



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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www.MRVAC.org

January - February 2023

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

MRVAC Program Information

The MRVAC meets monthly on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Meetings are held either in-person at the Refuge or virtually via Zoom. Virtual meeting links will be posted about one week in advance on our website.

Upcoming Chapter Events

January 26: Chapter Meeting via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. with guest speaker, Linnea Rowse

February 23: Chapter Meeting via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. with guest speaker, Scott Weidensaul

**For MRVAC sponsored field trips, please see page 3*

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 \$15 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, such as printing this Trumpeter newsletter. The Trumpeter is available online to the public and sent to our email list. While email costs are minimal, printing costs add up quickly and are often not covered by the national membership fees that the chapter receives.

Give to the Max Results

We are happy to report that our Give to the Max Fund Drive was successful. We not only achieved our goal of raising \$2,000 but we received an additional \$80. Many thanks to all of you who contributed. The money we raise is important as there are many worthwhile projects that we help fund every year.

To donate to MRVAC and/or become a local member, please visit MRVAC.org or mail a check to
MRVAC, PO Box 20400
Bloomington, MN

January 26, 2023 - Virtual Program

Meeting and presentation begin at 7:30 p.m.

Linnea Rowse: Great Lakes Private Lands Director for the American Bird Conservancy

Collaborative Approaches in Forest Management for Bird Conservation

The dramatic loss of 2.9 billion birds in 50 years drives natural resource workers to meet the critical conservation needs of species with steep declines in addition to working to keep common birds common. To address conservation needs, land managers and private landowners must collaborate to restore, maintain, and improve habitat quality and availability. Planning for forest bird conservation includes not only bird habitat but also healthy forest ecosystems.

February 23, 2023 - Virtual Program

Meeting and presentation begin at 7:30 p.m.

Scott Weidensaul: Co-founder of Project SNOWstorm, field researcher, author, and naturalist

A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds

Even as scientists make astounding discoveries about the navigational and physiological feats that enable migratory birds to cross immense oceans or fly above the highest mountains, humans have brought many migrants to the brink. Based on his bestselling new book *A World on the Wing*, Scott Weidensaul takes you around the globe to learn how people are fighting to understand and save the world's great bird migrations. Scott Weidensaul is the author of more than two dozen books on natural history and is a contributing editor for Audubon. He is an active field researcher, studying Saw-whet Owl migration for more than two decades and the winter movements of snowy owls through Project SNOWstorm.

CHAPTER NEWS & NOTES

A Note From Our President

by Rob Daves, Board President

The last *Trumpeter* edition was an appeal to birders to get out and vote. Overall, Minnesotans did, but not in record-setting numbers (and certainly not because of my urging).

The result? Now one party now controls both state legislative houses and the gubernatorial seat. It'll make passing conservation legislation easier, news reports say.

However, this new dynamic, according to Gov. Tim Waltz on election night, is surprising enough that he's still figuring out top priorities. Waltz suggested that inflation and public safety might be most urgent. But we know there are also other urgent matters: habitat loss, climate warming and other problems resident and migratory birds face. Want some specifics?

The legislature takes up a state budget this year, and a bonding bill also may be in the works. Programs key to fighting habitat loss, harmful pesticides, lead ammunition and other conservation projects could be considered. You can bet Audubon will be lobbying to get them into the legislative hopper.

How can we as birders help? Of course we can continue to fundraise and provide MRVAC grants to help conservation education on the micro-local level. We've been doing that for years. But one of the most important things we can do is to contact our legislators – state and federal – and let them know how important conservation issues are. We need to be specific.

For example, your congressional representative needs to hear from you if you want him or her to vote for Betty McCollum's legislation that launches the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative, which will help restore floodplains and important wetlands and improve water quality and habitat. They also need to hear from you if you want the Recovering America's Wildlife Act to be reintroduced in the next Congress. The bipartisan bill passed in the house failed in the senate when senators could not agree on how to fund it. Those are national initiatives.

This legislative session Audubon Minnesota and other conservation organizations are lobbying to get conservation projects funded by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Native plants, habitat restoration, clean water, and getting lead out of ammunition and fishing tackle are all topics that the legislature could be addressing. When there's a need for birders to weigh in, Audubon Minnesota will issue an action alert.

Locally, please sign up to get action alerts from our state
Page 2

Audubon folks. You can do that at mn.audubon.org/take-action-mn, or get there through the on mrvac.org (it's in a news article on the home page). When the state organization needs your help contacting legislators, it will issue an action alert only to Minnesota residents who have signed up.

The great thing is that this won't take time away from birding. It can be done quickly and at home. Please sign up now.

Remembering Becky Lystig

by Rita Baden

It is with great sadness that we share this news: Becky Lystig, a long time member of MRVAC, passed away



Photo courtesy of Star Tribune

December 3, 2022. Becky was an active volunteer for MRVAC and the Raptor Center. She enjoyed bird watching, gardening, canoeing, skiing, hiking and biking. She was willing to share her knowledge of birds and flowers with everyone she met. Becky was a wonderful friend and will be missed by many. She is survived by her husband, Mark.

