



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

# Trumpeter

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[www.MRVAC.org](http://www.MRVAC.org)

November – December 2020

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## Bird-a-thon Results

*by Bob Williams, Board Member*

The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter held its annual Bird-a-thon fundraising event on August 22 and 23. Due to the pandemic we tried a different format that would allow people to go birding on their own and either contribute themselves and/or raise money from donors. We had at least 27 participants for this year's event and plan to do a similarly organized Bird-a-thon in 2021. The total amount raised so far is \$1870.

The most interesting bird reported was a hybrid Eastern/Western Kingbird seen by Chet Meyer near the Miesville Ravine in Dakota County. The highest number of species seen in one day was 95 by Brad Abendroth. He was trying to set a new record for species seen in Scott County on one day in August and he succeeded. We thank everyone who participated and we look forward to sharing information soon about the projects that we are helping to fund with the money we raised this fiscal year (June 1, 2020 – May 31, 2021).

## 2020 Field Trip Update

*by Craig Mandel, Field Trip Coordinator*

Due to current social distancing guidelines in place, there are no field trips sponsored by MRVAC scheduled for the months of November and December.

Additionally, the November 4-11, 2020 – Ecuador Choco Andes Birding Tour has been postponed due to the uncertainty of international travel. We are working on rescheduling the trip, but no dates have been set at this time. If you would be interested in joining this or other international tours, please contact me and I will add you to the list of potential participants for these tours.

Please direct any questions about MRVAC field trips to Craig over the phone at (952)-240-7647.

## Special Presentation

Our next MRVAC member meeting will be a special virtual presentation taking place on Thursday, November 19 at 7:30 PM. A Zoom link will be sent out in a MRVAC email closer to the date. Feel free to share the link with others.

Thursday, November 19, 2020, 7:30 PM  
Virtual Presentation on Zoom

**“Bird Migration”**

**Stan Tekiela, Minnesota-based naturalist,  
photographer, and author**

Stan Tekiela will give a program on Bird Migration with magnificent photographs of birds migrating along with fascinating facts that unlock many of the secrets of bird migration. This presentation is filled with information and fun stories of migrating birds. How do they find their way? How do they know when they have arrived? How do they find their way back? Learn the answers to these questions and more!

## Give to the Max!

The annual MRVAC Holiday Auction which is usually held in November or December has been cancelled this year to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Funds raised at the auction usually go to support the grants and projects put on by the chapter.

Without the funds raised from the auction this year, members are especially encouraged to support MRVAC through Give to the Max Day on Thursday, November 19. Donations on this day will be matched up to \$1200 from funds raised by members of the MRVAC Board of Directors. Click the logo below to be taken to the MRVAC Give to the Max donation page.





## Top Headlines

### From the Refuge

by Sarena Selbo, Refuge Manager



September 29, 2020 was Urban National Wildlife Refuge Day, and in recognition of this, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that both Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge have been awarded \$1 million in additional funding to bolster their urban refuge programs.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a thriving urban refuge where nature connects people, wildlife and communities. The additional federal investments will allow the refuge to: expand outreach and engage new, underrepresented communities in nature education and outdoor recreation opportunities; develop new and innovative programming to reach these audiences; ensure the refuge is accessible and welcoming; and build the staff capacity to facilitate the program goals and objectives. The refuge will also use the funds to foster internship programs to develop targeted career paths and opportunities for youth in the Twin Cities metro.

In celebration of Urban National Wildlife Refuge Day, we held a week-long virtual event to unveil the new Nature Play Area at Old Cedar Avenue. Our new Nature Play Area is a great example of the creative spaces urban refuges provide to meet the needs of the communities we serve. The completion of this project has been a team effort including many of you! Volunteers have and will continue to help us maintain this premiere refuge destination as a welcoming place for all.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the new Nature Play Area.

