



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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2021 MRVAC Birding Weekend *by Bob Williams, Board Member*

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic our chapter did not have its annual fundraising event known as the Bird-a-thon in either 2020 or 2021. It had been a part of our efforts to raise money for many years and had been very successful. Last year we came up with an alternative fundraiser and we will be hosting the event again this year. We are asking that you participate in the MRVAC Birding Weekend by going to your favorite birding spots on either Saturday, August 21, Sunday, August 22, or both, and to keep a list of all the species that you are able to identify each day. We would then ask you to tell us what birds you found so that we can compile a complete list for each day.

Small prizes will be awarded to the person who identifies the most species for each day and to the person who identifies the most unusual bird each day. The results will be published in a following edition of *The Trumpeter*.

Our goal is to have at least 100 birders participate in this event. If each participant would contribute and/or raise at least \$25, we would achieve our fundraising goal. You can visit our website at www.MRVAC.org for ways to contribute online or you can mail a check made out to MRVAC at PO Box 20400, Bloomington, MN 55420. If you have any questions about the MRVAC Birding Weekend, please contact Bob Williams at drbop6789@gmail.com or by text at (612)-991-0727.

Meetings and Presentations take a break in July and August

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

As in previous years, we will be taking a break from scheduled MRVAC member meetings and special presentations in July and August. Stay tuned for more information regarding the upcoming meetings and presentations on Thursday, September 23 and Thursday, October 21.

MRVAC Field Trips are back!

View the upcoming
schedule on page 5.

End of Year Fiscal Update

by Walt Stull, Treasurer

This past fiscal year we budgeted for \$15,100.00 in income and expenses. We ended the year with \$13,025.94 in income and \$12,303.21 in expenses for a profit of \$722.31 this year. We exceeded our fundraising budget by \$999.35. Thank you everyone who participated these efforts in this extraordinary year.

We supported many organizations with contributions of \$75.00 to \$175.00. These include the American Bird Conservancy, Minnesota Ornithologists' Union (MOU), Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary, Minnesota Environmental Partnership, Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Clean Up the River Environment (CURE), Friends of Sax Zim Bog, and Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory.

We also provided grants of \$1000 to \$2000 to the Friends of Sax-Zim Bog, Refuge Friends, Inc., Bluebird Project, Normandale Hills Elementary School (Nine Mile Creek Watershed District), Jefferson High School, and Urban Roots.

Feel free to contact us if you know of an organization that has a project that could be supported by future MRVAC funding designated to promote environmental awareness, education, and advocacy action.



MRVAC Grant Updates

Pollinator Gardens are underway!

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

MRVAC co-sponsored a rain and pollinator garden at **Normandale Hills Elementary** which was planted on May 21. The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District provided expertise and partial funds for the raingarden. The project's goals were to a) reduce mowed turf areas on school grounds, b) increase pollinator and bird habitat, c) create a teaching garden for students to learn about phenology, plants, pollinators, birds, and other natural processes d) and to create a community amenity and learning opportunity for walkers from surrounding neighborhoods.

They transformed what was a grassy low spot into a beautiful raingarden. All the plants are pollinator favorites and will also attract many different bird species. Parents and student volunteers (over 100 people) prepared the shallow basin by removing sod, adding compost, and adding mulch and a fence. After that, 5th graders helped plant over 400 native flowers and shrubs in this space. As an added bonus, students made stepping stones in art class that were installed to create a path through the raingarden. Teachers plan to use this garden in the future as part of their lessons, giving students a real-world application for the topics they are learning about.

The 5th grade students now have a better understanding of watersheds, raingardens and their function, and native plants. They also expressed how much they enjoyed planting the flowers. All the flowers have now been planted and a system set up to water them over the summer. The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District will also be installing an interpretive sign in the garden to teach passersby about its purpose. MRVAC is cited on the sign as a donor.

