



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

# Trumpeter

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

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The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter cares deeply about our communities. The death of George Floyd, and others in the black community before him, is disgusting and reprehensible. We stand against racial injustice and will elevate the voices of others who are leading the way in creating positive change. We encourage you to read “It’s Time to Build a Truly Inclusive Outdoors” written by Corina Newsome of *Audubon Magazine* on page 2.

## Officers and Directors Elected

by Rob Daves, Board Member

The MRVAC board elected a new slate of officers and directors for the 2020-2021 year at its May 21 video meeting. The board reelected Matthew Schaut, president; Steve Weston, vice president; Rob Daves, secretary; and Walt Stull, treasurer. They join a slate of directors that include Rita Baden, Robin Kutz, Lee Ann Landstrom, Doug Mayo, Ken Oulman, Monica Rauchwarter and Bob Williams. Doug Mayo joins the board in the seat of retiring board member Greg Burnes, whom the board thanked for his terrific service on the board and as Membership Chair.

In addition to new officers and a new board, the board reorganized MRVAC’s committees. The communication committee was abolished, as volunteers were already taking care of its individual tasks, including the website (Rob Daves, webmaster) and the *Trumpeter* newsletter (Josh Sweet, editor). The Environmental Action and Conservation Committees were combined to create an Education and Action Committee chaired by Board Member Lee Ann Landstrom.

Board Member Bob Williams, will work with the fundraising committee, helping with the auction, Bird-a-thon, and administering the GiveMN webpage. Vice President Steve Weston will continue to chair the program committee and coordinate MRVAC activities with the Minnesota National Wildlife Refuge. On Greg Burnes’ retirement the membership committee chair is open. Robin Kutz continues to chair the social committee.

The complete list of directors, officers, committee chairs and other volunteer leaders can be found by clicking [here](#).

## 2020 MRVAC Birding Weekend

by Bob Williams, Board Member

Because of Covid-19 our chapter did not have its annual fundraising event known as the Bird-a-thon. It has been a part of our efforts to raise money for many years and has been very successful. This year we would like to try something a little different. We are asking that you participate in a birding weekend by going to your favorite birding spots on either August 22, August 23, or both, and to keep a list of all the species that you are able to identify each day. We would then ask you to tell us what birds you found so that we can compile a complete list for each day.

Small prizes will be awarded to the person who identifies the most species for each day and for the person who identifies the most unusual bird each day. The results will be published in a following edition of the *Trumpeter*.

Our goal is to have at least 100 birders participate in this event. If each participant would contribute and/or raise at least \$25, we would achieve our fundraising goal. You can visit our updated and improved website at [www.MRVAC.org](http://www.MRVAC.org) for ways to contribute online or you can mail a check made out to MRVAC at PO Box 20400, Bloomington, MN 55420. If you have any questions about the birding weekend, please contact Bob Williams at [drbop6789@gmail.com](mailto:drbop6789@gmail.com) or by text at (612)-991-0727.

“Field Trips are updated promptly. News is fresh. MRVAC info only a few mouse clicks away. What’s this, you ask? [Drum roll... ] It’s a freshly redesigned and easily updatable MRVAC website!” – Rob Daves

**Learn more on page 3.**



## National Audubon Spotlight

### It's Time to Build a Truly Inclusive Outdoors

by Corina Newsome, *Audubon Magazine*

Republished from the National Audubon Society

*As the nation continues to confront racism, the birding community must embrace difficult conversations.*



Corina Newsome birding along the Savannah River in Georgia.  
Photo: Katherine Arntzen/Georgia Southern University

It's early April and American Woodcocks have begun twilight mating displays, making whistling, twirling falls from the sky. You've seen them before with friends, but to abide by social distancing rules you decide on a solo trip. Then you recall the sound of gravel behind you as a police car followed you to a trail head the other day. You quickly but calmly grabbed your binoculars and pointed them to a nearby tree. Not because you saw a bird, but to prove your innocence—to de-escalate what you feared could unfold. It's cold outside and will be colder tonight when the woodcocks dance. You should layer up with your hoodie, but you know how that makes you look. Especially at night. Especially alone. You decide it's better not to go. If you can, go birding.

Every detail of this scenario is based on events experienced by me and my Black birding friends—and our fear is not for nothing. Law enforcement and vigilantes have endangered or taken Black lives more times than we can count. Names ring in our ears: Tamir, Breonna, George, Ahmaud. We have also seen the discomfort of white hikers and birders when they encounter us, sometimes suspicious or fearful, other times shocked we're even there. To raise our concerns, we've reached out to our birding communities. But instead of finding listening ears, we've been told that discussion is too political. Nature exploration is "neutral territory." How dare we bring race into birding.

