



### **High Flyer**

Name: City of Evansville

Joined Bird City: 2011

Population: 5,124

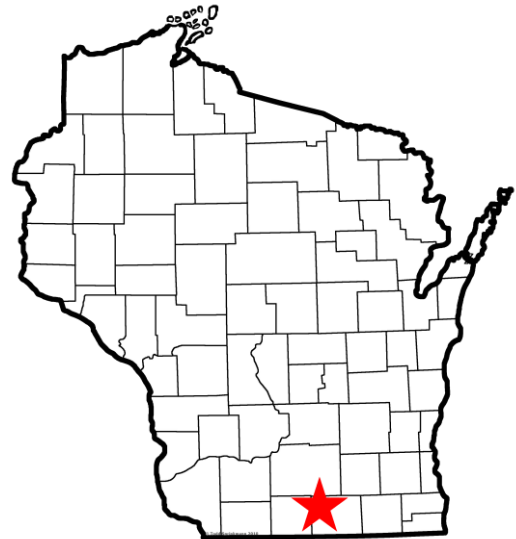
Incorporated: 1896

Area: 3.31 mi<sup>2</sup>

Online:

[City of Evansville](#)

[Official Bird City page](#)



To get involved in Bird City Evansville, please email us at  
[birdcitywisconsin@gmail.com](mailto:birdcitywisconsin@gmail.com).

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## **Application Highlights**

### **CATEGORY 1: CREATION AND PROTECTION OF HABITAT**

- A. *Demonstrate with an attachment that your community is in compliance with Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" law for land use planning and resource management.***

In November 2015, the City of Evansville Common Council unanimously approved a state-required, ten-year update to the 2005 Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan. Sustainability is incorporated [throughout the updated Plan](#).

**B. *Attach bird monitoring results and/or other data obtained from researchers or local volunteers in the local park system.***

The City of Evansville began holding a Lake Leota bird walk as an International Migratory Bird Day activity in 2011. These walks have occurred each year since as part of the local IMBD celebration. A total of 86 species have been sighted in the five walks, 2011-2015. As part of the 2016 celebration a second bird walk at Magnolia Bluff is planned to showcase other local birding hotspots.

**C. *Attach ordinance or other evidence that existing bird habitat has legal protection.***

The City of Evansville Park & Outdoor Recreation Plan, adopted by the Common Council in 2007, was updated by the City Park and Recreation Board in 2013. In 2012, the National Park Service listed Leonard-Leota Park on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. Improvements to the aquatic environment at Lake Leota continue, with collaborative effort among SOLE (Save Our Lake Environment), Boy Scouts, and the City.

**D. *Document that current community planning seeks to provide additional bird habitat.***

The School District has implemented a School Forest Education Plan since 2009. In 2013, Eagle Scout Dan Johnson built and installed wood and Plexiglas educational signage kiosks along the Forest Trail. Bird information has been displayed in the kiosks. Aldo Leopold style benches have been built using recycled wood from old light poles.

The updated Smart Growth Plan identifies new “open space and conservation” property on the west shore of Lake Leota, securing undeveloped land for habitat. This past fall, bald eagles built a nest in a cottonwood tree on this land.

**F. *Show how the community offers the public information on the control and removal of invasive species.***

A local native landscaping company posts information on invasive species on Facebook. The business owner also makes presentations on native landscaping at the local community center and exhibits at the annual Earth Day Energy Fair.

The Scouts have been undertaking removal of invasive species at the Grove Community School Forest.

**I. *Other.***

The Evansville Police Department installed a 24/7 drug drop off box at the police station. They also participate in the National Rx Round Up. Citizens can anonymously drop off unused, unwanted and expired prescription and over-the-counter medications, keeping them from polluting landfills and groundwater and out of the hands of our youth. Nearly one ton of drugs have been collected locally through these programs.

The City provides information about Emerald Ash Borer at the Bird City table at the Earth Day Energy Fair.

## **CATEGORY 2: PROMOTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT**

- A. *Demonstrate that your community is a member of the National Arbor Day Foundation's program [Tree City USA](#).***

The City of Evansville continues to be recognized as a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation following its initial award in 2001.

- B. *Other.***

R. Bruce Allison, PhD. discussed his publication "Wisconsin's Favorite and Historic Trees" at the local community center in April 2015.

## **CATEGORY 3: LIMITING OR REMOVING HAZARDS TO BIRDS**

- A. *Attach evidence or provide a community web link if your community has an educational program to control free-roaming cats and/or actively publicizes the "Cats Indoors!" program.***

The brochure "Birds, Cats, and You" is available on the Bird City Wisconsin page of the city website.

- B. *Demonstrate that your community provides property owners with information on how to protect birds from window-strikes.***

Children made window silhouettes for preventing bird collisions at the Earth Day Energy Fair.