### MRVAC Funds School Pollinator Rain Garden

by Lee Ann Landstrom, Board Member

In late winter, your Board made a goal to promote native species in pollinator garden plantings. I gathered lots of pollinator literature to distribute to MRVAC members, but then we haven't been able to meet in-person. We decided to forge ahead and look for schools or city parks which could benefit from pollinator gardens. I asked around and eventually ended up connecting with Normandale Hills Elementary in Bloomington. They are very interested in putting in a rain garden using native plant species that will also benefit insects. However, with the recent change to

distance learning and the extra time needed for planning, they are postponing their project until spring 2021.

However, Poplar Grove Elementary in Bloomington was ready to move. Adele Binning, science specialist, explained that their previous, popular garden was destroyed by HVAC work. Teachers used the former garden for outdoor studies, so much so that at times, classes were backed up to explore and study the garden. Our \$1,300 contribution paid for the purchase of 1,024 plants of 19 native species. She had an abundance of family/student volunteers, who worked hourly in distanced small groups to do the planting.

Adele states, "I am indebted to you for making this happen....I've also received a lot of positive feedback from both teachers and families. This project is good for our school environment...both biological AND psychological! Everyone needs this kind of positivity at this time. One thing that I think parents enjoyed was getting their hands in the dirt WITH their kids. Another benefit for our school is that there are students who have just joined our school (moved into the District from other places) and this gave them a chance to "belong" at a time when it is hard to make new friends. Thank you so much for all that you've done. Wait until you see what happens over the next months and years. It will be spectacular!"

So thank YOU to MRVAC members and friends who contributed to your chapter through the 2019 Holiday Auction, Give to the Max Day, Bird-a-thon, or donations. These funds have enabled many school children to learn and explore the natural world around their school yard, as well as providing habitat and food for insects and the birds that rely on them.



Students at Poplar Grove Elementary enjoyed the perfect planting weather while creating their school's pollinator rain garden.



## Audubon News

### Christmas Bird Counts

by Steve Weston, Board Member

Local Christmas Bird Counts are expected to happen on schedule but with changes due to Covid-19 mandated by state regulations and Audubon guidelines. Birding by car will only occur within family/household groups or existing familiar social pods. New counters will not be assigned to groups. Existing teams will be expected to bird in separate cars, perhaps subdividing territories. As such, openings for new but experienced counters will probably be limited or non-existent. Gatherings such as Bloomington's traditional soup dinner and Cedar Creek Bog's lunch will not happen, although some groups will have post-count Zoom meetings. An email with more details will be sent directly to participants.

#### Contact Information

Liz Stanley, Bloomington CBC - [lizmstanley@gmail.com](mailto:lizmstanley@gmail.com)

Howard Towle, Excelsior CBC - [towle001@umn.edu](mailto:towle001@umn.edu)

Steve Weston, Cedar Creek Bog CBC or other CBC's - [sweston2@comcast.net](mailto:sweston2@comcast.net)

### The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – Our Public Land Needs YOU!

by Mary Gallagher, Lake Wenatchee, Washington State  
 Republished from the North Central Washington Audubon Society's newsletter. Submitted to the Trumpeter by  
 Lois Norrgard, MRVAC

On August 17, 2020, the current administration released the Record of Decision to adopt Alternative B of the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Environmental Impact Statement. This is the Alternative that will allow for the entire 2,443 square miles (over 1.56 million acres) to be leased to the oil industry. Alternative B does not address the major concerns that native people, other government agencies, scientists, and many of you sent in pointing out the negative impacts of this option. A recent poll by Yale Climate Connections found that 67% of United States voters oppose drilling in the Arctic Refuge. This majority needs to be listened to.

Five of the six major banks that operate in the United States of America: Citigroup, Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, and Wells Fargo have said, along with many banks around the world, that they will not fund any new oil and gas development in the Arctic Refuge and across the Arctic region.

