



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

Volume 53 Issue 3—Bloomington MN
www.MRVAC.org

December 2019 - February 2020

Josh Sweet, Trumpeter Editor
jhsweet0201@gmail.com

Call for Trumpeter Award Nominations

by Becky Lystig

Each spring for 14 of the past 18 years, the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter (MRVAC) has presented the Trumpeter Award to one of its members for outstanding long-term contributions to the organization. We are soliciting nominations from you, our members, to tell us who you think should be our next recipient. Please send in your nominations by Saturday, February 15. The Selection Committee, which is comprised of the previous years' recipients, will review the nominations and forward their choice to the Board. The award will then be presented at a subsequent meeting.

To obtain a Nomination Form please visit www.mrvac.org or call (651) 452 1133 to have a copy mailed to you.

Completed applications can be sent via email to markbeckylstig@comcast.net or mailed to Becky Lystig, 1741 Sartell Avenue, Eagan, Minnesota 55122.

Previous Trumpeter Award recipients:

2001 Karol Gresser; 2002 Joe White; 2003 Pat & Jack Telfer;
2004 Edith Grace Quam; 2005 Craig Mandel; 2006 John Rehbein;
2007 Lois Norrgard; 2008 Jack Mauritz; 2009 George Tkach;
2010 Bob Leis; 2011 Anne Hanley & George Skinner;
2012 Steve Weston; 2013 Bob Williams;
2016 Mark & Becky Lystig; 2018 Dave & Rita Baden

Statewide Christmas Bird Counts

by Steve Weston, Board Member

The 120th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the oldest citizen science survey in the world, will be held from December 14 until January 4 at 80+ count circles throughout Minnesota.

New to birding? Don't know where to find the birds? Not to worry. Contact us and we pair you with experienced birders in your area. The large metro counts in Bloomington (sponsored by MRVAC), Excelsior, Minneapolis, and St. Paul will all be held on Saturday, December 14. The Cedar Creek Bog Count in Northern Anoka County will be held on Sunday, December 15. If you would like to participate in a count, please visit www.moumn.org/cbc/locations to find a count circle in your area and for additional contact information.

Meetings & Special Presentations

Join us at 7:00 PM to socialize over cookies. A brief business meeting followed by the featured presentation will begin at 7:30 PM. The meeting will conclude before 9:00 PM.

The MVNWR Bloomington Visitor Center is located at 3815 American Boulevard East in Bloomington and is accessible after a short walk by the METRO Blue Line (Hiawatha Light Rail) at American Blvd.

Thursday, January 23, 2020, 7:00 PM

MVNWR Bloomington Visitor Center



“Wildlife Tracking in the Twin Cities Metro Area”
Jonathan Popple, Director of the Minnesota Wildlife Tracking Project

The Twin Cities Metro Area is home to a remarkable diversity of wild mammals. Though often elusive, they leave behind tracks and signs for us to see. The Minnesota Wildlife Tracking Project is a group of nature enthusiasts who gather to explore the art and science of wildlife tracking. Over the years, we have identified the tracks and signs of a wide range of mammals in the greater metro area including river otter, black bear, and even grey wolves. Come learn a bit about animal tracks, hear stories about adventures in the field, and find out how to get involved in your own neighborhood.

Thursday, February 27, 2020, 7:00 PM

MVNWR Bloomington Visitor Center

“Bird Nests: Amazingly Ingenious & Intricate”
Stan Tekiela, Naturalist, Author, and Wildlife Photographer

Bird Nests are among the most amazing dwelling places in the entire animal kingdom. Few creatures craft such brilliant and involved homes as birds do. From holes drilled into trees to intricately woven cups, these magnificent structures are worthy of our admiration. This talk is full of fun details told with Stan's great sense of humor. Come early as we expect a full house.



Refuge News & Nature Notes

Ranger's Report

by Joel Vos, MVNWR Visitor Center Manager

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is one of thirteen National Wildlife Refuges in the state, and home to some excellent waterfowl habitat. As fall turns into winter, we've seen good numbers of waterfowl in the swollen Long Meadow Lake and other areas along the river. However, it was one of our sister refuges that made the news recently. Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge, just south of McGregor, surprised meteorologists at the Twin Cities and Duluth offices of the National Weather Service when almost 900,000 ducks hit the air around sunrise. A massive plume erupted into the sky, and watchful meteorologists first suspected a wildfire. According to many experts of aerial wildlife surveys, it's not uncommon for flying creatures to appear on radar screens. Every year bats, birds, and even insects can suddenly appear, confusing watchful weather professionals until the story unfolds.

