



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

Volume 51 Issue 2—Bloomington MN
www.MRVAC.org

September & October 2017

Anne Hanley, articles editor
Greg Burnes, field trips editor

Special Presentations Sept 28 and Oct 26

Free & Open to the Public

Time & location details for both events below

September 28, 2016 - 7:30 pm

Al Batt – Author, Humorist & Birder

Spark Birds + 50th Anniversary

If you have heard Al before, you know you are going to be in for a treat. If you haven't heard Al speak, plan to be here. What in the world is a spark bird? What is your spark bird? Why is it your spark bird? Can you trade spark birds with your friends? Al Batt will endeavor to answer your spark bird questions.

October 26, 2016 – 7:30 pm

Greg Hoch – Minnesota DNR

The Greater Prairie Chicken

For ten months of the year, the Greater Prairie Chicken's drab colors allow it to disappear into the landscape, however, in April and May this grouse is one of the most outrageously flamboyant birds in North America. Competing with each other for the attention of females, males gather before dawn in an explosion of visual and audio displays - "booming from the mists of nowhere" as Aldo Leopold wrote decades ago. There is nothing else like it, and it came perilously close to being lost. Greg Hoch shows that we can ensure that this iconic bird flourishes once again.

When: Please join us on the 4th Thursday of the month 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, get off at the American Blvd. stop. Driving, take Hwy 494 to 34th Ave – go south to American Blvd; turn left, go 2 blocks. Use the staff entrance in the middle of the building.

Treasurer's Report

By Bob Williams, MRVAC Treasurer

Our last fiscal year, June 1, 2016-May 31, 2017, was another successful one. We exceeded our income budget for our 3 most important categories of income i.e. Birdathon, Holiday Auction, General Contributions. This meant that we did not have to dip into our reserves to meet our budget.

On the expense side we had an unexpected expense for the new website, which was well worth it, but in other categories we came in below budget so it all averaged out in the end. Our total income for the year was \$16,143.50 and our total expenses were \$15,450.70. We still have 4 CD's totaling a little over \$20,000 and a nice cushion in our checking account so we can handle most surprises at least for the foreseeable future.

Our current fiscal year is off to a good start as well. We have received donations for Birdathon totaling over \$2,000 and we expect a few more before the end of the calendar year. If you would still like to contribute, please send your checks to MRVAC at PO Box 20400, Bloomington, MN 55420 made payable to MRVAC or go to our page on GiveMN.org where you can use a credit card.

Since we are no longer sending the Trumpeter by mail to the majority of our members, our projected expenses for this fiscal year are lower than last year. This should allow us to make even more grants than we did last year to help fund the worthy programs of the organizations that apply.

Finally, I would like to let people know that I plan to resign as Treasurer at the end of this fiscal year, May 2018. If there is anyone out there who would like to take over this task, please let me know at bxwilliams@cbburnet.com or at 612-728-2232. It is not a particularly difficult task and I would be happy to help you with it during the first year; June 2018 to May 2019.



MRVAC Chapter News

Holiday Auction November 16

Please think about what donations you could collect for the fundraising auction Thursday November 16.

We could especially use a few larger items like a boat trip, use of a cabin, a homemade dinner or a behind the scenes tour.

Please email the committee with your ideas or let us know in advance, ideally by October 1 if possible, about your contributions so we can mention them in our publicity:

- Monica Rauchwarter mrauchwarter@gmail.com
- or Greg Burnes GBurnes@comcast.net
- or Anne Hanley anne_hanley90@hotmail.com

Bird Surveys in Renville County

By Bob Janssen, MRVAC Board of Directors

Here's my story of how I came to do bird surveys in one of the most intensely agricultural counties, Renville. If you check a map, you will see that the northern boundary is roughly Highway 7. The Minnesota River forms the diagonal boundary.

At the MOU spring meeting in St. Paul, I met an old friend, Steve Stucker, who is Director of the Minnesota County Biological Survey. Steve is one of Minnesota's most knowledgeable birders because of his extensive experience with the geographical distribution of Minnesota birds. I mentioned that I was looking for useful work to keep me busy. Steve told me to get in touch with his wife who is looking for help doing bird surveys in areas in western Minnesota. It sounded exactly like what I was looking for, especially since it might get me back into working with birds.