Fifteen state attorneys general have filed a lawsuit against the current administration on the grounds that what happens in the Arctic Refuge affects their fish, wildlife, and physical environment. For example, New York has tundra swans, American golden plovers, and whimbrels that migrate from the Arctic Refuge and contribute to their \$4 billion birdwatching industry. In Michigan, waterfowl hunting is a significant source of income and some of the targeted species reproduce in the Arctic Refuge. California,

Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington are the other states. Attorney General Bob Ferguson, from our State, is taking the lead.

Two other lawsuits have also been filed against the current administration on this issue. One led by the Gwich'in Steering Committee and includes the Alaska Wilderness League, Alaska Wildlife Alliance, Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society-Yukon Chapter, Defenders of Wildlife, Environment America, Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, National Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and Wilderness Watch. The other by Earthjustice representing the National Audubon Society, Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Earth and Stand.Earth.

What can you, a person who cares about the birds, do? Turns out, you can do a lot!

#### Use your VOICE.

Contact your Senators and Congressional Representative, let them know how you feel on this issue. Thank them if they have supported this issue. If they have not, stress that you would like them to start supporting NOT drilling in the Arctic Refuge. Remind them you will be voting.

Contact Bank of America and ask them to join the other banks and PLEASE not finance Arctic Refuge drilling. If you bank with them, this is a critical action for you to take.

Share this with your family and friends in person, via email or social media.

Write a letter or two to the editor of your local newspaper. Thank your Congressional Representative or publicly ask them to show support for not drilling. Thank the banks by name that have signed on and ask Bank of America to join the others. Thank your Attorney General by name or ask them to join the other 15 in the lawsuit.

#### Get INSPIRED.

Watch "Gwich'in Voices for the Arctic Refuge" and "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins Gwich'in Women Speak" trailer. We are not protecting the Arctic Refuge for ourselves. We are protecting it for everyone... Let's work together.

READ a book that in my opinion is a must read for every citizen of the United States—we are all Public-land owners. We own the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We own 640 million acres, 28% of the land that makes up our country. We have a right to make sure it is used wisely and kept in the public's hands for us here now and generations yet to come. That Wild Country: An Epic Journey through the Past, Present, and Future of America's Public Lands by Mark Kenyon. Part history, part travelogue. It is about working together. It is about enjoying our public lands. I learned so much from this book. I hope you do too.

**Grab your binoculars, go look and listen for birds out in your favorite parcel of your public land. Enjoy!**



## The Green Scene

### Turkeys = Quarantine Entertainment

by Anne Hanley

When turkeys are found at bus stops waiting on the bus bench and walking around downtown, it's no longer big news to have turkeys in your neighborhood, but we love watching the local turkey flock when they pass through our yard.

Since mid-July, "our" turkey group included two turkey hens plus 17 or 18 youngsters of two different sizes. After some grazing and a drink from the birdbath, some might sit down in the sun in the backyard and do some grooming. It was interesting to watch the walking birds sometimes walking right on top of the sitting birds. Maybe this has something to do with pecking order or maybe they just have a different idea of personal space.

At some point during the visit, one turkey feels it is time to move on and they file off into the back woods or over to the neighbors. There was a trio of young turkeys who were always the last to leave a good feeding area – several times they stayed under the front birdfeeder until the troop had moved on out of the yard. It was interesting to watch the threesome look around, trying to figure out which way the rest of the group travelled.

During the dry spell in late September and early October, the turkeys added dust bathing to their routine. In the back yard we have tunnels from moles or some other tunneling creature. The turkeys took advantage of the loosened dirt; they would sit down directly on top of the tunnel and scratch with their feet to kick up dust. The lumpy "lawn" section turned into a dirt pathway. Besides food, water and shelter, your yard could also provide a dust bath area.



### Leave the Leaves

by Anne Hanley



As you think about what you can do to counter the drastic insect decline, remember that many insects overwinter in the leaf litter. Leave as many leaves as you can – preferably not munched up by the lawn mower and not blown around by a leaf blower. Raking them onto a wilder area of the yard is the best option, if you must rake the more public areas of your yard.