While the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge hasn't set off any radar alarms this fall, we did make some news in local birding circles when a briefly unflappable rarity appeared atop the rock retaining wall behind the Bloomington Visitor Center and headquarters building: a Rock Wren! Generally a bird of the west, this leggy, long-tailed, and thin-billed bird was photographed by Ed McFadden and became only the third record in the past 10 years. While birders swarmed the grounds until dusk to try and make their own sighting, only a couple lucky souls ticked the box for their lists that day.

Rare sightings and oddities of nature certainly get our attention, don't they? However, it's the day-to-day spectacles of nature at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge that make it so special. Acting as a federally-protected oasis of nearly 14,000 acres along roughly 70 miles of the Minnesota River Valley, the Refuge was established to conserve and protect the habitat of the river valley for the continuing benefit of the American people. With dozens of miles of hiking trails, two visitor centers, and a staff conserving and restoring the river bottom habitats while providing learning experiences about nature, the Refuge is fortunate to have folks like yourselves who visit and share your experiences.

We love to hear what you're seeing, so stop by during our winter hours at the Bloomington Visitor Center 7 days a week (9:00 AM – 4:00 PM), or the Rapids Lake Visitor Center Tuesday-Friday (9:00 AM – 3:00 PM) to let us know what you find! If you're interested in volunteering or supporting the Refuge, contact Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Executive Director Sara Blood at sarablood.mnvr@gmail.com. Want to share an exciting sighting from the Refuge? Send us an email at minnesotavalley@fws.gov or call (952) 854 5900.

Steve Sutter Day Proclamation

by Sara Blood, MVRF Interim Executive Director

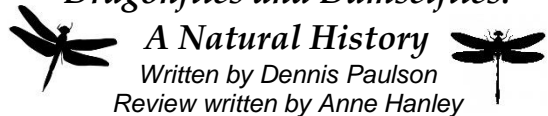
The Bloomington City Government proclaimed October 8, 2019, Steve Sutter Day! Steve founded the Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends in 2006 and has dedicated over 6,500 hours to the refuge as a volunteer.

Under Steve's leadership, Refuge Friends provided 10,000 students with free transportation to the refuge and 400 students with free fishing poles, just last year alone.

Steve's contributions to the Refuge and his community cannot be understated. Steve served in the Richfield Firefighters Local 1215 from 1976-2000 and was past president of the Richfield Optimist Club.

Join us in celebrating Steve Sutter, who has helped to showcase, protect and preserve the beauty of the Refuge for nearly 20 years.

Dragonflies and Damselflies:



A Natural History

Written by Dennis Paulson

Review written by Anne Hanley

If you have been curious about dragonflies, here's a beautiful new book that will open the Odonata world for you. (The order that contains both dragonflies and damselflies is called Odonata.) Birders sometimes branch out into watching odonates since they are airborne mid-day when birds are napping. Odonates are significant prey items for many birds, another reason to be interested in them. This new book will give you a thorough introduction to the natural history of this fascinating order of insects.

If you read the first section of a field guide to dragonflies or damselflies, you usually find an overview of their lifecycle. This book is like those introductory pages on steroids; it gives you a full chapter just on 'Capturing Prey and Avoiding Predators'. Fun facts: some capture prey in flight like a swift while others hunt like a flycatcher, from a perch watching for prey to fly past. I was amazed to learn that large North American dragonflies sometimes prey on hummingbirds.

Just like with birds, across the world's odonates there are different color patterns, sizes, hunting strategies and number of days (or years!) before reaching flying adulthood. I found myself sharing interesting factoids as I read the book; besides the eating of hummingbirds, did you know some brightly colored males can change their body color to grey to be less conspicuous and therefore less likely to be eaten?

