



Name: City of Hastings, MN

Joined Bird City: 2016

Population: 22,424

Area: 11.18 mi²

Park/open space: 400+ acres

IMBD: April 23rd, Hastings Birding Festival

Online:

<http://www.hastingsmn.gov/>



Bird City Hastings

Hastings celebrates International Migratory Bird Day by hosting a city-wide Hastings Birding Festival in early spring. This event is hosted by the Hastings Environmental Protectors and Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center, and hosts a multitude of activities. Some of these highlights are an “Introduction to Birding” class, a “Raptors 101” class, bird banding demonstrations, and guided bird trips in the Hastings area. This festival is designed to encourage the public to be more involved in nature, specifically birding. In addition, the proceeds from this event support environmental education programs and habitat protection.

Category 1: Educate and engage citizens in birding and conservation

BP #1: Increase awareness of birds in your community

Hastings provides the public with the tools to be engaged in local birding culture. On the City of Hastings webpage, under the Visitors tab -> Birding, the city provides an ArcGIS map of all birding locations in the general area, including 11 in the local area. This webpage includes a birding checklist, highlights of each of the birding stations, and directions on how to get to them. Several of the parks included are in one of the four Audubon sanctioned Important Bird Areas (IBAs), two are within city limits and others are nearby. Many of these are along the Mississippi and St. Croix River and river front.

BP #3: Educate and engage youth audiences

A special focus for the Hastings Bird Festival is engaging youth in birding through a Youth Birding Competition. The competition is divided into two age groups and aims to encourage teams to identify as many birds as possible throughout the day. There are also a number of community classes offered such as Beginning Birding, a Beginning Birding Hike, a Raptor Program, and a Keeping Your Bird List class. These classes are family friendly and perfect for people new to birding. For the more experienced birders there are public bird banding demonstrations provided by Carpenter Nature Center.

BP #4: Promote citizen science monitoring and research

Citizens have collected important data on bird population in Hastings by participating in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count since 1973. During the count period for 2014-2015, nineteen participants recorded 54 total species in 58.2 volunteer hours. The City recognizes "citizen science" as an important tool in management of our natural resources. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is a great example of how volunteers can make a difference. Hastings also partners with the Audubon Society to host an annual fall Chimney Swift Watch in the Public Square and encourages the public to use bird safe chimney sweepers. One of the larger programs offered is the MN Bluebird Recovery Program, and data from Hastings' volunteers is sent in annually. In 2015, there were 88 nest boxes and 405 fledged bluebirds reported, contributing to the over 17,000 birds hatched in Minnesota that year. In addition to blue bird recovery programs, Hastings' volunteers focus on other species of birds including Wood Ducks and Peregrine Falcons. For instance, there are other nest boxes at Lake Rebecca, Lake Isabel, and the Vermillion River.

BP #5: Ensure access to nature

The City of Hastings has established nearly 30 miles of trails at many local parks and nature centers including Lake Rebecca Park, CP Adams Park, Hastings River Flats, and the Carpenter Nature Center Minnesota campus. Many of the trails are located within various kinds of wildlife habitat including savanna, prairie, and forested areas which are crucial to bird habitats. The City of Hastings has park land dedication as part of our subdivision code; a system in which the City is able to acquire land or cash in lieu of land for the development of parks, open spaces, trails, etc.



Blue Bird box near Hastings Water Tower.
Photo credit: Kevin Smith

Category 2: Protect, restore and enhance bird habitat

BP #7: Create and protect habitat &

BP #8: Promote use of native and beneficial plant species

Within the past 5 years, Old Mill Park and Vermillion Linear Park were transitioned from manicured green space to natural landscapes. Old Mill Park converted at least half an acre while Vermillion Linear Park converted two and a half acre. By doing so they created both bird and pollinator friendly habitat. The local Boy Scout group also helped to develop a Monarch Way Station on the LeDuc Historic Estate to promote healthy pollinator populations.



Wood Duck nest box on Lake Rebecca.
Photo credit: Kevin Smith.

