



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

# Trumpeter

Volume 51 Issue 5—Bloomington MN  
www.MRVAC.org

March & April 2018

Anne Hanley, articles editor  
Greg Burnes, field trips editor

## Matthew's Musings

By Matthew Schaut, MRVAC President

The January 2018 Refuge gathering was an enjoyable affair. What is better than hearing about, and seeing video of penguins in action?

In the audience was a young professional biologist. In her early teens she had applied for and received money from MRVAC to attend environmental summer camps. She sited these camps as one of the key reasons she chose a career studying and positively impacting our precious environment. If you are aware of an interested youth, or a program which serves youth, now is the time to submit your proposal! This can be done at [MRVAC.ORG](http://MRVAC.ORG) or talk to any board member for more details. MRVAC's mission is to support environmental education with the donation dollars we receive from each of you. Thanks!

It doesn't seem possible, but the environmental assault seems to have accelerated over the last couple of months. The coastlines have been opened up to unlimited drilling, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been put at risk, multiple national monuments are being opened up to mineral claims, 30% tariffs have been put on imported solar panels, the Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty has been degraded in its ability to protect nonhuman beings, and the Polymet environmental review process truncated – all by executive fiat.

Apparently, that is how our government now works? I don't know if lawsuits will slow these unconscionable actions, but they will not hurt. I do know that resistance means gumming up the works in every way possible. We must also know what we want and accept no less. (The other side has a clear picture of what it wants – and stops at nothing.) We must do what reason and conscience prompts – and never forget the spirit of Standing Rock or Martin Luther King Jr.'s Arc of Justice. The planet needs this.

I'd like to share a book with you, Derek Jensen's *The Culture of Make Believe*. It is a model of conscience and

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## Special Presentations March and April Free & Open to the Public

### Minnesota's Birds: What We Thought We Knew, What We Now Know, What We Still Don't Know Thursday March 22 @ 7:30 pm

Presented by Bob Dunlap, MN DNR and MOU President

We've learned a few things about Minnesota's birds since the turn of the century. Bob Dunlap, a zoologist with the MN Department of Natural Resources and current president of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, will guide us through some new insights and new frontiers for birding in Minnesota.

### Monitoring Minnesota Bats Thursday, April 26 @ 7:30 pm

Presented by Melissa Boman, MN Biological Survey

Bats are an incredible mammal species that provide us with many ecological benefits. Learn about the different species of bats in Minnesota and how the deadly disease, White-nose Syndrome will impact bats in the state and across North America. Bat survey specialist Melissa Boman will discuss ongoing monitoring conducted by the Minnesota Biological Survey and measures you can take to contribute to bat conservation.

#### These details are for both meetings –

**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 3815 American Blvd E, Bloomington. Enter through the staff door in the middle of the building. From Hwy 494 exit on 34<sup>th</sup> Ave, go south to American Blvd; turn left on American and go 3 blocks. Visitor Center will be on your right. Also accessible via the Hiawatha Light Rail line; exit at the American Blvd. stop.

## MRVAC News

### *Mathew's Musings, continued*

soul-searing reflection on the processes in American history and psyches that have always been there, but which we often repress. The book seems prescient because the unacknowledged cruelty has been unmasked by the Trump Presidency but the injustice to the environment and to the disenfranchised have always been dominant processes in our society. Our Constitution has never fully protected anyone from being enslaved, lynched or from having their village wiped out. Nor, to be frank, did our Founding Fathers.

If the current tribulations cause us all to do a little more soul searching and become more engaged in politics, we will all be better for it. Jensen is a perfect guide. He is passionate, he feels the pain, he refuses to turn a blind eye, he witnesses – and he is kind. I cannot think of a better book to read for these times.

Take care out there.

### **2017 Bloomington CBC Report**

*Submitted by Bart Anderson, Bloomington Compiler*

The 2017 Bloomington Christmas Bird Count took place on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The temperature stayed around 30F with low winds, which made for ideal birding. The count included 17 parties with 49 counters. Counters walked a total of 66 foot miles, drove 348.6 car miles, and spent 50 hours walking and 45.5 hours driving.

57 species were tallied, with one unidentified hawk species and one unidentified owl species. A grand total of 5,700 birds were seen. Water on the Minnesota River was frozen in some spots but mostly open. Most ponds were frozen, but larger bodies of water were partly open. Waterfowl species were well represented with Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Green-Winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, American Coot and Common and Hooded Merganser found

Raptors seen were Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-tailed and Rough Legged hawk (3). Also seen were Northern Shrike(8), Peregrine Falcon(2),and Merlin(1). Owls found included Great Horned, Barred, and 4 Snowy Owls at the MSP airport (the airport has already live-trapped and relocated 16 Snowy Owls).

