



## **Program Goal**

Bird City Texas recognizes and encourages effective and impactful native bird conservation where people live, work, and recreate. Science-based bird conservation initiatives and community-centric action will enhance and restore habitats, reduce population-level threats, increase public awareness of the benefits and challenges of bird conservation, and promote environmental stewardship in Texas cities. Where birds thrive, people prosper. From urban centers to rural towns, each community can provide important habitat for birds. In turn, birds offer us a richer, more beautiful, and healthful place to live.

## **Program Sponsors**

Bird City Texas is jointly sponsored and managed by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Audubon Texas. Program sponsors have final authority over Program rules, guidelines, report requirements, and certification decisions. Program sponsors will have the flexibility to invite partners and volunteers to assist with application reviews and program guidelines in an advisory capacity.

## **Program Rigor**

Program sponsors feel strongly that Bird City status is awarded only to applicants that demonstrate a significant level of investment in native bird conservation that benefits communities, birds, and the habitats on which they depend. Applicants that demonstrate minimal compliance with criteria or propose investments that do not match the resources of their communities will be asked to re-apply.

Certification will be based on an intense level of expectations and commitments. Only communities that provide documentation and supporting materials that clearly show they have exceeded minimum standards will be certified.

Certification will be based on the strength of anticipated conservation impact, diversity of individuals or organizations engaged, and overall quality of submissions. Program sponsors will evaluate accomplishments and commitments and reserve the right to limit the number of certifications based on program resources.

Successful applications will include:

- Measurable and meaningful actions that meet criteria and fully engage in the mission of Bird City Texas.
- Accurate listing of work already completed and proposed commitments that describes activities, outcomes, and a short summary of process.



- Clear demonstration of timelines, evaluative metrics, and processes by which activity success will be demonstrated by the applicants.
- Upon certification, a commitment to participate in statewide Bird City Program promotion and certification review process (e.g. post-evaluation surveys, interviews, promotional events, etc.)

Applications that do not meet base expectations will not move forward to the review committee.

## **Program Structure**

Bird City status is awarded to communities based on activities that a community has already completed, and what a community proposes to do in the future. We offer 2 levels of certification: Basic and High Flyer. High Flyer status is a distinguished recognition level intended to credit those communities that have committed to making bird conservation a top priority throughout all levels of the community.

The definition of “community” will be defined by the applicant. Boundaries must be able to be physically delineated on a map and will typically follow municipal boundaries. A “community” may include more than one municipality. Because many wildlife management practices require the ability to influence land management and pass and enforce regulatory mechanisms, applicants will typically be local governments. Neighborhoods and non-regulatory HOAs will generally not be able to meet program requirements. However, activities that contribute to Bird City certification may be coordinated or conducted by people and organizations outside of the applicant’s organizational structure. In fact, Bird City Texas strongly encourages applicants to develop partnerships within their community, wherein citizens, organizational partners, and governing bodies work together to improve bird conservation activities. The applicant is not required to be involved in every activity or commitment listed in the application. In this manner, applicants can leverage the full potential of their community.

Bird City Texas Certification will be conferred for a 3 year period, after which communities may seek recertification. Communities will be required to submit an annual progress report each year to verify that program intensity is met each year. Communities will be asked to submit annual reports and a recertification application near the end of their 3 year certification period.

Criteria are purposefully broadly written to give flexibility to communities of different sizes to implement programs appropriate for their community. The review committee will be given the latitude to judge whether a community’s accomplishments match the level of intensity expected, given the physical size, human population, and potential resources of the applying community. Communities will be expected to meet their commitments, develop evaluative metrics, and provide substantial supporting documentation that demonstrates how the community excels at meeting each criteria. The application should clearly explain how communities have evaluated,



developed and utilized strong metrics for evaluating the success of their programs, and revised their activities based on their evaluations (as appropriate).

Communities are asked to provide evaluative metrics for each activity they conduct related to their Bird City application and certification. Communities are encouraged to self-identify those metrics. Criteria marked with \*\* are special reporting categories. For these activities, evaluative metrics must include one or more of the following: number of acres affected, number of people engaged, number of native plants sold, and/or put in/taken out of the ground (when appropriate). Criteria designated with this symbol (†) will qualify even if this activity was not accomplished within the confines of the year of action (ex. 3 years ago).

Bird City status may be revoked by Program sponsors for failure to accomplish required actions, failure to maintain minimum levels of activity within a certification period, failure to submit annual reports, or for major actions or policy changes that negatively and severely impact birds or bird habitat.