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## **Frankfort Woman Singled Out for Environmental Leadership Honoree Receives Audubon/Toyota TogetherGreen Fellowship**

**New York, NY, November 20, 2008**—A Frankfort, Illinois woman is the recipient of a new national fellowship designed to advance the work of individuals with outstanding potential to help shape a brighter environmental future.

Kim Meyer Ramirez is one of only 40 people selected from competitors nationwide for the *TogetherGreen* Conservation Leadership Program, part of a new conservation initiative of the National Audubon Society with support from Toyota. Fellows receive specialized training in conservation planning and execution, the chance to work and share best practices with gifted conservation professionals, and assistance with project outreach and evaluation. Each Fellow will also receive \$10,000 towards a community-focused project to engage local residents in conserving land, water and energy, and contributing to greater environmental health.

Ramirez will focus her efforts on the Midewin Bobolinking Project. The project will engage young adults from local high schools and community-based organizations in stewardship and biological monitoring projects at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Wilmington, Illinois – making them all part of the conservation solution. The project will accomplish this through a series of workshops, field experiments and restoration workdays. The project will ensure that that everyone in the community learns about this unique habitat. She will mentor community members in ecological monitoring projects, equipping them with new skills, opening their eyes to the nature and wildlife that exists in their own backyard, and collecting data that can create better management practices at Midewin. By encouraging community members to become environmental stewards, Ramirez is helping protect Midewin and the wildlife that depends on it now and for the future.

Ramirez, currently a graduate student at Governors University, has been involved in conservation efforts for two decades and has proven to be a dedicated and innovative conservationist. In her previous position, as a teaching assistant she assisted with courses in zoology, environmental physiology, and botany, among others, bringing her love of nature into the classroom. Ramirez also volunteers at Midewin as well as Sweet Fern Savanna Land and Water Reserve, Bartel Grassland and Orland Park Grassland, restoring habitat and monitoring bird populations.

“Kim is the kind of person who can make a real difference in the health of our environment and the quality of our future,” said Audubon President John Flicker. “Each of our *TogetherGreen* Fellows demonstrates exceptional environmental understanding and commitment, combined with tremendous potential to inspire and lead others. Together, they represent the talented and diverse leadership the environmental community will need to tackle the huge challenges and opportunities confronting us now and in the years to come.”

“The outcomes of this project will be two-fold,” said Ramirez. “Data collected by participants will result in better ecological management practices for grassland birds – and will increase community engagement in bird habit conservation, building further support for restoration efforts at Midewin.”

Ramirez has been affiliated with Governors University since 2006. Half of the *TogetherGreen* fellows come from within Audubon's far-reaching national network; half channel their environmental efforts through other organizations.

Ramirez will receive a Masters degree in environmental biology from Governors State University in 2009 and currently has a Masters degree in public health from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. She has worked with the Peace Corps in Honduras to improve environmental education and with Futures Group International to improve women's reproductive health.

"Toyota believes in the power of grassroots efforts to develop the environmental leaders of tomorrow," said Patricia Salas Pineda, Group Vice President, Toyota Motor North America. "These 40 *TogetherGreen* Fellows will receive invaluable training for the future while immediately making a difference today with on-the-ground community projects."

A complete list of the 2008 *TogetherGreen* fellows can be found at [www.TogetherGreen.org/fellows](http://www.TogetherGreen.org/fellows).

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### **About TogetherGreen**

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in spring, 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer and individual action opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. As of October, volunteer days have begun in 40, tallying in excess of 11,000 volunteer hours. Funding totaling \$1.4 million was recently awarded to innovative conservation projects nationwide, while [www.TogetherGreen.org](http://www.TogetherGreen.org) helps users take individual conservation action and share and celebrate success stories. The *TogetherGreen* initiative and grants programs are funded by a \$20 million Toyota gift to Audubon, the largest in the conservation group's long history.

### **About Audubon**

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. Visit Audubon online at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

### **About Toyota**

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants, with another under construction in Mississippi. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Through its corporate initiatives, manufacturing operations and philanthropy, Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. In 2007, Toyota contributed more than \$56 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit <http://www.toyota.com/community>.