



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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Let's hear from You!

by Josh Sweet, Trumpeter Editor



Do you have an interesting story, poem, or artistic expression related to our mutual appreciation of birds that you would like to share with other MRVAC members? Send it in to be included in the next edition of *The Trumpeter*! Submissions can be emailed directly to jhsweet0201@gmail.com with "MRVAC Newsletter" in the subject line by October 10.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Unit Trail Maps

Click the text below to view each unit trail map. Save these PDFs to your phone or take a screenshot for offline viewing when you are out on the trail.

Long Meadow Lake and Black Dog Units

Bloomington Ferry and Wilkie Units

Rapids Lake, Louisville Swamp, and Chaska Units



Normandale Hills Elementary

MRVAC grant recipients have been busy working on several pollinator gardens. Read more on page 2.

Upcoming Member Meetings

by Steve Weston, Board Vice President and
Meeting Program Chair

The Minnesota River Valley Wildlife Refuge staff have informed us that the Visitor Center is expected to be unavailable for meetings for the foreseeable future. We are planning on holding virtual meetings in September, January, February, and March. We are hopeful that we will be able to meet in person at the Visitor Center in October and from April through June of 2022. Virtual meetings will start at 7:30 PM with links sent out about a week before. In person meetings, whenever possible, will begin at 7:00 PM with a social gathering and the presentation starting at 7:30 PM.

"Biodiversity & Research in the Sax-Zim Bog" Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus, Head Naturalist

Thursday, September 23, 2021, 7:30 PM
Virtual Presentation

While research at the Sax-Zim Bog includes surveying Golden-winged Warblers, Owls, and supporting organizations or individuals studying specific species in the Bog, it can also include documenting biodiversity by citizen scientists through organized surveys such as our annual BioBlitz and Christmas Bird Counts or reports on iNaturalist. We will review the different surveying and research projects happening in the Sax-Zim Bog and share some of the interesting and exciting results.

"Red-headed Woodpecker Project at Cedar Creek" Dr. Elena West, Lead Researcher

Thursday, October 21, 2021, 7:00 PM
Minnesota River Valley Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center

Find out what an intense study of Minnesota's largest concentration of Red-headed Woodpeckers has revealed. Migration routes and wintering locations have been discovered from tracking devices strapped on the backs of some birds. Nest cavity cameras have uncovered all sorts of nesting information and some surprising stories. Learn about the new technology that has been and will be utilized in this project.



MRVAC Grant Updates

by Lee Ann Landstrom, Board Member and
Environmental Action & Conservation Chair

Pollinator Gardens Galore!



Jefferson High School

Since last fall, I've been writing about three pollinator/rain gardens that MRVAC supported by paying for the native plants and mulch. How are those gardens doing, you ask?

Normandale Hills Elementary: The project manager says the plants are in good shape overall! There was some die-off from improper planting and heat stress, but she would say at least 2/3rds of the plants are still alive; some are even flowering and have grown despite this drought. Also, the step stones that the students painted look really nice, and provide a good path for people to walk through the garden without compacting the soil.

Jefferson High School: A small crew of helpers has been faithfully watering the new garden which was planted during the early June heat wave. It looks great! Some plants are flowering and there are numerous insects already!

Poplar Grove Elementary: The teacher contact says despite the drought and pandemic's best efforts to quash progress on anything, the rain garden has thrived. "I am not going to say that everything is lush, but almost every plant has put on impressive new growth". They are capitalizing on enthusiasm which led to a grant proposal to enhance the main rain garden, to create another smaller pollinator garden in our courtyard along with some brick raised beds vegetable gardens. These funds from the Friends of Minnesota Valley covers more native plants for our main rain garden, plants for a new pollinator garden in our courtyard, 3 tons of river rock to line the pathways of the rain garden, and native shrubs to start creating a bird-feeding station in the courtyard. This will occur August into October.

In addition to these wonderful projects, some *Poplar Bridge Elementary* teachers have stepped up who want to continue our progress toward more outdoor learning spots. There is interest in a school arboretum using native trees, an outdoor classroom, a prairie garden and more. This school is truly amazing in their dedication to enhance the environment and using it to teach their kids.

Thank you to all of the students, teachers, and MRVAC members for making these projects possible.

Normandale Community College Bird-safe Window Project Underway

For over a year, I and two members of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis have been in frequent contact with staff from Normandale Community College regarding their large span of reflective windows. These windows have been monitored and shown to cause over a dozen known bird deaths because of window strikes.

As of early August, the "Friendly Harmony" product is being installed by Sun Control. I took a photo of the dot matrix and how it disrupts the reflection of the landscape. (When I took the photos on August 6, the project was not done; some product is on back order). To see more recent photos of the installation in progress, check out the College's Facebook posting on August 16.

