

Saint Paul Audubon Society Grant Applicant Guidelines

People or organizations requesting funding must complete the brief grant application.

Priority is given to projects or activities that work on SPAS's priority focus areas (Education, Conservation, Policy/Advocacy)

Priority is given to projects or activities within SPAS's geographic area (Ramsey and Washington Counties)

The Board will review applications at the March and September Board meetings. Applications must be received by February 15 and October 1. Email this document to: general@saintpaulaudubon.org. In a genuine emergency, appeals outside the application window may be considered.

The Committee or Board may approve total funding, partial funding, decline, defer, or request more information on an application.

Grant recipients are requested to provide a short article about the project (with pictures if possible) for Chapter publications and be available for a 5-minute presentation at a member meeting.

Saint Paul Audubon Society Grant Application

Please complete all fields. Use N/A if not applicable.

Organization: MYBirdClub 501c3

Tax ID#: 93-4602539

Fiscal Agent (optional): **Tax ID# (optional):**

The person making the request: Amy Simso Dean

Email: asimsodean@gmail.com

Phone: 612-508-8582

Project name: MYBirdClub - FREE Youth & Family Inclusive Bird Walks

Amount requested:

Project #1 - \$2000 guided youth and family birdwatching and other bird-related adventures

Project #2 – \$1500 Partnership with Frogtown green to provide bird-focused activities for Froglab afterschool program

Date of request: August 28, 2024 **Date funds needed:** 3/1/2025

A brief overview of the organization, including its mission statement (links to information are acceptable):

MYBirdClub provides guided, youth birdwatching that connects youth of all abilities (and their grownups) to birds and nature. We have found that once you connect with kids you draw in their adults as active participants. MYBirdClub is devoted to creating a safe space where all kids can build peer friendships and explore their interest in birds and nature.

Since 2014, MYBirdClub has established a proven record of creating a fun, club environment while teaching kids and adults about birds, their habitats, natural history and conservation. Through this, we hope to inspire the next generation of birders, conservationists, and environmentalists.

We also provide adult field trips upon request.

You can [meet our Board](#)

Our leaders

Amy Simso Dean – Executive Director and guide. Amy has been birding for over 25 years. She founded MYBirdClub and cofounded The Kestrels, an inclusive bird club for MN women. Starting in 2010 she volunteered in the education department at The Raptor Center and was trained on environmental education best practices. She is also an experience educator with The Loft Literary Center. She currently works there part time. Amy served as vice chair of Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis and still volunteers with them. She is a member of MOU, Audubon, American Bird Conservancy, Friend of Sax Zim Bog

among other local birding and conservation organizations. As much as she loves birding, what she really loves is getting people excited about birds and conservation.

Julie Brophy - Co-founder and guide. Julie has engaged thousands of students, families, and teachers in learning about the seasonal migration of birds and other wildlife through her work at Journey North, a K–12online education program. She has been a co-leader of bird and nature walks at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum for 10+ years, and a co-leader of MYBirdClub programs since 2014. As a local birder, MOU member, and Naturalist herself, Julie is passionate about nurturing curiosity and stewardship in the natural world.

Lisa Keitel - Co-leader and guide. Lisa is a lifelong birder, Minnesota Master Naturalist and volunteer with the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis and Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. She has experience as a naturalist teaching 5th and 6th grade students. She created a bird club for Gilda’s Club Twin Cities, offering birding as an ongoing activity for cancer patients and survivors to aid in their recovery. Lisa also created a bird club for Minnesota Independence College and Community in Richfield (a life skills and vocational education program for young adults on the autism spectrum and with learning differences).

Maximillian Borge - Guide. Since traveling to Costa Rica in high school to assist with Sea Turtle conservation, Max has been fascinated with the outdoors and the flora/ fauna that we share it with. Since graduating with a degree in Environmental Studies Max has spent most of his professional life working as a classroom educator, an environmental educator, and a Zookeeper. MYBirdClub has provided Max with the opportunity to further encourage empathy for the outdoors with the local community.

Scarlet Fitzsimmons – Guide. Scarlet is an accomplished naturalist who has dedicated her career to helping people discover the wonders of nature and outdoor recreation. While earning her degree from the University of Minnesota, Scarlet worked at the Raptor Center and became interested in trying to see some wild owls. This led her to take a transformative trip to Sax-Zim Bog, where she discovered her love for birdwatching. She currently works at the Bell Museum.

Through numerous outdoor adventures and roles at the Bell Museum, Como Park Zoo, and Kroening Nature Center, Scarlet has honed her bird identification skills and acquired ample experience leading diverse groups in bird walks and environmental programs.

Scarlet co-founded The Kestrels (an inclusive birding club in MN) where she leads and organizes bird walks, annual trips to Sax-Zim Bog, and other bird-themed events.

A description of the project, including location, activities, goals, timeline, and expected completion date (or is it for operational expenses?):

Project #1 – Youth Birdwatching

Offering 18 indoor and outdoor adventures Jan-Dec 2025. SPA funds will support 9 of these outings. However, we pool our grants and thank our partners at each event.

MYBirdClub guides and outfits youth and adult outdoor birdwatching adventures. Youth earn milestone rewards (charms) that they add to their MYBirdClub Lanyard when they

attend their 1st and 3rd and 5th adventures, after that charms are earned for every 5 adventures they attend.

