



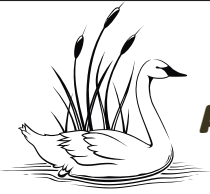
The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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www.MRVAC.org

January - February 2024

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Chapter Events

January 25: Meeting at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom with guest speaker Lee Ann Landstrom

February 22: Meeting at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom with guest speaker Dr. John Marzluff

MRVAC Sponsored Field Trips: See page 4

MRVAC Auction 2023 Wrap-Up

The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter's annual holiday auction returned this year after several years off during the pandemic. And it was a great success, raising \$3,470 for MRVAC's grant program, events and other things the chapter does for birds, birding and the environment.

Original art, photography, books, feeders, holiday ornaments, birdseed, binoculars. All were donated — and sold by the practiced team of Scott Clark and Monica Rauchwarter. Thanks to Monica for arranging for Richardson Nature Center to host the auction, and to the board members and the old hands who had organized past auctions for its success. Thanks also to local businesses for their donations. Of course it wouldn't have worked at all without the birders who opened their pocketbooks.

Although a firm date hasn't been set for 2024, pencil in the Thursday before Turkey Day in 2024 on your calendars. See you next year. - *MRVAC President, Rob Daves*

Trumpeter Subscription & Local Membership

Become an MRVAC member 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.

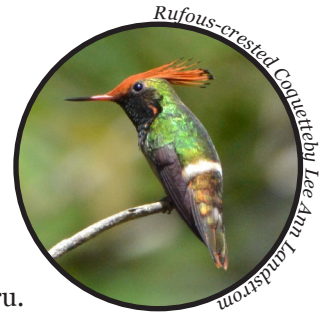
MRVAC Program Information

The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter meets most months on the fourth Thursday. The January and February meetings are virtual only via Zoom. Links will be posted on our website and emailed approximately one week prior to each meeting.

January 25, 2024

Presentation begins on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Lee Ann Landstrom: MRVAC Conservation Chair



Birding Northern Peru

We will explore the birds, habitats, sights, and flavors of Northern Peru.

This South American country is a hot bed for hummingbirds, as well as tanagers, flycatchers, and many other interesting species. Savor the mountain views...and *not* the road construction during this presentation.

February 22, 2024

Presentation begins on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Dr. John Marzluff: Award-winning author, James W. Ridgeway Professor of Wildlife at the University of Washington, and National Geographic Explorer



Think Like A Raven

This presentation is a culmination of Dr. Marzluff's work detailing the intertwined lives of ravens, wolves, pumas, and people. The talk will follow the seasons of Yellowstone and the scientific journey to decode the mysteries of raven life. Join us to find out what secrets the birds reveal.

A Note From Our President

by Rob Daves, Board President

It was a two-day, two-lifer getaway to the Sax-Zim Bog. My wife and I hoped to see owls, winter finches and Rough-legged Hawks, which tend to disappear later in the winter. We also found a new — to us — place to stay right in Toivola, Alesches' Accommodations. As soon as we headed north into the fields from the empty Morse feeders, Rough-legged Hawks started appearing, peering from high perches, sailing over fields and kiting over suspected prey. We counted a half-dozen before we stopped for picnic lunch at the Welcome Center.

The naturalists there had little good news: not enough snow yet for Common Redpolls; no snowies and only a few Great Gray and Northern Hawk Owl reports. But right there at the welcome center we scored a lifer for both of us — and not a bird. “Ermine!” one of the photographers exclaimed. A short-tail weasel was right there at the parking area.

We watched it busy itself before we headed out to visit some feeders. The hawk count mounted. A flock of Evening Grosbeaks and some whiskey jacks — Canada Jays — appeared at the Zabin on McDavitt Road. Ruffed Grouse put in an appearance. Admiral Road feeders yielded lots of photographers but no new birds. At dinner we shared the Alesches' kitchen with two photographers, one proudly displaying a stunning Pine Marten portrait taken at the Admiral Road feeders.