This process took longer than originally expected because the College decided to increase the dollar amount from initial expectations. Because of the dollar amount involved, the project had to go out on bid, which added time to the timeline and initial goals.

Jon Hanson, the maintenance and sustainability staffer writes, "I am hoping to do much of the Partnership Center that faces the Japanese Garden and the adjacent marsh. We will have close to \$50,000 from what I am understanding. This is a big deal!"

Jon also writes, "As for future budgeting, I will be certainly considering it. What I have done is asked our program manager at the system office if there is a way to make this a building standard for campuses when there are large sections of glass like we have here."

Bluebird Trail in Terrace Oaks Park

Nikki Pyle, Gold Medal Award Girl Scout, reports that she has installed six houses so far. She will have the other six boxes installed in Terrace Oaks Park, Burnsville, before the beginning of September. Due to the dearth of bluebirds this year, she had none nesting. But there was one box of tree swallows that fledged two young.

She spent \$499.46 on cedar planks, pipe, flanges, bend hooks, and wood screws. (The additional costs were covered by her, but she is very thankful for the opportunity to use the MRVAC grant, "it has made this project 100 times easier").

In the future, she will be working with Burnsville, especially staffer Caleb Ashling, to continue finding volunteers to monitor the houses and report the data. She will be offering maintenance for the houses for 2 years, after that she will be offering that as another opportunity for future volunteers. She will be staying in close contact with the program.



Autumn's Arrival

Take 5 for Nature: Monarch Madness

by Josh Sweet, Trumpeter Editor



When I think of the end of summer, I imagine myself in a hammock enjoying an earlier sunset and cooler weather. I think of vegetable gardens coming to fruition and farmers markets packed with delicious ingredients for my neighbors and I to enjoy. But at this time of year, Monarch butterflies are preparing for an entirely different scenario that will involve an unbelievable amount of resilience and stamina.

These brightly-colored insects, only a few inches in length, will journey approximately 2,500 miles to their wintering grounds in Mexico in late August. Their timing is critical as they cannot fly when temperatures drop below 55°F. Interestingly enough, it took several generations of Monarchs to migrate north in the spring, but this final generation is charged with the incredible task of returning all the way to the southern end of their range. How they find their way to the same forests in Mexico as their ancestors without ever having travelled there is still a mystery.

Even before they embark on this journey, Monarch butterflies will have gone through a grueling life cycle spending time in an egg, as a caterpillar, and in a chrysalis over the span of five weeks. They spend their days as a caterpillar feeding exclusively on milkweed, a plant with foul-tasting milky sap. The sap builds up in their body and deters predators who associate the foul taste with their color scheme. As an adult, rest can be hard to come by, as they may fly up to 100 miles in a single day.

Monarchs and many other pollinating insects have been in decline over the past few decades. Research shows that this is due to a significant loss of habitat, increased use of herbicides and pesticides, and a changing climate. How can we help? By planting milkweed and other pollinator-friendly plants, avoiding the use of pesticides, and supporting conservation efforts, you can help Monarch butterflies and other species each year.

Interested in learning more about Monarchs? Register to attend a Monarch Tagging program at the Lowry Nature Center in early September. Reservations can be made www.threeriversparks.org or by calling (763)-559-6700.

Fall Phenology at the Refuge

by Blake Matti, MVNWR Seasonal Ranger

Fall is here in Minnesota, and with it comes new phenological events! Phenology is the study of biological cycles that occur in nature. While interesting in its own right, phenology is also important to understanding how the environment is changing.

Here at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, phenology plays a key role in the management of invasive species. Knowing when a plant species is going to seed is critical, for example, when deciding when to mow or remove invasive plants.

As the growing season progresses, you'll start to notice changes in wildflowers and grasses. Some prairie plants flower in the late spring to early summer, like Prairie Phlox. Others wait longer into the summer to bloom, such as Big Bluestem and Black-eyed Susans. While the fall is late for some prairie species, visit Minnesota Valley now to catch Purple Coneflower, Meadow Blazing Stars, or Cup Plants (which can bloom as late as October!) in full force. You'll also find the fields dotted with Goldenrods and Purple Asters.

Perhaps the most surefire display of a seasonal change is the fantastic fall foliage that we get going into autumn. Look for bright red on Sumac, Virginia Creeper, and Poison Ivy as telltale signs that the seasons are changing. All along streets, yards, and forests, you'll see mixtures of incredible colors. Look for golden leaves on Quaking Aspens and Eastern Cottonwoods, bright brown on Red and Bur Oaks, and the rich red on Sugar Maples.