He will host a celebration of Becky's life on April 30, 2023 at 2 p.m. at Wood Lake Nature Center in Richfield. Bring binoculars and your fond memories of Becky. MRVAC sends sincere condolences to Becky's family and friends.

The Great Backyard Bird Count

The 26th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is coming up February 18- 21. Everyone is invited to join the count so their birds become part of a massive database used by scientists to track changes in bird populations over time. Participants count birds for any length of time (> 15 minutes) and report what they see on eBird. It's easy for people of all skill levels!

"The GBBC is a great starting point for anyone who wants to try a new activity for 2023," said Pat Leonard, Cornell Lab of Ornithology's GBBC spokesperson. "Many new people have turned to birdwatching in recent years and studies have shown how beneficial it is for people to have this exposure to nature. Participation in bird counts also benefits the birds themselves, providing the data needed to help assess the status of populations. We hope everyone around the world will consider spending a little time with the birds this February!"

To learn more about the GBBC and find tools to help, visit birdcount.org

MRVAC BIRDING TREKS

All of the refuge field trips are listed below, followed by field trips to other locations. All trips are free unless otherwise noted. Beginning birders are always welcome.

REGISTRATION PROCESS

Registration for these walks is available on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge website. Note 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

Refuge Bird Watching Treks

- January 15 (Sunday) - Bass Ponds Trailhead
 - January 29 (Sunday) - Wilkie Unit Trailhead
 - February 4 (Saturday) - Bass Ponds Trailhead
 - February 25 (Saturday) - Wilkie Unit 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. 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. 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. Craig Mandel, a volunteer refuge naturalist, will lead the treks. For weather cancellations, or other questions about these walks, please contact Craig at 952-240-7647

Refuge Beginning Bird Walks

- January 28 (Saturday)- Old Cedar Avenue Bridge
 - February 26 (Sunday)- Old Cedar Avenue Bridge
- *Each walk runs from 8 a.m.-10:30 a.m.*

Join us on a beginning bird walk at the Old Cedar Avenue bridge. You'll have an opportunity to learn about using and choosing optics and field guides for bird watching and about some of the better locations to search for birds at the refuge and other locations around the Twin Cities. Afterwards we will take a walk and search for some of the birds that migrate to the refuge during the Winter season. Birders of all ages are welcome on this walk, bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather.

Northern Minnesota Sax-Zim Bog Birding Days

Thursday- Friday, January 12-13, 2023 | 7 a.m.
Craig Mandel, 952-240-7647

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. *Cost: \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members*

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip Locations & Addresses

Wilkie Unit Trailhead
7701 County Road 101 E, Shakopee, MN, 55379

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

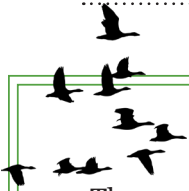
Old Cedar Avenue Trailhead
9551 Old Cedar Ave. S., Bloomington, MN

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

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BIRD TRIVIA

The answer to the previous bird trivia from the November-December 2022 edition of the Trumpeter is the...



Prothonotary Warbler!

THE GREEN SCENE: NATURE NEWS

Spiderweb of motorized recreation trails expanding on our public lands

by Lois Norrgard

We need your help! We know there are a lot of huge important fights we are in to protect our water, air, land, and wildlife. This is an additional one – and the proposers of this threat want it to slip under our collective radar.

Off Road Vehicles (ORVs) are recreational vehicles capable of cross-country travel on natural terrain. In Minnesota, the use of these vehicles has risen exponentially and can result in damage to our precious natural resources and sensitive habitats.

The DNR is presently developing three statewide Master Plans for ORV trail expansion. They have acknowledged that they are unsure of the current number of trail miles presently open to ORVs. Thus, we are unsure of the cumulative impacts of the current ORV use on habitats and it is imperative that there is no trail expansion without a baseline inventory.

There must be an equal focus on protecting our natural resources, and a greater emphasis on low-impact recreation like birding, hiking, camping, and canoeing. Quiet uses of our public lands are at risk from the increasing noise and proliferation of these machines.

What are the limits of our natural resources to withstand more intense recreational use? We are at a crisis point and it is imperative that we put in place protective measures for birds and other wildlife before these Master Plans hit the ground.

To address this there is a citizen effort to get initiatives introduced at the state Capitol. These are starting points for not only keeping our public lands healthy but also helping the DNR better manage this type of recreation.

The basic initiatives being proposed are:

1. ORVs can only access signed trails. No sign, no access.
2. The most pristine waters in the state cannot be crossed on unpaved roads by ORV routes.
3. All waters that are crossed must have buffer zones of a specified number of feet applying Best Management Practice measures used by many National Forests.
4. Trails must avoid known noxious weed areas.
5. Tribal, County and Township approval is required for all projects that traverse their lands.
6. All ORV projects must have an Environmental Assessment Worksheet, which allows for public transparency with a required public comment period.