I assisted in planting the large pollinator "Unity" garden at **Jefferson High School** (Bloomington) on June 4. This is a project of the Earth Corps Club at the school. Earlier, volunteers cut and turned over the sod to kill the grass. The Tree Guys and Joel Sniegowski donated all of the mulch and delivered it to be spread on the overturned sod. So the site was ready for 541 neonicotinoid-free native plants planted by volunteer students, National Honor Society members, Jefferson teachers, Rotarians, Izaak Walton League members, Oak Grove Church congregants, and school neighbors. A plan was created to water the site twice a day by neighbors and teachers which is *really* needed since it was planted at the start of our long, hot, dry spell.

Funding came from MRVAC, Lower MN Watershed District, Will Steger's Climate Generation, World Citizen



Normandale Hills 5th graders planting their new rain garden.
Photo Credit: Nine Mile Creek Watershed District

Scholarship, and several individuals. The Club is working with various teachers (science, art, English, special education) to utilize the site in the next years. Several student clubs will do follow up maintenance.

Poplar Grove Elementary's rain and pollinator garden was planted last fall. There is now a former student (Girl Scout Silver Award candidate) working on a project to do some signage for the garden, some interpretation, and lesson plans for the students and teachers to use. The school has submitted another grant to see about putting in more substantial path markers (river rock edging) so that the paths don't need as frequent upkeep.

Two teachers have stepped forward enthusiastically to ask if they can serve on an "outdoor learning" group that is forming at the school. In addition, one of the 4th grade teachers involved with the MVNWR Partner Teacher program is bringing up "What about learning outdoors? How can we incorporate that?" into every teacher curriculum planning meeting. The enthusiasm of the rain garden project is having far-reaching consequences and future plans include raised beds, another smaller pollinator garden, as well as native trees and shrubs that will serve as food and cover for birds. They hope this will establish a bird-feeding garden visible from the media center windows. This will allow students to easily participate in Project Feederwatch and other Cornell Lab of Ornithology projects.

"So you can see that the generous grant has put into motion so much more action and I look forward to reporting about its effects for years to come. Thank you for helping us get this started" - Adele Binning (Poplar Grove Teacher, Coordinator, and Advocate)



In Other News...

Minnesota Audubon Spotlight:

Sentinels of the Boreal

A Short Film by Tomas Koeck



Photo: Great Gray Owl at Sax-Zim Bog - J. Sweet

A new film has been produced in cooperation with the Sax-Zim Bog and the National Audubon Society. According to Audubon Minnesota's Executive Director, Rob Schultz, the film's purpose is to point out how important boreal forests are in our bird conservation work. A full description and a link to watch the film for free are below.

The boreal forest is the world's largest piece of forested wilderness in the world, stretching from Maine to Alaska in the Americas and being a prominent biome in Europe and Asia. This forest is home to many different species of wildlife such as moose, warblers, and even wolves. Yet few of these species can capture the mystic as one of the most elusive animals in the Americas, the great gray owl. Join Tomas Koeck as he takes you on a tour of what makes the boreal forest so special and why one should fight for the survival of this massive forest! Parts of this film were captured right here in Minnesota at Sax-Zim Bog!

[Click here to watch Sentinels of the Boreal.](#)

Wood Duck Volunteers Needed

from the Bush Lake Chapter of the Izaak Walton League

The Bush Lake Chapter Izaak Walton League, aka the Ikes, completed its Normandale Lake Wood Duck House project in May. They had installed 14 houses and predator guards in March when the ice was on.

They are looking for help monitoring and maintaining these houses each winter when the ice is safe, as they also have 20+ wood duck and other houses that are maintained in the Bush Lake Area.

If you can help, contact Paul Erdmann, Conservation Director of the Bush Lake Chapter Izaak Walton League via email at pwerdmann1976@gmail.com.

Cliff Swallow Mating Mystery

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

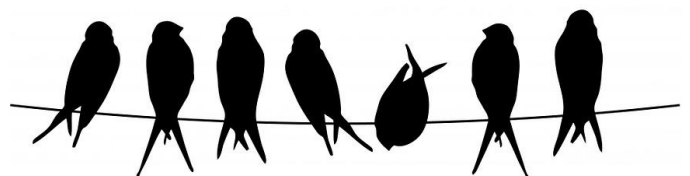
Cliff swallows are far more interesting than I used to think.

