



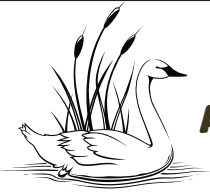
The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

# Trumpeter

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

November - December 2023

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Upcoming Chapter Events

**November 9:** MRVAC Auction at Richardson Nature Center in Bloomington. Doors open at 6 p.m., auction begins at 7 p.m.

**December 16:** Bloomington and Excelsior Christmas Bird Counts, sponsored by MRVAC

**December 17:** Cedar Creek Bog Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by MRVAC

**MRVAC Sponsored Field Trips:** See page 4

### Grants Available For Conservation or Education

The MRVAC Board is now accepting applications for grants this fiscal year. Grants will be considered for educational equipment, scout projects to help wildlife, birding activities, habitat improvements, or pollinator/rain gardens, for example. Please consider your network of faith communities, youth clubs, municipal parks, schools, or churches who may be thinking to enhance their grounds for birds and pollinators; tell them we'd like to help their project. For more information and to apply, visit [www.mrvac.org/grants](http://www.mrvac.org/grants)

### Trumpeter Subscription & Local Membership

Please help support MRVAC in promoting environmental awareness, education and advocacy action, especially relating to the wildlife and habitats of the Minnesota River Valley! To do this, you can become a local member of MRVAC for \$20 per year. This is not the same as the National Audubon Society membership. Becoming a local member helps the chapter continue to fund crucial environmental projects and cover costs associated with outreach and advocacy.

## MRVAC Auction Returns November 9

After a Covid-driven hiatus, the MRVAC holiday auction is back on **Thursday, Nov. 9 at Richardson Nature Center in Bloomington!** The nature center is located at 8737 E Bush Lake Rd., Bloomington.

The auction begins at 7 p.m. Come early to drop off your items to be auctioned, get first pick on low-priced books, get your bidding strategies down, and socialize a bit. There will be snacks and drinks and of course lots of really nifty things up for grabs. Doors open at 6 p.m.

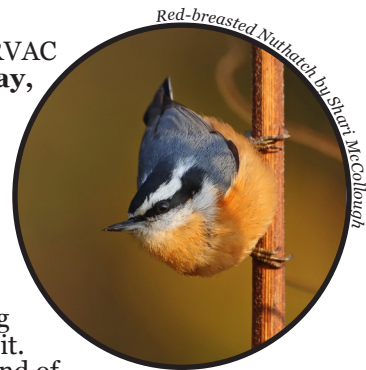
Books? Yep, bunches, including many different nature topics and some field guides. One special book is *Birds of North America* which you will not find in a used book store. Art? You bet, including a signed original Walter Breckenridge, watercolors and a beautiful canvas print of a snowy owl that was displayed at the September meeting. You have a chance to pick up a pair of Swarovski binoculars with no minimum bid. There will be bird houses and feeders. And heads up, St. Paulites: The auction will include antique St. Paul Bird Club stickers. We are still soliciting more contributions.

You can bring your items to be auctioned, too. Or just show up early and volunteer to be a runner or general helper. You also can give one of the board members a shout. All the proceeds will go toward MRVAC's grant program, which helps fund local conservation education and birding projects. Questions? Reach out to Rob at [rob\\_daves@yahoo.com](mailto:rob_daves@yahoo.com)

## Christmas Bird Count Season Is Coming

*by Steve Weston, Board Member*

The 124<sup>th</sup> annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count will take place from Dec. 14 through Jan. 5 at over 80 count circles in Minnesota. This is probably the largest and longest running citizen science program anywhere. And you are invited to join us. MRVAC sponsors three of these counts: Bloomington, Excelsior, and Cedar Creek Bog in Anoka. You can find the dates for these counts and some others nearby continued on the next page.



Red-breasted Nuthatch by Shari McCollough

*December 16*

Bloomington: Liz Stanley, lizmstanley@gmail.com  
 Excelsior: Howard Towle, towle001@umn.edu  
 Minneapolis North: Siah St. Clair, StClairS@comcast.net  
 St. Paul North: Gregg Severson, gregg.severson@gmail.com

*December 17*

Cedar Creek Bog: Steve Weston, sweston2g@gmail.com

To participate, contact the count compiler for more information. The first time I joined a count, I turned to our team leader and said, "I am not at all good at identifying bird calls." He said, "I can't hear them well anymore. You find them, I'll identify them." Whatever your birding level is, we need your help.