The species accounts at the end of each chapter highlight interesting features of 50 different genera. I admit to reading the North American species accounts more carefully than the others, but each one has some fascinating adaptation.

For a complete dragonfly/damselfly package, you will want to add a local field guide or two.



National Audubon Spotlight

To Help Birds This Winter, Go Easy on Fall Yard Work

republished from the National Audubon Society
by Andy McGlashen

A manicured lawn might look nice, but messy is better for birds and bugs.

There's a certain satisfaction in autumn chores. When the weather's right, cleaning gutters, touching up paint, or splitting some firewood can feel less like manual labor and more like a rite of the season.

But if you want to make your backyard a welcoming winter haven for birds, some fall tasks call for a laissez-faire approach. "Messy is definitely good to provide food and shelter for birds during the cold winter months," says Tod Winston, Audubon's Plants for Birds program manager.

So let someone else keep up with the neighbors this weekend. Sleep in, linger a little longer with your morning coffee, and follow these tips for a bird-friendly yard you can be proud of.

Save the seeds. When fall arrives, some tidy-minded gardeners might be inclined to snip the stems of perennials in the flower garden. But the seed heads of coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, and other native wildflowers provide a helpful food cache for birds. "They're almost invisible, those seeds, but birds eat them all winter long," Winston says. Grasses – not the stuff you mow, but native species like bluestems or grammas – also make for good foraging after they go to seeds. And letting other dead plants stick around can fill your property with protein-packed bird snacks in the form of insect larvae, such as the fly and wasp larvae that inhabit goldenrod galls.

Leave the leaves. You can help birds and other wildlife – and save yourself some backache and blisters – by skipping the leaf raking. "Those leaves are important because they rot and enrich the soil, and also provide places for bugs and birds to forage for food," Winston says. If a fully hands-off approach doesn't work for your yard, consider composting some leaves and letting the rest be. You could also rake them from the lawn to your garden beds, or mulch them with a mower to nourish your lawn.

Leaf litter isn't just free fertilizer – it's also a pretty happening patch of habitat for a variety of critters such as salamanders, snails, worms, and toads. "If you're digging in the garden and come upon these squirmy little coppery-brown dudes, and you don't know what they are – those are moth pupae," Winston says. A healthy layer of

undisturbed soil and leaf litter means more moths, which in their caterpillar phase are a crucial food source for birds.

Build a brush pile. Along with shaking loose showers of leaves, blustery fall days also tend to knock down tree limbs. Rather than hauling them away, you can use fallen branches to build a brush pile that will shelter birds from lousy weather and predators. American Tree Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, and other wintering birds will appreciate the protection from the elements. Rabbits, snakes, and other wildlife also take refuge there. You'll find that the pile settles and decomposes over the seasons ahead, making room for next year's additions. (And it's a great place to dispose of your Christmas tree.)

Skip the chemicals. You might see your neighbors spreading "weed and feed" mixtures in the fall to fertilize their lawns and knock back crabgrass and other unwanted plants. In most cases, though, grass clippings and mulched leaf litter provide plenty of plant nutrition, and using store-bought fertilizers only encourages more non-native plants to grow. Generally speaking, native grasses, shrubs, trees, and flowering plants don't need chemical inputs. Save a few bucks and keep your yard healthy for bugs and birds.

Hit the nursery. Although laziness can be a good thing when it comes to creating a bird-friendly backyard, it's worth putting in some hard work planting native shrubs and trees. (Cooler temperatures also make fall a more comfortable time to tear out some turf grass and expand your native plant garden.) Native dogwoods, hawthorns, sumacs, and other flowering shrubs produce small fruits that only feed birds during the colder months, but can also provide a welcome pop of color when winter gets drab. Planted in the right place, evergreens like cedars and firs give birds something to eat and a cozy shelter. Fall is also a great time to liven up your property with late-blooming perennials such as asters or sages – and to buy spring and summer-blooming wildflowers at a substantial discount.

To find species suited to your yard, just enter your zip code in **Audubon's native plant database**. If you plant trees or shrubs this fall, they might not bear fruit this year – but come next winter, you and your backyard birds will be glad you did.