In May a few years back, I was able to attend an awesome show, a dazzling phenomenon the likes of which I have rarely seen on any stage. We stopped at quiet rural corner where two graveled roads met at a broken, swayed-backed, gray hulk of a long abandoned chapel, its open portals the flight-ways to its current resident parishioners: a colony of cliff swallows. But their demeanor was antithetical to the proper attitude of church goers, to say nothing of a cloistered community. On the edges of the ochre colored rain puddle at the intersection, the birds were stopping to scoop up the clay mortar with which they build their nests. But this was more than a rural barn raising party of birds swooping in to pause briefly on the road to swipe a bit of mud.

As members of the community swirled wildly about, the ladies would land and form a chorus line side-by-side, each facing the pool, their backs arched, head high, wings vibrating, tips pointing to the sky, and with tail straight up and their butts an open invitation to partners, who would alight but for the briefest second or two and never even seem to touch the ground. This was not a display of monogamous breeding or even community participation in raucous singular coupling as with elephants. This was a full scale, voodoo drums beating, communal orgy.

I did not notice how long each was able to hold this vibrating pose, but I did notice that it took at least four or five in the line to attract a mate, who never chose one on the outside of the line. One would expect a wild party such as this to be especially raucous, but it seemed no noisier than a typical gathering of the flock. In retrospect it may have been considerably quieter than usual.

Fitting with this wanton wild party is the practice of this species to deposit eggs in other Cliff Swallow's nests, stealing in when the occupant is otherwise distracted. Sometimes they even carry in the eggs in their bills! I wonder how they decide which will mother a brood and which will party? Do the party girls help feed the young?





Regional Events of Interest



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Programs at Como Park in St. Paul, Minnesota

Paddle with a Purpose

Saturday, July 10, 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM
Saturday, August 7, 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM
Located at Como Park (Lakeside Pavilion)

Participants will learn the basics of paddling while exploring our local waterways. After returning to shore, help give back to our parks by picking up trash and contributing to The Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative community science efforts to reduce litter that travels from here down to the Gulf of Mexico. Register online. All ages. Free. www.fws.gov



Friends of Sax-Zim Bog
Welcome Center located in Meadowlands, MN

Sax-Zim Bog BioBlitz 9

Saturday, July 17, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

This annual event features experts leading groups in the field to discover biodiversity in the Sax-Zim Bog for a day full of learning and exploration of the greater Sax-Zim Bog area. This year sees the return of a few of our well known field trips and a couple of brand new trips! Newly added trips feature bees, galls, and plant diseases alongside our traditional field trip topics like spiders, butterflies, and plants! Recently, our field trips have documented over 600 species throughout the Bog over the course of a few hours! Registration not required, but encouraged. www.saxzim.org

Sax-Zim Bog Spiders Field Trip

Saturday, July 31, 12:00 – 5:00 PM

Spiders are an interesting bunch: some have nothing but nice things to say about them, while others cannot bear to be within several hundred feet of these eight legged wonders. The Sax-Zim Bog has an incredible diversity of spiders, including several first state record and dozens of new county record species in the last three years. Come out to learn a little more about the different species of spiders in Minnesota and spend some time observing these misunderstood critters! Registration limited to 5 vehicles. www.saxzim.org

Sax-Zim Bog Stream Study Field Trip

Saturday, August 7, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

The St. Louis River drains 2.4 million acres of Northern Minnesota, differs greatly in geology, and is home to some interesting biodiversity. This program will not only investigate the St. Louis River and what it has to offer biologically, but will give participants a chance to observe and interpret a truly dynamic ecosystem. You will definitely be getting wet during this field trip! Registration limited to 5 vehicles. www.saxzim.org



Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center
Sandstone, Minnesota

Wild Workshop: Birding

Sunday, July 25, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

The day will include a beginners' bird walk at Osprey Wilds to learn how to use binoculars and identify birds. We'll visit our education wildlife ambassadors, look for birds at our feeders and on the trails, and view the bird housing we have on campus. After a tasty lunch, we'll build a birdhouse you can take home to encourage a bluebird family to move in. Register online by July 23. Ages 16+. \$25 per person. www.ospreywilds.org