Sparrow species found were American Tree, Fox, Song, White-throated and Dark-eyed Junco. 25 Common Redpolls were seen at Wood Lake Nature Center under feeders. Other species of note were Hermit Thrush(1), Yellow Rumped Warbler(1), Red-Winged Blackbird(2),and Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker(1). Count week birds (birds seen from December 13-15 and 17-19) include Tufted Titmouse, Red-Shouldered Hawk, Northern Goshawk and Carolina Wren.

### **Salt Lake Birding Weekend 2018**

Saturday April 28 - Sponsored by MOU and MRVAC  
*Submitted by Ken Larson*

If you're dreaming about spring and wanting to find migrating shorebirds and waterfowl, why not join the 43rd annual Salt Lake Birding Weekend? On Saturday April 28, 2018, volunteers will guide birders around Salt Lake, Big Stone Refuge, the lakes, wetlands and native prairies in Lac qui Parle, Yellow Medicine and Big Stone counties. Friday and Sunday birding is on your own. This event is free and open to all who are interested. No pre-registration is required. Last year over 100 birders found 139 different species of birds with an additional five on Friday and three on Sunday for a total of 147. Information and map at <http://moumn.org/saltlake/>

On Saturday April 28 at 7 a.m. meet at the Marietta American Legion, located one block west of the intersection of County Road 7 and State Highway 40, 11 miles west of Madison. Coffee, sweet rolls, juice and milk will be available for purchase. Guided car caravans will leave between 7 and 8 am. At noon stop back at the Legion for barbecue sandwiches (available at a modest cost), to compare notes and continue afternoon birding. A Saturday chicken dinner for \$12, will be served at 7:30 pm at the Sons of Norway Hall on Highway 75 in Madison. Reservations are necessary for dinner; please contact Julie Clafin by email at [JulieClafin@gmail.com](mailto:JulieClafin@gmail.com). After dinner there will be a short program and then the species count for the day will be recorded.

Local lodging is available at Lou's Lodge in Madison 320-598-7518, the Vali Vu Motel in Ortonville 320-839-2558, Prairie Waters Inn in Appleton 320-289-2500, and the Country Inn by Carlson in Montevideo 320-269-8000. Free camping is available at Prairie Marsh Farm, 1770 151st Ave, Marietta, located 7 miles west of US 75 and 1.5 miles south of 212. Contact Ken Larson for more information or to reserve a camping site - cell 612-210-8486 or Email to [prairiemarshfarm@comcast.net](mailto:prairiemarshfarm@comcast.net).

Last year with cold, wet weather two days before plus the later date resulted in a good variety of waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, warblers and sparrows. Some of the best birds of the weekend were a Black-necked Stilt at Lone Tree Lake and a Prairie Falcon in southwestern Lac Qui Parle County. A Golden Eagle was spotted near Big Stone Lake. Three miles northwest of Madison a large flock of over 648 American Golden Plovers was found. Nearby at Madrena WMA three White-faced Ibis, 123 American White Pelicans and one Western Grebe were found. Two Ferruginous Hawks were seen as well as numerous Swainson's Hawks. Altogether 23 shorebird, 15 sparrow and 5 Warbler species were counted.

## MRVAC News, Continued

### Bird-a-Thon Challenge

Submitted by Bob Williams, Treasurer

2018 marks the 51<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the incorporation of our chapter. Last year we raised over \$2,000 – it would be great to beat that.

Those of you who plan to go birding to raise money should choose a day between May 1<sup>st</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup>. You can go birding anywhere in the world on that day. Sponsors usually make their pledges as a flat amount or on a per bird basis, so the more species you identify, the more money you can raise.

You don't have to go birding alone. The more eyes and ears you have the better. You can start at 12:01am and bird until 11:59pm if you have the stamina. The funds that we raise with our Birdathon will be used to fund grant requests that are submitted to us. In the past these have included grants to local nature centers and schools, to the MN Arboretum, to the Audubon Center of the North Woods and the MN Valley NWR. Most of our grants support educational efforts directed at children.