As COVID-19 cases exploded, the outdoors, and birding in particular, became a source of solace and escape for many, bringing the anxiety and racism Black people experience in the outdoors into clear relief. Then a spark: on video, a white woman tried to weaponize the police against a Black birder, Christian Cooper, by falsely claiming an African American man threatened her life. The issues we'd long known became international news, just as Black Lives Matter protests spread globally. My friends and I, a group of about 30 Black birders, scientists, and nature enthusiasts, decided it was the perfect time to tell the world that these aren't isolated incidents, but the fruit of an entrenched culture. With this resolve, we organized the first Black Birders Week, which began May 31.

Through online events and conversations at hashtags like #BlackInNature, #BirdingWhileBlack, and #BlackWomenWhoBird, hundreds of thousands of people saw, heard, and celebrated Black birders. Large organizations amplified our message; we were no longer silenced. Even as the pandemic kept many apart, we saw more fellow Black birders, scientists, and hikers than ever before.

Still, our efforts must continue—and white people must join. We are at the cusp of a turning point that embraces human diversity as joyfully as the diversity of feathered creatures. To get there, white people must value Black lives and hear our voices—and lean into uncomfortable conversations about racism and privilege that follow. The birding community must show that it is not neutral. Neutrality is dangerous, and this is our protest.

*Corina Newsome is a biology graduate student at Georgia Southern University. She has worked in wildlife conservation for eight years, and is currently a field biologist studying the MacGillivray's Seaside Sparrow.*

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**“How dare we bring race into birding.”**



## Chapter News

### New Website Goes Live

by Rob Daves, Board Member



**F**ield Trips are updated promptly. News is fresh. MRVAC info is only a few mouse clicks away.

“What’s this,” you ask?

[Drum roll...] It’s a freshly redesigned and easily updatable MRVAC website.

Earlier this year the board tapped Greg Burnes and Rob Daves to find a web designer that wouldn’t break MRVAC’s budget who could redesign the site and teach board members to maintain it. The goals were to ensure that it could be accessed from nearly any device, reorganize it so that content could be more quickly accessed, and be easily updated for members to have quick, accurate information about the organization, field trips, grants, and other MRVAC information.

Greg and Rob found Christine Tierney of Junebird Creative (the name was icing on the creative cake). She worked with them to redesign the site to more logically organize content and to train a MRVAC team to update it when needed.

That was one of the problems with the old site. No one knew how to use the software that could update the site, so it languished. Now, Craig Mandel, MRVAC’s Field Trip Coordinator, can update trips and events on the site. Rob, our Board Secretary, handles most of the rest of the updates, but President Matthew Schaut, Vice President Steve Weston and Board Member Bob Williams have also been trained to make updates.

The site features a bundle of nifty features including new photos from members of the local birding community and an expanded list of members’ favorite birding places. But the coolest is the “ecommerce” feature – the ability to accept member dues on the website.

Here are seven helpful tips to assist MRVAC members with navigating the site.

- 1) The home page has tabs at the top to help find specific content.
- 2) The ‘About MRVAC’ tab has information about the chapter, its leadership, board minutes, how to support MRVAC online, and the annual Trumpeter Award winner.
- 3) The ‘Grants’ tab has information about how MRVAC fosters conservation through its grants and how to apply for grants.
- 4) The ‘Birding’ tab has resources for birding, birding sites and a gallery of members’ photos.
- 5) The ‘Field Trips and Events’ tab has info about all of MRVAC’s field trips and other events including regular monthly meetings.
- 6) The ‘News’ tab has articles about specific birding and conservation-related topics and also contains current and past issues of *The Trumpeter*.
- 7) The ‘Membership’ tab tells how to join MRVAC and allows members to pay dues online.

[www.MRVAC.org](http://www.MRVAC.org). Check it out.

### Thinking about the Future

by Lee Ann Landstrom, Education & Action Chair

**D**espite the novel corona COVID-19 crisis, the climate change crisis continues. Even though there was a decrease in CO2 emissions worldwide in the past two months, the overall atmospheric CO2 amount in May was the highest ever. Climate change roars on.

To learn how birds will be affected, see my **April 29 article** on MRVAC’s main webpage and News section. You can dig into the predictions on which species will suffer the most. Better yet, you can get inspired and informed on actions you can do to help the environment.

When we meet in person, you can pick up literature and a brand-new, excellent booklet on using native plants in your yard to benefit bees and birds.

