



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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Spring Forward Fundraiser

*by Bob Williams, Board Member and
Bird-a-thon Coordinator*

This year we are introducing a new format for our spring fundraising effort formally known as the Bird-a-thon.

GiveMN has initiated a spring fundraising event called SpringForwardMN so we are asking you to consider donating during that event. It runs from May 1 to May 11. GiveMN has two features that help with our fundraising effort. First, you can donate using a credit card. Second, they offer bonuses at random that may help boost our fundraising drive. All you have to do is log on to the GiveMN website and look for the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter. If you prefer, you can always donate by sending a check to MRVAC, PO Box 20400, Bloomington, MN 55420. Our goal is to raise \$1,000 during this drive. Those who donate at least \$50 will receive a link to Birdflight and Music Patterns, a video put together by the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra.

We have a number of interesting grants that we have approved or are considering. The money we raise will help us to continue actively supporting area organizations whose projects are in line with our mission statement. You can learn more about these grants elsewhere in this newsletter and on our website.

Please consider making a donation and enjoy spring migration safely. Click the image below to be directed to the **MRVAC GiveMN website**.



Upcoming Virtual Meetings

*coordinated by Steve Weston, Board Vice President and
Meeting Program Chair*

Our next two MRVAC member meetings will feature special virtual presentations. A video link will be sent out in a MRVAC email closer to each meeting date. Feel free to share the link with others. All ages. Free.

**“Diclofenac and other Veterinary Pharmaceuticals:
Are Vultures in the Iberian Peninsula at Risk?”**
Irene Bueno Padilla, University of Minnesota

Thursday, May 27, 2021, 7:30 PM
Virtual Presentation

Vultures are essential for ecosystem health due to their role in removing animal carcasses from the environment. However, vulture populations are declining globally due to different threats. In fact, in the late 1990's, their populations declined dramatically (99%) in the Indian Subcontinent due to intoxication with diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) used in cattle. Diclofenac was banned in many of the Asian countries involved, but it is now approved for veterinary use in large animals in the European Union. Considering that the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) has over 95% of Europe's vulture population, what is the risk of diclofenac (and other veterinary drugs) to vultures in the Iberian Peninsula?

“Birds and Culture of Peru”
Gunnar Engblom, Kolibri Expeditions

Thursday, June 24, 2021, 7:30 PM
Virtual Presentation

Gunnar Engblom, the owner of Kolibri Expeditions and the best known tour guide in Peru, will be joining us virtually from Peru. He is an expat from Sweden with 27 years of experience and a pioneer of birding tourism in Peru. Gunnar is a biologist with a particular interest in the conservation of threatened bird species (including the Andean Condor), discovering new ones, and the human impact on the environment.



Chapter News

Bluebird Houses Underway in Burnsville

by Lee Ann Landstrom, Board Member and
Environmental Action & Conservation Chair



In January, your Board voted to award \$490 to Nicole “Nikki” Pyle who is working on her Gold Medal Girl Scout Award. She is working with the City of Burnsville to build 12 bluebird houses to install in Terrace Oaks Park. Nikki has purchased the necessary materials. She and her dad built 12 houses, and she is in the process of installing the houses this spring. She will monitor and report any nests in the houses this summer.

New Signage Funded at Sax-Zim Bog

by Lee Ann Landstrom, Board Member and
Environmental Action & Conservation Chair

On March 25, the Board of Directors approved a grant request from the Friends of Sax-Zim Bog. The Bog had recently purchased a unique piece of property, dubbed “Wood Thrush Woods on the Whiteface River”. “This unique 41 acres continues our mission of habitat conservation and protection”. They requested funds to design and install interpretive signs on the parcel. These interpretive signs would highlight the unique bird and plant communities of the riverfront floodplain. This habitat attracts breeding birds that are at the northern edge of their range in Sax-Zim, including Great Crested Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager and Yellow-throated Vireo (not to mention uncommon trees including Green Ash, Basswood, Ironwood, and Bur Oak). The signs would also raise awareness of the need to protect unique habitats in the Sax-Zim Bog for overwintering and migratory birds.

MRVAC will be cited as a funder on the signs. Stay tuned for a report and photo when the project is complete.

MRVAC Awards More Garden Grants

by Lee Ann Landstrom, Board Member and
Environmental Action & Conservation Chair

At the March 25 Board meeting, we voted on two more grant requests for pollinator gardens. The first is for Normandale Hills Elementary in Bloomington. The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is doing the planning for this project and intends to start planting on May 15, using student classes, parents, and teachers. MRVAC’s \$2,000 will be used to buy plants, mulch, and compost. The Watershed District is providing matching funds. The plants will be pollinator-friendly, including some black chokeberry for birds. There is a large number of curriculum units that teachers will use in the new garden. This rain garden site is next to a city path, so signage will explain the garden to neighbors.