Dawn came and the owl quest continued. A Rough-Legged Hawk dropped a snowshoe hare right in front of the car in the growing light. We left quickly hoping it would return to its headless hare. The hawk count continued to mount but there were no owl sightings, even where other birders had reported them.



We staked out the Admiral Road feeders again. After a while, the urge to move on had occurred when photographers began oozing out of cars exclaiming “marten!” It was the Pine Marten, which had little fear of birders, cars and photographers. It busied itself at the human-supplied cafeteria creating great camera poses. A lively explorer, it was even more exciting “in person” than in the pros' portrait earlier.

Pine Siskins revealed their presence. At one of the last stops of the day, the Bob Russell Bogwalk, I forest bathed in the copper sheen of the Labrador tea in the westering sun amid the silence of the tall spruces. No owls in the gloaming, but a flock of Common Redpolls showed up to feed on alder, hanging upside down like our very own Christmas-tree ornaments.

To us, finches were sparse; owls, invisible. But two lifers —
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even if they were mammals — gave us a great nature buzz and a most memorable bog trip. And hawks? We finished the trip with 24 Rough-legged Hawk sightings. Icing on the lifer cake.

New Initiative to Help Grassland Birds

by Lee Ann Landstrom, Conservation Chair

The National Audubon Society has an initiative underway to help grassland bird species on private lands. These bird populations have suffered unparalleled decline due to grazing and other development. Thus, Audubon has developed the Conservation Ranching Initiative, a market-based approach which provides incentives for ranchers to utilize good stewardship practices such as rotational grazing. In return, the ranchers and farmers receive a certification label for their products. Hopefully, consumers buy these certified meats and will pay a higher price to support sustainably-raised animals and wildlife habitat improvements.



To qualify for this certification, each ranch must do the following: develop a habitat management plan; graze livestock on open pasture with minimum grain supplements, use no antibiotics, and not finish off animals at feedlots; utilize best practices for animal health and welfare; and use native grasses and flowers as forage, which sequesters carbon, better protects erosion and water runoff, and provides better wildlife habitat. Audubon certified beef is not necessarily organic nor required to be 100% grass fed or grass finished.

There are certified ranches in 15 states so far; many restaurants and chains are interested in partaking but there's not enough product right now. The large, Minnesota-based, multi-state company Thousand Hills has committed all their farms to this program. However at this point, there are no certified farms in Minnesota; there are some that need to have their audit finished in the spring before they are officially certified and listed in the database. In Minnesota, some Thousand Hills meat products can be found at food co-ops such as Lakewinds or Valley Natural Foods in Burnsville.

Why should you care? “By choosing beef products from Audubon-certified ranches, you can contribute to the expansion of livestock management practices that are better for your health, better for cattle, and better for the environment. When expanded to millions of acres, this program will support more sustainable ranching livelihoods, resulting in more grassland birds, cleaner streams, healthier soils, more pollinators for plants, and more carbon stored in plants and soil,” says the Audubon ranching website. Learn more at www.audubon.org/conservation/ranching

All North American Birds Named After People Will Soon Get New Names

Reprinted from the National Audubon Society

The American Ornithological Society (AOS), the organization of bird scientists that determines the official English and Latin names for North America's bird species, announced this week that they are embarking on a process to change the English names of the approximately 152 North American birds and 111 South American birds named after people.

Birds with eponymous names can be found in every section of a field guide, from the Bullock's Oriole to the Ross's Goose and Wilson's Plover. Among sparrows alone, 11 different species are named after people. Although birders use these names on a regular basis, their origins can be opaque and have often been nearly forgotten. Across the globe, many eponymous names were coined in the 18th and 19th centuries as white naturalists "discovered" new birds in territories previously held by non-white peoples, naming them after the original collectors of bird specimens, fellow scientists, other prominent figures of the time, and even their family members.

