

2017 MOU Savaloja Grant: Final Report

Eagle Bluff ELC, Lanesboro MN

Synopsis

Thanks to the Savaloja Grant through MOU, Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center was able to expand our birding opportunities. Specifically, we were able to purchase the supplies to offer a second, 'Birds' class which is designed to increase the public's interest in birds and their understanding of how human actions have an impact on bird populations. Previous to this grant, we had the equipment to offer one, 3-hour birding class at a time to our user groups. We can now offer a second, 3-hour birding class.

Our most popular visitors are students attending programming with their school as part of a residential program in which they stay on-site for an immersive experience lasting three to five days. Teachers choose classes designed to meet academic standards and complement classroom curriculum. Most of these students are in fifth through eighth grade which is the optimum age to affect lifelong attitudes.

As part of the 3-hour 'Birds' class, students are:

1. Able to list several characteristics of birds that make them unique to their own taxonomic Class called *Aves*.
2. Use careful observations to identify local birds and be able to name several species observed during class.
3. Observe birds residing and interacting in their habitats.
4. Understand why observing birds is an important way of learning about local species and how human actions have an impact on these populations.

More often than not, Eagle Bluff hosts multiple schools/groups at the same time which causes competition for certain classes. With a second 'Birds' class, we are able to "double up" and offer 2 classes at the same time providing additional opportunities for more people to learn how easy and fun observing birds is.

Budget Report & Description of Expenses

With the \$2,460 awarded to us, we were able to purchase 27 pairs of new Eagle Optic Binoculars, which is by far the most expensive equipment needed for the class. Eagle Bluff was able to pay for the additional equipment needed for a second class.



Total Grant award: \$ 2,460

Expenses:

- \$ 2,429.76 Eagle Optics Shrike 8x42 Binoculars (27 @ 89.99 per item)
- \$ 30.24 Went towards the cost of 4 "Birds" posters for the classroom portion of class

Additional Information

In order to get the word out about the additional 'Birds' class, we sent an e-mail out to all the lead teachers informing them of the new opportunity:

Birds Class times 2: Thanks to a grant from the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, we will be able to offer a second "Birds" class. This class visits feeders for a close-up view of songbird species, explores the woods for a glimpse of canopy dwellers, sits quietly as wild chickadees approach, and enjoys a view of soaring eagles, hawks, or vultures high above the Root River valley.

In September of 2017 we began offering the doubled up class and, since then, 15 'Birds' classes have been taught; that's roughly 300 youth and adults participants. We anticipate offering 'Birds' class many more times throughout the year, especially during winter which is a wonderful time for beginner birders to have success observing birds at feeders and in the bare trees.

We received several comments from teachers regarding 'Birds' class this fall:

Faithful Shepard (8th Grade): "Birds was new for them and they thought it went really well. Likes that it challenges kids to be calm and observant. Had good luck seeing stuff and learning about differences between birds."

Randolph Heights (5th Grade): "We were impressed with the overall setup of the class and progression. The materials and instruction for Birds class was impressive."



Project Challenges

The one hiccup we ran into during this project was in regards to the promotional video we wanted to create for our website. The intention was to create a 2-3 minute video to showcase the 'Birds' class and encourage more teachers to request the class. Unfortunately, the laptop computer, which had the video footage we were going to use, was stolen from a staff member's vehicle. It is our hope to create this video in the future.