, these landowners want to help protect the habitat we share with birds, but may lack the knowledge and resources to do so.

“Private landowners and conservationists are natural partners when both sides have an equal stake in the land being protected,” said Audubon Vermont Director of Conservation and Policy Jim Shallow. “Everyone benefits from our project—landowners, other community members, and not least of all the birds.”

“This grant enables us to work with Audubon Vermont to make a difference by reaching the landowner, the ultimate decision maker.” added Lisa Sausville of Vermont Coverts. “Providing opportunities for landowners to become good forest stewards will have a positive impact on wildlife now and on into the future.”

The local grant is part of the first \$1.4 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen*. Announced in Spring 2008, the initiative is a dynamic and innovative national Audubon program funded by Toyota that aims to provide inspiration, leadership, and opportunities for people to take action at home, in their communities and beyond to improve the health of our environment. Grantees were selected from scores of applicants across America. Funds were awarded to local Audubon programs and chapters that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for environmental quality.

“We need environmental solutions that treat community members as valuable partners in achieving conservation results, and we're happy to be giving these groups the help they need to achieve that,” 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 www.toyota.com/community.