



# News from the Thief River Falls Rotary Club

**For Immediate Release**

June 14, 2018

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## Photos Attached

### **Beito Foundation Supports TRF Rotary BirdWatch Program at Franklin Middle School**

Back in December 2017, when the Thief River Falls Rotary considered starting a program to introduce local students to wild birds, they knew they'd need to find an interested teacher and a mentor, and they'd need to provide tools - binoculars and bird identification books.

TRF Rotary Treasurer Jessica Muller found a teacher - Amber Murry - and a birding mentor - Heidi Hughes of Agassiz Audubon Society. Together they applied for grants to purchase 200 binoculars, one for every student in the 7th grade at Franklin Middle School.

Over the past six months, the TRF Rotary BirdWatch project has received a combined total of \$16,000 in grants from the TRF Education Foundation, the TRF Rotary and the Minnesota Ornithologists Union. Scheels of Grand Forks and Athlon Optics of Olathe, KS made the arrangements for the school to receive 200 Athlon NEOS 8x42 waterproof binoculars.

Now, thanks to a recent donation from the Beito Foundation of Thief River Falls, every 7th grader at Franklin Middle School will also have a bird identification book to use throughout the school year - so they can study local birds as part of their science education experience.

"We want our students to know that right here in Thief River Falls we have a tremendous variety and number of song birds, waterfowl, and more," said Gretchen Beito. "We want them to get outside and look."

That's what they plan to do when the school year starts this fall. Agassiz Audubon will be out there with them - to show them how to find, identify and study birds - at school, at home and on field trips to Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge, Red Lake Watershed District flood control projects and other local birding hotspots.

Agassiz Audubon is looking to expand the TRF Rotary BirdWatch Project this fall by helping Franklin Middle School students install a bird garden, feeders and nest boxes right outside their classroom windows. For more information about how you can get involved in this project - or learn more about birds and the wild nature of Northwestern Minnesota, contact Agassiz Audubon at 218-745-5666.

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The TRF Rotary Club is an organization of business professionals who believe in and commit to the motto "Service Above Self". They volunteer to improve the quality of our community. TRF Rotary Club's focus is on children and education, so most of their volunteer time is spent within the schools and supporting youth. Rotarians believe in developing the leaders of tomorrow with opportunities, creative thinking, and introduction into the world of business. Giving children a solid education with support is the foundation to lifelong learning. Rotary Club is proud to be a part of the Thief River Falls community.



## News from the Thief River Falls Rotary Club

### Photo Captions



Thief River Falls Rotary Treasurer Jessica Muller and TRF students Cora Hintz, McKenzie Hintz and Logan Hintz went outdoors last week to practice identifying birds - using bird identification books donated by the Beito Foundation and Athlon binoculars purchased with grant funds provided by the TRF Rotary, TRF Education Foundation and the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union.



Jessica Muller points out a Red-winged Blackbird in a marsh near the Challenger Elementary School in Thief River Falls



It's relatively easy to spot and identify this black bird. He's named for that bright color on his wings. He's a Red-winged Blackbird. During nesting season males flash the red epaulets on their shoulders to let other birds know: don't come any closer!

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