A small but growing contingent of birders had been aware for years that these names could be harmful or exclusionary, given many honor people now understood to have committed racist acts, and had begun to favor moving away from them. But the effort took on new meaning and haste during the racial reckoning that swept across the country and birding world in 2020. After the Chris Cooper Central Park incident, which occurred on the same day as George Floyd's murder, and the creation of Black Birders Week, birders Jordan Rutter and Gabriel Foley were inspired to found the "Bird Names For Birds" movement. They launched a petition to change common bird names to monikers that drop any association with people and instead describe species' appearance or ecology—attributes that are also more practical and helpful for making identifications in the field.

Traditionally, changes to official English bird names begin as proposals to the AOS's North American Classification and Nomenclature Committee and are only accepted if there is a scientific or taxonomic justification of the change. These changes happen routinely, and are why the Rufous-sided Towhee, for example, is now called the Eastern Towhee. But a 2019 proposal under this system to update the name of McCown's Longspur, named for a Confederate general, was initially rejected. McCown's Longspur officially became the Thick-billed Longspur in August 2020 after the establishment of an interim set of guidelines for handling such changes.

The renaming effort will begin in 2024 with a subset of eponymously named bird species, still to be selected.

Since then, the AOS has continued to cautiously engage with the idea of changing eponymous bird names. "We are a group of scientists, and we study things, and we make very considered decisions," says Colleen Handel, a wildlife biologist with the USGS's Alaska Science Center in Anchorage, Alaska. A virtual "Community Congress" AOS held on the issue in April 2021 eventually led to the establishment of an ad hoc committee that was charged with developing a process for reexamining other bird names. That committee's final 32-page report, published on the day of the announcement, lays out the road map for the organization's next steps.

The renaming effort will begin in 2024 with a subset of eponymously named bird species, still to be selected, that are found primarily in the United States and Canada. The AOS has committed to engaging the public in the renaming process and to establishing a new, permanent committee to oversee the English names of North American birds—one that will include "a diverse representation of individuals with expertise in the social sciences, communications, ornithology, and taxonomy," according to an AOS statement. Species' scientific or Latin names, which must follow a much stricter set of rules determined by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, will not be affected.

A separate AOS committee traditionally oversees the English names of birds that range mainly in South America, and the AOS plans to eventually update eponymous South American bird names as well. This will involve further conversations with ornithologists and organizations based throughout Latin America.

"Birds have been facing unprecedented conservation challenges, with the loss of three billion birds over the last half century, and we need to have people united in a very positive way towards reversing those declines and taking care of the birds that we have this tremendous responsibility for," says Handel. The names of birds are the entryway into the world of birds, she notes. "We want to make sure that this world of birds is open to as many people as want to be involved with them."

The process of updating English names will continue to unfold for years to come, as it will take time to update field guides, apps, and other reference materials after new names begin to be announced. Birders, many of whom will not have been closely following this debate over the past three years, will need time to adjust to using unfamiliar names. Aligning the new names with the banding codes used by the United States Geological Survey and on platforms like eBird will also take time.

For more information about the AOS decision and plan, please visit www.americanornithology.org/about/english-bird-names-project/

MRVAC & REFUGE BIRDING TRIPS

Refuge Bird Watching Treks

January 14 (Sunday) — Bass Ponds Trailhead
January 20 (Saturday) — Wilkie Unit Trailhead
January 27 (Saturday) — Bass Ponds Trailhead
February 18 (Sunday) — Wilkie Unit Trailhead
February 24 (Saturday) — Bass Ponds Trailhead
Each walk runs from 8 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Join us for a winter birding walk at one of the many refuge units. Each winter offers a different variety of birds that over winter on the refuge. 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. We'll look for these species and watch for the species that regularly over winter in Minnesota. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. These trips are led by Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist. In the event of a weather related cancelation, registered participants will receive an email notifying them of the cancelation prior to the date of the event. Please contact Craig at 952-240-7647 for questions.