- C. *Other.***

The 13th Annual Evansville Earth Day Energy Fair was held on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015. This is Evansville's largest annual community-wide event other than the 4th of July celebration. An estimated 2000 people attended the fair in 2015. The fair offers hands-on activities for students.

The Bird City Committee was an exhibitor at the Fair. The Committee displayed posters on cats as bird threats, offered brochures and handouts from the American Bird Conservatory, entitled "Cats, Birds, and You," "Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR): Bad for Birds, Bad for Cats," and "You Can Save Birds from Flying into Windows," to attendees. Loon Watch materials on lead poisoning by lead fishing tackle were also distributed.

In 2016, the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Energy Fair will be held on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## **CATEGORY 4: PUBLIC EDUCATION**

- D. *Demonstrate that your community is represented in at least one bird monitoring program (e.g., the Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count, or Swift Night Out).***

Evansville has participated in the Christmas Bird Count for decades. Former Evansville resident and University of Wisconsin art professor John Wilde began local participation in the Count in the mid-

1960s. Currently, local resident David Huset coordinates the Cooksville Bird Count, part of the Christmas Bird Count. The Cooksville Bird Count occurs each year on January 1 and includes Evansville locations such as Lake Leota and Wind Prairie Park.

***F. Illustrate a program that involves schools, garden clubs, or other organizations in bird conservation activities.***

The Evansville community obtained a bird monitoring kit in April, 2013. The kit was introduced at the Bird City table at the Energy Fair. Bird pictures were hung on the gym walls and students were guided to find them with the binoculars and a scope; it was a great hands-on science activity. Phil Kress, a master naturalist, and Nancy Kress, a retired elementary school teacher, have used the bird monitoring kit on numerous occasions to educate more than 500 youths (scouts and students) in the Evansville area.

Eager Free Public Library has organized the STEAMPunks Club, with students in K-5. The students enjoy hands-on science and nature activities, including birding.

We continue to use the Evansville Earth Day Energy Fair to provide bird and habitat information. A high school science teacher gave extra credit to students attending the Energy Fair and relayed this wonderful comment from a freshman student: "My experience at the energy fair was great. I got to see a lot of my friends and people I knew even you! I have only been to the energy fair a few times but this years was probably the best. Pretty much every event and table I went to I got to try something fun or learn something such as scientists estimate that nationwide, cats kill between 500 million and one billion birds each year. I also learned a lot about water, plant/trees, and animals. My two favorite events were the animal exhibit and the bird station. I liked the animal exhibit because I got to see some exotic animals like my favorite the kookaburra. I liked the bird station because they had a scanner that could pick up bird noises which was awesome. What I didn't like about the energy fair was that it was so packed with people. I also didn't like the stations that didn't really have to do with nature because then I just thought it was boring and not interesting. But overall the energy fair was a huge success and taught me a bunch of new things and I'm sure it taught everyone who was there a new thing."

Activity at the Grove Community School Forest is ongoing. Additional native prairie plants and shrubs were planted in 2015. Bluebird houses previously installed along the School Forest Trail are monitored by school students.

## G. Other.



The Evansville Environmental Center, the community nature center located at the intermediate school, launched an effort in 2015 to encourage district teachers to utilize the many Center resources to enhance curriculum. The school district has two environmental coordinators and work is underway to schedule outdoor days for each grade level.

### CATEGORY 5: CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

The Lake Leota IMBD Bird Walk, led by several members of the local Audubon chapter, was held on May 2, 2015 from 7:00 – 9:00 am. The weather was cloudy and it had been cold for several days. 40 species were observed.

## HIGH FLYER CRITERIA

### CATEGORY 1: CREATION AND PROTECTION OF HABITAT

#### **A. Show how and where the community has restored at least two acres of woodlands, wetlands, or prairie.**

On the south edge of the city between First and Second Streets is Wind Prairie Park. The 5.4 acre parcel was a former city dump. Local organizations restored the area. The Evansville Park and Outdoor Recreation Plan states that: *"Wind Prairie Park is a specialized recreation area consisting of an open space prairie conservation area in the southern part of the city. The area contains a variety of prairie plant species and a few trees that have been planted along the property's boundaries for screening and beautification."* The plan also points out that the Park is intended to be a nature preserve. Wind Prairie Park is a local site for the Christmas Bird Count. Eagle Scout Ethan Pierick put up five bluebird houses in Wind Prairie Park. There is a mowed walking path and wood benches that allow for nature study.

Much work occurred in Wind Prairie Park in 2015. The prairie was burned and invasive shrubs were removed. A \$2,000 purchase of prairie seed from Agrecol was sown in late fall.