### 2020 Grants Awarded

by Walt Stull, Board Member

**T**he entire MRVAC family would like to congratulate the following organizations who applied for and were awarded grant funding this year. More information about MRVAC grants can be found on the website.

**Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends  
Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center  
Red-headed Woodpecker Conservation Plan  
Wild Ones, Prairie Edge Chapter**





## The Green Scene

### Matthew's Musings

by *Matthew Schaut, Board President*

One of my most salient birding memories is my first encounter with a brown-headed cowbird in the forest around our family land in the western upper peninsula of Michigan. The grumpy female emerged from the grasses at the base of a tree that I just happened to know was the site of a Connecticut warbler nest. I was shocked and displeased, of course, but also torn. Do I interfere with nature or do I let nature run its course, the "science based" way to proceed. To my regret, I did not remove the cowbird egg I have little doubt had just been laid. I have never seen another Connecticut warbler at this site, while the number of cowbirds has continued to grow.

Books like *1491* made the strong case that humans have always impacted the environment and interfered in natural processes. Science continues to be humbled about its ability to model and control natural processes. Think climate models – the models always have missed important variables and seem to reflect scientist's subconscious wishful thinking and minimization – because climate reality consistently turns out to be much more dire than the predictions of the models. (Oh, if we could return to those hopeful delusionary days...). Think efforts to control flooding or shore erosion – laughable, but beavers know how to do it. Think about anything you want! In truth humans do not know all of the relevant variables of any natural process. We are clumsy engineers with blockhead brains, far inferior to evolution's mastery of evolutionary processes.

This is why shame and regret remain from my non-interference decision at the warbler's nest. Without the illusion of control or the delusion of non-involvement – we are faced with our ethical duty TO ACT. We have a duty to protect and salvage this planet and its creatures and its evolutionary processes! My attempt to play objective scientist doomed that Connecticut warbler's nest even as my ethical sense screamed "remove the cowbird egg!" I felt the discomfort but just walked away. Yet, I haven't just walked away, because the impacts of my non-action remain with me – and doomed that particular Connecticut warbler lineage, which is a far more terrible thing.

Maybe in a controlled experimental setting the stance of non-interference is appropriate but outside of that context, we must be ethical *actors*. Non-participation is a delusion. Being non-partisan is a delusion, though the National Audubon Society continues to take that stance. We are required to take a stance within the systems we are a part of. I hope all of us, including MRVAC, become much more courageous going forward. Ideas for action are all around us, including those shared on the MRVAC Facebook page and on the MRVAC website.

Around the world, environmentalists are killed in large numbers. I am well aware that the County Commissioners in the rural county that lost its Connecticut warbler nest are most afraid of oil company revenge if they vote against pipelines through their rural county. There is always the implied threat and it is easy to pick off lone individuals in the woods.

We are talking about an incredible level of courage... but our planet is in danger of becoming uninhabitable for biological life, species are going extinct in incredible numbers, and – to my shame – I suspect we are all complicit.

### Armstrong Wetland Restoration

by *Bob Williams, Board Member*

One of the most interesting birding hotspots that is within an hour's drive of the metro area is the Armstrong Wetlands Restoration just north of Rice Lake State Park on NE 84<sup>th</sup> Ave in Steele County.

In 2009 Charles Armstrong walked into the Owatonna Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office and said he was tired of growing crops on an 885.2 acre piece of land that he owned. "Farming on peat soils makes growing a crop a difficult and unpredictable thing to do," said Armstrong. Noel Frank the longtime district conservationist (DC) in Steele County worked with Armstrong to develop a Permanent Rim/WRP easement through NRCS' Wetland Reserve Program and the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Program. Frank says, "This is the largest restoration site I have worked with in my career. The site contained drainage tile and drainage ditches and was perfect for a restoration in Steele County." Restorations such as this require a great deal of cooperation from the landowner, conservation partners and NRCS, BWSR, Ducks Unlimited and the Steele Soil and Water Conservation District. The result is a fabulous place to see birds.

Here is a partial list of birds that have been seen here at various times of the year: many species of waterfowl including Eared Grebes, Sandhill Cranes, many species of shorebirds and waders including American Bittern, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, Black-necked Stilt and Whimbrel, and several species of raptor including Short-eared Owls. If you have not been there yet I encourage you to go. There is a gravel road that runs through the land and is lightly traveled. Rice Lake State Park is also a great location to bird so you can make a very enjoyable day of it.



## Gardening for Wildlife

by Robin Kutz



I've been gardening since I was a kid. My favorite part was watching the critters the gardens brought in. The fascination stuck.

