



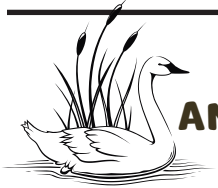
The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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March - April 2023

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Chapter Events

- March 23:** Chapter meeting via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. with guest speaker, Kristin Hall
 - April 27:** Chapter meeting via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. with guest speaker, Charles Foley
 - April 28-29:** Salt Lake Birding Trip, co-sponsored by MRVAC and the MOU (see page 2)
- *For MRVAC sponsored field trips, please see page 4*

Trumpeter Award Nominations

The MRVAC Trumpeter Award is given to one of the chapter's members for outstanding long-term contributions to the organization. The selection committee, which is composed of the previous years' recipients, reviews the nominations and forwards its choice to MRVAC's board of directors. The award is presented in the spring of each year. Please send your nomination to this year's committee chair, Rita Baden, at 2hoots4u@gmail.com.

Audubon Migration Explorer

The Audubon Bird Migration Explorer, which is an interactive guide to the amazing annual journeys made by over 450 bird species in North America, and the conservation challenges they face along the way, is now available for mobile devices. Try the Bird Migration Explorer at www.explorer.audubon.org

Save the Date: Global Big Day

Make plans to get out and bird on May 13, 2023. Global Big Day is an annual celebration of birds, run by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. No matter where you are located, you can log your observations on eBird all day long and be a citizen scientist. You'll be helping researchers better understand bird populations and make the best management decisions. Learn more about Global Big Day at www.ebird.org/globalbigday

MRVAC Program Information

The MRVAC meets monthly on the fourth Thursday of the month. Meetings are held either in-person at the Refuge or virtually via Zoom. Virtual meeting links will be posted about one week in advance on our website.

March 23, 2023 - Virtual Program

Meeting and presentation begin at 7:30 p.m.
Kristin Hall: Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator at the MN DNR

Minnesota State Wildlife Action Plan

The MN State Wildlife Action Plan focuses on conservation action for Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and their required habitats. Currently, MN has 346 SGCN, not including plants, of which 28% are bird species. Importantly, up to 16% of the state's invertebrates (aka bird food) are also SGCN. The DNR is in the process of revising the plan for the next 10 years (2025-2035) and Kristin will share with us what this means for conservation in our state and how you can be engaged.



April 27, 2023 - Virtual & In-person Program

Social gathering at 7 p.m. with presentation at 7:30 p.m.
Charles Foley: Senior Conservation Scientist at Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago

A Big Mammal Day in Tanzania

Charles Foley will discuss the history of Big Mammal Days, and describe how he, his wife, and two good friends set about attempting a new world record for mammals seen in 24 hours in the Tarangire ecosystem in northern Tanzania. He will show photographs of many of the mammals they saw, including leopard, yellow-winged bats, and the wonderful aardvark.



CHAPTER NEWS & NOTES

A Note From Our President

by Rob Daves, Board President

Salt Lake Birding Weekend is back for 2023. Hooray! Until 2020, the annual Salt Lake Birding Weekend had been going 44 straight years. It was one of the highlights of my spring until a tearful March day in 2020 when I got Ken Larson's email saying that year's weekend event had been canceled because of Covid-19. That Covid-fueled drought has continued for over two years.

I liked this birding weekend for a lot of reasons. Salt Lake wasn't on my list of usual avian haunts, so it always offered a new adventure. Just pick one of the guides to follow during the day to see new sights and learn. There was great fellowship and leadership, thanks to Ken, Mary Lou and all the knowledgeable guides. There was a chance to experience the Norwegian "white meal." I made great friends and got to know Western Minnesota better.

Although I do a bit of banjo picking as well as birding, I generally leave the songwriting to others. But the Salt Lake experiences over the years moved me to put pen to paper. Let the lyrics below help you think of how the lake calls to the birds and their admirers, and contains a plea for protection.

(To the tune of Elk River Blues, Ernie Carpenter, public domain, Key of A or G)

1. The bird

The warming sun starts whispering to me.
And day by day, its voice impels me to take wing.
Go north, go north! Now it is time to sing.
Go north, go north, it is my destiny.

2. The flocks

Where is the food? Where are the growing flocks?
Where are our mates? We hear the ticking of the clock.
There is the food! Now it is time to stop.
There is Salt Lake. Now it is time to stop.