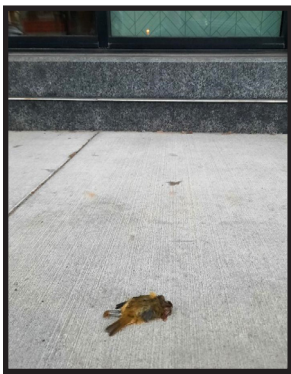
Minnesota has two of the first and only counts set up for LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities at the Shakopee SMSC community and Minneapolis West. If you are interested contact the Urban Bird Collective at urbanbirdcollective@gmail.com.

Learn more about the Christmas Bird Counts on page 3 and find a count near you at [www.moumn.org/cbc](http://www.moumn.org/cbc)

## A Note From Our President

*by Rob Daves, Board President*

After dinner we were headed for the Guthrie among the tall glass towers in downtown Minneapolis when the goth couple ahead of us swerved on the sidewalk.



Almost unconsciously we swerved to dodge whatever they had seen. A glance down showed the sad story: a warbler, newly dead on the sidewalk, its neck bent at an unnatural angle. Perhaps not to the experts on the records committee, but to me it was one of Peterson's "confusing fall warblers."

My spirits plummeted. I'd been looking forward to an Oscar Wilde

comedy at the theater and now was reminded of the fragility of those who adapted to Mother Earth's natural characteristics and have been stymied – or like this, killed – by humankind's intrusions.

When I moved to a house adjacent to a natural area in Bloomington several years ago, we quickly learned that we needed to break up window reflections of the bur oaks and cottonwoods to keep birds from crashing into the windows. Since then, I've worked to help MRVAC website readers know about "Lights Out" times during spring and fall migrations.

At one MOU paper session we heard the research about pesticides in grain harming birds that eat the grain falling from grain trucks and rail cars. That might be abstract to some. But seeing something in the concrete like the window

strike earlier this fall is more likely to initiate action than hearing about it in the abstract – or just reading about it here.

If we commit to do something small regularly, even just once a month, it can make a difference. Often we can do it in the comfort of our homes. We can sign up for Audubon action alerts ([mn.audubon.org](http://mn.audubon.org)). We can email legislators to support the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund Reauthorization in 2024 (also called more simply the "lottery reauthorization"). We can incorporate more native plants, including native varieties of wildflowers, in our landscaping. There are many others.

But right now? One of the things we can do is support the MRVAC holiday auction Nov. 9. Its proceeds will go to local birding and conservation and education grants. You can find the details on the cover of the Trumpeter.

See you there!

## Winter Finch Forecast

*by Steve Weston, Board Member*

This birding forecast is mostly based on conditions in Canada surveyed by Tyler Hoar and Matt Young, who observed cone and berry production and early movements of birds. They reported that this summer's forest fires are not affecting the bird migration. Minnesota bird movements are mostly based on eBird reports.

With food sources exhausted in Canada and Pine Siskin numbers up, it promises to be a great year for siskins throughout the state. They are already showing up in northern Minnesota in good numbers, are being found widely across the Metro Area and are starting to show up in southern Minnesota. They will be heading south of Minnesota soon. How long they will stay in the state is a function of the continued supply of food.

Redpolls are expected to show up in moderate numbers, which means they should appear on some Christmas Bird Counts. At this time of writing (late September), they have not started showing up.

It should be a good year for Red Crossbills. Western Type 4 Red Crossbills have been showing up in record numbers on the East coast and should be around in Minnesota this winter. Type 2 and Type 5 numbers are promising for a good showing this winter. Red Crossbills are already in good numbers in northern Minnesota and showing up in the Metro Area and in small numbers further south. Type 2 and Type 4 are being reported already, but that doesn't mean others are not here. This may be the best year for Red



*Common Redpoll by Shari McCollough*



Crossbills in the last decade or two.

Small flocks of White-winged Crossbills are expected to show up south of the Canadian border in Minnesota. While isolated birds were around in August in northern Minnesota, none were being reported a month later.