Now, after years of working at garden centers, attending workshops, and designing my own gardens, I truly appreciate the variety of plants and animals that grow and live here in the Twin Cities.

My three main goals in planting are: plant for wildlife, keep it native as much as possible, and let it look nice enough that the neighbors won't mind.

When I moved into our Burnsville home twenty-six years ago, I never would have guessed that eventually my tidy, sodded, suburban yard would become a multicolored haven for critters. Little by little my gardens have popped up where sod used to be, and have been expanded throughout, taking the place of boring, shortly trimmed grass. Two ponds provide flowing water. A curb garden expands all along the curb, and even into the neighbors' yards (with their permission of course.) Three rain gardens now extend from where our rain gutters end, collecting rainwater, and allowing it to seep into the soil. The yard is a National Certified Wildlife Habitat. It's so much fun to look out the window and see who's visiting each day.

The trick? Just start small and stick to it: adding new garden sections when possible (with a good variety of plants: perennials, shrubs, trees). Seek out new places to purchase MN native plants, investigate your county's and city's rain and native garden grants. Stop using pesticides. Be brave and let the milkweed stand in the middle of the garden if it happens to like growing there. Provide places of shelter, and fresh water. Offer a nice large rock or two, for the bees and butterflies to warm up on. Read up on animals you want to encourage to stay, and make little changes that draw them in.

My gardens have all become butterfly and pollinator gardens, because I've added a handful of plants that they love, including: asclepias-butterfly weed, penstemon, monarda-bee balm, lobelia, chelone-turtlehead, thalictrum-meadow rue, nepeta-cat mint, and coreopsis-tickseed.

Most of my gardens have a bird bath or water source. I also have multiple feeders and a variety of bird houses. Each little bit makes the yard that much better.

I've even left some areas a little bit wild, in the back yard, where I don't mind. I've let the goldenrod and taller grasses onto my berm. It creates a safe space for critters to shelter. We had two does adopt my little Burnsville backyard as daycare last summer. It was wonderful to look outside and see up to three little spotted fawns curled up in the yard. This year I had to erect a deer fence around the apple and pear trees, because the now grown fawns still walk through from time to time, and expect lunch. I'm much more giving of the hostas out there than the fruit trees

In short, plant what you love. Include some native plants. Watch and appreciate what wonders you see.

### MRVAC Field Trip Update

by Craig Mandel, Field Trip Coordinator

Due to the current social distancing guidelines in place, all field trips have been canceled through August 15. Please check the MRVAC website for event updates in September and later this fall. These cancellations affect the following field trips.

Sunday, July 5 – Bass Ponds  
 Saturday, July 25 – Bass Ponds  
 Monday, July 27 – Bass Ponds  
 Sunday, August 2 – Bass Ponds  
 July 9/10 – Central Minnesota Birding Days  
 August 6/7 – SW Minnesota Birding Days (Worthington)  
 August 13/14 – SW Minnesota Birding Days (RW Falls)

I will be sending out information about these cancellations to those of you who have preregistered for these field trips. If you have any questions about these field trip cancellations, you can contact Craig at (952)-240-7647.

### Socially-distant Renewable Energy Tour

by Lindsay Bjorklund, Deep Portage Assistant Director

Deep Portage is a leader in renewable energy systems! Get an up-close, guided tour of wind, solar, and wood gasification installations and how they have greatly benefitted our organization. Our helpful staff will be happy to answer your questions and provide additional resources for those that are interested. Click [here](#) for a sneak peek at what's on the tour.



Tuesday, July 21, 2020; 1-2:30 PM  
 FREE! Donations welcome.



2197 Nature Center Dr. NW Hackensack, MN 56452

Advanced reservations are required by sending an email to [publicprograms@deepportage.org](mailto:publicprograms@deepportage.org) or by calling (218)-682-2325. Tour will be limited to 15 people. Participants will be asked to stay 6 feet from other family groups. Do not attend if you or someone in your household is feeling ill.

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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!**



**Digital Resources from the Refuge**

*by Joel Vos, MVNWR Visitor Center Manager*

**S**ummer camps for your kids or grandkids canceled? Trying to find resources to enjoy while visiting the Refuge? The education staff at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge have produced lesson packets, fun virtual field trips, readings of children's books, scavenger hunts and more for K-6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Please help us get these resources out by sharing the links below with partners, students and families that you think might be interested.

All parts of the learning packets can be found on our website on the **Just for Kids page**.

Or you can find the video playlists on the Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends **YouTube channel**.

Don't forget – the outdoors is not canceled! Get outside and explore the refuge or your own neighborhood with the help of these great resources for students.