Leaving plant stems standing now, cut to within 12-24 inches off the ground, will provide spring nesting habitat for some of our native bees. (Many nest in the ground and appreciate some bare soil in an undisturbed area.) In the spring, for another insect assist, plant more native shrubs, trees, flowers and grasses.

One place you don't want to leave the leaves is in the street. Depending on where you live, grass clippings and leaves in the streets flow either to local ponds or to the Minnesota or Mississippi rivers. This is bad because as the plant material decays, it uses up the oxygen in the water which hurts the fish, aquatic plants and all the insects that spend part of their lifecycle in the water.

### Birding and Conservation Groups Are Beginning to Grapple with Racist Histories

But it's not enough to look only at the past, say experts - organizations must examine how these legacies influence their fields today.

by Jessica Leber, Senior Editor – Audubon Magazine

In 1986 birders in western North Carolina formed an Audubon chapter named after Elisha Mitchell, a 19th-century conservationist. The East Coast's highest peak also bears his name.

Decades later, on a Friday this June, chapter president Nancy Casey opened an email from a member and learned that Mitchell was also a slaveholder. Quick research further revealed he wrote a book defending the disgraceful institution. Fourteen hours and many frenzied calls later, she announced the chapter would change its name. "This isn't about erasing history," says Casey, now leader of Blue Ridge Audubon. "This is about understanding that these types of things can hurt people today."

The decision came amid a new wave of reckoning with the white supremacy, systemic racism, and colonialism that shaped this nation's past and persists today. Sparked by mass protests—and momentum racial-justice advocates have built over decades—cities, schools, the military, and more are reexamining symbols of this history. Wildlife, too, carries the weight of a problematic human past. In August, the American Ornithological Society (AOS) renamed a bird that honored avian collector John P. McCown, a Confederate Army general.

"More people are now seeing the massive scale of racial oppression and subjugation that forms the underpinnings of our country and so many of our social and cultural institutions," says Harvard University historian Tiya Miles, an expert in 19th-century Black, Native American, and women's history.

These tainted foundations also prop up modern conservation, environmental, and scientific groups, which were shaped by ideas of white naturalists who benefited from Black and Native American knowledge and explored land emptied of its original inhabitants. Some propagated racist ideologies. This summer, organizations like the Sierra Club and American Museum of Natural History publicly confronted the dark side of their legends, John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt.

The National Audubon Society, too, began unraveling the myth of John James Audubon—its and this magazine's namesake. The influential naturalist and artist enslaved Black people in the 1810s and '20s and held white supremacist views, among other fundamental flaws. Until recently, scholars and stewards of his legacy minimized these facts; this summer Audubon president David Yarnold condemned them for the first time. "Audubon's founding stories center on the groups of women who came together to end the slaughter of birds for their feathers (mostly for fancy hats), but we have glossed over the actions of the American icon whose name we bear, as well as the racist aspects of our organization's history," he wrote.

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## Distance Learning Opportunities



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
Bloomington, Minnesota

### Enjoying the Outdoors at Home

Check out these distance learning activity packets for outdoor exploration at home, at the refuge or a neighborhood park. Each lesson is geared towards a specific grade level and can be accessed on our website by clicking [here](#). Free.

*Forests are More than Trees (Grades K-2)*

*Nature Through the Seasons (Grades K-2)*

*Pond Insect Investigation (Grades 2-3)*

*Wetland Connections (Grades 3-5)*

*Pond Science (Grades 4-6)*

*Young Angler (Grade 5)*



Lowry Nature Center  
Victoria, MN

### Nature's Classroom Curbside Kits

The Lowry Nature Center offers explorations kits for purchase so that you can continue to discover nature in our park and in your own backyard. Submit your order form via email and you will be contacted by a staff member with curbside pickup instructions. Kit themes include Solar Leaf Art, Outdoor Survival, and Insect Investigations. Click [here](#) to view an online order form. \$10 per kit, just in time for the holidays!



