



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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www.MRVAC.org

January & February 2012

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Successful Holiday Auction Raises Money for Educational Projects

By Matthew Schaut and Bob Williams, MRVAC Board

Fall has been a busy time for MRVAC. Our annual auction, held November 17, 2011 at the Refuge Headquarters, brought in almost \$2000.00. The MRVAC Board extends many thanks to all those who attended and bid so generously! A big thank you as well to our very entertaining auctioneers (Mark Lystig and Scott Clark), and to Jeanne Holloran and the Refuge staff who continue to so kindly allow us to use their space. To those of you who have not yet attended an auction, please plan to attend next year. Loads of fun for a great cause.

The money raised will help us continue to support bus transportation for elementary students to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and providing Audubon Adventures newsletter kits for elementary classrooms as well as other projects under consideration. If you were unable to be at the auction, you can still help our education program by sending a gift to MRVAC at P.O. Box 20400, Bloomington, MN 55420.

A big thank you to the companies who donated so generously:

Vortex Optics
Jensen's Café in Burnsville
Baker's Square
Milio's Subs
Abdallah's in Burnsville
Great Harvest Bakery
Refuge Friends Inc
Aveda
Minnesota Valley YMCA
All Seasons Wild Bird Store
Valley Natural Foods in Burnsville
U of M Landscape Arboretum
Bruegger's Bagels
Lunds/Byerlys

Many of you donated homemade, new or gently used items. Thanks for bringing them!

Special Presentations Jan 26 and Feb 23 Free and Open to the Public

January 26 - Scott Sharkey

Wilderness in the Wetland

In December 1995, a Boy Scout troop, under the direction of refuge interpreter Ed Moyer, plugged a large drain tile on the Opus Marsh along the Minnesota River in Bloomington. A long neglected wetland was reborn. The program "Wilderness in a Wetland" is a photographic exploration of this unique 100 acre marsh over 15 years. The photographs and narrative document the remarkable recovery of this special wetland.

February 23- Sarah Thompson

Do trees affect nesting success in grasslands?

Sarah will talk about her research examining the role of trees in grasslands. Do trees cause songbirds to avoid otherwise suitable grassland habitat? Do waterfowl have lower nest success when they nest near tree groves or shelterbelts? Is tree removal an effective way to create better grassland habitat. She is working to answer these questions in conjunction with the Morris Wetland Management District in western Minnesota. Sarah is a graduate student in the Conservation Biology Graduate Program at the University of Minnesota

When: Please join us from **7:00-7:30 pm** to socialize over cookies. A brief business meeting and the featured speaker begin at **7:30 pm**. The meeting will conclude before 9:00 pm.

Where: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center 3801 American Blvd E, Bloomington. Accessible by Hiawatha Light Rail line, American Blvd. stop. Hwy 494 to 34th Ave – S to American Blvd; turn left and go 2 blocks. Center will be on your right.



MRVAC Chapter News & Regional Events

Matthew's Musings

By Matthew Schaut, MRVAC President

Welcome to 2012. Glad we all made it! I trust you enjoyed sundry holidays, a Christmas Bird Count or two, and have seen one or several of the many Snowy Owls that have infiltrated the States. The joy of seeing Snowys in our neck of the woods is tempered by the knowledge that they are here because they are hungry, on the brink of starvation. The younger ones, especially, don't change their diet when they enter warmer climes. They learned to hunt lemmings, a largish rodent, and don't know to take advantage of more petite, local fare. I wish they would, I wish they could. Let's honor those who make it through the winter, and those who don't.

While there is no guarantee that humankind can actually desist from destroying every square inch of natural space on the planet – this ecological nightmare has played out to the very bitter end writ small on Easter Island, and is being writ large on a global scale today—there have always been wise voices urging *moderation*. Think Aristotle and the foundations of Western Philosophy! An argument can be made, and the Audubon Society should make it, that a great deal of habitat should be preserved simply because it *should be* preserved. We *don't* have to use up everything just because we can! In fact, if we do then whatever we may imagine, we human beings will not survive too many more generations of eviscerating the natural world and natural processes – certainly not with our material well-being intact. We have to decide that enough is enough and choose to live within limits. In 2012, I hope we do a better job of this.

