

Projects Grant Report
Projects Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union

1) Project Title

“Avian Audio Experience”

(Nature’s Window outdoor microphone system)

2) Project Description

Purchase and install a new bird-sound microphone system at the Milton R. Owen Nature Center.

3) Project Goals

The goal of this project was to enhance the ambient learning capacity of the Milton R. Owen Nature Center with bird sounds projected through a microphone and speaker system.

With generous grant funding through the Iowa Ornithologists Union, Mitchell County Conservation Board purchased a “Natures Window” microphone system to bring the sounds of visiting birds into the nature center for a more complete environmental education experience.

With this microphone system in place, Mitchell County Conservation Board Naturalist Chelsea Ewen can now continue to reach the following education goals for the Milton R. Owen Nature Center:

- Increase appreciation for local avian diversity
- Encourage interest in birds and bird watching
- Foster awareness and participation in bird conservation efforts
- Inspire youth involvement with bird-related educational activities

4) Project impact

Since the installation of the Nature’s Window microphone system, visitors to the Milton R. Owen Nature Center are now getting more complete experience of bird life in Iowa. Having a constant stream of natural sound, both from birds and other natural sources, also creates a welcoming ambiance and sets the stage for environmental education at the Milton R. Owen Nature Center. Having a microphone system in place increases the exposure to Iowa bird life, not only through the bird feeding station-which highlights the birds unique feathers and behaviors, but also adds the element of sound for a more immersive experience. It also make those experiences possible despite inclement weather or physical restrictions. Youth especially love hearing bird songs and calls and seeing the associated behavior. Aggressive Blue Jays, woodpeckers, and Black-capped Chickadees rank among the kids’ favorites.