

Four New Urban Partnerships Help Americans Gain Access to Health Benefits of Nature

In an increasingly urbanized country, new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partnerships in four cities will connect residents with nature. The partnerships are part of the Service's [Urban Wildlife Conservation Program](#).

Bloomington, MN; Cincinnati, OH; Elizabeth, NJ; and West Palm Beach, FL, join 17 other cities with [Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships](#). These partnerships work to provide residents of demographically diverse cities with fresh opportunities to get outdoors and experience nature. The partnerships encourage and nurture an appreciation of wildlife conservation.

One other city – Springfield, MA – has been designated an [Urban Bird Treaty city](#), joining 26 other such partnerships. The Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds works with cities and partners to conserve migratory birds through education, citizen science and conservation action.

The new partnerships were made possible by 2016 Five Star grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, which generated more than \$2 million in direct contributions and matching funds from local partners.

The four new Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships' focus areas are:

- **Bloomington, MN: Canoemobile: Discovering our Urban Wildlife Refuges:** The Wilderness Inquiry, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools, Saint Paul Right Track and other partners will showcase the [Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge](#) as a community asset for 1,200 urban youth and their families through place-based education and recreation activities and restoration of 15-acres along the Minnesota River.
- **Cincinnati, OH/Seymour, Indiana: Mill Creek Healthy People/Healthy River Program:** This project will help restore and regenerate 17 acres of wildlife habitat and wetlands in [Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge](#) in Indiana and in multiple sites within the Mill Creek riverine-riparian corridor in Cincinnati, Ohio. It will also engage at least 960 participants, including 860 middle and high school students and 100 adult volunteers from Mill Creek neighborhoods and diverse organizations.
- **Elizabeth, NJ: Greenway Renewal Along Elizabeth's Urban Waters:** Groundwork Elizabeth will partner with the [Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge](#) to foster a productive and mutually-beneficial relationship through two river restoration projects in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The project will engage youth from underserved communities in environmental projects that build stewardship around and improve access to amenities along the Elizabeth River and Travers Branch for communities around them.
- **West Palm Beach, FL: Apple Snail Adoption Program (ASAP) - Teaching Youth About the Effect of Invasives On Natural Ecosystems:** Florida Atlantic University Pine Jog will implement ASAP with at least 500 students in South Florida. The program will focus on propagating and restoring native Florida Apple Snail populations and the removal of invasive exotic snails in two locations: the [Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge](#) and the Grassy Waters Everglades Preserve.

The new Urban Bird Treaty city focus area is:

- **Springfield, MA:** This project will engage Springfield residents in citizen-science and stewardship-related activities to increase their knowledge and appreciation of bird conservation

issues through the Sustainable Springfield Urban Refuge Partnership. Restoration and habitat improvements for resident and migratory birds will span the metropolitan area, comprising a network of “Neighborhood Habitat Refuges” in strategic locations. The projects will enable students to participate in habitat restoration, curricula-based bird education, population monitoring and bird conservation awareness.

Photo caption:

Florida Atlantic University Pine Jog will work with the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge on restoring native Florida apple snail populations. (Photo by Ian Shive)