***D. Document a program to support the establishment of natural lawns and native landscaping.***

For several years the DNR has provided hundreds of native trees that are distributed for free at the Energy Fair.

***E. Demonstrate the implementation of a program to preserve Chimney Swift roosting sites and/or to construct alternative Chimney Swift towers.***

There are Chimney Swifts in the Evansville area. They are known to roost in a local church (and in the mayor's chimney). Phil Kress is a member of the Evansville Woodchucks, which is a woodworking group affiliated with the community and senior center, and has constructed two Chimney Swift towers that will be located near the School Forest Trail, most likely atop one of the school buildings. The towers will augment the educational resources of the School Forest.

A Chimney Swift tower was displayed at the Energy Fair. Instructions for construction of a Chimney Swift tower were made available to fair attendees and an informative poster about Chimney Swifts was also part of the Evansville Bird City exhibit.

***G. Show how the community aides the Boy/Girl Scouts and conservation groups in projects like establishing Bluebird Trails and erecting Wood Duck nesting boxes.***

Evansville has a long history of collaborative efforts to accomplish local projects. During the spring of 2012, SOLE, a local group dedicated to improving the lake ecosystem, built an Osprey platform and erected it on property near Lake Leota. SOLE has led the effort to restock fish in Lake Leota. SOLE has also installed Wood Duck boxes at Lake Leota.

In coordination with the Wisconsin Bluebird Association, additional Bluebird nesting boxes have been placed along the Grove Community School Forest Trail in the spring of 2012, and five additional boxes have been erected in 2013.

A number of Eagle Scout projects have been completed that enhance birding or habitat. Installation of Bluebird boxes and construction of educational kiosks and benches at Wind Prairie Park and the School Forest Trail are recent projects. The Boy Scouts were also active volunteers in planting the 2000+ native trees and shrubs along the School Forest Trail.

***H. Demonstrate how a public golf course is managed to benefit birds.***

A Bluebird trail was established at Evansville Community Golf Course in 2009. Resident David Huset has monitored and maintained the 14 nesting boxes since they were installed.

## **CATEGORY 2: PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMS PROMOTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT**

### ***A. Document an ongoing community program to incorporate native hardwood trees and native shrubs in public landscaping.***

The City has maintained rough habitat at the edge of Lake Leota for fish, insects, and small birds.

Our community continuously uses the Grove Community School Forest to engage our students in improving habitat. 120 Evansville kindergarten students “planted” prairie seeds by tossing mud balls imbedded with seeds that they had made. The seeds will enhance the prairie plot of the Grove Community School Forest to provide habitat and food for area birds.



## **CATEGORY 3: LIMITING OR REMOVING HAZARDS TO BIRDS**

### ***E. Show how the community supports a bird collision monitoring program and/or offers information and material for preventing window collisions in homes and commercial establishments.***

Because Bird City Selection reviewers commented that it would like Evansville to do more to address "Cats Indoors!" and window strikes, the local Bird City Committee made an effort to provide education in this area. At the Bird City Energy Fair exhibit, copies of three American Bird Conservancy brochures were available to attendees: two regarding cats and one on bird collisions. Posters on both topics were displayed and a Bird City Committee member manning the exhibit talked with attendees. Following the Fair, a display with this and other information was placed in a prominent location in the local library. Children were able to make window silhouettes as an interactive program during the Energy Fair and during the International Migratory Bird Day celebration.

## **CATEGORY 4: PUBLIC EDUCATION**

### ***A. Demonstrate that the community is active in raising awareness of its bird assets. Examples include placing a remote web camera on a nesting platform, offering field trips to observe threatened or endangered birds, or creating a significant educational resource on the community's bird life.***

Environmental education is a priority in Evansville, led by the Evansville Community School District. A prime example is the continuing development and improvement of the Grove Community School

Forest Trail, with its incorporation into the school curriculum, its community-wide volunteer base, and recent addition of educational kiosks.

The Evansville Environmental Center is a rich resource for the community to support sustainability.

The School District is also a lead sponsor of their community's Earth Day Energy Fair and provides the majority of Fair volunteers. The Evansville Bird City Committee is an exhibitor at the Energy Fair.

Committee members have written articles about birds and the Bird City program for the local newspaper. The Committee has added birding information to the City website.

Bird City Wisconsin exhibited at the 2013 Energy Fair. Carl Schwartz promoted the statewide initiative to attendees. Carl's attendance brought added attention to local bird conservation efforts.

The Evansville Bird City Wisconsin Committee exhibited at the Evansville Activity Fair, held on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The Activity Fair showcases local organizations and their activities. Conversations with staff of the Evansville Youth Center and local Scout leaders at the Activity Fair made these groups aware of their opportunities to use their new resource, the bird monitoring kit, as well as the possibility of having local birding experts work with them.