

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Projects Grant Report

Project title: **Establishing Bird Friendly Iowa Communities**

Project description: Bird Friendly Iowa (BFI) is a statewide community conservation initiative developed to bring attention to wildlife habitats and to engage Iowans to learn about and advocate for birds. For this particular grant, several urban communities are targeted to help each meet criteria to achieve *Bird Friendly Iowa Community* status. Educational materials about ways to increase habitat and nest sites for Greatest Conservation Needs bird species have been created and printed and currently are being distributed in towns and cities, helping achieve *Bird Friendly Iowa Community* status for more communities. BFI representatives are currently working with the following communities: Waterloo, Pleasant Hill, Madrid, Ames, Decorah, Fayette, and Peterson.

Project goals: This Bird Friendly Iowa initiative has three main goals: 1) Protect, restore, and enhance bird habitat, 2) Reduce hazards to birds, and 3) Educate and engage people in bird-watching activities and wildlife conservation. The goal of this project was to use the \$700, provided by Iowa Ornithologists' Union Projects Grant, to produce educational materials that are distributed in towns and cities, helping two more communities meet criteria to achieve *Bird Friendly Iowa Community* status by year's end. Specifically, thanks in large part to Dr. Julia Badenhope, Professor of Landscape Architecture (Iowa State University) and her students, four-page publications were created and printed (140 copies each) for Eastern Screech Owl, American Kestrel, Eastern Bluebird, and Northern Flicker. Each includes a nest-box design, construction instructions, and species' habitat information. Also created and printed is a fifth publication, a *Bird Friendly Master Plant List*, which includes tables of native trees, shrubs and flowering plants that citizens can plant in their yards to provide habitat for many wildlife species - especially for birds, bees, and butterflies. Information used by citizens from these five publications helps communities meet several criteria that are listed under BFI goal 1) to: Protect, restore, and enhance bird habitat, as well as goal 3) to: Educate and engage people in bird-watching activities and wildlife conservation. Pleasant Hill recently received *Bird Friendly Iowa Community* status, and Decorah and Fayette (and perhaps Ames) should gain this status before the end of 2019.

Project impact: Dr. Julia Badenhope and her students created different versions of these publications for the town of Madrid, and local citizens are using the information provided in these publications to create nesting structures and plantings for birdlife in that community. The publications created with IOU Projects Grant money include nest box designs that are designed by a bird biologist and crafted by a professional graphic artist, hired by Bird Friendly Iowa. BFI Steering Committee members will continue to distribute the current and improved educational materials to schools, community centers, libraries, community leaders, homeowners, etc., while also providing advice on how to improve habitat (by putting up nest boxes and strategically planting native vegetation) and better enjoy the birds and other wildlife that occupy these habitats. Electronic copies of these five publications will be available for download from Bird Friendly Iowa's website at birdfriendlyiowa.org.