With fall we see changes not only in our flora, but our fauna as well. As September starts, so does the migration of our state butterfly, the Monarch. Flying on average 11 miles an hour, the Monarch begins a long trip to their winter homes of Mexico or California. But they're not the only ones leaving for warmer places. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, who had a feeding frenzy in August, start heading south to wintering sites in Central America. While Minnesota says farewell to many bird species in the fall, there are always some close to home. Dark-eyed Juncos breed in Canada during the summer before heading to Minnesota in the winter, while Northern Cardinals or Blue Jays make Minnesota their home year-round. You'll also start to notice flocks of American Robins, who've already migrated, looking for a variety of food including berries, worms, and other insects in your backyard.

While summer may be over, there's always something going on at Minnesota Valley! Come visit during September and October to catch a glimpse of many ducks, geese, and swans at our various wetland management districts. For more information please visit our website at www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota_valley/.



Regional Events of Interest



Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory
Duluth, Minnesota



Friends of Sax-Zim Bog
Toivola, Minnesota

Fall Migration Programs

Wednesday, September 1 – Sunday, October 31

Join us and view the magnificent fall bird migration. Staff and volunteers will be available to answer questions, teach about birds and the migration, provide live bird education demonstrations, and share information on our bird migration count and banding research! You can also join us on the weekends for one of our naturalist programs/hikes. More information available online at www.hawkridge.org.

Hawk Weekend Festival 2021

Friday, September 17 – Sunday, September 19

Come and celebrate the fall bird migration with us! Hawk Weekend is the annual festival held by the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, MN. It is a wonderful opportunity to showcase one of North America's best places to experience the fall bird migration at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. There will be a variety of field trips, hikes, programs, and activities for all ages! View the event schedule and register online at www.hawkridge.org.



National Eagle Center
Wabasha, Minnesota

Online: Adventures in Eagle Territory

Mondays and Wednesdays in September, 1:00 – 2:00 PM

Join the National Eagle Center on Facebook and YouTube as we lead you on short Adventures in Eagle Territory! Our education team will bring the National Eagle Center's extensive knowledge of eagles and nature TO YOU through live Facebook sessions and pre-recorded mini-programs covering a wide range of topics, including how our avian care team works and daily care of the eagles, spring migration of waterfowl and songbird, facts about the Refuge, eagle nests, eagle symbolism in culture, guided tours of the Center's exhibits and much more! Don't miss out on these fun opportunities to experience the National Eagle Center from the comfort of home. www.nationaleaglecenter.org



International Owl Center
Houston, Minnesota

Expert-led Owl Prowls

Saturday, September 18, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

Saturday, October 23, 5:30 – 8:30 PM

Join us this fall to experience wild owls after dark. Spend time indoors learning how to identify owl sounds and the ethics of calling owls. Then everyone will drive their own vehicle, following staff to rural locations in Houston to call in wild owls. \$10/member or \$15/nonmember. Register online at www.internationalowlcenter.org.

Fall Dragonfly and Damselfly Field Trip

Saturday, September 18, 12:00 – 5:00 PM

We often hold dragonfly and damselfly field trips in the middle of the summer, as that is when most of the diversity of dragonflies and damselflies in the Sax-Zim Bog is on the wing. However, this misses an entire season of diversity. Many larger species of dragonfly start flying toward the end of August well into September! This field trip will target a couple of the more difficult groups of dragonflies to ID, such as the darners and meadowhawks. Expect good species diversity and a lot of learning opportunities during this late season field trip! Limited to 5 vehicles. Register online at www.saxzim.org.

Wonderful World of Lichens Field Trip

Saturday, October 2, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Lichens offer biodiversity that is visible most of the year, which means anytime is a good time to look at and learn about this interesting group (unless the snow gets too deep)! The Sax-Zim Bog offers really unique lichen diversity, with over 75 species documented in the bogs, upland conifer forests, mixed forests, roadside boulders, and even cemeteries! This field trip is great for those just starting to learn their lichens, as well as the seasoned lichen observer. Limited to 5 vehicles. Register online at www.saxzim.org.



Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center
Sandstone, Minnesota

Bike Maintenance & Repair Workshop

Saturday, September 25, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Using your own bike, walk through basic repairs and see what tools and supplies you need to keep your bike running smoothly and safely. Enjoy a provided lunch followed by a group bike ride along the Willard Munger Trail (paved). Register online at www.ospreywilds.org. Ages 16+. \$25 per person.

