

## Bird City Wisconsin Tops the Century Mark

March 2, 2017

The number 101 is a frequent target when a writer is trying to compile an impressive list – surely it has not been long since you last saw “101 Ways to ...”. 101 also describes a list that speaks volumes about the people of Wisconsin: it is the number of Bird City Wisconsin communities following the recognition Osceola (100) and Sturgeon Bay (101). Bird City welcomes both municipalities to a program that recognizes forward-thinking communities across the great state of Wisconsin who understand the value of birds.

Bird City Wisconsin recognizes municipalities for the conservation and education activities that they undertake to make their communities healthy for birds ... and people.

To be recognized as a Bird City, a community must meet at least 7 of 22 criteria spread across five categories: habitat creation and protection, community forest management, limiting threats to birds, education, and the official recognition and celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. Bird City also offers a second level of recognition, High Flyer, for those communities that truly go above and beyond in their conservation and education programs. To become a High Flyer, a community must meet the requirements to become a Bird City plus a minimum of 5 of an additional 17 criteria.

Osceola and Sturgeon Bay enter the program with some impressive accomplishments. Among the highlights of these two applications are the Grow Osceola (Osceola) and Crossroads at Big Creek (Sturgeon Bay) programs. These programs focus on using bird-friendly native plants and bringing together schools, garden clubs, and other organizations to involve them in bird conservation. Actions like these benefit wildlife and help build a connection to nature that will show current and future decision makers just how important it is to protect the natural world. As is the case with many Bird City



communities, the organization is hopeful that initial recognition as a Bird City will serve as a springboard for Osceola and Sturgeon Bay to develop new, and often non-traditional, partnerships as they expand local conservation and education actions.

In addition to speaking volumes about the citizens of Wisconsin, the fact that Bird City Wisconsin has over 100 communities and a 100% community retention rate says a lot about the organization and the people associated with it. Bird City Wisconsin, a program of the Milwaukee Audubon Society, is currently in its eighth year and seventh year of issuing Bird City recognition. This astounding growth rate demonstrates the wisdom and of the people who designed Bird City Wisconsin as well as the innovative nature of the many organizations that they represent.

The success that Bird City Wisconsin has achieved (over 1,000 actions are taken each year to be awarded Bird City recognition and another 175 to meet the High Flyer requirements) is a testament not only to those involved in running the Bird City program itself but also to the hundreds of people who are responsible for Bird City programs in each Bird City community. The tireless dedication of community members truly makes the Bird City model work and they should be thanked for their efforts at every chance ... thank you!

Looking forward, Bird City Wisconsin will continue to improve the information and services that it provides for its communities. The organization will also continue to foster programs in other states – thus far Bird City Wisconsin has helped launch Bird City Minnesota and Bird Town Indiana and is helping in the planning process with Bird-friendly Iowa and a yet-to-be named program in Texas. A



national/international organization also remains high on Bird City Wisconsin's wish list. Please follow Bird City on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/BirdCityWisconsin/](http://www.facebook.com/BirdCityWisconsin/)) or contact us to join our email list.

### **About Bird City**

Bird City Wisconsin, a program of the Milwaukee Audubon Society, was created in 2009 and began recognizing communities the following year. The program recognizes municipalities for the conservation and education activities that they undertake to make their communities healthy for birds ... and people.

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In the coming weeks, Bird City will announce the first revision to its recognition criteria. The new criteria build on those currently in place, seeking to do more around several issues that are important to the organization, including keeping cats indoors, reducing window collisions, and addressing greenhouse gas emissions while encouraging people to spend more time outdoors.

### **Contact**

Bryan Lenz  
Director  
Bird City Wisconsin  
c/o Milwaukee Audubon Society  
1111 E. Brown Deer Road  
Bayside, WI 53217

Phone: (414) 533-5398  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/birdcitywisconsin](http://www.facebook.com/birdcitywisconsin)  
Online: [www.birdcitywisconsin.org](http://www.birdcitywisconsin.org)