



Ely Elementary School

Ely Field Naturalists 2019 Savaloja Grant

Final Report
December 30, 2019

Objectives

Ely Field Naturalists (EFN) proposed to partner with Ely Elementary School to promote the preservation of birds by engaging teachers and administrators, and teaching young students about birds, migration, and man-made dangers to birds. We also proposed to conduct an age-appropriate “science experiment” to help mitigate bird mortality at the school resulting from birds striking the newly-installed reflective windows on the campus. The 2019 Savaloja Grant in the amount of \$525 helped us achieve our objectives.

The partnering of EFN volunteers with the local elementary school was communicated via email to over 500+ EFN members. A key component of the project was to increase awareness and interest in birds and preservation in the community at large by promoting the elementary school project in newspapers (Bill wrote an article for the Timberjay), radio (Bill was interviewed on radio station WELY) and regional festivals.

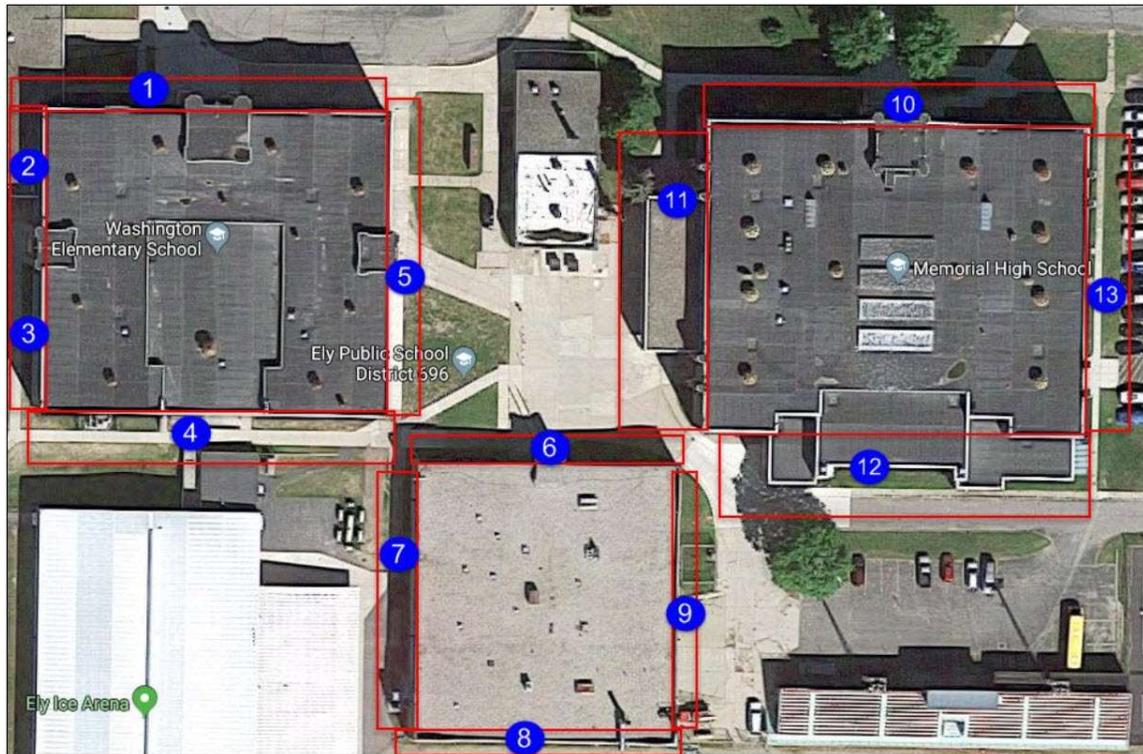
An experiment was envisioned to allow 1st and 2nd graders to explore the effects of treating the reflective windows with yellow highlighter, comparing the number of bird strikes observed before and after treatment, and comparing with untreated windows. We found that given the very busy end-of-the-school-year schedule, teachers did not have enough time to involve their students in the experiment to the extent we had hoped. We also found after about six weeks of monitoring that we were not finding any dead or injured birds on the perimeter of the building. Therefore, the focus of activities became education, awareness, and engagement of the school community. We gave several classroom presentations about birds and migration dangers, and we supplied teachers with curriculum materials that they requested. One classroom’s windows were treated with highlighter.

Our hope was that this grant would increase awareness among decision makers to consider bird safety in their evaluation of the type of windows to be installed as the remaining old windows on campus are gradually replaced. We were able to speak with administrators and building improvement planners to try to gain their support to consider bird-safe building methods and windows.

This project contributed to a number of outcomes. Students were involved in scientific investigation and problem solving. School administrators and architects were engaged in discussions for planning future building design and window replacements. Community members benefited from information from EFN about the project in looking the incidence of window collisions other community buildings and homes.