The second grant is for Bloomington Jefferson High School’s Earth Corps student club. This student-led environmental club has been advised by ReWild Landscaping and the Bloomington Sustainability Commission. They will use their \$1,500 grant to purchase a very nice array of non-nicotinoid, true-native herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees in this “Unity Garden”. The Lower Minnesota Watershed organization will also provide funds, as well as a private donor and several other smaller organizations. This garden will be professionally planted, date TBD. Meanwhile, the National Honor Society, a local church, the Bloomington Public Works (and maybe the Bloomington Rotary) have signed on to help with site prep including turf removal. A local tree service company is delivering and helping with mulch, and various student clubs and other citizen groups will do the follow-up maintenance. The Corps is hoping that various teachers (such as science, physical education, art, and special education) will utilize the site.

Update from Poplar Grove Elementary pollinator garden: Planted last fall with plants funded by MRVAC. This spring, they will be delineating pathways that were laid out but that now are probably not recognizable to most people. The PTSA is ready and willing to help with further improvements, like putting in mulch to show the way for students and neighbors through the garden. A display will be made for the back door to highlight the processes for the garden. A former student, now an 8th grade Silver Award Girl Scout, wants to create some interpretation on pollinators for teachers to use in the garden, and a 5th grader wants to do a science project about native plants. Lastly, the folks at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge have been in touch about how they might increase and develop outdoor learning at Poplar Bridge. The native plant/rain garden figures highly into the possibilities.



Regional Updates

From the Refuge

by Joel Vos, MVNWR Visitor Center Manager

May 8, 2021 marks the 27th year of World Migratory Bird Day, and we hope you'll find a way to celebrate in your neighborhood, at your favorite park, or at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge! We will have staff present outdoors at our Bloomington Education and Visitor Center from 12:00 – 4:00 PM to provide information about birding, point you to area hotspots, and answer questions you might have about projects ongoing at the refuge.

Refuge staff will be promoting area birding groups, birding-related programs and events in the metro area via our Facebook page throughout the month of May. Be sure to check the refuge's **Events webpage** often for upcoming COVID-19-safe programs, and follow Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge on Facebook for the most frequent updates. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) **Twitter** and **Facebook** pages will feature fun bird facts, announcements about bird festivals, family activities for you at home, and more.

If you're interested in finding trailheads and birding areas at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, be sure to take a look at **our website!** There you can find trail conditions, links to trail maps, as well as information about trailheads and recommended hikes arranged by city. Want birding-specific information? We have you covered with our **Birding webpage**. You can search hotspot information via eBird, and find trail and map information in one web page.

As World Migratory Bird Day comes and goes, we know visitors will be excited to find locations at the Refuge where they can find great birding close to home. Want to look for songbirds and warblers during migration? Head to **Bass Ponds!** If waterfowl and other waterbirds are your target, **Old Cedar Avenue** is a great place to start. And for nesting raptors and numerous woodland species, the **Long Meadow Lake Trail** or a visit upriver to the **Louisville Swamp** can fill a whole afternoon. Be sure to check out our **Plan Your Hike webpage** to assist in finding refuge access points close to you.

We hope you find yourself out and about at the refuge for World Migratory Bird Day this year, and well into the future. For more information about World Migratory Bird Day, visit www.migratorybirdday.org/.

Salt Lake Update

by Josh Sweet, Trumpeter Editor

Although the famed Salt Lake Festival was cancelled this year due to the pandemic, my wife and I were able to make a quick trip to Lac Qui Parle and Big Stone counties over April 16-18. We were able to identify over 60 species including Western Meadowlarks at Salt Lake, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Ruddy Ducks at Big Stone National Wildlife

Refuge, a Greater Yellowlegs at Lac Qui Parle State Park, and many Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks along the roadsides. The weather was overcast with high temperatures around 50 degrees.

We look forward to seeing folks next year and enjoying Sloppy Joes in Marietta when the festival resumes!

