

# Fond du Lac Bird Communities Education Project

## 2017 Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Savaloja Final Grant Report

### 1) Project Description and Goals:

The Fond du Lac Band (FdL) of Lake Superior Chippewa received grant funds to support a holistic educational bird project to help broaden the awareness and appreciation of bird species in the area.

The FdL Environmental Program worked in partnership with the Fond du Lac Ojibwe School (FdLOS) to provide an educational opportunity for approximately 10 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Project activities proposed included:

- Activities to learn basic bird identification, bird calls, natural history and ecology incorporating Ojibwe language, traditional ecological knowledge, cultural significance (i.e. clans), and stories. This will include a research project and interviews with elders.
- Field trips to nearby educational centers for hands-on learning about various bird species, their ecology and environmental issues affecting their populations. Locations may include the Audubon Center of the North Woods, Hawk Ridge, and Sax-Zim Bog, and a site within the Fond du Lac Reservation.
- Field days with FdLTCC to utilize their wildlife acoustic equipment for learning and identifying bird calls.
- The development of a "Birds of the Fond du Lac Reservation" app with the help of the FdLOS Technology Director. The app would include bird photos, songs, names in Latin, Ojibwe, and English, and interesting facts about the birds students learned through interviews, stories and research.

### The benefits of this project included:

- Culturally relevant and hands-on science education for students and community members;
- Intergenerational exchange of knowledge, language, history and stories to help preserve traditional ecological knowledge in the community;
- Increased awareness, stewardship and conservation of bird species through community outreach;
- Increased student awareness of careers in the environmental/natural sciences field.

## 2) Project Activities:

### **Research and Traditional Ecological Knowledge:**

**Classroom Research:** Each youth was responsible for researching two bird species to get to know more about them. They were given an outline of information to research about their birds and resources such as books and the internet. They also found photos that could be used in their bird apps. We met biweekly throughout spring to give them time to do their research. We also had them research different apps, talked about what makes an app useful and appealing, and had them outline what they would want included in their app. Attached is the form students used to guide their research. We also went outside to the nature trail and pond with binoculars and bird books to look for and identify birds seen and heard each day.

**Traditional Ecological Knowledge:** Youth put together a series of questions to help guide discussions with elders. Youth met with one elder who shared with them her knowledge and experience with birds and what she had been taught growing up. On another occasion, this same elder came to the classroom and taught the students how to make dreamcatchers, talking about the feathers used and which kinds should not be used. We had another elder scheduled to come in on a couple of occasions, but issues came up where they had to cancel. Students also studied the Native Skywatchers resources to identify the role of birds in astronomy from a cultural perspective. Attached are the questions used to help guide the discussion with the elder and one of the Native Skywatchers resources.

### **Field Trips:**

**Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW), May 2017:** The seventh grade class kicked off the project with a field trip to ACNW to learn about the basics of birds, use binoculars and bird books to observe and identify birds at feeders and do a bird banding class. It was a very lucky day bird banding. Students got to band and release purple finches, a downy woodpecker, chickadees and a rose-breasted grosbeak. One student was so happy because the purple finch just sat on his hand and did not want to fly off. He finally had to give it a gentle nudge. This is an experience he still talks about to this day. Each student got to release at least one bird and though hesitant at first, were very excited to be able to have the experience. Finally, students learned about raptors, what makes them unique to other birds and were able to see and learn about a few of the resident raptors.



**Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, October 2017:** The students, now in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, visited Hawk Ridge during the migration season. They observed several species of raptors and also were fortunate to have a sharp-shinned hawk caught during a program. They were able to observe and learn more about it and release it back to the wild. They also participated in two programs learning a variety of birds, characteristics and the significance of the area for migration.



**Sax-Zim Bog, December 2017:** The students had the opportunity to visit Sax-Zim Bog, another Minnesota treasure with unique habitat that supports a variety of birds. Though students did not see a lot of birds that day, they learned about the bog ecosystem and were able to learn a variety of plants different birds and wildlife depend on for shelter and food.

**Audubon Center of the North Woods, May 2018:** Though the day threatened rain, it held off long enough for a very successful morning of bird banding. The students also had lessons on birds and did a bird walk to see what they could find in the woods. In addition to birds, they also found other wildlife and spring flora.



We were unable to complete all of the grant objectives. The Information Specialist that was going to help with the app in Spring 2018 ended up being out a lot of the semester having had surgery. The hope was to be able to complete the app in the 2018-2019 school year with the students from this class that were in the after-school program, but we were unable to find open days and with this group organizing a community climate event, we were limited. We are very disappointed that we were unable to complete this objective, but are very happy that the kids were able to learn more about birds both from a scientific and cultural perspective as well as get outside and experience them in person.

One of the most rewarding and impactful parts of this project were the field trips where students got to see birds close up and have the opportunity to release a bird after banding. I saw smiles on students' faces that were otherwise somewhat skeptical about this project and insisted they were uninterested in birds.

In the future, a project like this would be best kicked off at the beginning of the school year rather than the spring before. This would help with momentum and consistency. Some of the students in the class in May were no longer there and there were some new students the next year.

**Staff involved in project included:**

Shannon Judd  
FdL Environmental Education and Outreach Coordinator

Ariel Johnson  
FdL Ojibwe School Science Teacher

**3) Budget**

The requested amount included funding for the field trips and honorariums for elders and other community members who participate in interviews and student activities.

Budget Item	Budgeted	Actual	Variance
Travel/Transportation	\$895	\$519.73	\$375.27
Other/Facility Fees	\$580	\$510	\$70
Stipends	\$685	\$100	\$585
Total	\$2,160.00	\$1,129.73	\$1,030.27

Additional funds for this project was provided as in-kind contribution of staff time by Fond du Lac Resource Management Division, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, and the Fond du Lac Ojibwe School.

