

To achieve annual certification as a "Bird City," communities need to demonstrate in a written application that they have met at least seven of 22 criteria, including three from Category 1 and one from each of the other four categories:

Darlington

Became a Bird City Wisconsin for 2014 by meeting 7 basic requirements

Category 1: Creation and Protection of Habitat

- A. Compliance with Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" law for land use planning and resource management.
- B. The community has a park system with habitat for a number of species of birds. This is demonstrated by bird monitoring results and/or other data obtained from researchers or local volunteers.
- I. Some other municipal action in furtherance of habitat creation or protection.

Category 2: Participation in Programs Promoting Effective Community Forest Management

- B. Some other municipal accomplishment in this area.

Category 3: Limiting or Removing Hazards to Birds

- C. Some other important municipal accomplishment in this area.

Category 4: Public Education

- F. Community has a program that involves schools, garden clubs, etc. in bird conservation activities.

Category 5: Community Celebration of International Migratory Bird Day

- A. Community adopts resolution recognizing IMBD and organizes a local IMBD celebration.

Highlights of Darlington's Bird Conservation Efforts

Category 1: Creation and Protection of Habitat

1A. The City of Darlington developed and approved the "City of Darlington Comprehensive Plan" in January, 2005. This plan is in compliance with elements set forth in Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" law concerning land use planning and resource management. Darlington remains in compliance with this plan to this day.

1B. The City of Darlington is an active monitor and participant in the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW). Velma Klenke has monitored multiple Bluebird boxes for years now and in 2013, there were 4 successful fledglings recorded in Darlington.

1I. Darlington has established a walking trail located in one of the parks that follows along the Pecatonica River in the downtown area. The trail is lit and paved. The trail is used by visitors and local people. Nest boxes for cavity nesting birds are placed along the trail where Bluebirds, Wrens, and Tree Swallows fledge from the boxes. An educational kiosk, provided by a C. D. Besadny Conservation Grant in cooperation with the North American Bluebird Society and the Lafayette County Bluebird Society, was constructed by the Darlington High School shop class and is focused on Bluebirds. The Darlington Garden Club also maintains plots located along the trail. Many of the plots contain native prairie plants. The trail has a campground with water and electricity and is used by families, outdoorsmen and nature enthusiasts. The walking trail is a perfect example of what a community can do to encourage and promote native birds and native plants.

Category 2: Promoting Effective Community Forest Management

2B. The City of Darlington employs a Park and Recreation director who oversees the several parks in the community. He is trained to identify diseased trees and removes them. He has planted a variety of trees in the city parks, including Tamarac trees. Much thought is put into replacing and maintaining the trees. In recent years, the City has followed the tree placement guidelines of the Arbor Day Foundation.

Category 3: Limiting or Removing Hazards to Birds

3C. The local police department in Darlington has worked with the community to control the feral cat population in the City with good results. All cats (not just feral cats) are prohibited from running at large pursuant to Municipal Code 13.03(6). Typically speaking, they have had very good compliance with this ordinance as it pertains to domesticated cats. Feral cats have posed problems but the population has decreased considerably for a few reasons:

1. Through an informal, cooperative trapping/relocating program they participated in with some residents they have all but wiped out the feral cat population in some neighborhoods.
2. They conducted property inspections and required property owners to tear down or improve properties where feral cats (and skunks) found suitable habitat. This included dilapidated sheds, openings under buildings or porches, and the like.
3. Residents who fed feral cats were instructed to do one of two things: stop feeding them or adopt them and comply with the running at large ordinance mentioned above. When told this, residents always choose to stop feeding them, which has helped to lower the attraction to certain neighborhoods.

Category 4: Public Education

4F. The Lafayette County Bluebird Society, established in 1981, was originally the Darlington Bluebird Society. It is headquartered in the Darlington area and on June 14, 2014 is opening the Bluebird Nest Nature Center in downtown Darlington. The Center's mission is to *"provide to the public a facility that serves the purpose of offering educational materials, classes, speakers, and interpretive displays relating to: the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity nesting birds, threatened and endangered species, the driftless area, and the general fauna and flora in Southwestern Wisconsin and stimulate the Center's visitors' interest and interaction in these areas of the natural world."*

Over the years, the Lafayette County Bluebird Society has had a significant impact in educating school children and adults on the importance of wildlife conservation by: presenting educational programs throughout the year with noted speakers, providing bird related literature to libraries and schools, conducting bird trail hikes, and gathering nestbox trail data that is emailed to nearly 100 birders. The Society's web site:

<https://lafayettecountybluebirdsociety.wordpress.com> provides information on Bluebird trail management, current migration reports from members, nest box design, and bird related information.

Category 5: Celebration of International Migratory Bird Day

The City of Darlington approved an official resolution on Jan. 21, 2014, proclaiming that the second Saturday of June each year be International Migratory Bird Day. In 2014, that date will be June 14, and will be marked by the grand opening of Bluebird Nest Nature Center in downtown Darlington from 1 to 5 p.m.