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For Immediate Release:

## **Milwaukee County Named as Bird City Wisconsin “High Flyer”** *First Community to Receive “High Flyer” Status on Initial Application*

Milwaukee, WI - (April 30, 2015) Milwaukee County has been designated a Bird City with High Flyer status. Recognizing communities for their contributions to avian conservation, education, and the well-being of their residents, Bird City Wisconsin will present Parks Director John Dargle, Jr. with Bird City street signs, a flag, and plaque, in a ceremony Thursday, May 7 at 10 a.m. in Grant Park, at Picnic Area 5A. The picnic site can be accessed from the park entrance at the intersection of South Lake Drive and Park Avenue, in South Milwaukee.

Of the nearly 100 Bird Cities, Milwaukee County is among only 15 with High Flyer status and is the first community to receive the advanced status on its initial application to the program.

Bird City Wisconsin is modeled on the Arbor Day Foundation’s successful national program, Tree City USA. With 22 conservation criteria in five categories that focus on habitat (protection, management, and creation), public education, and reducing human-caused threats to birds, Bird City Wisconsin seeks to promote civic management and public engagement to create healthy bird and human populations. Communities that meet at least seven of the 22 criteria are eligible to become a Bird City. Milwaukee County met 12 of these basic conservation criteria and an additional six High Flyer criteria. To maintain the designation, communities must submit an annual application documenting their continuing conservation work.

The Parks Department’s Natural Areas Program and other urban bird monitoring projects are working to build a comprehensive database on avian habitat use in urban natural areas within the Park System. This data is then used to implement wildlife habitat projects.

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“We commend you on these programs and hope to see them continue in the future as the data they generate should be tremendously useful to those seeking to make their urban areas more bird friendly,” said Bryan Lenz, Ph.D., Director of Bird City Wisconsin. “Local governments are proving that they not only can implement sound conservation practices on their own, but also can educate their residents to play an increased role in making our communities healthy for birds... and people.”

Milwaukee County parkland totals 15,000 acres, of which 9,200 acres comprise undeveloped natural areas and therefore are especially important for birds. The Department manages much of this land through forward-looking Ecological Restoration and Management Plans that operate on 10-year timelines to ensure that these areas best meet the social and ecological needs of both the human and avian communities.

In addition, Parks Natural Areas staff provide numerous educational opportunities through backyard biodiversity events, citizen-science programs, and field trips. These opportunities are offered throughout the Park System and in local classrooms, focused on hands-on learning for middle-school, high-school, and university students.

“Efforts like these are invaluable for Milwaukee County because they instill respect for nature in our children (and adults!) so that they can fight for its protection in the future,” said Lenz.

For more information on Bird City Wisconsin, visit [BirdCityWisconsin.org](http://BirdCityWisconsin.org).

For more information on the Milwaukee County Parks Department’s Natural Areas Program, contact Brian Russart, Natural Areas Coordinator, at (414) 257-6521 or [brian.russart@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:brian.russart@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

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