



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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www.MRVAC.org

January – February 2022

Josh Sweet, Trumpeter Editor
jhsweet0201@gmail.com

Seeking New Board Members

by Matthew Schaut, Board President

The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter (MRVAC) is fortunate to have a strong Board of Directors who bring a diversity of strengths and experience to the work MRVAC does. This being said, MRVAC is both in need of – and quite desirous – of having new people join the Board.

There was a time when I, as a relative newcomer to Minnesota, was seen as a young one – but I never really was that young, and am definitely not so young now. We would love to see younger people, including those with no experience serving on Boards, take the plunge and try something new.

Contrary to what I thought before I myself took the plunge, you don't need deep pockets, for your role isn't to carry the organization financially. You don't need to be a mover or a shaker. You don't need to know a bunch of stuff and have a bunch of experience. You do need to care about birds, the Minnesota River Valley, and the health of the Minnesota River. Our role is to advocate for environmental stewardship, keep our full plate of field trips going, and fulfill our mission of bringing underserved youth populations into close contact with nature.

Please consider joining us. If you are interested you may contact the Board through our website, or you may email or text me directly.

Matthew can be reached by phone at (612) 756-2349 or by email at Mschaut22@yahoo.com.

Trumpeter Editor needed in 2023

by Josh Sweet, Trumpeter Editor 2019-2022

For the past few years it has been an honor to be the editor of MRVAC's very own newsletter, *The Trumpeter*. I have truly enjoyed the opportunity to share chapter updates, nature news, and learning opportunities with all of our readers. Beginning in November of 2022, I will be transitioning into a new part-time role at Deep Portage Learning Center in Hackensack, Minnesota. Due

to time constraints, I will no longer be able to continue my responsibilities as editor at that time.

Therefore, MRVAC is seeking a new editor for *The Trumpeter* to begin at the end of the 2022 calendar year and heading into 2023. Responsibilities include coordinating 5-6 issues each year, keeping up to date on regional happenings, and creating original newsletter content when necessary. A stipend is available. Interested individuals should contact Board President, Matthew Schaut by email at Mschaut22@yahoo.com.

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 January and February. Virtual meetings start at 7:30 PM with a link sent out about a week ahead of time via email.



"Studying Owls with Sound"

Karla Bloem, International Owl Center
Thursday, January 27, 2022, 7:30 PM



Join us for an evening with international owl expert, Karla Bloem from the International Owl Center in Houston, Minnesota. Did you know that there is an ongoing study of wild Barn Owls in southeastern Minnesota? And, they are finding them! Did you know that Great Horned Owl may be split into two or more species someday? Did you know that the International Ornithological Council considers the Barn Owl to be three different species even though the American Ornithological Council does not yet? And that all of this relates to owl vocalizations?



"Spiders of Minnesota"

Chad Heins, Bethany Lutheran College
Thursday, February 24, 2022, 7:30 PM



Chad Heins will spin a tale about how a simple question about Minnesota's spiders entangled him in spider research and how that work has ballooned into a bigger project that utilizes the World Wide Web.



Nature Notes



Are You a Naturalist?

by Dianne Rowse, MRVAC Member



Do you prefer to spend time outdoors, enjoy bird watching or gardening, or do you read about and study nature? Do you consider yourself a naturalist?

From “The Compass to Nature”, a curriculum created by the US Fish and Wildlife Service - Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, the definition of a naturalist is “a person who studies nature.”

This curriculum aptly describes naturalists as people who “make observations, record data, and share their discoveries with others. They are skilled in exploring, observing, organizing, collecting, describing, inventing and experimenting.” Some famous North American naturalists include Byrd Baylor, John Muir, George Washington Carver, and Rachel Carson. Naturalists have common characteristics, even as children. They are “prepared, quiet, observant, patient, curious, respectful, full of wonder, in the moment, and sharing.” Who wouldn’t want to be described with these positive qualities?

Also from this curriculum, a naturalist pays close attention to changes and differences over time, respects nature, uses clues to explain natural events, keeps records, thinks reflectively, and shares experiences, delight and discoveries. This sounds like just the kind of person I want to go on a walk with! So, are you a Naturalist?