Find MRVAC and the
National Audubon Society on





Regional Events of Interest



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
3815 American Blvd. E., Bloomington, MN 55425

Bird Language

Sunday, December 1, 9:15 AM – 1:00 PM
Sunday, January 5, 9:15 AM – 1:00 PM

Want to learn more about birds and their behavior? Wonder what they're chipping about, or why they suddenly fall silent? Join Volunteer Refuge Naturalist Jonathon Poppele and Donnie Phyllaier for this special workshop series to learn more! Workshop begins indoors for discussion and will head outside for observations and more learning. Bring a notebook, pencil, and something to sit on outdoors. Be sure to dress for the weather. Free. Registration encouraged online at www.MNtracking.org.



Lowry Nature Center
7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria, MN 55386

Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Associated with the Excelsior Christmas Bird Count
Saturday, December 14, 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Join this nation-wide bird census. Bird on your own schedule – this is not a guided hike. Call (763) 694 7656 or email kirk.mona@threeriversparks.org to sign up for a park section and full or half day. Staff are especially interested in finding counters willing to look for owls in the park as they have likely been undercounted in the past. Free. Ages 10+. www.ThreeRiversParks.org



Lowry Nature Center
7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria, MN 55386

Raptors up Close

Sunday, December 15, 2:00 – 4:00 PM
Sunday, January 19, 2:00 – 4:00 PM
Sunday, February 16, 2:00 – 4:00 PM

Meet captive raptors and learn about these amazing birds of prey. Cameras welcome. Drop in anytime. Free. All ages. www.ThreeRiversParks.org



Audubon Center of the North Woods
54165 Audubon Dr., Sandstone, MN 55072

Holiday Dinner at the Lake

Saturday, December 21, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

After a wonderful banquet dinner, Minnesota meteorologist Sven Sundgaard will be the keynote speaker. Includes appetizers, meal, and presentation. Adults \$35; Children (ages 5-17) \$17. Reservations required online at www.Audubon-Center.org.



International Owl Center
126 E. Cedar St., Houston, MN 55943

Expert-led Owl Prowls

Tuesday, December 31, 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Saturday, January 11, 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Saturday, February 8, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

Owls live all around us but are very good at evading detection. Come learn how to identify local owls by size, shape, silhouette and sound. Following the indoor portion of the program, participants will carpool to known owl territories around Houston to call and listen for Eastern Screech Owls, Barred Owls, and Great Horned Owls. Dress for the weather and try to wear clothes that don't make noise when you move. Little walking is required. Kids are welcome but must be able to stand quietly for at least 10 minutes at a time. Members \$7; Non-members \$10. Registration required by sending an email to karla@internationalowlcenter.org. More information can be found online at www.InternationalOwlCenter.org.



Deep Portage Learning Center
2197 Nature Center Dr. NW
Hackensack, MN 56452

Winter Rendezvous

Saturday, January 25, 10:00 AM – 2:30 PM

Celebrate the history and culture of northern Minnesota while you test your skills in a family-friendly competition! Events include a tomahawk throw, ice fishing, northwoods curling and much more! Adults \$5; Children/Seniors/Members \$3. Optional Lunch: Adults \$5; Children/Seniors/Members \$3. Registration encouraged by calling (218) 682 2325. www.Deep-Portage.org



Audubon Center of the North Woods
54165 Audubon Dr., Sandstone, MN 55072

Winter Family Weekend

Friday, February 14 - Monday, February 17

Embrace winter over the long President's Day Weekend. Treat your family to 3 nights/4 days of discovery, learning and fun. This exciting family program offers age-specific and all-family program options to choose from. Whether you're looking for snow activities, skiing/snowshoeing, nature learning or quality family time, we have something for the whole family. All-inclusive rates are available online at www.Audubon-Center.org. Registration required.



MRVAC Field Trips & Programs



FIELD TRIPS – join us. All trips are free unless otherwise noted.

Beginning birders are welcome on all field trips.

All of the Refuge field trips are listed below, followed by Refuge addresses, and field trips to other locations in chronological order.

Refuge Bird Watching Treks (Dec. - Feb.)