Strange by Nature Podcast is Home Grown

republished from *Strange by Nature*



Podcasting has taken off over the past few years as a great new way to target niche audiences with shows that might not otherwise get "on the air" in the world of radio. Podcasts have the advantage of being listened to on the listener's schedule as well. The pandemic gave many aspiring hosts the time to finally get their shows up and running and one such effort is decidedly Minnesotan. Professional naturalist Kirk Mona is no stranger to new media. He formerly hosted the Twin Cities Naturalist podcast and runs the Secret Nature YouTube channel. When the pandemic hit he started a weekly live show called Lowry@Home so the naturalists at Lowry Nature Center could continue to teach the public while the center was closed. Kirk had been thinking of going back to podcasting for a few years but was looking for the right format. It all came together this winter and he paired up with two other local professional naturalists, Rachel Giemza and Victoria Thompson to create the Strange by Nature Podcast.

"There's a lot of pseudoscience out there. People love to talk about bigfoot and ghosts and mysterious lake creatures but the real mysteries in nature are so much stranger than the made up ones," says Kirk. The goal of the show is to explore the unbelievable and strange side of nature in a fun way. There are truly so many strange real things in nature that they will likely never run out of topics.

On each episode, the naturalists each present one topic for about 10 minutes. They often try to stump the other hosts by finding topics even their peers have never heard of. It's a big universe so they are often successful.

"While we all live in Minnesota, we take a wider perspective," explains Kirk. "We want to appeal to everyone no matter where they are listening. We cover birds and mammals but also bacteria and marine life. We even cover topics in outer space as we take the wide-view on what is considered 'nature.' We're interested in all natural phenomenon."

To listen to and support this local show you can search for "Strange by Nature" in a podcast player on your smartphone or listen to episodes online on your personal computer at www.strangebynaturepodcast.com/.



Take 5 for Nature: Waiting on Wildflowers

by Josh Sweet, Trumpeter Editor



Although in Minnesota it's never really safe to say that winter is over, spring has officially begun. With warmer weather comes migrating birds, fresh maple sap, and the return of seasonal plant life in the understory. New and reemerging plants begin to appear on the forest floor in April and May, and many of the most impressive species are considered spring ephemeral wildflowers.

Spring ephemeral wildflowers are beautiful woodland plants that bloom only for a short period of time early in the growing season. Many different varieties can be found in Minnesota in the spring, and because of their acute size could easily go unnoticed. But each one of these noteworthy plants has its own striking appearance and unique features. Many visitors at the Lowry Nature Center first take an interest in spring wildflowers to appreciate their brief rich colors or for nature photography. These flowers also play an important role in the natural world by providing nectar to the first active pollinators each year.

Some spring ephemerals are named for their unique features and thankfully this can help when it comes to identifying each. For example, Dutchman's Breeches which flowers in the early spring, resembles a pair of upside-down trousers. Bloodroot on the other hand, blooms for only a few days and has dark red sap in its stem that can be used to create natural dyes.

Other common ephemeral wildflowers in Minnesota include Wood Anemone (pictured), Trout Lily, and Trillium. If searching for any of these species later this spring, I would recommend taking a hike on the Oak Trail, Aspen Trail, or Maple Trail at the Lowry Nature Center. While doing so, keep a keen eye on the sides of the trails for these remarkable wildflowers before they're gone.

National Audubon Spotlight: *Bird Song Became Softer During the Pandemic Thanks to Less Noise Pollution*

by Daisy Yuhas, Audubon Magazine

The relative quiet of the past year offered a rare chance to study how birds are affected by our growing cacophony. But the silence won't last.

There were no busloads of tourists vying for Golden Gate Bridge views in the San Francisco Bay Area last spring, and roads normally clogged with commuters were nearly empty. With pandemic lockdowns in force, behavioral ecologist Jennifer Phillips was struck by the profound quiet—and by a unique chance to see how the area's White-crowned Sparrows, which she'd recorded in previous years, would respond.

What she found was somewhat expected: The birds sang more quietly in the region, which hadn't been so hushed since the 1950s. But the degree of change shocked the study's leader, Liz Derryberry at the University of Tennessee. The sparrows' songs were 37 percent softer—much more than anticipated. It's possible that the birds wanted to avoid standing out to predators. But the songs also featured new characteristics, including frequency changes, that experiments suggested could make birds more attractive to mates and better at defending territories.

The relative quiet of this pandemic year won't last, and unraveling how wildlife are affected by human cacophony is a tricky but increasingly important question. "Cities are growing everywhere, and people are wondering about the noise," says Hansjoerg Kunc of Queen's University Belfast. Truly deafening decibel ranges are harmful to birds and humans alike. But just as people find the roar of a leaf blower or a chorus of sirens simply irritating, many creatures are also distracted and stressed by such noise, says Kunc, who has pooled findings across the animal kingdom. Noise, he says, should be considered a significant pollutant.