Deep Portage Learning Center  
Hackensack, MN

### Renewable Energy Resources

Deep Portage is committed to creating a healthier world for both planet and people, and our campus is no exception. Since 2009, we have installed multiple solar, wind, and biomass systems to help our campus align with our goal of a sustainable future. These systems have saved us hundreds of thousands of dollars in energy costs, and the renewable energy that we generate on site – combined with certified green energy that we purchase from Crow Wing Power – makes the Deep Portage campus 100% carbon-neutral.

Our experimentation with a variety of renewable energy systems also makes us a superb resource for those who are curious about how they can take similar steps. Learn more about what Deep Portage is doing to create a cleaner, greener world by accessing our Renewable Energy Resource page by clicking [here](#). Free.



Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center  
Sandstone, MN

### Migratory and Winter Birds Webinar

Wednesday, November 4, 7:00 PM

Join Osprey Wilds on the first Wednesday of the month for a FREE educational webinar with our Environmental Education Fellows. Topics will focus on outdoor and environmental education and are great for all ages. Hosted through Zoom, you can submit your questions or comments during the webinar.

To kick off our Wednesday Webinars, we decided to answer some of the common questions and even debunk some myths about where birds go in winter. Register online [here](#).

### Nature Journaling Seminar

Thursdays, November 5-19, 8:00 PM

Join Osprey Wilds for a nature journaling seminar for beginners! A nature journal is more than a collection of pretty sketches, it is a record of your experiences with the natural world. Learn how to use a nature journal to support your investigation and connect with the world around you.

The class will meet virtually once a week for three weeks. Outside of class, participants will explore their new nature journaling skills. This class is focused on journaling, so while sketching and drawing can enrich these activities, no artistic abilities are needed. CEUs available. \$50. Register online [here](#).



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Saint Paul, Minnesota

### Online Educator Workshops

Learn how to use Project Learning Tree (PLT) and Project WILD lessons to teach science, math, language arts, social sciences, art, health, and even physical education! Designed for public school teachers, homeschool teachers, pre-service teachers, naturalists, scout leaders, natural resources professionals, and others interested in environmental education. More information available online by clicking [here](#). Some fees apply.

*PLT K-8 Online Course*

*PLT Environmental Experiences (Pre-K) Online Course*

*PLT Tree-mendous Science (Grades K-2) Online Course*

*PLT Energy in Ecosystems (Grades 3-5) Online Course*

*PLT Carbon and Climate (Grades 6-8) Online Course*

*Project WILD Growing Up WILD (Pre-K) Online Course*



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**

**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!**

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Grappling with both may facilitate a more welcoming birding community today. Wildlife biologist Danielle Belleny, for example, says she feels slightly betrayed that she was taught to hold such flawed figures on a pedestal. But, she says: "I do appreciate that people are now coming forward with this history, even if it is a bit late." She and others who organized Black Birders Week, a grassroots effort this summer, have called for elevating contributions of non-white naturalists whose stories have been largely sidelined.

She is also among thousands of birders who support a campaign to revise all of North America's nearly 150 eponymous bird names, erasing the specter of racism and colonialism from field guides in one swoop. To date, such upending of convention goes too far for the AOS scientists who govern names—though they're easing a path for more bird-by-bird name change proposals with social justice in mind.

In any case, it's not enough to change a name or apologize for the past, says writer and professor Lauret Savoy, who specializes in U.S. conservation history and race. These needed actions must be joined by an honest look at how race and racism once influenced—and continue to influence—organizations' identities, as well as transparent steps to incorporate justice, equity, and diversity in all work today. "The very necessary structural work must be the key," she says.

Toward this, Yarnold said Audubon will more deeply examine its history and prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion in its hiring, training, and mission. Blue Ridge Audubon, for one, bought binoculars that its volunteers will use to create a program at a city recreation center to bring the joy of birds to a more diverse audience. "You've got to make connections and show up for people rather than just inviting them to us," Casey says. On this and many fronts, Audubon and the broader community have work to do.

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