BP #10: Create and protect nesting opportunities

Currently the Hastings Standard Operating Procedures follows the DNR's recommendations as related to mowing of these areas. Governor Dayton's buffer initiative provides a 50 foot buffer to all water courses in the state to help with migratory bird habitat. Road ditches, storm water retention ponding basins, and other grasslands are not mowed, grazed, or hayed until August 1st to maximize wildlife habitat and reproduction. The Parks and Recreation Department also encourages the installation and maintenance of blue bird and wood duck nest boxes around the city. Volunteers also encourage and educate the public about the correct maintenance of the Blue Bird Trail in Hastings.

BP #11: Ensure best management of urban forests

In 1996, Hastings applied to become a Tree City USA in which every year requires re-certification. This certification proves that "at least half of the trees in our City are on public property along streets, in parks, and around public building." On the Hastings Tree Guide, 75% of the recommended boulevard trees for planting are environmentally friendly and native trees to Minnesota. The City of Hastings requires all park keepers to be certified tree inspectors as part of their job requirement. These certified park keepers are trained to identify health issues that may including fungi and pests.

Category 3: Reduce Threats to Birds

BP #14: Reduce collisions with other man-made structures

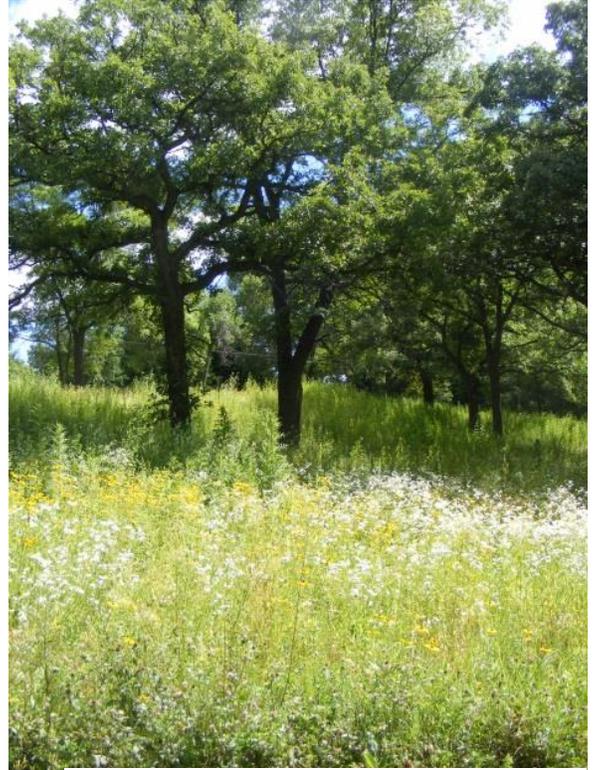
Many birds use the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers as migratory paths to move through Minnesota and south to the Gulf of Mexico. Many songbirds migrate at night and use the stars and other nocturnal cues to navigate. Artificial light, such as on bridges, can confuse and disorient migration. In order to prevent further bird confusion and death, Hastings constructed the new Highway 61 Bridge with under lighting.

BP #17: Reduce the threat of pesticides and other toxins

The City of Hastings also requires all park keepers to be certified MN Pesticides Applicators as part of their job requirement. This ensures that the park keepers are implementing the most efficient methods of using pesticides but also to have the ability to identify a problem and how to solve it with limited pesticide use.

BP #18: Reduce climate impacts

Lastly, new pool water heaters were installed at the Hastings Family Aquatic Center in 2014. Total BTU capacity is 3 million as compared to the old heater which was 4 million. There are now 2 heaters, so the operation of the pools usually only requires 1 heater and max capacity is 1.5 million BTU's. Finally, all parking lot, trail, and pavilion lighting installed as a part of Riverfront Renaissance is LED and is controllable through software.



Old Mill Park's converted natural landscape.
Photo credit: Marissa Escobedo and Megan Orthmann.

Renewal Suggestions: Review greens steps to determine how many of those practices fall under the policies of Bird City; look into more energy efficient programs; conduct a city-wide blue bird count using the data from volunteers; review the Hastings Tree Guide to remove any non-native/invasive trees on the recommended planted trees list; review all hyperlinks and online PDFs are up-to-date and still valid links.