- 2 leaders per 10 participants – each leader experienced with youth outdoor education and specifically birding with kids
- All leaders have background checks within last 5 years
- 20 binoculars suited for birdwatching - 8x power
- 4 monoculars – 8x power
- 1-2 scopes with tripods
- Misc. additional gear as needed for outdoor adventures with kids
- All participants sign a liability release before participation for one calendar year
- Most metro area sites we visit are accessible by public transit
- Children 12+ may attend on their own, children younger 12 will need an adult to attend.
- Our consistent leadership builds familiarity with the kids and their adults.

We guide in the following parks: Crosby Farm – St. Paul, Harriet Alexander – Roseville, Wood Lake – Richfield, Veterans Park – Richfield, Robert’s Bird Sanctuary - Minneapolis

We also offer indoor programs during winter months at area libraries and nature centers.

Budget – \$2000

\$220 per outing pays for two experienced guides with youth environmental education experience and related materials.

Project #2 – Froglab birdwatching program with Frogtown Green

Provide afterschool programming focused on birds, birdwatching and bird conservation for Froglab.

MYBirdClub will present 4 programs – indoor and outdoor – to introduce kids to birdwatching and how they can get involved. They will each receive a laminated field guide to keep and to inspire them.

MYBirdClub will offer 1 program with games that teaches participating kids about birdwatching, identifying birds and how to be a good neighbor to birds, nature and other birders. Weather permitting we will walk to a Frogtown Green garden and observe the new feeder station as well as birds we see on the way. MYBirdClub will also have indoor and outdoor games based on weather and timing – migration game, pothole duck migration game, cowbird versus yellow warbler games.

2024 will be a test year with 4 engagements. If successful we will offer additional adventures and/or expand into another afterschool program run by Frogtown Green.

Budget

20 Pocket Field Guides - \$180 (leftovers can be used for MYBirdClub participants or for future Frogtown green collaborations)

4 MYBirdClub adventures - \$1320 (planning, materials and execution)

If approved, will these dollars be the sole funding mechanism for this project? If not, please list other partners and funders.

We anticipate additional funding to come from The MN Ornithologist's Union, private donations, Bluebird Recovery Project of MN, Friends of Roberts Bird Sanctuary.

Which of SPAS's priority focus areas does this project address?

Environmental Education

MYBirdClub is inspiring the next generation of birders, conservationists, and environmentalists. We talk about specific actions youth and families can take to support and protect birds and our environment. We share easy conservation tips that kids and adults can adopt in their homes and communities.

Supporting opportunities for birders

MYBirdClub is bringing kids who love birds together, getting them outside and connecting them to each other and to nature in a fun, club setting. The young person's interest in birding is supported by including the adults on the walks, which sparks their own interest and supports their child's ongoing birding. MYBirdClub ultimately benefits birds by inspiring the next generation of birders, conservationists and environmentalists. We help instill a desire to care for birds and shows kids and adults how they can weave personal conservation actions and efforts into their everyday lives.

Diversifying participation in birding and nature activities

We welcome young birders of all physical abilities and neurotypes. With our 10 to 1 ratio of birders to guide, we are easily able to adjust our pace, content and other observations to meet an individual birder's needs. We look to urban landscapes and parks, in underserved areas, to invite and encourage families from diverse cultures and experience to participate.

We have recently partnered with Frogtown Green and Big Brothers & Big Sisters in order to connect with even more underserved communities.

Is this a one-time request, or are future requests anticipated? (Include frequency):

We anticipate annual requests for funding to continue offering youth and family bird walks to the East Metro.

How will you determine whether the project is successful?

Each time we bird with a youth or family – that is a success. As of 8/28/24, we had

- 98 new kids joined MYBirdClub in 2024
- 470+ people registered for an outing Jan through Aug
- We reached over 1650 people through tabling events

We are achieving our goal if the kids walk away having had fun. If they feel empowered to be birders. Our focus on kid-driven learning means they most certainly do learn, but that is not our primary goal – our goal is connecting them with birds and birding.

Each kid who arrives who shares a new birding story, who IDs or finds a bird on their own is a success. Of course, as we grow and welcome new kids into our program – each kid is a success. We could point to a youth mentor who decided to study ornithology in college. Or the kids who send us their bird drawings or have parents text us while they’re on vacation to share a cool bird they saw. A hug when they arrive. Or even the tears – yes it happens – when they’ve missed a session.

Who will benefit from this project, and how will you measure these benefits?

Our overarching goal is to always offer a free club experience that provides all necessary supplies and knowledge so that we can connect all kids - including traditionally underserved youth and families - to birds, birding and bird conservation in a fun setting.

Building a youth-centered bird club gives kids a safe space to build peer friendships and explore their interest in birds and nature. We focus on building a fun club environment (versus a class environment). Kids have more fun birding with other kids which helps build a solid foundation for a lifelong hobby and helps build up a community of young birders and conservationists in the Metro.

The adults participating are gaining bird and conservation knowledge to support their young birder at home.

How can Saint Paul Audubon assist in the success of your project/organization?

By providing the funds requested, MYBirdClub will be able to schedule 9 our planned events in 2025. Our postings and sign-ups will feature a thank you to SPA as the sponsor for the events, acknowledgement at each outing as well as being listed as a partner on our website (with link to SPA website).

Approved by ___ Board ___Committee Name_____ Amount:

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