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National Innovation Grant Funds Monroe Save Our Swifts Campaign Launch

Support Fuels Multi-Year Initiative to Save One of the World's Largest Roosting Sites of Vaux's Swifts

One of 48 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will support the launch of the Monroe Save Our Swifts Campaign, a multi-year initiative to save the major migratory roosting site for Vaux's Swifts in Washington – the chimney at Frank Wagner Elementary School in Monroe, a rural community near Everett and Seattle. The Frank Wagner chimney hosts the largest known roosting site in Washington of the amazing aerialist Vaux's Swifts (pronounced "voxes") – one of the four largest roosting sites in the world, with up to 20,000 swifts descending into the chimney to roost overnight during their biannual migration.

The \$15,000 grant will pay for key educational and outreach activities in the Save Our Swift effort, including development of an in-school science curriculum, positioning of a webcam inside the chimney, increase citizen science monitoring efforts, and planning community engagement activities related to the Vaux's Swifts. The effort will be led by Pilchuck Audubon Society in partnership with Seattle Audubon and Eastside Audubon Societies. The grant will compliment an allocation in 2009 by the WA State legislature of \$100,000 to pay for the actual earthquake retrofit of the chimney.

"It is just wonderful to receive this TogetherGreen funding," said Susie Schaefer, project coordinator at Pilchuck Audubon, "as it will really compliment our existing activities. The TogetherGreen funds will allow us to initiate some new in-school and community projects that we feel will build student and community engagement, such as putting a webcam in the chimney, which everybody is excited about."

Vaux's Swifts are summer residents of forested areas in Washington State. Since they cannot perch like other birds, the small birds roost and nest in natural vertical cavities such as tree snags. With natural snags increasingly hard to come by, swifts have adapted and substitute chimneys as roosting and nesting sites. These man-made "habitat" features have thus become important to the species' survival.

The Frank Wagner Elementary chimney was built in 1939 and is located in the center of the school building, where it represents an unacceptable seismic risk to children at the school. The Monroe School District began discussions in 2007 with the Audubon chapters about finding a solution to the chimney issue, which led to the formation of the Monroe Save Our Swifts Campaign.

"Monroe Public Schools is excited about this project," said John Mannix, Assistant Superintendent of Monroe School District. "It represents to an opportunity to educate both our students and our community about these fascinating birds, and to build the school children's and community's sense of stewardship regarding their local migratory roosting site."

The Washington 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.

“Community members need to be engaged if we’re going to see any real advancements in wildlife conservation, and we’re glad to be able to help these Audubon Chapters 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.