Purple Finch by Shari McCollough

While it is predicted to be a normal year for Pine Grosbeaks, none are being reported anywhere near us at this time. Evening Grosbeaks are expected to find enough food north of the border to keep them up there. While scattered birds have been showing up in northeastern Minnesota, greater numbers are not expected.

Purple Finches are already flying past the Hawk Ridge in Duluth by the thousands and are being reported in good numbers around the northern half of the state. This should be a good year for them and they are expected to continue south of Minnesota. Interestingly, this is the only area south of the border that is experiencing an irruption of these birds.

Bohemian Waxwings and Red-breasted Nuthatches are expected in normal numbers. This year the Metro Area and probably others are experiencing a bumper crop of acorn. As a result of these acorns, Red-headed Woodpeckers fledged a record number of nestlings at Cedar Creek Bog in northern Anoka County and they are expected to remain over the winter, which only happens when there are sufficient nuts to keep them from migrating. Blue Jay numbers have also been correlated to high availability of nuts. Large numbers of Blue Jays have been reported passing by Hawk Ridge. Wild Turkeys are a third species that should benefit from the abundance of acorns.

The Christmas Bird Counts in late December through early January will largely show how accurate these predictions were. For more information about the winter finch forecasts, visit [www.finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2023-2024](http://www.finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2023-2024)

## History of the Christmas Bird Counts

*Republished from the National Audubon Society*

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas “Side Hunt.” They would choose sides and go afield with their guns— whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.

Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas

Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a “Christmas Bird Census” that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.

So began the Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to the inspiration of Chapman and the enthusiasm of 27 dedicated birders, 25 Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied around 90 species on all the counts combined.

Each November birders interested in participating in the CBC can sign up and join in through the Audubon website. From December 14 through January 5 each year tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, or rain, and take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations and to help guide conservation action.

The data collected by observers over the past century allow Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent’s bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The long term perspective is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat, and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well.

You can contribute to this massive citizen science event! If you want to join the Christmas Bird Counts in Minnesota, please visit [www.moumn.org/cbc](http://www.moumn.org/cbc)



## MRVAC & REFUGE BIRDING TRIPS

### Refuge Bird Watching Treks

November 11 (Saturday) — Old Cedar Avenue Bridge  
November 12 (Sunday) — Bass Ponds Trailhead  
November 18 (Saturday) — Old Cedar Avenue Bridge  
December 2 (Saturday) — Old Cedar Avenue Bridge  
December 10 (Sunday) — Bass Ponds Trailhead  
December 16 (Saturday) — Wilkie Unit Trailhead  
*Each walk runs from 8 a.m.-10:30 a.m.*

Explore some of the best refuge units for bird watching in the winter season. We will spend time on these walks searching for birds that spend winter on the refuge or are late migrants. We will study the different species of birds and learn about some other local locations to search for birds during the winter. Birders of all skill levels are welcome to attend these walks. Bring along your binoculars and favorite field guide. Please dress appropriately for the weather. For weather cancellations or other questions about these walks, please contact Craig at 952-240-7647.

Registration for refuge walks is available on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge website. 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](http://www.signup.com/go/rLmKfrK)

### Refuge Field Trip Locations & Addresses

**Bass Ponds Trailhead**  
2501 86th St. E., Bloomington, MN 55425

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

**Wilkie Unit Trailhead**  
7701 County Rd. 101 E., Shakopee, MN, 55379

**Click here for refuge trail maps** or visit [www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota-valley/visit-us](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota-valley/visit-us)



### Northern Minnesota Sax-Zim Bog Birding Days

Thursday-Friday, January 11-13, 7 a.m.  
Craig Mandel — 952-240-7647  
\$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members

We will search for any over wintering owls in the area and spend a day at some of the feeding stations in the Sax-Zim Bog. This will give your 2023 birding checklist a good start with a fair number of northern specialties. Please contact Craig to register for this field trip.

### International Tours

The tours below are arranged through Holbrook Travel, in partnership with MRVAC. Holbrook helps with the arrangement of lodging, travel, and local guiding in the countries we are visiting. For more information on these tours, please email Craig Mandel at [EgretCMan@msn.com](mailto:EgretCMan@msn.com). Additional information can also be found on the Holbrook website at [www.holbrooktravel.com](http://www.holbrooktravel.com).