Yet the effects of this pollution are complicated, and some species may be more sensitive than others. Studying 142 bird species, Cal Poly State University ecologist Clinton Francis recently found that forest-dwelling birds, such as Oak Titmice, had less success mating and breeding in noisy environments: some laid fewer eggs or endured higher rates of nest or clutch failure. Light pollution may also exacerbate noise's effects. Other birds, however, were less bothered or may have even benefited, Francis says, but "big picture, it's probably not positive."

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Field Trips & Additional Programs



Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
Bloomington, Minnesota

MRVAC field trips are back! Some MRVAC field trips will begin again soon. These birding walks will be open to everyone, but all adult participants must be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. No reservations needed.
www.mrvac.org

Hok-Si-La Warbler Watching

Saturday, May 8, 7:30am
2500 US Hwy 61, Lake City, MN

Join us for this traditional field trip (30+ years). We never know what we will find. Meet at Hok-Si-La Park north of Lake City. Bring a lunch if you want to stay for the afternoon birding. Moderate effort- some walking on trails. Contact Steve at 612.978.3993 with questions.

Miesville Ravine in Dakota County

Sunday, June 6, 7:30am
27970 Orlando Trail, Cannon Falls, MN (north parking lot)
Join us to explore Dakota County's least known county park. Target birds include Cerulean Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Bring a lunch if you want to stay for the afternoon birding. Moderate effort- some walking on trails. Contact Steve at 612.978.3993 with questions.



Wood Lake Nature Center
Richfield, Minnesota

Spring Bird Hikes

Saturday, May 1, 9:00 – 10:30 AM & 1:00 – 2:30 PM
Sunday, May 2, 12:00 – 1:30 PM & 3:00 – 4:30 PM
Monday, May 10, 6:30 – 8:00 PM
Wednesday, May 19, 6:30 – 8:00 PM
Saturday, May 22, 12:00 – 1:30 PM & 2:30 – 4:00 PM
Enjoy a spring hike as we look for both migrating and resident birds. Discover how to identify species from sight and sound. Binoculars and field guides available for loan. \$5 per non-member; free for nature center members.
www.richfieldmn.gov



Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center
Sandstone, MN

Wednesday Webinar: Bugs

Wednesday, May 5, 7:00 – 8:00 PM
Join us for a free webinar about bugs! What are they? What qualifies as a bug? What makes these crawling, flying, wiggling things different? What can we learn from them? Led by our resident bug guy and education fellow, Light, in an adventure through all things small and spineless. All ages. www.ospreywilds.org



Three Rivers Parks
Metro-wide

Young Birders Club

Discover cool birds and make new friends in a free and exciting club. Ages 9-12. Reservations required.
www.threeriversparks.org

Spring Bird Hike at Eastman Nature Center
Friday, May 14, 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Intro to Birding at Richardson Nature Center
Saturday, May 15, 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Bird Behavior at Mississippi Gateway Regional Park
Sunday, June 6, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Early Morning Bird Hikes

Join avid birder and naturalist Kirk on an early morning bird walk. Early May can be great for spotting many returning migrant birds. Reservations required.
www.threeriversparks.org

Saturday, May 8, 6:00 – 8:00 AM at Lowry Nature Center
Saturday, May 15, 6:00 – 8:00 AM at Lowry Nature Center



Project Learning Tree
Nationwide Educator Resource

New K-8 Activity Guide:

Explore Your Environment

Available online or by attending a Minnesota DNR course
Project Learning Tree has released a new curriculum guide to engage kindergarten through grade 8 students in exploring their environment! 50 field-tested, hands-on activities integrate investigations of nature with science, math, English language arts, and social studies.
www.plt.org



PEN America
Online Video

Literary Science Writing Award

Follow up to the February 25 MRVAC Virtual Meeting
At the MRVAC meeting on February 25, our guest presenter was Dr. Jonathan C. Slaughter. Dr. Jonathan published the *Times Book of the Year*, "Owls of the Eastern Ice." Visit the following link to view him accept the PEN America Literary Science Writing Award.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAg2JG617Nc



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!

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With other studies underway, the pandemic could prove a watershed moment for understanding avian resilience to noise and other disturbances. University of Manitoba biologist Nicola Koper is gathering pandemic-period observations from birders in the United States and Canada. Her early findings show that birds were observed in higher numbers than usual at newly quiet airports last spring. To Koper, this suggests that birds can make on-the-fly decisions about habitat suitability in response to a drop in human activity.

This May birders can aid the ongoing work. The Dawn Chorus project, launched last year, is again inviting early risers around the world to record audio at first light, says scientific advisor Lisa Gill. "We wanted to seize that moment—that opportunity of the silent spring."