Treating classroom window with highlighter



Arial view of windows monitored on the Ely campus

Methods

Ely Elementary School, Ely, MN is in the process of replacing aging windows. Several banks of new windows were installed within the last few years. With this grant, we were able to engage teachers, students, and administrators in discussions about the dangers windows can pose to migrating birds.

- EFN members Bill Tefft, Helen Becker, Steve Schon and Julie Nester met with the teachers in the spring of 2019 to assess their interest and availability to become involved in the project. Three teachers wanted their students to participate and indicated willingness to have windows treated with highlighters.
- Julie and Helen met with several teachers and they developed a list of classroom materials that would improve their science curriculum about birds. The list of materials we supplied is found in the budget appendix.
- We attended a community planning meeting that was held with architects and consultants who were gathering input on the community's hopes and desires for building improvements. Bill met with the new superintendent to provide information about birds and windows.
- The school district sent a survey to all district residents to gather feedback on school improvements and to gauge support for a levy. We encouraged the EFN

email network to submit comments in favor of exploring bird-safe windows for future window replacements.

- For approximately six weeks in the beginning of April and throughout May, we monitored the perimeter of the elementary school daily, using the map above to indicate the location of dead or injured birds. Daily monitoring did not guarantee that all injured or dead birds were located and recovered by our team because the school yard is populated with ravens and possibly other predators. We recovered one dead ovenbird and one dead white-throated sparrow.
- In the spring, students and teachers helped to monitor the building by walking the perimeter with EFN members.
- In the fall, we attended a staff meeting to talk about the project with all the staff. We posted a monitoring log on their website so teachers could continue to log bird strikes and found birds.
- Bill, Steve and Helen gave several classroom presentations to Kindergarten and 4th grade classrooms in October.
- Steve gave a demonstration of window treatments to reduce bird strikes. He applied the fluorescent highlighter grid to the interior of the new windows in one classroom.
- EFN presented the project at three community festivals: Ely Blueberry Festival, Earth Fest in Hibbing, and Ely Harvest Moon Festival. An estimated 15,000 people attend these festivals combined.



Personnel

EFN members: Bill, Helen, Steve and Julie

Teachers: Tara Johnson, 1st grade teacher and Master Naturalist /Master Naturalist Instructor, and Kaley Hotaling, 2nd grade teacher, two kindergarten teachers and one 4th grade teacher also hosted presentations by Bill, Steve, and Helen.

Location

Ely Elementary School

Results

Teachers received much-needed classroom materials to assist them in teaching about birds. (See budget below). Students were involved in scientific investigation and problem solving. School administrators and architects were engaged in discussions for planning future building design and window replacements. Community members benefited from information from EFN about the project and to consider incidence of window collisions at other community buildings and homes. We see the activities undertaken with this grant as a beginning of the discussion and awareness-raising in our community. The grant helped provide an incentive for us and for the teachers to start the ball rolling. Hopefully we can pursue more window treatments and continued involvement in the science curriculum in the future. The Ely Field Naturalists would like to thank the Minnesota Ornithologist's Union for supporting our students and communities in learning more about human – avian interactions in our area.

NUMBERS AND TYPES OF PEOPLE SERVED

EFN outreach at the school: estimated 14 teachers and 100 students

EFN community outreach at 3 festivals (15,000) and media (5,000)

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

	Awarded	Spent
Window Treatment Supplies: Such as highlighters, painters tape, decals	\$200	\$25
Instructional/classroom materials: Such as 20-24 age-appropriate field guides, activity books, bird song CDs, teacher's workbooks, copying and laminating	\$275	\$304.06
Monitoring supplies: Such as gloves, notebook, pens	\$50	0
Travel to MOU Paper Session (2 teachers, 1 student+parent) gas, mileage, hotel (1 night) 1.5 days per diem/per person	\$635	
Bill will purchase additional classroom supplies and presentation materials.		\$195.94
Total	\$525	\$525

CLASSROOM MATERIALS PURCHASED

5 of: *Birds of the Northwoods Activity Book: A Coloring and Learning Guide*, David Grack

1 of: *Backyard Birds of Eastern/Central North America: A Folding Pocket Guide to Common Backyard Birds (Wildlife and Nature Identification)*, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

4 of: *Backyard Birds of Eastern/Central North America: A Folding Pocket Guide to Common Backyard Birds (Wildlife and Nature Identification)*, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

2 of: *Backyard Birds of Eastern/Central North America: A Folding Pocket Guide to Common Backyard Birds (Wildlife and Nature Identification)*, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

13 of: *Backyard Birds of Eastern/Central North America: A Folding Pocket Guide to Common Backyard Birds (Wildlife and Nature Identification)*, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

2 of: *A Field Guide to Bird Songs: Eastern and Central North America (Peterson Field Guides)*, of Ornithology, Cornell Laboratory