3. The people

The warming sun starts whispering to us.
With all the friends, the journey binds our hearts to thee.
Salt Lake, Salt Lake, your presence calls to me.
Salt Lake, Salt Lake, your bounty blesses me.

4. The lake

I am Salt Lake, I hear all the winds.
I am Salt Lake, I welcome all my true friends.
I am Salt Lake, I plead be kind to me.
I am Salt Lake, you hold my destiny.

Lyrics © Rob Daves, 2019

45th Salt Lake Birding Festival

We are pleased to announce that, after a three-year hiatus, the Salt Lake Birding Weekend has returned! Join us April 28-29 in Lac qui Parle County for our 45th Salt Lake Birding Festival while shorebird and waterfowl migration peaks in the Upper Minnesota River Valley.



Marbled Godwit by Jason Frank

This is a great place to find rare and interesting migrants like godwits, avocets, ibises, Upland Sandpipers, and grebes, including dancing Western Grebes. We never know what western species will make a surprise appearance! Sharp-tailed Grouse have been seen lekking in recent years. Also, water levels are down right now, suggesting a good chance of finding shorebirds. This trip typically coincides with the very start of warbler migration.

On the evening of Friday, April 28, beginning at 5:30, birders are invited to stop by Madison Mercantile for a potluck dinner and live music. Birders will then meet at the American Legion in Marietta at 7 a.m. on Saturday (April 29) for breakfast and coffee, available for a modest fee. There you will meet your guides and assemble into caravans for the day. While most of the count is centered around Lac qui Parle County, we generally make our way to sites in Big Stone and Yellow Medicine counties.

Maps and checklists will be provided. Our guides will communicate via group text as well. Birders will meet at the Legion for lunch and share intel before embarking on the afternoon leg of the journey.

At 7:30 p.m. Saturday, birders will re-group at the Sons of Norway Lodge in Madison for supper and the final tally. Dinner is \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door, if available. Reservations are necessary for dinner with prepayment preferred. Please contact Bernice Oelien at oelmal@farmerstel.net, (507) 829-0676, or (320) 752-4757. Gluten-free and vegetarian options are available upon request in advance. Some of the guides will still be around birding on Sunday. Feel free to make inquiries on Saturday night if you plan on lingering in the area.

The Salt Lake Birding Weekend is free and open to all, though advance registration is appreciated. To register, visit bit.ly/saltlakebirding23

Additional details and the most up-to-date information can be found at www.MOUMN.org/saltlake. Any questions can be sent to Jason Frank at jmfrank@gmail.com. This event is sponsored by MRVAC and MOU.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARIES

Excelsior

by Howard Towle

The 71st edition of the Excelsior Christmas Bird Count was held on December 17, 2022, under weather conditions that were quite normal for the time of year. We were quite lucky in picking a day between a snow event and the start of an arctic blast. Seventy-six field counters and 14 feeder watchers participated. The combined efforts of all resulted in a total of 55 species and 7,562 individuals being observed. The 55 species was nearly identical to the 20-year average of 57 species for the count. The 7,562 individuals counted was a strong total for a year when Lake Minnetonka was frozen. Last year's total was 5,758 individuals. Some of the more notable sightings from this year's count:

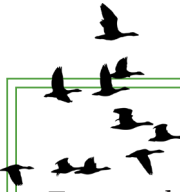
- Fifteen waterfowl species were recorded, with some more unusual sightings. There was a single Green-winged Teal for the second year in a row following a gap of ten years without a sighting, and a single Wood Duck at the Mill Pond, the seventh in the past 20 years. There were also two Ruddy Ducks that were only the fifth in the past 20 years.
- A new record for our circle was an eBird report of a Common Raven flying over Purgatory Creek in Eden Prairie. Although new to the count, this was not a particularly surprising find, as ravens have been steadily moving south in the state.
- Another species which seems to be increasing on the Excelsior count, Merlin, was observed in two areas. This marks the fourth consecutive winter for spotting this falcon, but there were only four sightings in the previous 67 years of the count.
- A Chipping Sparrow visited a feeder in Minnetonka. This was only the second occurrence for this species in our count's history, the previous sighting being from 2008.
- For the third consecutive year, only one Ring-necked Pheasant was found. While 301 individuals were noted in 1978, they have been steadily decreasing with increased urbanization.
- The only species on this year's count that set record high numbers was Ring-necked Duck with a total of 86, exceeding the previous high of 68 from 2012.
- The highest number for any species was 1,733 Mallards. Among the passerines Black-capped Chickadees, not surprisingly, led the way 757 individuals.
- Misses: Common Mergansers had all passed through, only the third time in 20 years we missed on this species. Winter finches were not cooperative this year. We had no Common Redpolls at all, a species that we record on about 50% of our counts. And we zipped on White-throated Sparrow for only the second time in the past 15 years.