### Southern Ecuador

September 26, 2024 — October 7, 2024  
*Registration is now available for this tour. Contact Craig to receive a registration link for this tour.*

This tour begins and ends in the Ecuadorian city of Guayaquil and covers some of Southern Ecuador’s better birding locations. Some of the locations that we will visit are the Manglares Churute Ecological Reserve, Buenaventura, Jorupe Reserve, Tapichalaca Reserve, the Loja-Zamora Road, Podocarpus National Park and Cajas National Park. A few of the species of birds that we will search for include the El Oro Parakeet, El Oro Tapaculo, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Jocoto, and Rufous and Chestnut-crowned Antpittas. Plus, there will be a nice mix of hummingbirds, tanagers and other tropical bird species.

### Costa Rica: An Introduction to Neotropical Birding

March 1, 2024 — March 9, 2024  
*Registration is now available for this tour. Contact Craig to receive a registration link.*

This tour will begin in the city of San Jose. From there we head to Selva Verde Lodge for a three-night stay. We will bird the grounds and travel to the Tirimbina Biological Reserve and La Selva Biological Station. Next we travel to the Savegre Hotel Natural Reserve & Spa. Some of the locations nearby that we will stop at include the Nectar and Pollen Reserve, Batsu Garden and the upper trails at the lodge, accessed via 4x4 vehicles. Target bird species include the Resplendent Quetzal, Great Green Macaw, Sunbittern, Snowcap, Talamanca Hummingbird, Volcano Hummingbird and Scintillant Hummingbird.

## REGIONAL PROGRAMS OF INTEREST



Three Rivers Park District  
Various Locations

### Bird Banding

Lowry Nature Center in Victoria  
November 18 | 9 a.m. - noon

See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and banded with numbered rings. Discuss what scientists learn from these banded birds. Drop in anytime for this free program.

### Raptors Up Close

Lowry Nature Center in Victoria  
November 19 | 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Meet captive raptors, learn about these amazing birds of prey. Drop in anytime. All ages. Free.

### Free Family Fun Day: Backyard Birds

Richardson Nature Center in Bloomington  
November 12 | 3 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Join a naturalist in the Wildlife Viewing Room as we learn about birds visiting the bird feeders. Discover how to attract a variety of birds to your neighborhood. Bring your bird-related questions for the naturalist! No reservations needed; drop in anytime.



Deep Portage Learning Center  
Hackensack, MN

### Annual Meeting

November 18 | 1 p.m.

Come join us for our Annual Meeting! All are welcome to attend our Annual Meeting as we wrap up the year, honor individuals and organizations that have supported us over the years, and cap off our 50th Anniversary celebrations. After the meeting, we will have music, social time, and brick oven pizza making for all to enjoy!

Please register for this event at [www.deep-portage.org/public-programs](http://www.deep-portage.org/public-programs)



International Owl Center  
Houston, MN

### Expert-led Owl Prowls

International Owl Center, Houston, MN  
November 4 & 25  
December 30

Join expert owl caller Jo Severson for an indoor session to learn local owl calls and owl prowl etiquette, then drive your vehicle following Jo to three or four rural stops to call for wild owls. Owls are usually heard but not seen. Pre-registration is required and is \$10 for Owl Center members and \$15 for non-members. For more information or to register go to [www.InternationalOwlCenter.org/owlprowls](http://www.InternationalOwlCenter.org/owlprowls)

The Nature Conservancy  Ottawa Bluffs Preserve  
Le Sueur, MN

### Volunteer Workdays

November 11 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
December 2 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
December 16 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Spend your afternoon volunteering with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and help restore this important remnant of the Minnesota River bluffs. You'll be rewarded with brag-worthy views of the river valley and the great company of fellow conservationists

Please bring a lunch, plenty of water and work gloves—leather work best. Be sure to wear appropriate (sturdy) footwear and dress in layers, particularly layers that are well-worn and that you wouldn't mind a few extra holes in. Rain, snow or shine, volunteers will be out there!

The Ottawa Bluffs Preserve is located at Ottawa Rd, Le Sueur, MN 56058. For questions, please contact Bill Ramsden at [ottawabluffs@gmail.com](mailto:ottawabluffs@gmail.com)



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 \$20 to:

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

You can also join MRVAC online at [www.mrvac.org](http://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!**