Naturalists contribute to our quality of life and remind us to live in balance with the Earth. Keep on being curious!

Link with more information:

www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Compass_to_Nature_FINAL_low_resolution.pdf

Take 5 for Nature: In Otter News...

by Josh Sweet, Trumpeter Editor

Human beings aren’t the only creatures with an appreciation for sledding in winter. River otters, one of many incredible species found at the Lowry Nature Center, will playfully zip, dive, and hurl their bodies down steep, snow-packed slopes leaving behind belly-wide runways in the snow. In addition to appearing to enjoy themselves, this behavior is thought to help sharpen their predatory skills and maneuvers.

Otter tracks and slides often lead to narrow pockets of open water as their sleek bodies are seamlessly suited for aquatic life. Their exceptionally dense fur and webbed feet allow them to remain active beneath the ice throughout the coldest months of the year. Thanks to these favorable adaptations, otters are considered the largest aquatic carnivores in Minnesota feeding on fish, clams, and even turtles.

An adult river otter can measure up to five and a half feet long including a powerful 18-inch tail. They belong to the Mustelid (*weasel*) family and will weigh an average of 15-19 pounds. Thanks to decades of interagency wetland restoration efforts, otters are becoming more common throughout the state and are protected in all areas managed by Three Rivers Park District including at the Lowry Nature Center in Carver Park Reserve.

Know of a student who is ready to learn more about local wildlife? Pick up a copy of the brand-new *Junior Naturalist Activity Book* for free at the Lowry Nature Center! This self-guided activity book helps children discover more about the natural environment and what steps they can take to preserve it for future generations. Each activity can be completed at the nature center or in your own backyard or neighborhood. Students of all ages can learn about ecosystem connections, habitats, pollinators, different types of recreation and much more while earning prizes along the way. Can’t make it to the nature center? Download and print your own copy online at www.threeriversparks.org/juniornaturalist.

Mary Lou’s Garage at Sax-Zim

by Sparky Stensaas, Friends of the Sax-Zim Bog
republished from the Friends of the Sax-Zim Bog

Hi all Sax-Zim birders/photographers! I am Sparky Stensaas, a longtime birder in Sax-Zim Bog. I have brought many birding groups to Mary Lou's over the years. She is such an awesome and friendly person. And now she could really use our help.

Our friend Mary Lou of "Lou's feeders" (aka "the Evening Grosbeak Lady") had a traumatic fire in the early morning on December 5. Her garage completely burned down in an intense fire. Her car was destroyed, as well as all but one of her chickens. ALL her stored bird seed was destroyed as well as the porta-potty that we have all come to depend on. The heat was so intense that it melted some of the siding on her nearby house, and cracked some windows.

So many of you have already reached out to see how we all can help. Thank you! You can mail a check directly to Mary Lou Freyholtz at 2604 CR444, Hibbing, MN 55746 or you can put money in her bird feed donation boxes. The GoFundMe Fundraiser has now ended. P.S. Mary Lou still really wants birders/photographers to come and enjoy her feeders! She wants everyone to enjoy the Evening Grosbeaks!



Nature Notes

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Connects with Birdability

“Birdability’s mission is to share the joys of birding with people who have disabilities, and to ensure birding is accessible for everybody. Birding truly is for everybody and every body, regardless of disability or other health concerns.”

by Cortney Solum, Minnesota Valley NWR

The Refuge works with a variety of partners to ensure that the outdoors are welcoming, inclusive, safe, and accessible for everybody. In 2020, we connected with the organization Birdability to support and amplify their work to improve the physical accessibility of birding locations, empower a welcoming and inclusive birding community, and introduce people with access challenges to birding.

You can help us by adding information about your favorite trails and birding spots, on or off the Refuge, to the new interactive Birdability Map which can be found online at www.gis.audubon.org/birdability/.

If you lead birding outings or events, be sure to check out the helpful online resources at www.birdability.org/ under “Guidance Documents” for insights on how to be more inclusive through language, equipment and welcoming behavior.

