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Atlanta Named USFWS Urban Bird Treaty City

(Atlanta, Ga.) October 6, 2015 – Atlanta was recently named a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Urban Bird Treaty City. As part of the designation, the USFWS Migratory Bird Program has awarded a \$25,000 Five Star Grant to Atlanta Audubon Society (AAS) for a joint project called *Creating Bird friendly Communities along Atlanta's Urban Tributaries*.

The project goal is to enhance and restore sections of Emma Wetlands at Blue Heron Nature Preserve and the Confluence of the north and south branches of Peachtree Creek to make them more bird friendly and to provide educational outreach in the community.

Adam Betuel, AAS Conservation Director, has already begun scouting project areas to identify birds that are currently using the areas. Invasive plant removal and native plantings are planned for the area, and AAS will continue to monitor Emma Wetlands and the Confluence to further understand what bird species visit these urban green spaces and how they utilize these improved habitats. Early surveys have already found beautiful birds like the American Redstart and Hooded Warbler, Swainson's Thrush, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks which are long distance migrants, as well as birds of conservation concern in the Southeastern U.S. like the Red-headed Woodpecker and even the flagship species of AAS, the Brown-headed Nuthatch.

"Atlanta Audubon Society is excited to bring a bird perspective to regional habitat restoration efforts," says Nikki Belmonte, Executive Director of AAS. "We are working with partners to conserve migratory birds through education, hazard reductions, citizen science, and habitat improvement strategies in metro Atlanta. We are absolutely thrilled to be recognized as an Urban Bird Treaty City—and I bet the birds who navigate through our city are, too."

Partners on this project include Blue Heron Nature Preserve, South Fork Conservancy, National Audubon Society, Greening Youth Foundation (Atlanta Youth Corps), and Georgia Native Plant Society, as well as minor contributions by Trees Atlanta and the Georgia Young Birders Club.

The grant proposal, *Creating Bird-friendly Communities in Atlanta's Urban Tributaries*, received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant. The program is administered by NFWF and financially supported by the Southern Company in the southeastern United States. The goal of the grant program is to develop nation-wide community stewardship of local natural resources, preserve these resources for future generations, and enhance habitat for local wildlife.

Funded projects address water quality issues in priority watersheds, and focus on the stewardship and restoration of coastal, wetland and riparian ecosystems across the country. The goal is to meet the conservation needs of important species and habitats, providing

measurable and meaningful conservation and educational outcomes. The program requires a minimum of five diverse partnerships and an education/outreach component that will help shape and sustain behavior to achieve conservation goals.

Additionally, AAS is partnering on another Five Star project awarded in Georgia this year with Conservation Legacy and Chattahoochee Bend State Park to provide birding opportunities, volunteer support, and educational print resources.

The mission of Atlanta Audubon Society is to protect Georgia's birds and their habitats through education, conservation, and advocacy.

Photo attached: Adam Betuel, AAS Conservation Director, has been surveying the project areas to determine what species of birds are currently found there.

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