Please watch for opportunities to voice your support for these commonsense measures as the legislative session begins on January 3. For more information, please contact Lois Norrgard (lnorrgard@comcast.net).

Pig's Eye Lake Environmental Concerns

by Kiki Sonnen

This piece is in response to the previously published article, "New Islands Mean New Birding Opportunities in St.Paul." The views expressed are those of the author.

Pig's Eye Lake is St. Paul's largest lake and a crucial patch of habitat for a variety of wildlife. Currently, environmental groups are calling on lawmakers to move polluting industrial uses off Pig's Eye public park lands. Used as a dumping ground from the 1920s to the 1970s, community activists have worked tirelessly to stop activities that would be a detriment to the Pig's Eye environment.

Many had hoped the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would allocate water quality cleanup funds to Pig's Eye Lake. Those funds, however, were allocated to Lake Minnetonka instead. The Corps did, however, allocate some funding to stopping wind fetch and shoreline erosions by creating dredge islands. The islands suddenly provide the Corps with a place to dump 81 million gallons of dredge spoil. Dredge spoil in Pool 2 comes from the area near the outfall of 3M's Chemolite Plant. According to the corps' Environmental Assessment, PFOA (Perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate) are part of the pollutants in the dredge spoil. The level is 9.1 parts per trillion, which is 455 times higher than the new EPA Health Advisory as of June 15, 2022. Cleanup and restoration are important for people's healthy communities and for the entire ecosystem. Adding pollutants is not the answer.

There is some hope for Pig's Eye Lake, though. Last Spring the State Legislature allocated \$800,000 to establish an inter-agency commission which will initiate plans and programs for cleanup and restoration of wildlife habitat.

Concerned people will continue advocating for Pig's Eye to be cleaned up and restored. We hope the parkland becomes welcoming to the public and the lands and waters become protected from industrial encroachment, pollution, and hazardous waste dumping.

To see the wonders of Pig's Eye contact Tom Dimond (tdimond@q.com) or check out Pig's Eye Park Friends Facebook page for weekly hikes that are open to the public.



Pig's Eye Park Friends hike in January 2022

REGIONAL PROGRAMS OF INTEREST



*International Owl Center
Houston, MN*

International Festival of Owls

March 3-5, 2023

Immerse yourself in the world of owls in Houston, MN. After two years the International Festival of Owls is back to normal with a few changes.

World Owl Hall of Fame award winner Milan Ružić from Serbia will be giving a special presentation (in person) on Saturday evening about his work with the largest concentrations of owls in the world. There can be up to 700 Long-eared Owls overwintering in the city square of Kikinda each winter. Details are still being worked out, but if all goes well the festival will showcase old and new videos of Blakiston's Fish Owls in Japan, possibly accompanied in person by Hall of Famer Sumio Yamamoto, who has studied them for decades.

The Illinois Raptor Center will be back with their live owl programs, including a Snowy Owl. Expect owl prowls, a birding/natural history/geology bus trip, pellet dissection, nest box building, a hooting masterclass, face painting, kids' crafts, vendors, and children's owl art from around the world.

Learn more at www.FestivalOfOwls.com.



*Deep Portage Learning Center
Hackensack, MN*

44th Annual Winter Rendezvous

January 21 | 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Winter is here, and here to stay! That means the 44th Annual Winter Rendezvous Event is just around the corner! There will be all sorts of fun activities, including axe throwing, ice fishing, trap shooting, northwoods curling, birdwatching, and much more! Lunch will be tasty warm chili from noon-1 p.m.. With each activity you do, the more points you get! Be sure to stick around for our awards ceremony at the end to see the results.

In-person registration will open at 9:30am on the day of Rendezvous at our greeting table. If you wish to get a head start and pre-register you can call (218) 682-2325, send us a Facebook message, or email us at winterrendezvous@deepportage.org.

Cost: Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for kids. Lunch will be an additional \$5 for adults and \$3 for kids.

Page 5



*Three Rivers Park District
Various Locations*

First Birds of the Year

Lowry Nature Center in Victoria

January 1 | 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Walk with a naturalist to find the first birds of the year. Practice bird identification while hiking on trails. Start your 2023 bird list. Bring your own binoculars or borrow a pair of ours.

Bird Banding

Eastman Nature Center in Dayton

January 21 | 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Lowry Nature Center in Victoria

January 21 | 9:00 a.m. - noon

February 18 | 9:00 a.m. - noon

See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and tagged with numbered rings. Bring a camera. Drop in anytime.

Every Body Can Bird

Eastman Nature Center in Dayton

February 20 | 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Accessible and inclusive birding for every body! Borrow binoculars. Practice birding by ear. Enjoy the company of other birders. Go birding with a naturalist on the sidewalk around the nature center and move inside to the Observation Room where birds visit the feeders right outside the windows. All ages and skill levels welcome.



Northern Cardinal by Lee Ann Landstrom



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
 - Join the Board
 - Other:

The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Thank you for joining!

