

2013 Iowa Ornithologists Union Grant Report

1) Project Title:

“Binoculars for Beginning Birders”

2) Project description:

The purpose of this grant was to provide a set of durable, user-friendly binoculars for use in environmental education programming provided by Mitchell County Conservation Board (MCCB). The funds were used to help purchase a total of 25 pairs of Bushnell binoculars from Ben Meadows catalog. MCCB’s Environmental Education funds provided supplemental monies to purchase all 25 binoculars.

3) Project goals – describe the project goals and how the goals were met or how the project was completed. Also include how IOU funds were used to accomplish the goals of the project.

The Iowa Ornithologists Union generously donated \$500 towards this project. The money was used to help purchase a set of 25 binoculars for environmental programming through MCCB. A set of 25 was chosen as this would be sufficient to cover the majority of classroom sizes within the county. The binoculars have been used in classrooms, on wildlife hikes, during summer camp activities, and at care facility programs. Two pairs located in our Milt R. Owen Nature Center receive the most use by visitors to view birds at our feeding station. Through this increased exposure to the bird-life of Iowa, we have seen an increase of interest in Iowa birds and bird watching, and also an increase in bird-related programming. This is a realization of our related goals of increased appreciation for local avian diversity, encouraging interest in birds and bird watching, and fostering awareness and participation in bird conservation efforts

4) Project impact – how did this project impact conservation of birds in Iowa, increase the knowledge of Iowa birds, or educate the public on Iowa birds and their habitats?

Since bird watching is an activity that all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can enjoy, having a good set of binoculars has been a universally appealing asset to have as part of the Mitchell County Conservation Board Environmental Education programming. With better access to bird watching tools, MCCB has seen an increase in interest in birds and especially bird feeding. Several groups, especially care facilities, have asked for more bird-related programming. MCCB has also recently begun restoration of an oak savanna area, for which the new set of binoculars will be essential in conducting species inventories. Bird education, study, and documentation are a critical part of this restoration process, and environmental education programming and interpretation will be conducted in the restored area. Our future goal for this project is to continually increase the number of bird education programs that utilize the binoculars, with the hopes that the more people we can expose to the beauty of birds, both in feather and song, we will generate public support and interest for habitat preservation and other conservation efforts, such as the oak savanna project.