I'll close with the end of another Robert Frost poem which expresses what I am saying in stronger language. The poem begins by talking about gold, and the conquistador's unquenchable desire for more gold (sound familiar, oh Wall Street?). The ending rings bitter and true:

The Vindictives by Robert Frost

"The best way to hate is the worst.
'Tis to find what the hated need,
Never mind of what actual worth,
And wipe that out of the earth.
Let them die of unsatisfied greed,
Of unsatisfied love of display,
Of unsatisfied love of the high,
Unvulgar, unsoiled, and ideal.
Let their trappings be taken away.
Let them suffer starvation and die
Of being brought down to the real."

MRVAC Funds Chimney Swift Tower

By Paul Randall, MRVAC Member

I want to thank for your generous donation of \$250 for chimney swift tower materials; my Eagle Scout project. Without it, I would not have had enough funding in time.

I'd like to talk about my project and how it went for me. This is a large chimney like tower providing a place for chimney swifts to roost and nest. We started work on the 16th of June and finished on the 26th. It ended up being 18 hours of work with several people on each of the five workdays. On the final day, one of the parents brought scaffolding which greatly increased progress. We used liquid nail on the entire tower, along with screws for maximum strength. The angle irons are also a quarter of an inch adding additional strength. It shouldn't be going anywhere! I finished by the end of June, my original goal.

I hope you are pleased with where your money went. I am very happy with how the tower turned out. There is quite a bit of space underneath to squeeze in and clean the tower. I can do the cleaning job; it is only once a year and it is very simple. I just have to scrape the twig nest out if a nest was made. The tower should also last for a number of decades. Yearly maintenance should keep it in good condition and I can do my best to preserve it. Ron Windingstad from Audubon Minnesota gave me a CD with Chimney Swift recordings on it. I will play it in an attempt to attract nesting or roosting swifts. If you would like to see it, feel free to contact me. Thank you again helping me complete my project with your support. (See photo on page 3.)

Audubon Center of the North Woods Upcoming Event:

Celebrate the natural world and learn skills to make you more comfortable outdoors in Sandstone MN at the ACNW/Audubon Environmental Learning Center:

Becoming an Outdoors Woman Workshop

Weekend February 24-26, 2012

Meals, lodging and multiple winter outdoor skill classes (and some indoor sessions) are included in this weekend event. (\$170-180) Registration is by mail and some scholarships are available. Call 1-888-404-7743 or visit <http://www.audubon-center.org>



Regional and Conservation News

Highlights from the Audubon Minnesota Annual Meeting – Migration Corridor Focus

By Matthew Schaut, MRVAC President

The Audubon Minnesota annual meeting held at the Wilder Center in St. Paul on Nov. 12, 2011 was exciting. Two points especially stand out in my mind. One is the strategic reorganization of all of the National Audubon's efforts based upon migration pathways. Instead of basing efforts on state boundaries, the National Audubon Society will focus on the health of the flyways migrating birds actually use. Minnesota is now part of the Gulf Coast Restoration/Mississippi flyway region, under the leadership of Chris Canfield. For us and for our birds, Louisiana may have just become more important than Washington, DC.

The other thing that stands out in my mind is how flyway health will be encouraged within Minnesota. Within the State, the Audubon Society plans to focus efforts on increasing the viability of the areas identified as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). I was a little disappointed in this until I took a closer look at the IBAs already identified. The Upper and the Lower Minnesota River Valleys are two IBAs – covering the whole course of the Minnesota River! This is a lot of territory and most of it is unprotected habitat.

There's plenty of room for habitat protection and remediation here! Much effort will be aimed at improving the status of Minnesota's most endangered or declining species – such as birds using grassland and oak habitats – and being good stewards of those species identified as Stewardship species, such as the golden-winged warbler and the American woodcock whose breeding population or breeding area is concentrated in Minnesota.

My biggest concern is with habitat protection. I trust that, given the chance, natural processes will prove to be remediation processes. Habitat being preserved, with time, remediation will occur via natural and human-assisted processes. Even with a concentration on IBAs, some species simply will need more protected habitat. Preserving habitat will be difficult.

