



Bird City Wisconsin Newsletter

July 2023

Bird City Wisconsin is joining the Bird City Network!

By **CHARLES HAGNER**
Bird City Wisconsin Director

We're happy to announce that Bird City Wisconsin is joining with Bird City programs in eight other states and in Colombia and Mexico in the Bird City Network, launched by the American Bird Conservancy and Environment for the Americas. Our new online home will soon be at <https://birdcity.org>

Just as birds' annual movements carry them across borders, the new site will allow you to meet, network, and collaborate with program leaders across the continent. We're excited to see what comes of the cross-border socializing and information sharing the site makes possible -- for the birds' sake primarily, but for your sake and ours, too.

We hope you agree that the new site is better looking and easier to use than our present site. We're especially excited that the Bird City Network site will allow program leaders to extend editing privileges to other team members, so the responsibility for updating a community's pages will no longer have to be shouldered by a single hard-working soul.

On the new site, you can form a team, share access privileges, and divvy up the work. Another benefit: You will be able to set and reset your own passwords.



We think you'll also like the new "**About**", "**Tourism**", and "**Events**" sections that you will be able to create and update for your community. Use them to put your hometown on the map -- literally! Promote upcoming events that make your community bird-friendly and fun for tourists, and tell the world about the birding hotspots, inns, restaurants, and other features that make your Bird City a great tourism destination.

As you might imagine, attempting to manage Bird City programs from many different states and countries on a single website with a single operating system nec-

essarily required a few tweaks to be made to certain programs, ours included.

The most significant change you'll notice concerns the number of Bird City Wisconsin's categories. Instead of six, on the new site you will find only four: "**Habitat**," "**Threats to Birds**," "**Education and Engagement**," and "**Sustainability**."

But no actions were done away with. The pair of actions formerly listed under "**World Migratory Bird Day**" (Cat. 6), for example, are moving to "**Education and Engagement**," while those formerly under "**Community Forest Management**" (Cat. 2) will now be found under "**Habitat**." We'll send details about other tweaks later this summer.

Rest assured, the adjustments won't require you to do any extra work. We will migrate all your previous application material to the new system for you, including matching past criteria to the updated action list.

In the meantime, a request: Now more than ever, it's essential that we have up-to-date contact information for you and your team members. Please send this to us at director@birdcitywisconsin.org. Next year's renewal process will take place on the new site, and we want you to be ready!

What does it take to become a Bird City?

Launch of the Bird City Network holds the promise of expanding upon the more than 200 communities in three countries that are working to become healthier for birds and people. Existing communities will act as excellent mentors in the growing network of bird conservation-oriented communities across the Western Hemisphere.

To answer the question, "What does it take to become a Bird City?", **KRISTEN VALE** has shared her experience in helping Galveston, Tex., become a Bird City. Kristen is ABC's Texas Coast program director. In 2018, she was asked to join a task force in Galveston to help encourage birding tourism there. They learned about the Bird City Texas program and by February 2021 Galveston was certified as a Bird City.

The designation not only raised Galveston's profile as a birding destination, but also facilitated conservation efforts to protect **PIPING PLOVERS** and **LEAST TERNS**. The Bird City program shows that conservation work can begin in our backyards and expand to neighborhoods, parks and beaches.

To celebrate the launch of the Bird City Network, which pools resources and information from communities like Galveston, Kristen was interviewed about the benefits of being a Bird City and how

other communities can apply:

Where did the idea to make Galveston a Bird City come from?

Kristen: I was part of a task force in Galveston that was put together by the Galveston Convention and Visitors Bureau. The task force was put together because they wanted to promote more birding across Galveston.

We happened to learn about this Bird City Texas program and thought that it would be a good opportunity to increase awareness around the community and also to help with the tourism aspect of our mission. It all started as a way to increase tourism, but then, once you actually go through the application, you have these pretty strict criteria you have to follow. The whole point of the program is to try to help protect the birds around your community.

What was your role?

K: I was part of the team that filled out the application. I helped with the application and filled out the criteria. I was one of the key people who applied and helped with the application process.

Please turn the page



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Check out our website at birdcitywisconsin.org

HOW CAN I HELP?