Cedar Creek

by Jim Howitz

On December 18, 2022, it was 2 degrees above at dawn and only got to 13 above, but the clear skies and little wind made for a comfortable 77th Cedar Creek Bog Christmas Bird Count. The snow depth in open areas was two feet, which made forays away from the roads problematic. The species total was 43, and our total individuals counted was 2,154, both below expected numbers of 45 and 2,800. Here are some notable sightings from this year's count:

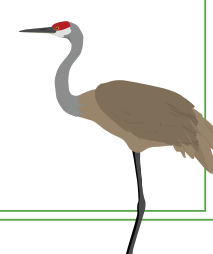
- We added a new species for the count: Wilson's Snipe. We also saw Eastern Bluebirds and a Northern Saw-whet Owl.
- The anticipated finch invasion did not materialize, though House Finches set a record high and Purple Finches and American Goldfinches were up.
- Red-bellied Woodpeckers set a record high, and turkeys tied their record.
- Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, crows, starlings, robins, and House Sparrows were down.
- In most years, we have dozens of Red-headed Woodpeckers to count. However with pin oaks failing to produce a decent acorn crop, none of these woodpeckers were present.
- Our Blue Jay counts correlate with the Red-headed Woodpecker counts and were less than half the average.



BIRD TRIVIA

Test your knowledge with the Trumpeter's bird trivia! Can you guess which bird species this is without using Google? Try it out and make sure to check the next Trumpeter edition for the answer!

- This species nests on the ground
- They are the only member of their family native to North America
- Females have longer bills than males
- Mothers will often fake having a broken wing to look vulnerable and lure predators away from their chicks
- They can fly super slowly, at only five miles per hour



MRVAC BIRDING TREKS

All of the refuge field trips are listed below, followed by field trips to other locations. All trips are free unless otherwise noted. Beginning birders are always welcome.

REGISTRATION PROCESS

Registration for these walks is available on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge website. Note registration for some dates will remain locked for about a month prior to the date of the walk. Please indicate in your registration if you would like to receive a birding summary and species list from the walk. Registration is required online at the following link: www.signup.com/go/rLmKfrK

Refuge Bird Watching Treks

- March 19 (Sunday) - Bass Ponds Trailhead
 - March 25 (Sunday) - Bass Ponds Trailhead
 - April 8 (Saturday) - Bass Ponds Trailhead
 - April 22 (Saturday) - Rapids Lake Education & Visitor Center
- *Each walk runs from 8 a.m.-10:30 a.m.*

Join us for a birding walk at one of the many refuge units. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Craig Mandel, a volunteer refuge naturalist, will lead the treks. For weather cancellations, or other questions about these walks, please contact Craig at 952-240-7647

Refuge Beginning Bird Walks

- March 26 (Saturday) - Old Cedar Avenue Bridge
 - April 15 (Sunday) - Old Cedar Avenue Bridge
- *Each walk runs from 8 a.m.-10:30 a.m.*

Join us on a beginning bird walk at the Old Cedar Avenue bridge. You'll have an opportunity to learn about using and choosing optics and field guides for bird watching and about some of the better locations to search for birds at the refuge and other locations around the Twin Cities. Birders of all ages are welcome on this walk, bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip Locations & Addresses

Wilkie Unit Trailhead
7701 County Road 101 E, Shakopee, MN, 55379

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

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

Pope County Birding Days

Base – Glenwood, MN
Thursday-Friday, March 30-31, 7 a.m.
Craig Mandel - 952-240-7647
\$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members

Our birding days in late March, Pope County should be a great time to look for migrating waterfowl. With luck we'll find some open lakes and there are a number of parks to check and some interesting WMA's to search for migrants. Glacial Lakes State Park is good for woodland birds and sometimes waterfowl. Some of the other locations we may have time to check include Barsness Park, Lake Minnewaska and Lake Emily. Time permitting, we may also check some locations in southern Douglas county on this trip. Please contact Craig to register for the Pope County Birding Days field trip.