**Prepared by:**

Shannon Judd  
Environmental Education and Outreach Coordinator  
218.878.7123  
[shannonjudd@fdlrez.com](mailto:shannonjudd@fdlrez.com)

**MOU Savaloja Grant Project – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Bird Research**

**Bird Species**

Common Name \_\_\_\_\_

Scientific Name \_\_\_\_\_

Anishinaabemowin \_\_\_\_\_

Nicknames or Other Names \_\_\_\_\_

What is the conservation status of this bird?

Describe the physical characteristics of the bird (Size, colors, shape, field ID tips)

What habitat does it prefer?

What foods does it eat?

Describe this bird's common behaviors.

Describe its call. How many different calls does it have?

What are some interesting facts about this bird?

Additional notes about your bird:

1. What is your favorite bird and why?
2. Is your clan one of the birds? What has it meant to you to be part of this clan?
3. What is the significant of birds in our culture?
4. How did birds get here according to stories?
5. Why do birds have their songs?
6. What is the purpose of some of the birds (like the crow)?
7. What is one story that you feel is most important from a bird?
8. Which story have you connected with/has been meaningful in your life?
9. How has these stories helped you in real world experiences (ravens and dead things/moose and deer flies)?
10. What is one cool thing you have seen birds do?
11. Can you make a bird call sound?
12. Why do you like birds?
13. What would you name a bird if you could?
14. Why are birds important to you?
15. What has your experience been with birds?
16. Why should we care about birds?
17. What's one cool fun fact you know about birds?

18. If you could be a bird, which one would you be?

**Ojibwe Constellation Guide – Ojibwe Giizhig Anung Masinaaigan**  
**Ojibwe Sky Star Map**

Written by Annette Lee, William Wilson, Jeff Tibbets and Carl Gawboy © 2012

**Mishi bizhiw - Curly Tail, Great Panther - Leo, Cancer**



This constellation is a mountain lion/cougar/puma that were once more abundant in Minnesota. The big spirit cat is lives at the bottom of lakes and can cause flooding or water danger. Curly Tail is overhead in Spring. It rises in late winter. People knew that when the great cat was overhead the lakes would not be frozen and would be dangerous to cross. People knew it was time to move from winter camp to sugar bush camp. At sugar bush, feasts and prayers are offered for the water spirits (like Curly Tail) and to all those relatives that did not survive the winter.

**Madoodiswan - Sweat Lodge - Corona & Noondeshin Bemaadizid - Exhausted Bather (Person) - Hercules**



The sweat lodge is a purification ceremony. It is returning to the womb and remembering/renewing our spirit. The person is exhausted after participating in the sweat. He/She is exhausted on the outside but full of life and strong on the inside. The Sweat Lodge is seen overhead in late Spring and the Exhausted Bather is an early summer constellation.

**Biboonkeonini - Wintermaker - Orion, Procyon (Canis Minor), Aldebaran (Taurus)**



Wintermaker is a strong Ojibwe canoe man. His outstretched arms rule the winter sky. Wintermaker is seen overhead during the winter months. He is an important mythological figure in Ojibwe culture.

**Maang - Loon - Little Dipper/Ursa Minor**



The North Star and other stars in the Little Dipper/Ursa Minor make up the Ojibwe loon constellation. The loon is one of the Ojibwe clans and is seen as a very important messenger. Loon and crane are both leaders in the clan system, they work together. The loon stands at the doorway between the water and the land or the material and the spirit world.

The loon avoids leaving the water, it must have water to land and take off. Only to make a nest to lay eggs it goes on land. They prefer larger lakes. The loons' legs and feet are positioned way back and they can't walk well on land.

**Ojibwe Constellation Guide – Ojibwe Giizhig Anung Masinaaigan**  
**Ojibwe Sky Star Map**



**Ojiig - Fischer - Big Dipper/Ursa Major**

This constellation relates to the story of when the birds and Spring were held prisoner by the ogres. Of all the animals it was only the Fischer that was able to trick the ogres and free the birds. He saved everyone with his courage and wit.

The Fischer is the only animal that can kill and eat porcupines. Also it is not diurnal or nocturnal, but prefers to always be on the move, sleeping and eating night and day. It does not build a home in one place and return as most animals do, but rather makes its home in different places.



**Giwedin'anung - North Star/Polaris**

The night sky appears to rotate around this star in a counter-clockwise motion. This star is at the 'center' of all stars as seen from the northern hemisphere and because of this it is considered to be very important.



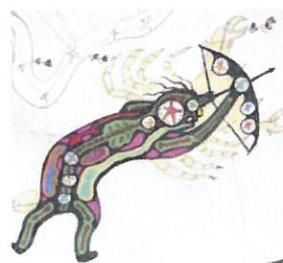
**Mooz - Moose - Pegasus, Lacerta**

This constellation is another animal of the Ojibwe clan system. The moose provides food, clothing, shelter for the people, much like deer or caribou.



**Ajijjaak/Bineshi Okanin - Crane/Skeleton Bird - Cygnus**

The crane is one of the leaders in the Ojibwe clan system. Crane and loon lead the people to stay strong. This constellation is overhead a few hours after sunset in the summertime.



**Nanaboujou - Nanaboujou - Scorpio**

A hero figure and a spirit that had many excursions on Earth a long time ago. He helped the people by creating dry land after the last flood. He had many human characteristics, like making mistakes. The constellation shows Nanaboujou shooting an arrow at the Great Panther, Curly Tail. There are many important Nanaboujou stories that are traditionally told only when there is snow on the ground.