

Mahaska County Conservation Board
Laura DeCook, Naturalist
2254 – 200th Street
New Sharon, IA 50207

Project Title

“Binoculars for Beginning Birders”

Project Description

The \$400.00 IOU Project Grant awarded to the Mahaska County Conservation Board was used to help purchase binoculars for the county’s environmental education program. The Mahaska CCB has wanted to provide better opportunities for the public to view birds during educational programs and events. The use of binoculars will help the county’s environmental education program achieve this.

Project Goals

The IOU Project Grant has helped The Mahaska County Conservation Board purchase eight binoculars. The binoculars were purchased from Eagle Optics through the IOU webpage. Five binoculars are Vortex Raptors (8.5x32) and three are Pentax Papilios (8.5x21). Of the total cost of the binoculars, \$400.000 was used from the grant and the remaining \$411 was purchased through the county’s environmental education budget. These binoculars were chosen after evaluating suggestions by IOU and other county conservation boards. We are very happy with the performance of these binoculars.

The binoculars will be used during field trips, day camps and public programs. During the programs, participants are taught how to use the binoculars as well as identify birds and view bird habitats. The binoculars were shipped to our conservation center after the field trip and day camp seasons in 2014, so they could not be used for these programs as planned in the grant application. I tried to schedule a summer or fall birding program, but had to postpone this plan until spring of 2015 due to scheduling conflicts with volunteers.

Project Impact

This project is designed to enhance birding opportunities while bird watching at feeding stations and on nature hikes and hosted by the Mahaska County Conservation Board. The binoculars have been used by small groups of people hiking at the Russell Wildlife Area. They were excited to use them to better see birds along the trails and identify the bird species.

Thank you for selecting the Mahaska County Conservation Board as a recipient for an IOU Project Grant. We look forward to using these binoculars at future programs and we will gratefully submit more information about the impact the grant has had on our educational programs later this spring and summer.