Here are a few simple tips:

1. Don't be afraid to ask! Most people are reluctant to ask for donations, but I am always surprised at how many people are willing to help, especially when they understand what the money will be used for. Be sure to tell them that it is our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
2. Plan out your route! Pay attention to the weather and the latest reports on MOU, e-bird and Facebook. The best results are achieved if you can visit a variety of habitats on a nice day.
3. Tell your sponsors what you did! Most sponsors have some interest in what you are doing and will want to know what the highlights of your day were. This will help you in upcoming years to ask for repeat sponsorship.
4. Use a sponsorship form! Forms can be obtained from MRVAC.ORG or Bob Williams (see below for his contact info). This helps you to keep track of who your donors are and how much they have pledged.

All donations that you collect should be submitted to Bob Williams by June 1, 2018. You can contact him at 612-728-2232 or at [bxwilliams@cbburnet.com](mailto:bxwilliams@cbburnet.com). It is best to give the donations directly to Bob at one of the general meetings, (4<sup>th</sup> Thursday – May 24) but they also can be mailed to MRVAC at PO Box 20400, Bloomington, MN 55420. You don't need to sponsor a birder to donate; direct donations are welcomed as well!

### Free Lecture March 31: “Birds Can Save the World”

Saturday, March 31, 2018 at 10:00 am  
MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center  
3815 American Boulevard East, Bloomington

Cornell University is sponsoring a free lecture by John Fitzpatrick, PhD, Director of the Cornell University Ornithology Laboratory, at The Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge headquarters. No charge, no reservations necessary.

### Updated Field Trip PDF Now Online

There have been some new field trips added to MRVAC's annual trip list plus some cancellations and changes because the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge is still closed.

Please check MRVAC.ORG for the new list. To find it, click on **Events** on the top right and then click on the red rectangle that says [Field Trip List 2017-2018](#)

### New Treasurer

Walt Stull will take over as Treasurer from the retiring Bob Williams in June. Watch for more about Walt in the next issue.

### Jean M. Pfeiderer



Jean M. Pfeiderer, (78) of Bloomington, MN passed away peacefully in her sleep on Wednesday November 29 2017. Survived by loving companion, Paul Pettinger; children Don (Deb) Pfeiderer, Dave (Jayne) Pfeiderer, and Deborah (Al) Tollefson, 3 grandchildren, & 1 great-granddaughter.

Jean was a close friend of Dorothy Taylor who was a former Membership Chair for MRVAC.

MRVAC gratefully received a bequest of \$500 from her family.

## Excelsior Christmas Bird Count Report

Submitted by Howard Towle, Excelsior compiler

The 66th Excelsior Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 16. Weather conditions were generally favorable with temperatures in the upper 20's, no precipitation and, most importantly, very little wind – far better than last year's subzero, windy, snowy conditions. Lakes, including the big bays on Lake Minnetonka, were frozen, but most rivers and streams were at least partially open. Sixty-two field observers and eight birdfeeder watchers helped count, including 18 counters working out of Lowry Nature Center under the coordination of Interpretative Naturalist Kirk Mona, four counters from the Minnesota Master Naturalists led by Mary Beth Pottratz, and seven volunteers working with the Bush Lake Chapter of the Izaak Walton League with Paul Erdmann.

The total number of species seen on count day was 53, somewhat below our 20-year average of 58. Curiously, this is exactly the number seen during last year's harsh conditions and can be explained by several 'misses' mentioned below and a minimum of unusual species. On the other hand, the total number of individuals counted was 9970, well above last year's total of 5115. The total number of birds on our count varies dramatically depending on whether Lake Minnetonka is open and hosting 1000's of Common Mergansers. In the past 10 years in which the lake was frozen, the average total count was 7280 individuals, so we did a good job of getting out there and finding birds.

The highlight of the count this year was a single female/immature Pine Grosbeak found in the gardens of the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum by Joel Claus and Joe Lindell. The last Pine Grosbeak found on our count was 28 years ago in 1989 – great find! This bird hung around for several days allowing many birders in the area the chance to observe this northern species.

Other notable findings: Jerry Bonkoski found a single Common Grackle in Shakopee. This species has been found in about 50% of counts in recent years; Bob and Denise Heise who count in the western Chaska area found the only Red-winged Blackbirds of the count – 55 of them. These blackbirds are also found on about 50% of counts; our intrepid team of counters led by Renner Anderson who cover the Blue Lake Water Treatment Plant and Shakopee Mill Pond did their usual outstanding job of counting ducks on the open water there. In all, they had 13 waterfowl species. The most unusual of these were a pair of Wood Duck at the Mill Pond, seen on only 30% of counts in the past 20 years; Dennis Yockers, Sue Grant and Mark Damato counting in Minnetonka found our only two Song Sparrows, another species found on about half of counts.

