

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 14, 2011

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Saint Paul and Minneapolis Join U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Urban Bird Treaty Program

Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the City of Minneapolis, in partnership with the City of Saint Paul, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Audubon Minnesota, celebrated Minneapolis and Saint Paul's implementation of the Service's Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds, also known as the Urban Bird Treaty.

Under the Urban Bird Treaty program, Minneapolis and Saint Paul will conduct habitat restoration (focusing on native plants), invasive species management, and develop educational materials to support conservation of birds that spend a portion of their lifecycle in this metropolitan area.

"Since taking office, my administration has been committed to investing in education and advancing our environmental efforts," Mayor Chris Coleman said. "This grant is a great way for us to do both. Through this program, not only will we create a haven for migrating birds, but a new way for children to learn about our environment."

"Minneapolis and Saint Paul sit at a geographic crossroads for a variety of migratory, resident and breeding birds that use the diversity of forest, marsh, grassland, and riverine habitats provided by the Mississippi River," said Tom Melius, Regional Director of the Service's Midwest Region. "The cities are a natural fit for the Urban Bird Treaty program, and the efforts put forth by the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, City of Saint Paul, and Audubon Minnesota will bring to light the importance of protecting birds in our neighborhoods, parks and backyards."

The Service will dedicate a \$70,000 Federal grant to the Urban Bird Treaty partnership, which will be used for on-the-ground, bird-friendly efforts by the partners over the next two years. Outdoor wildlife-watching activities like bird watching generate more than \$600 million in economic benefit in Minnesota per year. Birding is an outdoor activity that continues to grow in popularity and can be enjoyed by people of all ages in all geographic areas.

“Our proximity to the mighty Mississippi River is why Minneapolis is here in the first place, and it brings some important characteristics to the Minneapolis experience, such as the diversity of birds that live here and migrate through,” said Mayor R.T. Rybak. “Herons, owls, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, ospreys and songbirds are part of the character of our city -- part of our quality of life, both for people living in and visiting Minneapolis -- and they require healthy habitats to survive.”

“The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is dedicated to creating, preserving and protecting our natural areas and wildlife as well as educating residents and visitors about the natural environment that makes Minneapolis beautiful and unique,” said John Erwin, President of the Minneapolis Board of Park and Recreation. “The Park Board’s involvement in the Urban Bird Treaty offers us a chance to highlight the diverse migratory birds that are such a treasure to our city.”

Minneapolis and Saint Paul are seated within an important stopover area along the Mississippi Flyway, a route that supports millions of migrating ducks, shorebirds, waterbirds, and hundreds of species of songbirds during spring and fall migrations.

“Minneapolis – Saint Paul and its varied habitats of woods, waters, wetlands and prairies, supports over 300 species of birds – an outstanding number for an urban area,” said Mark Peterson, Executive Director of Audubon Minnesota. “The Urban Bird Treaty recognizes this outstanding wildlife diversity surrounding us, and the efforts of the residents of the Twin Cities to protect and improve it. It speaks to the quality of life we enjoy here,” he added.

The cities offer habitat for many birds that use both upland and bottomland forests, including hawks, owls, woodpeckers, flycatchers, and warblers. Birds associated with residential habitats include mourning doves, screech owls, chimney swifts, downy woodpeckers, purple martins, cardinals and chickadees. Wetland communities around the cities offer habitat for ducks, herons, egrets, bitterns, and shorebirds.

For more information about Minneapolis and Saint Paul’s efforts for the conservation of urban birds, visit: <http://www.fws.gov/Midwest/midwestbird/ubtmstp>

The Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds (Urban Bird Treaty) program was created to help municipal governments conserve birds that live and nest in or overwinter or migrate through their cities. Launched in 1999, the first treaty was signed with New Orleans. The treaties are a partnership agreement between a U.S. city and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) to conserve migratory birds through education, habitat improvement and bird conservation actions. Typically, many other partners are involved with Urban Bird Treaty activities and projects at a local level.

The City of Minneapolis embraces sustainability to support the city’s quality of life now and in the future. Minneapolis continues developing new, relevant sustainability indicators, data and policies to help systematically make Minneapolis a cleaner, healthier, more efficient city. In 2010, Minneapolis was recognized for water quality innovations, as the cleanest city in America, as the sixth best eco-city in the world, as America’s best bike city, as seventh least wasteful city in the nation and among the top 10 green cities. For information on Minneapolis’ sustainability initiatives, visit <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability>

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is dedicated to permanently preserving, protecting, maintaining, improving and enhancing its natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations. Created in 1883, the park system serves more

than 15 million visitors annually with its 6,000 acres of land and water and recreational amenities. For more information on the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, visit <http://www.minneapoilsparks.org>

The City of Saint Paul, the capital city of Minnesota, is a vibrant, diverse, and progressive city in the Greater Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan region. Saint Paul constantly strives to be the most livable city in America, intertwining its urban downtown with the city's natural beauty provided by its place along the Mississippi River. For more information please visit the city website: www.stpaul.gov.

Audubon Minnesota is the state office of the National Audubon Society. For over 30 years, Audubon Minnesota has been in the forefront of the critical conservation issues facing Minnesota by employing science-based conservation, advocacy and education "to conserve and restore natural ecosystems in Minnesota, focusing on birds and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity." Today there are 11,400 Audubon members in Minnesota, organized into 12 chapters across the state.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>

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