

NEW BIRD CITY NETWORK TAKES FLIGHT
BIRD CITY PROGRAMS MAKE CITIES HEALTHY FOR BIRDS AND PEOPLE
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(Bird City, US - May 14, 2022) Today, American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and Environment for the Americas (EFTA) launched Bird City Americas, a new network to help local bird conservation leaders bring people together to benefit birds and their communities. This transformative network is the result of years of collaboration between individuals and organizations working to improve urban habitats, reduce threats to birds, and engage people in bird conservation action locally by certifying Bird City communities. A new web-based platform supports the network of Bird City programs, addressing the need to share knowledge, access resources about problems facing birds, and create and manage bird-friendly action plans and Bird City applications online. Becoming a Bird City not only helps birds but also offers myriad community benefits through improved climate resiliency, economic opportunities, human health, biodiversity, and the valuable services birds and other species provide to humans. This new network magnifies those benefits by making Bird City accessible to more communities.

Working together with multiple partners, Bird City Americas now provides a web-based platform to give Bird City Programs an intuitive space to meet, operate, collaborate, and share resources. Additionally, this website provides user-friendly tools and resources for municipalities interested in becoming a new Bird City. Interested cities can review requirements and “lessons learned” from existing Bird City communities, and submit applications online, in different languages. Once accepted, each Bird City community has a dedicated web page showcasing their actions. The platform benefits local conservation leaders by saving them time and resources in developing and maintaining their Bird City program. It also provides an ideasharing network and fosters a sense of community across Bird City teams.

“Can you imagine living in a city without the songs and chirps and flutters of birds? Not enough cities are focused on creating better habitats for both birds and people - they don’t know where to start or how to help,” said Mayor Julie Wing, Chair of US Conference of Mayors. “Bird City Americas is their guide. This network helps cities create conservation and engagement-focused action plans while also building a network of like-minded people working together today to create a chirpier tomorrow.”

Users register and are able to create a community profile and start their application or manage progress towards the goals of an existing program. Using the content library, users can access templates, marketing materials, and social media content. If users need help or want to collaborate with peers, they can use the chat room feature to share and receive information.

“When I first started as the Chair of Buffalo’s Bird City Committee, I wasn’t sure how to build a team or an action plan. With Bird City Americas, new advocates can access all of the information they need and reach out to peers like me for help,” said Bob Bill, Chair of the Buffalo Bird City Committee. “Bird City Americas has a content library that makes it easy to find social media templates for organizing and a chat room to stay connected with the global bird community.”

For more information, please visit <https://abcbirds.org/birds/bird-city-americas/>
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

About the SOLUTION What is Bird City?

- Bird City is a designation communities can achieve by taking specific bird-friendly actions. It is both an education and a recognition program. Communities come together to learn about the needs of birds and select specific locally appropriate bird-friendly actions to complete from a list of examples. By reviewing requirements, communities create an action plan to fulfill recognition requirements and visualize future actions. Once an initial set of actions is completed, the community can apply for designation as a Bird City. Thereafter, actions are added or enhanced annually for continued recognition.

What is Bird City Americas?

- Bird City Americas is a network connecting Bird City programs across the hemisphere and providing systems and solutions to handle program administration and facilitate resource sharing and networking.

What are we building and why?

- We are building a web-based platform for the network of Bird City programs that they can use to manage their programs, administer community applications, access resources, communicate and generally improve their ability to engage, educate, and mentor municipal leaders to act locally to conserve birds while creating beautiful, biodiverse, healthy Bird City communities.

Who are the stakeholders of Bird City Americas?

Key stakeholders include city staff focused on sustainability, land management, buildings, grounds, parks; non-profit education and advocacy groups like the National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation; interested residents and businesspeople; and government agencies like Departments of Natural Resources (and comparable) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

How does it work?

- A community interested in becoming a Bird City connects with Bird City program leaders in their area. On the site, they can view program requirements and learn about the application process through videos, FAQs, and online or downloadable guidance materials. They identify and complete locally appropriate bird-friendly actions from a list of examples, learning about problems facing birds and potential solutions. Once a certain number of actions are completed, they are ready to apply. They create a login for their team, fill out their application and community information online, revisiting as needed until complete. Program Leaders review their submission and communicate within the application to accept actions, ask for clarification, or otherwise finalize and (hopefully) accept the submission. Once accepted, the community's webpage is created from the information contained in the application. The community is then in the network and connected to other programs, communities and continued learning opportunities.