Carlton County Birding Days

Base – Cloquet, MN
Thursday-Friday, April 20-21, 6:30 a.m.
Craig Mandel - 952-240-7647
\$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members

We'll spend a couple days birding in Carlton County on this field trip. We'll be checking some lakes for waterfowl and with luck we could find some species associated with the local boreal forests. Some of the locations we may have time to check include the Moose Lake sewage ponds, Moose Lake and Jay Cooke State Parks and a few wildlife management areas. Please contact Craig to register for the Carlton County Birding Days field trip.

Hok-Si-La Warbler Watching

Saturday, May 13, 7:30 a.m.
Steve Weston – 612- 978-3993
Field trip is free and open to the public

Join us for this traditional field trip that we've been taking for over 30 years! We never know what we will find. Please meet at Hok-Si-La Park (2500 U.S. Hwy 61, Lake City, MN), located just north of Lake City. Bring a lunch if you want to stay for some afternoon birding. This trip requires moderate effort, with some walking on trails. No reservations are required.

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

REGIONAL PROGRAMS OF INTEREST



Friends of Minnetonka Parks
Minnetonka, MN

The Friends of Minnetonka Parks has created a list of 2023 native plant sales in the area! Here are some upcoming dates and locations.

Anoka County Master Gardener Plant Sale
May 16-17 | Anoka County Fairgrounds

Burnsville Annual Spring Native Plant Market
May 20, 9 a.m.-noon | Bloomington City Hall

Dakota County Master Gardner Plant Sale
May 20, 8 a.m.-noon | Whitetail Woods Regional Park

Friends School Plant Sale
May 12-14 | Minnesota State Fairgrounds

Hennepin County Master Gardener Plant Sale
May 20, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. | Hopkins Pavilion

Landscape Arboretum Plant Sale
May 13-14 | Farm at the Arboretum

Ramsey County Master Gardener Plant Sale
May 20, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. | Church of the Holy Childhood

Wild Ones Twin Cities Native Plant Sale
June 2, 2 p.m. - 7 p.m. | Order online, pickup at Meetinghouse Church

Hennepin County Master Gardener Plant Sale
May 20, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. | Hopkins Pavilion

For more information on each event, including addresses and websites, please visit bit.ly/TCnativeplantsales



Three Rivers Park District
Various Locations

Bird Banding

Eastman Nature Center in Dayton
March 18 | 9 a.m. - noon

Lowry Nature Center in Victoria
March 18 | 9 a.m. - noon
April 15 | 9 a.m. - noon

Every Body Can Bird

Eastman Nature Center in Dayton
March 30 | 9 a.m. - 10 a.m.



MYBirdClub
Minneapolis, MN

Youth Spring Birdwatching

Old Cedar Avenue Bridge, Bloomington
March 25 | 8:30 a.m. - 10 a.m.

Heron Rookery, Minneapolis
March 26 | 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Veterans Park, Richfield
April 16 | 8:30 a.m. - 10 a.m.

Roberts Bird Sanctuary, Minneapolis
April 20 | 8:30 a.m. - 10 a.m.

Calling all youth birders! Join the MYBirdClub group for their spring bird walks. Every level of knowledge and all abilities are welcome. Binoculars and field guides will be available for free. Most locations offer flat gravel/dirt trails, ample parking, and a bus stop within a half mile of our starting point. Please dress for the weather, as we will only cancel for severe rain or dangerous weather conditions. These trips are sponsored by MRVAC.

Find more information for each hike and sign up at www.mrvac.org/trips-events



Deep Portage Learning Center
Hackensack, MN

50th Anniversary Celebration

April 22 | 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Deep Portage is celebrating its 50th Anniversary! This free, family-friendly event features lots of outdoor activities, food trucks, raffle prizes, and live music by Soul Shack! Join old and new friends as we invite former and current board members, staff members, students and their families, partnering school teachers, summer campers and families, supporters, volunteers, and the local community to celebrate the past 50 years and look forward to the future.

Feel free to bring your own adult beverages and drink responsibly. Please register in advance so we can better plan for the day.

View the full schedule and register at www.deep-portage.org



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
 - Join the Board
 - Other:

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



White-throated Sparrow by Shari McCollough