Jennifer Stucker is the Research Biologist for West Inc who are Environmental and Statistical Consultants doing work in western Minnesota where wind generators are potentially going to be installed. I called Jennifer and was hired and assigned to survey 17 GPS locations in a township in Renville County. I can think of better locations to look for birds but it was work and best of all it had to do with birds!

Surveys were required at each location for 70 minutes once per month. I was trained in the field by one of West's most experienced people. I thought I knew many things about doing bird surveys but I learned a lot of new techniques while doing these surveys. The surveys included observation of a Bald Eagle nest near to the points I was to survey. Who ever thought there would be a Bald Eagle nest in the "middle" of the corn and soybean monoculture in Renville County?

Continued on page 3

Support your Local Audubon Chapter

We rely on our members and supporters to keep us going. Please make a contribution to help underwrite printing the Trumpeter, provide honoraria for our meeting speakers and fund conservation/outdoor education projects.

While we do receive about \$2500 annually from National Audubon to help support chapter expenses, (about one-eighth of our annual budget) we count on raising at least \$5,000 through this appeal.

Any size donation is appreciated.

Please make your **check** payable to MRVAC and bring it to a meeting, mail it to MRVAC, PO Box 20400, Bloomington MN 55420 or use the enclosed envelope. (See below for donating on line)

Here is my donation to MRVAC of \$_____

Given on (fill in date) _____

By (Name): _____

Address: _____

Yes, please send me a receipt

MRVAC is a 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. If requested, we will mail you a receipt to document your gift.

Or donate online - start on our home page, MRVAC.ORG. Click the link that looks like this →

Donate to MRVAC and make a difference



Treats Needed for Upcoming Meetings

If you can bring a few dozen cookies, bars or some easy-to-eat snack to share at the October or subsequent meetings, please call Robin, the Social Chair, at 612-723-2632 or email to robinkutz13@gmail.com



Conservation & Habitat/Field Trips

Continued from page 2

I have been doing the surveys since April and I have found that this monoculture of agriculture is a great lesson in the changing landscape of Minnesota. This monoculture extends for miles, as far as the eye can see, corn and soybean planted almost to the edge of the road and the ditches along the road where grass and other plants remain which is usually mowed for the hay it produces. Where is there any habitat for birds?

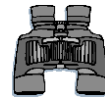
I was really discouraged but as time passed and I grew familiar with the landscape I found out how resilient birds can be. The main grassland habitat that remains is along the drainage ditches which are everywhere. Some of these ditches are 20 to 30 feet or more deep but they are full of grass and other vegetation "spills" out over the top of the ditches. Vesper Sparrows are common along the gravel roads where the ditches and grass occur, Horned Larks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Yellowthroats and even a few Bobolinks use the ditch grass for nesting. In addition to birds, butterflies are abundant in the sparse habitat along the gravel roads.

Another area that is good for birds in this intense agriculture area is the farmsteads. Most of the homes are surrounded by dense brush and many species of trees which provide excellent woodland habitat for Red-headed Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers and Downy Woodpeckers. Mourning Doves and Red-winged Blackbirds are probably the most common birds in the area, they are everywhere and an occasional Eurasian Collared-Dove can be heard about the farm houses. American Robins, Barn Swallows and House Wrens are present around each farm home. I have even found Least Flycatchers in a few of the woodlots. Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels are seen along the utility lines.

The agricultural portions of Renville County, with their monoculture of corn and soybeans, is not the place to look for rarities but in spite of this, the area provides habitat for many Minnesota birds so there is hope for the species that I have mentioned above.

In a few areas of the county where I am working there are extensive areas of grassland. One Waterfowl Production Area covers almost a square mile and the birdlife here is amazing, Bobolinks and Sedge Wrens are everywhere and can be heard as you drive by this beautiful prairie area. I haven't had time to study the area but it no doubt has many other species of grassland birds. It shows what the preservation of habitat can do for birds.

The bird that is missing from the whole area is the Western Meadowlark; I wonder what it would take to restore this species to Renville County? What a treat it would be to hear their song drifting over this landscape.



FIELD TRIPS – join us. All trips are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.

Beginning birders are welcome on all field trips:

Bird Watching Treks at the Refuge

Join us for a bird walk on one of the many refuge units and learn about the birds that visit the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge during their fall migration. With a variety of habitats at the different units, you will want to explore them all. Birders of all skill levels are welcome on these walks. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather.

Rapids Lake Education & Visitor Center

15865 Rapids Lake Rd, Carver

All hikes from 8:00–10:30 am, led by Craig Mandel.