A few near misses: Our only Sharp-shinned Hawk on the count was observed by Paula and Casey O'Keefe in Bloomington. Similarly, only one Cooper's Hawk was found by birdfeeder watcher, Steve O'Neill, in Shakopee. The only Red-breasted Nuthatches were found by Joel and Joe at the Arboretum. A single Purple Finch showed up at the birdfeeders of Paul and Tom Worwa in Chanhassen. And only a single White-throated Sparrow was found, again recorded by one of our feeder watchers, Alan Branhagen in Chaska. Thank goodness for those feeders.

Close, but no cigar: On the Friday before the count, Alan found a Hermit Thrush feeding on yew bushes outside a Subway in Chanhassen, but it decided to find a better food source by the next day. And while looking for the Pine Grosbeak, several folks noted a flock of Common Redpolls at the Arboretum on the Sunday after the count. These birds will go down as 'count week' birds, but don't count in our species total.

Misses (all birds seen on at least 50% of counts in past 20 years): Redhead, Canvasback, American Kestrel, Ring-billed Gull, Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin.

Highs: Despite the somewhat lower than average number of species found, a remarkable number were found in record high numbers for all 66 years of the Excelsior count: 323 Trumpeter Swans (previous high 165 in 2012); 209 Gadwall (previous high 158 in 1999); 17 Barred Owl (previous high 8 in 1993); 7 Belted Kingfisher (previous high 5 occurred three times); 22 Pileated Woodpeckers (previous high 19 in 2007); 1044 Black-capped Chickadees (previous high 985 in 2009); 288 White-breasted Nuthatch (previous 276 in 2009). The Barred Owls number was really remarkable; they were found in 8 different territories (out of 14). Four of the Belted Kingfishers were found along Purgatory Creek in Eden Prairie by Scott Clark, Ken Larson and Patrick Peters. Ring-necked Ducks, Wild Turkeys and Brown Creepers were also found in larger numbers than typical.

Lows: The total count for American Robins was 9. That compares to a 20-year average of 196. Not sure where they all went. There were also relatively low counts for American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos.

Next year's count will be held on Saturday, December 15 – mark your calendars. Most importantly, thanks to everyone who participated. Your continued support makes coordinating this count enjoyable. Note: The Audubon Society no longer asks participants to contribute \$5 each to support the count, but they do appreciate any contributions. Here's the website in case you are interested:  
<http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>



## Searching for Kirtland's Warblers in Minnesota May 10 – June 16

Come to a meeting April 9 from 7-9 pm  
Where: Southdale Library Meeting Room on 2nd floor  
Please RSVP to Jack Hauser: [jgshauser@gmail.com](mailto:jgshauser@gmail.com)  
All interested birders are invited. Come prepared to make a big difference and participate in this survey of Kirtland's Warblers (KIWA) in Pine County this spring.

Teams of 3-4 people each will be signed up to survey one township (6 miles square). Surveying will commence May 10 and end June 16. Surveying hours are sunrise to 10:00 a.m. on as many days as a team has time for.

If you already know you want to help, you can preregister to Pat Hogle: [pthoglund@msn.com](mailto:pthoglund@msn.com). Send your name, cell phone number and email address. You can also send your team's contact info, your preferred township and planned survey dates, if known.

### Back ground:

The Kirtland's Warbler (KIWA) is an endangered species who nests on the ground, under young Jack Pine trees primarily in Michigan. In the 1980's, the number of nesting pair in MI was down to 188. Last year there were 2500 nesting pair in MI. In 2007, the KIWA was found in Adams county WI, today in 5 WI counties. In 2016 one nesting KIWA fledged 5 chicks in Bayfield County WI.

The KIWA has only been sighted in MN 3 times in the last 150 years. There is no record of one nesting in MN. We want to organize an army of birders to survey Pine County MN for the KIWA in the spring of 2018. Teams of 3-4 people each will be signed up to survey one township (6 miles x 6 miles square).

Surveying will commence from May 10 and end June 16. Surveying hours are sunrise to 10:00 a.m. on as many days as a team has time for, but not if the weather is inclement (windy, cold or rainy).