Minnesota State Representative Paul Torkelson, who represents District 21B and is a fourth generation farmer in Watonwan County, was kind enough to speak at the annual meeting. His talk was on strategies farmers can use to achieve clean water. He also spoke of the necessity that farming practices be such that farmers can achieve the greatest yields possible from their land.

Otherwise, the pressure to till marginal land which could otherwise be set aside for nature – is too great and, the implication is, all possible land will have to be tilled.

This argument seems to lead into a trap. The pressures to utilize every square inch of land for agriculture aren't going to go away, not in a world with 7 billion human mouths to feed. There will always be many reasons why more land has to be plowed, why human society can't afford to preserve natural habitat. It seems to me that the only way habitat will be preserved is simply if we *decide* to preserve it and act to preserve it and fight to maintain the preserved status of lands that always *could* be used for farming or urban sprawl or vacation homes or... We have to make limits and live within the limits we make.

Chimney Swift Tower

built by Paul Randall with partial funding by MRVAC



The tower is located in Meadows Park 13690 Azalea Ave, Rosemount, Minnesota. See more about the tower on page 2.



FIELD TRIPS – join us. All trips are free unless otherwise noted.



Minnesota River Valley
Audubon Chapter
P.O. Box 20400
Bloomington, MN 55420

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Bird Watching for Beginners

Saturday, January 7, 9:00-10:30 am
Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center
15865 Carver Highlands Dr., Carver
Craig Mandel - 952-546-3407

Bird Watching is a hobby enjoyed by millions of Americans, and you can learn how to enjoy it as well from a professional birder. You will learn how to find birds in their different habitats and will learn how to use a field guide and look for identifying features of birds such as eye rings, wing bars, and other distinctive markings. Winter is an exciting time to study the resident birds, plus you will see some species of birds that are only observed during the winter season. Dress for the weather and bring along your binoculars. There will be extra binoculars to borrow if you don't have any.

Bird Watching Trek at MN Valley-Wilkie Unit

Saturday, January 21, 9:00-11:00 am,
Wilkie Unit - 7701 Co. Rd. 101 E., Shakopee
Craig Mandel - 952-546-3407

Join us for a bird walk on one of the many refuge units and learn about the birds that spend the winter season in Minnesota. With a variety of habitats at the different units, you will want to explore them all. During these walks we will search for birds that over winter in Minnesota and the first migrating species of the year. A variety of waterfowl, raptors, Northern Shrikes and American Tree Sparrows are some of the types of birds we will look for. Birders of all skill levels are welcome on these walks. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. For information on these walks or to register, please contact Craig

Northern Minnesota Birds Overnight Trip

Thursday & Friday, February 16-17, 2012 - 7:00 am
Craig Mandel 952-546-3407

\$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members

Join us on a trip to Northern Minnesota. We will begin the trip in Duluth and from there will head into the Sax/Zim Bog. We will be searching for wintering finches, woodpeckers and grouse and with luck we could get to see a Great Gray or Northern Hawk Owl. On Friday we will keep our options open. Some of the other locations that can offer interesting birding at this time of the year include areas in Lake and Aitkin counties. Please contact Craig to register for this trip.

Bird Watching Treks at MN Valley-Wilkie Unit

Saturday, February 25, 9:00-11:00 am,
Wilkie Unit - 7701 Co. Rd. 101 E., Shakopee
Craig Mandel - 952-546-3407

See January 21 for outing description.

Beginning Birdwatching Workshop CANCELED
March 3, 2012 at 1:30pm at Visitor Center Bloomington

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge has many indoor and outdoor events scheduled in Jan & Feb. Call 952-854-5900 or check their on-line calendar:
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/minnesotavalley/calendar.html>

Winter & Early Spring Bird Festivals

Sax-Zim Bog Birding Festival Feb 17-19, 2012

This northern Minnesota festival offers field trips to look for boreal specialties – learn where to “bird the bog” - with evening meals and presentations both Friday & Saturday. Register online at <http://sax-zimbog.com/birding-festival/>

Rivers & Wildlife Celebration March 15-18, 2012

Gather in Nebraska to celebrate the annual migration of 500,000 Sandhill Cranes and millions of waterfowl through the heart of the Central Flyway. Further info at nebraskacranefestival.org. Any other questions about the Celebration? Email us Nebraska@audubon.org or call 402-797-2301.