Sunday, September 10

Tuesday, September 26

Tuesday, October 3

Saturday, October 14

Bass Ponds Trailhead, 8:00 – 10:30am

2501 86th St. E., Bloomington

All hikes from 8:00–10:30 am, led by Craig Mandel.

Monday, September 11

Monday, September 18

Saturday, September 23

Sunday, October 1

Monday, October 9

Saturday, October 28

Ney Nature Center

Saturday, Sept. 9, @ 8:30 am

28238 Nature Center Ln, Henderson, MN 56044

Craig Mandel 952-240-7647

On this walk we will explore the trails at the Ney Nature Center. With a mix of habitats, we should be able to observe a nice variety of resident and migrant song birds. We should get to see a nice variety of warblers and sparrows. Please contact Craig to register.

Southern Minnesota Birding Days

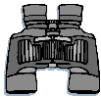
Thursday-Friday, September 14-15, @ 7:00 am

Craig Mandel 952-240-7647

\$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members
On this trip we will be spending time birding in Waseca and Steele counties. Some of the locations we may explore include, Rice Lake State Park, Oak Glen Lake, Goose Lake, Courthouse and Crane Creek and a couple of sewage ponds. With luck, we'll have a nice mix of early migrant shorebirds and some lingering nesting birds. Please contact Craig to register for this trip.

More field trips on page 4

September & October 2017



FIELD TRIPS – join us. All trips are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.



Minnesota River Valley
Audubon Chapter
PO Box 20400
Bloomington MN 55420

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Beginning birders are welcome on all field trips:
See more field trips on page 3.

Goodhue County Birding Day

Friday, Sept. 22, @ 7:30 am
Craig Mandel 952-240-7647

Join us on a search of the back roads along the Cannon and Mississippi Rivers. With a chance to find some Tufted Titmice and other interesting residents of the area. We should also have time to check Lock and Dam #3, Colville Park and Lake Byllesby. For information or to register for this field trip, please contact Craig

Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve

15501 Murphy Lake Road, Savage (Main parking lot)
Sunday, Sep. 24, @ 7:00 am
Jay Miller – 612-325-3066

Fall is a prime time to take a hike at Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve. We will look for migrant and resident species along the trails that run through the prairie and wooded areas. Please contact Jay for more information

Central Minnesota Birding Days

Thursday, Friday, Oct. 5-6 @ 6:30 am
Craig Mandel 952-240-7647

\$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members
On this trip we will be birding in Benton and Morrison counties. Some of the locations we may explore include Benton Beach, Bend in the River and Belle Prairie County Parks, Crane Meadows NWR and a number of WMAs. We will be searching for waterfowl, sparrows and other migrants. Please contact Craig to register for this trip.

Bids for Kids Scholarship Dinner & Fund Raiser

Saturday, October 14 @ 5:00 pm - 9:30 pm

Audubon Center of the Northwoods, Sandstone MN
Bids for Kids: K-12 Scholarship Fundraiser. Please join us for this fun evening to help fund scholarships for our K-12 environmental learners! Appetizers, beer & wine, banquet dinner, live music by Nathan Frazer, live auction and a silent auction \$35/person. Preview starts at 5:00 pm, dinner at 6:00 pm, auction follows. Pre-registration is required. This is a prepaid event. To reserve your spot visit audubon-center.org or call 888-404-7743

Sherburne County Birding Day

Friday, October 27, @ 8:00 am
Craig Mandel 952-240-7647

Much of our day will be spent exploring the Sherburne NWR, but there are also some other fun spots to bird in the county as well, including Big & Fremont Lakes that may have some interesting diving ducks. We'll also check a couple other smaller parks and WMA's. For information or to register, please contact Craig

Special Festivities at the September 28 General Meeting – the Continuing Celebration of MRVAC's 50th Anniversary

Besides Al Batt as the speaker – a treat in itself, there will be cake and some other taste treats.

There will be a photographer; wear something photogenic and/or bird-related.

Could you volunteer to take pictures of people at the photo station? If we don't have a volunteer, we'll hire a professional. Contact BXWilliams@CBBURNET.COM

We also need someone to record names as photos are being taken.

Other volunteer opportunities exist: board member, treasurer, newsletter editor, recruitment/volunteer coordinator. Contact GBurnes@comcast.net or BXWilliams@cbburnet.com