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National Innovation Grant Incorporates Important Roost Site into New Green School Design

Support Will Allow Preservation of Chimney Swifts and Encourage Experiential Learning

One of 48 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will allow Merrymeeting Audubon to save the largest Chimney Swift roost known in Maine by incorporating it into the design of a new elementary school, where students will be able to learn about the birds firsthand.

For years, an existing 1930s-era high school has supported migratory flocks of Maine Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*). The roost site serves as critical migratory roosting habitat for swifts passing through as well as resident swifts that breed in the Brunswick-Topsham area. However, since the former high school was torn down in 2009 to make way for a new school on the same site—the future ability of swifts' to find a replacement roost in the region is threatened.

The \$7,500 grant will power a partnership between Merrymeeting Audubon and the Town of Brunswick to create an improved roosting structure for the swifts that also fits into the school's plan to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. In addition to the replacement tower, educational signs about the swifts' plight will be posted in highly trafficked areas of the school and integrated into classroom lessons.

"This is a once in a lifetime chance provide a watchable wildlife opportunity for our downtown neighborhoods" said Steve Walker, project coordinator for Merrymeeting Audubon. "Not only will this project help a species of greatest conservation need and bring visitors to our downtown on summer evenings, it will demonstrate to future generations that local grassroots efforts can make a difference."

Currently, there are no protected swift roosts in the state of Maine. When completed, this project will mark the first formal action to conserve this rapidly declining species statewide. To celebrate this achievement, Merrymeeting Audubon will work with the school and the Town of Brunswick to coordinate public Swift Night Out events.

We are very pleased to partner with Audubon to conserve this roost site," said Vanessa Levesque, Town of Brunswick Natural Resources Planner. "Saving the swift roost will increase local awareness of our town's natural resources and help to reconnect our youth with the natural phenomenon that surround them in their daily lives."

The Merrymeeting Audubon 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 Merrymeeting Audubon and the town of Brunswick 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.