Sunday, Dec. 1, 8:00-10:30 AM, Bass Ponds
 Saturday, Dec. 7, 8:00-10:30 AM, Bass Ponds
 Monday, Dec. 9, 8:00-10:30 AM, Wilkie Unit
 Monday, Jan. 6, 8:00-10:30 AM, Bass Ponds
 Saturday, Jan. 18, 8:00-10:30 AM, Bass Ponds
 Sunday, Jan. 26, 8:00-10:30 AM, Bass Ponds
 Saturday, Feb. 1, 8:00-10:30 AM, Bass Ponds
 Saturday, Feb. 22, 8:00-10:30 AM, Wilkie Unit
 Sunday, Feb. 23, 8:00-10:30 AM, Bass Ponds

Join us for a bird walk on one of the Refuge's many units. Learn which species of birds use the Refuge as a migratory stop and those that call the Refuge home for the summer nesting season. Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Bring binoculars, your favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Led by Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip Locations & Addresses

MVNWR Bloomington Visitor Center
 3815 American Blvd. E., Bloomington, MN

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

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

Hennepin County Birding Day

Thursday, December 5, 2019, 8:00 AM
 Craig Mandel – (952) 240 7647

Theodore Wirth Park, French Lake Regional Park, Minnesota Valley NWR – Bass Ponds, Old Cedar Ave. Bridge, the Bloomington Visitor Center, and Lake Harriet are a few of the locations we may search for waterfowl, owls, and other winter species of birds. Please contact Craig to register.



Bloomington Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Information

Saturday, December 14

Primary Contact: Greg Burnes, Membership Chair
 (612) 205 3071 – gburnes@comcast.net

The CBC will be held on Saturday, December 14 and there is still time to get involved. However, we do need to hear from you by Friday, December 6 so that we have time to connect you with a team. In addition, please contact us if you are interested in conducting a feeder count on that day.

The CBC Potluck Dinner will be held at 5:00 PM at the Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in Bloomington. Please bring a main dish or dessert to share and we will tally the days' count and share stories of our adventures. Everyone is welcome.

NE Minnesota Birding Days

Thursday, January 23 – Friday, January 24
 Craig Mandel – (952) 240 7647

We will search for Great Gray and Northern Hawk Owls along with winter finches in the Sax-Zim Bog on Thursday. On Friday we will again start in Duluth and possibly bird in Duluth, Two Harbors, or make our way up to Lake and/or Aitkin County depending on what is being seen. This trip should get your 2020 birding checklist off to a great start. Please contact Craig to register for this trip.

International Birding Excursion

with the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
 Quito, Ecuador – Choco-Andes Region
 Wednesday, Nov. 4 – Friday, Nov. 13, 2020



Tour price with 7 participants: \$3175 + airfare
 Highlight Birds: 30 species of hummingbirds and the rare Moss-backed Tanager

To learn more about a tour or to register, visit www.HolbrookTravel.com. Click on 'Join a Trip,' enter the location and dates above, and scroll to see trips that mention MRVAC in the title.

MRVAC Contact: Craig Mandel
 (952) 240 7647 · egretcman@msn.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 your \$15 check (made payable to MRVAC) 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!

2019 & 2020 MRVAC Grants
by Matthew Schaut, Board President

MRVAC has received a delightful grant report, with accompanying letters of appreciation, from Lisa Keitel and the Minnesota Independence College and Community (MICC). MRVAC provided MICC with binoculars and other materials to bring birding to persons on the autism spectrum during the 2019 grant cycle.

The staff and volunteers of the Ney Nature Center would also like to express their immense gratitude to the MRVAC organization and its members for awarding the nature center an incredible grant in 2019. The grant funding was used to purchase binoculars and a spotting scope at a non-profit rate from Vortex Optics.

Through this generous partnership, the Ney Nature Center was able to reach over 150 people in a rural region of the state. Participants of all ages learned about birding as a pastime and scientific study, as well as birding tools and techniques before embarking on a guided bird hike at the nature center. Highlights from the year included the newly-created Youth Birding Club, a birding class for adults, and a bird-themed summer camp based in Le Sueur County.

MRVAC is now inviting other organizations to submit new proposals for the 2020 grant cycle. We are especially looking for proposals pertaining to youth who are underrepresented and underserved in the outdoor and birding communities. Additional grant information can be found online at www.mrvac.org/grants/.