You can learn even more from the Virtual Speaker Series hosted by Birdability and the American Bird Conservancy on the first Tuesday of each month. Tune in to the Birdability website to learn how you can help create a birding community for everybody.

Birdability will also be hosting a webinar on January 4, 2022 from 6:00 – 7:30 PM. This presentation will feature Kari Sasportas (she/they), an autistic birder with a lifelong passion for animals and nature. Among other topics, Kari will discuss the joy they find in birding, what everyday life is like with autism, and what they need from the birding community and birding locations to ensure access and feel welcomed and included. Register for this presentation online by visiting the following link.

www.act.abcbirds.org/a/birdability-kari-sasportas



Big Year of Birds in Three Rivers Parks

republished from Three Rivers Park District



In 2022, we’re celebrating birds all year long! For us at Three Rivers, it’s about conservation and connection. Birds connect us to nature in our own backyards and can spark curiosity about the faraway places they migrate to and from. They can help us learn about ecosystems and more about the natural world, reminding us the importance of being good environmental stewards for these creatures and their habitats.

Join our trained naturalists and bird experts for activities of all kinds throughout the year: hikes, talks, art installations, special events, field trips, workshops and more await!

Speaker Series

Join us for a Speaker Series all about birds! Learn from some of Minnesota’s most prominent bird experts, twice a month (January-March). All six sessions are free for all ages. Programs take place from 2-3 PM every other Sunday starting January 16, 2022 at Silverwood Park in St. Anthony.

World Migratory Bird Day – May 14, 2022

Save the date for our Big Year of Birds signature event at Eastman Nature Center on World Migratory Bird Day! Take a birding hike with a naturalist, meet a raptor and other birds up close, see bird banding, learn how to use binoculars, and more!

Young Birders Club

Discover the world of birding in the Young Birders Club! Learn all about native birds, and attend programs and events at the nature centers in Three Rivers. Ages 9-12.

Additional Resources

Learn more about birds online on the Three Rivers blog, The Wandering Naturalist podcast, and more at www.threeriversparks.org/page/big-year-birds.



Regional Events of Interest



Friends of Sax-Zim Bog
Welcome Center in Meadowlands, MN



Lowry Nature Center
Victoria, Minnesota

January BogDiversity Challenge: Warren Nelson Memorial Bog

Saturday, January 1-31

2022 is the 10th anniversary of the Sax-Zim Bog BioBiltzes! We hope to encourage folks to explore the biodiversity of the greater Sax-Zim Bog region and to use iNaturalist on our properties during all seasons! The January BogDiversity Challenge is at the Warren Nelson Bog! This property is the largest owned by the Friends of Sax-Zim Bog at 120 acres. Much of this property is not easily accessible, but it is one of three properties with a boardwalk. We hope to be creating a snowshoe trail that will allow access along the width of the property. This is a popular property to visit, so if you are planning on visiting the Bog during January and use iNaturalist, check out this property and join the project! www.saxzim.org

McDavitt Road Snowshoe Hike

Saturday, February 5, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Snowshoes are a great way to continue being active during the winter season and are a great way to explore hard to get to locations in the Bog. Join us for a leisurely snowshoe hike off of the South Logging Road on McDavitt Road. This location often has exciting tracks, finches, and we will get a good look at a bog during the winter! We will learn about bogs and winter ecology over the course of this trip. Snowshoes are required and can be borrowed from the Welcome Center (email Head Naturalist Clinton at naturalist@saxzim.org to reserve). www.saxzim.org

Winter World of Lichens Field Trip

Saturday, February 19, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Northern Minnesota is home to a diverse lichen community. These species cover nearly 8% of the terrestrial surface of the earth, yet are relatively unknown to most of us. Join us on this trip to get firsthand experience in lichen identification, as well as to learn a few of the more common lichens in our area. We will be making small collections of lichens for the Welcome Center or personal use! We MAY utilize snowshoes for this Field Trip (email Head Naturalist Clinton at naturalist@saxzim.org to reserve). www.saxzim.org