Who will own and maintain the solution?

- American Bird Conservancy and Environment for the Americas will own and maintain the [website] overall. State or regional Bird City program leaders will manage their program web pages within the site, updating and customizing information and requirements, managing applications and renewals for their communities, and assisting their community leaders with questions, content for their pages.

Who can use it?

- Different user levels will be defined for 1) Program leaders who review, comment on, and approve applications (by individual action) and 2) Community teams who maintain their community profile, complete application and renewal requirements by documenting the actions they have taken to meet Bird City requirements, mark future actions of interest, and pay fees 3) Site visitors can view program information, maps, statistics, program, and community pages from any location within the network.

Can we see a map of all our communities? All communities total?

- Users will be able to view a map showing all Bird City Programs (state or regional program boundaries) and Bird City communities as they zoom in or select the Program. Selecting the Program on the map will take users to the Program website (e.g. Bird City Wisconsin) where all participating community websites will also be accessible by zooming in. Overall stats (number of program areas - states / regions - and number of communities within each) will be displayed on a dashboard appropriate to the zoom level (overall on the overall map, state or regional stats on the Program level map). Basic information about interest inquiries can also be viewed (date, location) to help build interest in underrepresented states or regions.

What is the intended geographic area for the site?

- Currently the geographic target area for the Bird City Americas network includes North America (Canada, USA, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean) and South America.

Can I view the application from any Bird City?

- Only authorized users (the applicant and reviewers) can view an application in progress. Once the application is accepted, its contents will be used to populate the community webpage and will be publicly viewable in that format.

Will each Bird City program have its own website?

- Yes, each state or regional Bird City program will have its own website within the Bird City Americas site. Each will have a similar layout and format with customized content created and updated by the program team. Examples of customizations include images, news feed, calendar, blog, social media links, etc. A variety of options will be available for use as desired.

Will each Bird City community have its own webpage?

- Yes, each community designated as a Bird City will have a web page featuring the narrative description of their actions and any images or other media they supply. In addition, applicants will supply information such as 1) community history and facts, 2) community location within the state/region, 3) contact info for the Bird City committee, 4) community bird/logo information, 5) tourism opportunities. The site will have the capability of connecting to a community event calendar. Community web pages will go live or be updated once the application or updates are accepted by program managers.

Is there a news feed with bird relevant topics like sightings, migrations, policy changes?

- Regionally specific content such as bird sightings or local events may be created by teams at the program and community level. Other content such as broadly relevant policy changes, research, or news may be shared or created for the whole network as applicable.

About the PROGRAM

How does being a Bird City benefit my city?

- Birds are awesome! Bird City communities help birds by improving habitat, reducing threats and engaging people in birding and conservation. Helping birds makes communities more beautiful

(through the creation of habitat and the birds it attracts), more biodiverse (habitat increases diversity directly and attracts other species), healthier (more nature = better physical and mental health), more resilient (natural habitats increase cooling and buffer storm events), and provides economic savings (through all the free services birds perform) and opportunities (through the multi-billion-dollar birding tourism industry).

How many possible actions are there?

- Bird City programs, regardless of the location, are aimed at addressing the greatest threats to birds. All actions are grouped in the same categories - 1) improving habitat, 2) reducing threats, 3) engaging people and 4) promoting sustainability. Within the category's actions are grouped into best practices, each with a variety of example actions customized by the program team to best reflect the habitats and conservation issues being addressed locally. Because of this initial and on-going customization, the number of possible actions varies with each independent state or regional program. There may be 60 - 100 example actions within the 4 categories.

How many do we have to complete?

- The number of actions required for recognition as a Bird City also varies slightly between programs. In some programs it is possible to achieve a higher level of recognition for completing more and sometimes specific actions. Generally, of the 60-100 example actions there may be 10-15 actions required for designation. Program requirements lay out how many actions are required within each category.