Wild Workshop: Canning

Saturday, August 28, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Learn the basics of canning. The day will be a hands-on learning experience for all skill levels to enjoy! Tour our new farm, pick fresh, organic cucumbers, then make your own pickles and relish using a few simple ingredients. Learn how to keep your pickles crisp without the use of additives. Equipment and ingredients included. Register online by August 27. Ages 16+. \$25 per person. www.ospreywilds.org



International Owl Center
Houston, Minnesota

Breakfast with the Owls

Saturday, August 14, 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM
Located at Cross of Christ Lutheran Church

Join the International Owl Center for a locally-sourced artisan breakfast and live auction. All proceeds raised will go toward hiring an architect to create the final plans for the Center's future facility. All participants will get to select a piece of children's owl artwork from around the world to take home. Proxy bidding is allowed for those who cannot attend in person. Reservations required by August 7. \$75. www.internationalowlcenter.org

International Owl Awareness Day

Sunday, August 15, 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Learn about owls from experts around the world both online and in-person. Owl artwork from children around the world will be on display, and some will be available for sale. www.internationalowlcenter.org



Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory
Duluth, Minnesota

2021 Hawk Weekend Festival

September 17 – 19

Save the date! Online registration info coming soon.
www.hawkridge.org

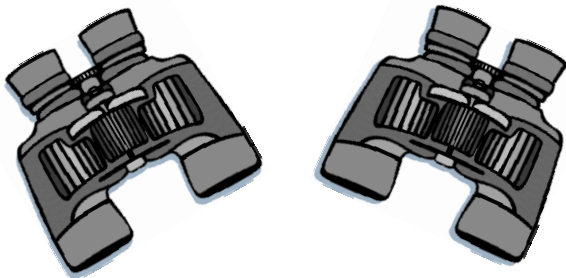


MRVAC Field Trips

Please do your part to stop the spread and adhere to the current recommendations from the Minnesota CDC in regards to COVID-19. This includes respecting the distance between you and those from other households, practicing proper hygiene, and wearing a mask if not vaccinated.

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

All trips are free unless otherwise noted. Beginning birders are always welcome.



Refuge Bird Watching Treks (July - August)

Saturday, July 10 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds

Sunday, July 18 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds

Saturday, Aug. 14 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds

Sunday, Aug. 22 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds

Join us for a bird walk on one of the many Refuge 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. Reservations are not required for Refuge Bird Walking Treks above.

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

Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center
15865 Rapids Lake Rd., Carver, MN

Morrison County Birding Days

Thursday, July 22 – Friday, July 23

\$25/MRVAC members;

\$35/non-MRVAC members

Craig Mandel – (952) 240 7647

Meeting Location: Little Falls, MN (6:00 AM)

We will have two days to hit many of the key birding locations in Morrison County. Some of which are: Charles Lindberg State Park, Belle Prairie County Park, Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, a few WMAs and a couple water treatment ponds. With luck there will be some early fall migrants and still some nesting birds feeding young. Please contact Craig to register for this field trip.

Central Minnesota Birding Days

Thursday, August 19 – Friday, August 20

\$25/MRVAC members;

\$35/non-MRVAC members

Craig Mandel – (952) 240 7647

Meeting Location: Alexandria, MN (6:30 AM)

On this two-day trip, we will be exploring many of Douglas and Todd counties hotspots. With Lake Osakis and Lake Carlos State park being a couple of my favorites. There will be lots of lakes and woodlands to explore and a few wastewater treatment ponds to check as well. There should be some shorebirds to study and maybe a few early migrant warblers. Please contact Craig to register for this field trip.

Miesville Ravine - Dakota County

Sunday, August 29 (7:30 AM)

Steve Weston – (612) 978 3993

Meeting Location: 27970 Orlando Trail,
Cannon Falls, MN (north parking lot)

We'll start out in Miesville Ravine Park in southeast Dakota County looking for early warbler migrants and cuckoos. After our hike on the upper trail, we'll head over to the Industrial Park by Randolph for grassland specialists and then check out Lake Byllesby. Bring lunch if you want to stay for the afternoon birding. Moderate effort- some walking on trails. Contact Steve with questions.



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!

Featured Artwork:

Ruby-throated Hummingbird
by MRVAC member, Robin Kutz.