Bird City is seeking to bolster its small-grant donations. Tax deductible donations can be made online at: <https://birdcitywisconsin.org/support-us> or by mail to BCW, 4230 N. Oakland Ave., #219, Shorewood, WI 53211

WHERE CAN I SEND NEWS ABOUT MY BIRD CITY?

Send pictures, stories and other information to director@birdcitywisconsin.org

WHAT ARE THE APPLICATION AND RENEWAL DATES?

New applications can be submitted at any time but are reviewed the first of March, July and November. Annual renewals are due on January 31.

WHAT ACTIONS DOES BCW ENCOURAGE?

1. Habitat creation, protection and monitoring
2. Community forest management
3. Limiting or removing threats to birds
4. Public education
5. Energy and sustainability
6. Celebration of World Migratory Bird Day



Photo by Yvette Stewart/Audubon Texas
Organizers of Bird City Texas (Audubon Texas and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department) pose this spring with partners of the certified Bird City community of Galveston.

Bird City designation puts a stamp of approval on conservation work

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What was the application process like?

K: You have to meet 26 criteria, and there are nine that you have to meet no matter what. For instance, you have to create a World Migratory Bird Day celebration and promote American Bird Conservancy Cats Indoors program through education and outreach.

The criteria are divided into categories: community engagement, habitat enhancement and protection, and creating safer spaces for birds. We do the Christmas Bird Count every year in Galveston, so that was an easy criteria to fulfill in the community engagement category.

For the “creating safer spaces for birds” category, one criteria is participating in the national Lights Out program, and we achieved this by working with the City of Galveston to create a proclamation stating certain nights in the spring and fall as “lights out” nights.

Fortunately, we had a lot of organizations, like Artist Boat and Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council, already doing a lot of work, so we were able to use a lot of pre-existing efforts to meet the criteria. Some of ABC’s efforts protecting beach-nesting birds fit a criteria related to protecting nesting areas.

Still, it took a while to put all the pieces together for the application to make sure that we fit all the criteria and that we could commit to it, because you have to submit a report each year detailing how you accomplished the work.

Did the process of applying to be a Bird City lead to more conservation work on top of what you were already doing?

K: We really worked on going above and beyond for the category of trying to increase awareness across the community. We printed out a bird flier and put it into 20,000 residents’ mailboxes through their monthly water bill. The city lets organizations promote things in the monthly water bills, and I helped create this flier that went out in the February 2021 water bill as a preparation for spring migration.

It listed things that you can do in preparation for the birds that are about to arrive in Galves-

ton, like plant natives, turn out lights, and keep your cats indoors. All of these are criteria for the Bird City Texas application.

How does it feel to officially be a Bird City?

K: We feel very proud — we’re so proud of this designation, and we promote it left and right. Our partner, the Galveston Nature Tourism Council, is using this as an opportunity to create more projects. We’re doing even more than what we said we would do. We want to share this with the masses, so we’re creating new opportunities to help spread the word.

What would you tell someone who would like to make their community a Bird City?

K: Form a committee early on and start those conversations early to see if at first glance you can meet the criteria. Having that team to help reach out to people and work on the application is really helpful.

What are the benefits of being a Bird City?

K: One of the main reasons why Galveston and other communities across Texas or the nation go through this process is to bring more awareness to the threats these birds are facing (including window collisions, outdoor cats, plastics, and pesticides) and enact some actions to reduce future threats. We’re trying to connect people with the nature around them and help them understand why it’s important. Since becoming a Bird City, Galveston has gained more awareness about birds in the community and ways people can help.

For instance, there is now a tab on the city’s website for Bird City, and we’re slowly adding educational materials onto their website for residents, like a list of native plants recommended for the region. We wouldn’t be able to do this if we weren’t designated — it puts a stamp of approval on efforts that says this is a worthy cause and something to be proud of.

In Galveston, we also took this opportunity to not just maintain the criteria but to spur other ideas and projects. We are seeing this positive change and awareness throughout Galveston since becoming a Bird City Texas community. It’s a great program, and we have a good team of people, so it’s fun to be a part of.