Registration for refuge walks is available on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge website. 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.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota-valley/events

Refuge Field Trip Locations & Addresses

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

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

Click here for refuge trail maps or visit www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota-valley/visit-us

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Northern Minnesota Sax-Zim Bog Birding Days I & II

Thursday—Friday, January 11 & 12, 7 a.m.
Thursday—Friday, February 15 & 16, 6:45 a.m.
Craig Mandel — 952-240-7647
\$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members

Join us for a visit to the Sax-Zim Bog. This can be one of the best spots to spot overwintering species in Minnesota. Some years there are a variety of finches, crossbills, shrikes, and several species of owls. This includes the iconic and elusive Great Gray Owl. Join us on one of these tours and discover what species of birds are there this winter. It's also a great way to get your 2024 year list off to a great start. 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. Additional information can also be found on the Holbrook website at www.holbrooktravel.com.

Costa Rica: An Introduction to Neotropical Birding

March 1, 2024 — March 9, 2024
Contact Craig to receive a registration link for this tour.

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 Tirmbina 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.

Southern Ecuador

September 26, 2024 — October 7, 2024
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.

REGIONAL PROGRAMS OF INTEREST



Three Rivers Park District
Various Locations

Bird Banding

Lowry Nature Center in Victoria
January 20 | 9 a.m. — noon
February 17 | 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
January 21 | 2:30 p.m. — 4 p.m.

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

FeederWatch Days (Volunteers Needed)

Richardson Nature Center in Bloomington
January 11 & 25 | 9:30 a.m. — 11:30 a.m.
February 8 & 22 | 9:30 a.m. — 11:30 a.m.

Richardson Nature Center is participating in the Cornell Lab FeederWatch program. They could use help observing and counting birds in the morning on the dates listed. If you're interested, please contact them at 763-694-7676 or email at RichardsonNC@threeriversparks.org.



Deep Portage Learning Center
Hackensack, MN

Annual Winter Rendezvous

January 20 | 9 a.m. — 3 p.m.

Deep Portage's Annual Winter Rendezvous is just around the corner! On Saturday, January 20 we invite folks out to enjoy a day of outdoor winter fun. Participants spend the day in friendly competition trying out activities such as axe throwing, snow snakes, spear throwing, and more. High scorers in all age classes even bring home an award! If you are less athletically-inclined, have no fear — you even get points for eating some hot-off-the-griddle johnny cakes. A tasty hot lunch inside our gorgeous dining hall during the event is sure to warm you on even the coldest days. Bring your family, bring a date, bring your friends — it's good fun for everyone!

Stay tuned for more details on our social media and website at www.deep-portage.org/winter-rendezvous



International Owl Center
Houston, MN

Expert-led Owl Prowls

International Owl Center, Houston, MN
January 27 | 4:30 p.m.

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 3 or 4 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 visit

www.InternationalOwlCenter.org/owlprowls

International Festival of Owls

International Owl Center, Houston, MN
March 1 — 3

Immerse yourself in owls at this all-owl, all-weekend festival! As in most years you can expect live owl programs by the Illinois Raptor Center, nest box building, pellet dissections, owl prowls, vendors of owl wares and more. Special for 2024 we'll be joined by World Owl Hall of Fame award winners Roar Solheim from Norway, who has done much work on Snowy and Great Gray Owls, and Martin Šálek from the Czech Republic, who has focused his efforts on Little Owls. Susan Richmond, author of the children's book "Night Owl Night", about a young girl who desperately wants to go out banding Saw-whet Owls with her researcher mother, will also be doing a presentation and signing books.

Pre-registration is required for the owl prowls, Sunday bus trip and keynote presentation. This should open by early January. For more information and to register go to www.FestivalOfOwls.com

Go Plastic Free in February!

Plastics can be a hassle — they create clutter and can be confusing to recycle — plus they contribute to litter, harm water and wildlife, and have largely unknown health impacts for us. Fortunately, there's a lot we can do to help create a plastic-free world.

The month-long Plastic-Free Challenge, offered in February by Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington counties, will be a great opportunity to kickstart your journey and start the new year with less waste. Registration begins January 1, 2024 and you can find more info at www.tcplasticfree.ecochallenge.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. Memberships are \$20 for individuals, \$15 for students, and \$100 for sustaining members.

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!



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www.facebook.com/MRVAC.MN