Women's Wellness Weekend

Friday, October 1 – Sunday, October 3 (overnight)

Join us for a retreat weekend that focuses on adventure, relaxation, and renewal! Choose from a wide variety of mind, body, and spirit activities for healing and personal growth, including private massages, reiki/energy healing, chakra, and intuitive sessions. Enjoy the peace and calm of our campus, and immerse yourself in nature. Pricing varies. Register online at www.ospreywilds.org.



MRVAC Field Trips

Please do your part to stop the spread and adhere to the current recommendations from the Minnesota CDC in regards to COVID-19. This includes respecting the distance between you and those from other households, practicing proper hygiene, and wearing a mask when it is recommended.

All of the Refuge field trips are listed below, followed by Refuge addresses, and field trips to other locations in chronological order.

All trips are free unless otherwise noted. Beginning birders are always welcome.



Refuge Bird Watching Treks (Sept. – Oct.)

Saturday, Sept. 11 (8:00-10:30 AM) Rapids Lake
Monday, Sept. 13 (8:00-10:30 AM) Old Cedar Ave.
Sunday, Sept. 26 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds
Sunday, October 3 (8:00-10:30 AM) Rapids Lake
Monday, October 11 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds
Saturday, Oct. 16 (8:00-10:30 AM) Old Cedar Ave.

Explore some of the best Refuge units for bird watching during the fall season. We will spend time on these walks searching for birds only seen on the Refuge during migration. We will study the different species of birds and learn about some other locations to search for birds during fall migration. Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Bring binoculars, your favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Led by Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist. Reservations are not required for Refuge Bird Walking Treks above.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip Locations & Addresses

MVNWR Bloomington Visitor Center
3815 American Blvd. E., Bloomington, MN

Bass Ponds Trailhead
2501 86th St. E., Bloomington, MN

Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center
15865 Rapids Lake Rd., Carver, MN

Old Cedar Avenue Trailhead
9551 Old Cedar Ave. S., Bloomington, MN

Kandiyohi County Birding Days

Thursday, September 16 – Friday, September 17
 \$25/MRVAC members;
 \$35/non-MRVAC members
 Craig Mandel – (952) 240 7647

With two days of birding in Kandiyohi County, we will have plenty of time to bird many of the key birding locations in Kandiyohi County. Some of which are: Sibley State Park, Robbins Island Park, Bergquist Wildlife Area, and the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. Please contact Craig to register for this field trip.

Itasca County Birding Days

Thursday, October 7 – Friday, October 8
 \$25/MRVAC members;
 \$35/non-MRVAC members
 Craig Mandel – (952) 240 7647

On this two-day trip, we will be exploring Itasca County. There will be some large lakes to search for Waterfowl and lots of parks to search for Sparrows and late migrants. Please contact Craig to register for this field trip.



Virginia Rail at Veteran's Memorial Park in Richfield. Photo: J. Sweet



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

Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Membership Form

To join the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter (MRVAC), please complete this form and mail it with a check, made payable to MRVAC, for at least \$15 to:

Membership Coordinator
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
PO Box 20400
Bloomington, MN 55420

You can also join MRVAC online at www.mrvac.org.

Yes! Please enroll me as a member of the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter. I will receive the *Trumpeter*, MRVAC's newsletter, along with notifications of chapter meetings and field trips. (Memberships are renewable annually.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Check one:

- I would like to receive the *Trumpeter* newsletter and other updates via email.
- I would like to receive a printed copy of the *Trumpeter* newsletter by USPS mail.

Volunteering (optional):

- I am interested in volunteering for MRVAC. Please contact me.

Areas of Interest:

- Field Trips
- Conservation and Environmental Action
- Habitat Restoration Work
- Activities with Children
- Chapter Administration
- Other: _____

The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Thank you for joining!

Get personalized help to adopt a lower waste lifestyle by joining the Zero Waste Challenge

*Republished from Hennepin County
Submitted to The Trumpeter by Anne Hanley*

Many people are interested in taking steps to prevent waste, declutter, and recycle more but aren't sure where to start. Joining Hennepin County's Zero Waste Challenge is a great way to learn more and get hands-on help.

Carolyn Wieland of Eden Prairie said the Zero Waste Challenge was "truly life changing for our family. It made us take an in depth look at our consumption and waste habits and equipped us with tools and strategies to become better stewards of the environment."

Throughout the eight-month challenge, participating households receive personalized coaching and support, attend virtual educational workshops, receive bi-weekly waste reduction tips, get access to supplies and educational materials, and connect with other households striving to live lower waste lifestyles.

The challenge will run from mid-September 2021 through early May 2022. Interested households should complete the online application by Tuesday, August 31 at www.hennepin.us/zerowastechallenge.

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