Is there a complete list of plan actions I can select from?

- Yes! Each program has a downloadable version of their example actions and how many are required for designation.

Can I add new actions?

- If your community is working on a meaningful action to help birds that is absent or varies significantly from the example actions provided by your local program, by all means either be in touch with your program leaders for guidance or submit your action under "other" and they will review and consider where the action should live and if it might be included as an example action for others within the action list.

Do I have to create and submit a bird action plan, or can my committee just complete actions?

- Example actions have been created by local program leaders and create the basis for any community's action plan. Communities review actions and requirements to determine their plan for earning recognition. Similarly, as they determine their initial actions, they can also identify actions of interest for future expansion and growth. That combination of immediate and future actions constitutes the action plan. It does not have to be written, submitted, or approved. It all lives within the platform as completed actions or (non-binding) goal actions. Communities can review at any time to inform municipal planning.

Does this program connect/reference other city sustainability programs, like Bee City and Tree City USA?

- Many programs give credit for recognition in a compatible or synergistic program such as Bee City, Tree City, or for specific actions from such programs. These multiple recognition opportunities are detailed within each program's action list and vary by state or region. In some cases, specific compatible actions from other programs are linked and communities can receive credit for specific actions completed for another program (e.g. Bird City Minnesota references specific Minnesota GreenStep Cities actions and allows dual recognition).

Is there an award/logo/plaque provided to the cities/communities who participate/qualify? - Bird City Programs vary in the recognition materials they provide to communities. Besides the prominent web presence created for each Bird City community on the network website, recognition materials provided are laid out on each Program's website.

Is there annual recognition of Bird City actions?

- Typically, Bird City communities are recognized for their initial certification and on an ongoing basis thereafter. How different state / regional Bird City programs recognize communities will vary - some may include annual recognition of some kind, others may vary in their schedule and approach to community recognition.

How do we get help better understanding problems facing birds and where to start on solutions?

- The Bird City Program requirements are designed to be the first step in understanding both the problems facing birds and some actionable solutions within the sphere of influence of a city and its partners and community members. Actions are written to provide a range of choice from first steps, such as providing information about the problem, through more advanced and in-depth approaches such as addressing a problem by creating ordinances, guidelines or regulation(s) of some kind.

Can any community apply?

- Any community within the jurisdiction of a Bird City Program can apply for recognition as a Bird City community. Programs operate at the state or regional level and support the communities in their region. Existing Bird City Programs are indicated in [some color] on the map [link].

What if there is no Bird City Program in my state or region?

- The network of Bird City Programs is growing but programs do not exist yet in every state or region. If your area is not represented, you can indicate your interest through a simple form. That interest puts a dot on the map and helps inform potential leaders. With enough groundswell, a program may result. Meanwhile, you can still work to make your community more bird-friendly by working towards any of these example actions [link to page or doc]. When a program comes online in your area you'll be on your way to applying!

How do I apply?

- To apply for recognition as a Bird City you'll first make sure you've completed the required number of actions for recognition by your state or regional program. Next, you'll create a Login for your team. Your login will be used to complete and manage applications, pay fees (directly to the state/regional program, not to ABC), and enter community information. Changes are automatically saved and tracked and your progress in completing your application is indicated. Missing information is flagged. Once all required information is entered, you may submit your application. Once submitted, your application will be reviewed by program leaders who will communicate with you through the application portal. You will receive an email message when additional action is required or the status of your application changes.

Can I find the point of contact information / someone meet with me/talk on the phone?

- Each state or regional program will lay out their process for connecting on their Contact Us page. All have differing abilities to respond in real time to your inquiry. Contact Network coordinators through the form on the home page.

Can someone give a presentation for my community/attend an event?

- Maybe! We have a variety of ways to get the word out about Bird City. Options include 1) a pre-recorded presentation introducing the program, requirements and benefits, 2) a PowerPoint

presentation with a script available for your use and 3) a variety of recorded presentations on specific subject matters. We also coordinate and publicize regular speaker opportunities through the network, maintain a speaker's bureau list and respond to specific speaker requests.

How can I make changes to my community webpage?

