



www.birdcor.org

FACT SHEET

Environmental Service-Learning Projects, Clearinghouse & Nature of Learning

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BirdCOR is working with City and suburban school classes and other youth groups such as Scouts and 4H to develop environmentally themed service-learning projects. Participants in the program partner with the twenty participating organizations of BirdCOR to engage in fun and meaningful projects. Service-learning projects create a win-win situation for all involved. Our city and towns benefit from habitat improvement, students and other youth get to participate in real life conservation activities and examine future career opportunities, and the organizations benefit by receiving help on priority projects.

As our corporate symbol, birds are some of the most beautiful, observable, and remarkable wildlife that share our world. Birds are also an important economic resource, controlling insect pests and generating billions in recreational dollars. Unfortunately, research has shown that many species are in decline, facing a growing number of threats on their migratory routes and in both their summer and winter habitats. Many bird species are well known as “indicators” of the overall health of our environment.

Community Service-Learning Projects are an important part of BirdCOR’s effort to give our young people many new opportunities for worthwhile, educational, and rewarding things to do. A subset of the Projects will be driven by Rochester Flying Wild, BirdCOR’s partnership with the national Flying WILD program to certify schoolteachers and other educators using learning materials correlated to National Science Standards. Flying WILD has science as its core, but connects to language arts, social science, math, physical education, and art.

BirdCOR will feature Service-Learning Projects at its annual International Migratory Bird Day celebration in the spring. We will give certificates to individuals and groups that participate in service activities. In addition, participants in the Projects can make their own exhibits to inform the public about their service activities and learning.

WHAT CONSTITUTES AN ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT?

Service-Learning Projects can take many forms. Using the bird theme as an example, Projects may be as simple as building birdhouses and mounting them in appropriate places, or more complicated, such as a school working to improve the school grounds as habitat for birds. Projects done as part of the BirdCOR Service-Learning program in Rochester have three things in common, however:

- First, they are based on solid knowledge. If the project is to build bird boxes, participants will need to decide what kind of bird they are building the box for, find out what the size and shape of the box should be, conduct research on where the best place is to place it, and learn what kind of maintenance it will need throughout the year. Research for a schoolyard habitat project might include looking up what birds eat and where shrubs and trees to plant that would provide suitable food and cover can be found. The library, the Internet, and BirdCOR participating organizations can provide help as project participants do their research.
- Second, the students or other youth will then need to plan and complete their projects. This may require finding partners in the community such as schools and parks for habitat improvement, or the participants may need to talk to plant nurseries or lumberyards for needed supplies and materials. Then the fun begins as the youth work with their friends to complete the projects that have been researched and planned.
- Third, the participants are being asked to document their projects so that others may learn from their efforts. Participating individuals and groups should provide BirdCOR with descriptions of their projects and pictures as their projects progress. Such information will be posted on the BirdCOR website and will be on display at our public events.

TYPES OF PROJECTS

Service-Learning Projects can be almost anything that will benefit birds or other wildlife while improving the quality of human life in the Rochester area. As long as participants do their homework and ensure that their projects are well planned and beneficial, the sky's the limit. A few ideas are presented below:

<p>Be mentors to younger kids so they can learn about birds and nature.</p> <p>Create a web page and use it to spread the word about conservation.</p> <p>Hold an art show and contest that features activities to benefit wildlife and our community resources.</p> <p>Improve schoolyard or campus habitats by planting food and nesting trees and shrubs.</p> <p>Participate in bird surveys and other research projects.</p>	<p>Plant trees and shrubs in local parks or on other public lands.</p> <p>Produce education programs and displays on conservation.</p> <p>Work with BirdCOR organizations or park staff on trail construction or construction of trailside exhibits.</p> <p>Write a newsletter on an environmental topic and distribute it each month.</p> <p>Write poems or plays about birds and use them to educate your fellow students.</p>
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PROJECT CLEARINGHOUSE

BirdCOR members are being requested to identify service projects on which they could use help. Descriptions of these projects will be posted on the BirdCOR clearinghouse. Interested participants can choose from these projects and contact the organization that needs the help. Conversely, interested youth can post projects in which they would like to participate, and BirdCOR member organizations will respond with suggestions and assistance.

NATURE OF LEARNING

BirdCOR has applied to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's *The Nature of Learning* program for start-up support for the program in the Rochester area. The proposed pilot program focuses on issues of wetland conservation and invasive species control. Proposed program partners include Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, Project S.T.R.E.A.M., Finger Lakes Community College, and five school districts (one in Monroe County and four in Ontario County).

Steps in BirdCOR's proposed Nature of Learning program pilot include the following:

- Prepare site-specific curriculum guide;
- Integrate Flying WILD educator workshops with Project S.T.R.E.A.M. student engagement;
- Conduct outdoor learning experiences using Project WATERSHED reference guide;
- Conduct on-Refuge outdoor learning experiences;
- Conduct support activities and excursions;
- Implement Stewardship project on invasive species control.