Birders are encouraged to organize their own teams with friends. Birders will set their own schedule for when and how often they survey. Each team is encouraged to survey at least once per week and as often as they can. Each Township could have more than one team so that teams of 4 take turns doing the survey.

You will need a cell phone or other mobile device with bird guide app that includes songs, GPS, notebook and binoculars. To play male KIWA songs, you will need some kind of amplifier.

## Governor's Forum

Here's a link to the governor's forum that was held in January 2018 by the Minnesota Environmental Partnership. (The Republican candidates were invited but did not participate.)

You may use this YouTube link to see the candidates in action.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cQA5056WFs&feature=youtu.be>

## Keep Grass Clippings on Your Lawn and Out of the Street

Once you start cutting grass again, orient the mower so any grass clippings are propelled back on your lawn and NOT into the street. Why?

Landscaping debris in roadways is eventually washed in to storm water collections systems when it rains. This organic material also contributes to nutrient loading and oxygen deprivation in receiving streams, lakes and storm water basins, while creating conditions conducive to bacteria growth. Ideally, grass clippings should be left on lawns to provide organic fertilizer or composted on site.

## Review of Garden Insects of North

### America by Whitney Cranshaw

by Renay Leone, Carver County Master Gardener

Dedicated to the Cooperative Extension Service of land grant universities in the United States, this is a comprehensive guide to the insects most likely to be found in yards and gardens across the country.

Three tools make this book especially useful to non-scientists: first, it is logically organized by insect type (leaf chewers, fruit eaters, sap suckers, etc). Second, the appendix can help narrow a search by focusing on insects most likely to affect a particular plant. Lastly, the many photographs and descriptions of many insects help confirm the true identity of the offending pest, allowing the gardener to determine the best course of action (and whether any action is actually needed or recommended).

This book is a highly recommended resource by University of Minnesota entomology professors, and loved by Extension Master Gardeners



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

**Beginning birders are welcome on all field trips:**

**International Festival of Owls** Lots of kids and adult activities March 3-5, 2017 in Houston, MN. For more info visit the festival website [www.festivalofowls.com](http://www.festivalofowls.com) or call the Houston Nature Center 507-896-6957

### **MN Valley Nat'l Wildlife Refuge Bird Watching**

Sunday, March 4, 8:00 am, Bass Ponds  
Monday, March 12, 8:00 am, Bass Ponds  
Saturday, March 17, 8:00 am, Bass Ponds  
Monday, March 19, 8:00 am, Bass Ponds  
Saturday, March 24, 8:00am, Bass Ponds  
Monday, April 2, 8:00am, Bass Ponds  
Sunday, April 8, 8:00am, Bass Ponds  
Tuesday, April 10, 8:00am, Bass Ponds

Join us for a bird walk on one of the many refuge units and learn about the birds that migrate to and through Minnesota. We will search for migrating waterfowl and raptors. We should also see some early spring migrants with a mix of Sparrows and the first Yellow-rumped Warblers of the season. Birder's of all skill levels are welcome on these walks. Bring your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Craig Mandel 952-240-7647, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist

### **Ney Nature Center**

Saturday, April 7, 2018, 8:30 am  
Craig Mandel 952-240-7647

We will explore the trails at the Ney Nature Center. With a mix of habitat, we should be able to observe a nice variety of resident and migrant song birds along with Sparrows and other early spring migrants. Please contact Craig to register for this trip.

### **Bird Banding Programs at Lowry**

Saturday, March 17 & April 21, 9:00 am - noon, free  
Lowry Nature Center in Carver Park Reserve  
7025 Victoria Drive, Victoria, MN 55386

See banders working with live songbirds. You will have an opportunity to see these wonderful birds up close and may even get the opportunity to release one. Visit [www.threeriversparks.org](http://www.threeriversparks.org) for more info.

### **Western Minnesota Birding Days**

Thursday, Friday, April 12-13, 2018, 7:00 am  
Craig Mandel 952-240-7647  
\$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members

We will be spending time birding in Grant and Douglas counties. Some of the locations we may explore include the North Ottawa Impoundment, Niemackl Lake, Spruce Hill and Pine Ridge County parks. We should also have time to explore parts of Lake Carlos State Park and a few WMA's and Sewage Ponds. With luck we'll find some early Warblers, Sparrows, Waterfowl and Shorebirds along with the usual Spring migrants. Please contact Craig to register for this trip.

**Salt Lake Weekend 2017** Saturday, April 29, 2017  
More information on page 2 & <http://moumn.org/saltlake/>