- Bird City Committees in each community can add/edit content. Some changes might require approval from Bird City leadership before they go live on a community's page.

Is there a cost to using this tool?

- No, American Bird Conservancy and Environment for the Americas have made the Bird City Americas platform available for free to all organizations running state or regional Bird City programs in a way consistent with the platform. Communities themselves gain access to the site by applying for Bird City status, which includes an application fee. Can I pay my application fee/renewal fee/make a donation online? Can I get an invoice and/or a receipt for all of those?

- Yes! Application and renewal fees (and donations) can be paid online and receipts are automatically generated. Invoices are available by special request.

If I have additional criteria to include in my renewal will I be able to just add those to the previously submitted application?

- Yes - you can submit all new actions during the renewal process.

How long does my Bird City 'membership' last? What's involved in/how do I renew?

- Bird City is intended to be an on-going continuous improvement program. After initial designation, some form of renewal is required to maintain your Bird City status. Renewal periods and procedures vary depending on your state or regional program requirements. Typically, if your community does not renew, it will no longer be considered a Bird City and its page on the website will be taken down. The community's login and password will continue to work and all of your information will still be saved so that you can log in and resubmit your application when your community is ready to return to being an active Bird City.

CAPABILITIES

Does my World Migratory Bird Day event information get shared directly onto the Environment for the Americas (EFTA) website or do I have to reenter everything there as well?

- All Bird City communities are required to hold an annual birding celebration for World Migratory Bird Day. This event can be held on the date of their choice and at the level that best matches their community and team. Event details are entered as part of the Bird City application and are automatically populated on the EFTA World Migratory Bird Day event map.

Are there tools available to help us predict the impact of certain actions? Example - a certain ordinance or addition of a certain amount or type of habitat?

- Not yet, but this is something we are working on and thinking about. Stay tuned.

What metrics will the site use, how will the data be entered and viewed?

- We will track a variety of metrics to help illustrate the impact of combined actions. Metrics may include number of programs, states, countries, municipalities, number of residents impacted, how many actions have been completed overall. We will also have the ability to track specific actions such as how many demonstration gardens have been created and how many ordinances have been passed. The data will be entered by users in the process of completing Bird City applications. Actions within the system will be tagged behind the scenes for compilation in real time on a dashboard on the main homepage and also on the homepage of each program. In addition, metrics

may be pulled out as a focus for discussion or for goal setting or for the creation of products such as an infographic for illustrating impact.

What languages are available for me to use?

- The tool will initially be available in English and Spanish with plans to add French and Portuguese in future iterations.

Can the site have a bird of the day picture submitted by users and who will manage that?

- This is a fun idea that could potentially be added if the network wants it and we have capacity to manage keeping it up.

How do I see all the available user content, including templates, marketing materials and forms?

TRAINING/HELP

Training - what resources will be available to help train users and answer questions?

- Video tutorials, step by step instructions and embedded instructions are available within the platform to assist users in navigating options and tools. Periodic tips and updates will be communicated through [the collaboration tool] and stored in the resource library. As needed, there will be webinars available on topics of interest including administration.

ENGAGEMENT/OUTREACH/COLLABORATION

How can the tool help me tell my cities story and increase visibility and adoption - how does it help me market our efforts?

- Each designated Bird City community will have a dedicated web page populated by the narratives created by the city team in their application. In addition, cities can work with their Bird City Program team to further highlight actions in other ways - for example in videos, spotlights, media posts or case studies.

CONTENT/DOCUMENT LIBRARY

What templates and content will the solution have and who will maintain it?

- The content library will be a key resource which is constantly changing and being updated. Maintaining the library and responding to needs will likely fall to a committee within the network.

I found an injured bird - what should I do with it?

- The Network website contains information about what to do if you find an injured bird.
- Each Program page provides information on how to find help near you and specific community pages may include information about local rehabilitation facilities or services if they exist.

If I need materials that don't exist, how do I make suggestions?

- In the document library click on the link for "Can't find what you need?" and detail your request. The needs and skills of the network will help us to prioritize what materials to track down, modify or create and who will head up those efforts.

Are there experts or advisors available to help?

- We hope to develop a list of experts or advisors to help with specific subjects. Stay tuned!