

## Birds & Birding Lesson for Camp Ewalu's Environmental Education Program

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to create a lesson about birds for the environmental education program at Camp Ewalu. In order to encourage more participation in this lesson by schools, this lesson is based on current Iowa educational standards as well as national environmental education standards set by the North American Association for Environmental Education.

Along with the lesson plan, Ewalu needed funding for the materials necessary to run the lesson. The two main material needs were field guides and binoculars.

### **Goals**

The goals of this project were to create the Birds & Birding lesson plan and gather materials so that it could start being offered to schools in the 2016 school year. One of the goals of the Birds & Birding class is to increase the knowledge of participants regarding birds as well as be an introduction to birding as a potential life-long activity. Through participation in the lesson, students would learn the skills needed to identify birds that they see out in the field and get the chance to participate in bird science.

The grant money received by the Iowa Ornithologists' Union for this project was enough to purchase the bird field guides used by the students. The field guide chosen was the *Birds of Iowa Field Guide* by Stan Tekiela. This was chosen because of the ease of looking up birds based on their dominant colors. We decided that this book would be easier for participants that have a potentially limited background with bird identification. With these field guides as a start for class materials, we were able to get a handful of private donors from a local congregation interested in the project and raise money for 30 pairs of binoculars to be used with the lesson.

### **Impact**

The environmental education program at Camp Ewalu serves schools mainly in the northeastern Iowa area. This lesson is meant to expose more students to birds as well as get them interested in birding as a recreational opportunity. Ewalu has a diverse plot of land, consisting mostly of hardwood forests, but also a couple pine plantations and prairie areas. This creates a well-rounded place to learn about how birds interact with the different habitats.

Our lessons are taught in an experiential way, using as many practical applications as we can to reach the goals of our lessons. One way this is done during the birding class is through participation in a citizen science bird count that is simple for students to get started with when they get back home.

Now that the lesson has been written and the materials have been gathered, we are offering this class to participating schools for the 2016-2017 school year.