Young Birder's Club: Winter Birds

Sunday, January 16, 2:00 – 4:00 PM

Kick off the year learning about common Minnesota winter birds. Learn about the Young Birder's Club and the amazing events going on during the "Big Year of the Bird" in Three Rivers Parks. FREE for Young Birder's Club members; \$5 per non-member. Ages 9-12. Reservations required. www.threeriversparks.org

Nature Journaling Club: Sketch & Seek

Sunday, January 30, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Learn how to keep sketching through the cold months. Bring your favorite sketchbook or nature journal as we focus on dry media like graphite and colored pencils. Meet for a demo, brief phenology chat and get outside to talk about microclimates and the wonders of winter. No membership needed, just join in if you enjoy sketching, nature and camaraderie. Please dress to be outside for an hour. Enjoy a warm beverage and briefly explore indoors afterward to warm up and share at the end. Basic sketching materials available. Great for families, small groups, experienced and new artists alike. Reservations required. www.threeriversparks.org



Deep Portage Learning Center
Hackensack, Minnesota

43rd Annual Winter Rendezvous

Saturday, January 22, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Journey back in time and learn about the cultural heritage of Minnesota. In this one-day event, activities will be based on traditions from Lumberjacks, Voyageurs and Native Americans. Try your hand at events such as snowsnakes, spear throwing using atlatls, the cross-cut saw, trap shooting, northwoods curling and much more! Bring the whole family to join in a friendly community competition while learning about the rich cultural history of the area. Free will donation to participate in the event. A hot lunch is available, also free will donation. All ages. www.deep-portage.org



International Owl Center
Houston, Minnesota

Virtual Owl Expert Speaker Series

Sundays, January 2, 16, 23 & 30 begins at 1:00 PM

Sundays, February 13, 20 & 27 begins at 1:00 PM

A different owl expert from around the world will give a free presentation on select Sundays. Please register to get the Zoom link. There is no cost, but donations are welcome. www.internationalowlcenter.org

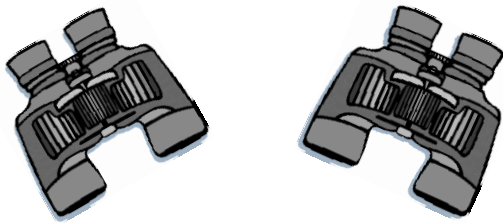


MRVAC Field Trips

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 if not vaccinated.

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 (Jan.-Feb.)

Monday, January 3 (8:00-10:30 AM) Wilkie Unit
Saturday, January 15 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds
Sunday, January 16 (8:00-10:30 AM) Wilkie Unit
Saturday, Feb. 5 (8:00-10:30 AM) Old Cedar Ave.
Sunday, Feb. 13 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds
Saturday, Feb. 26 (8:00-10:30 AM) Old Cedar Ave.

Join us for a bird walk on one of the many Refuge units. Each winter offers a different variety of birds that overwinter on the Refuge. But you can usually observe a variety of waterfowl and raptors each year. Plus, other species observed some winters include Northern Shrike, Winter Wren, and Brown Creepers. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Led by Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist. For weather-related cancellations or other questions please contact Craig at (952) 240-7647.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip Locations & Addresses

Wilkie Unit Trailhead
7701 County Road 101, Shakopee, MN

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

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

Northern Minnesota – Sax-Zim Birding Days

Thursday, January 20 – Friday, January 21, 2022
 \$25/MRVAC members;
 \$35/non-MRVAC members
 Craig Mandel – (952) 240-7647

We will spend the first day of this trip exploring the Sax-Zim Bog, looking for Great Gray and Northern Hawk Owls along with winter finches and other species observed in the Sax-Zim Bog. We will leave Friday's itinerary open to search for any unusual species of birds that have been seen in the area. This trip should get your 2022 Minnesota year list off to a great start. Please contact Craig to register for this trip.

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



Join MRVAC on January 27 for a virtual program with Karla Bloem, Executive Director at the International Owl Center. Details on page 1.

Photo Credit: Rochester Post Bulletin



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!

Join MRVAC on February 24 for a virtual program with Chad Heins. Associate Professor of Biology at Bethany Lutheran College. Details on page 1.

