



The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Trumpeter

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Creating an Inclusive Birding Experience



by Hanna McBrearty, MVNWR Park Ranger

I've never considered myself a birder, though I do enjoy watching birds, and when particularly enthralled, learning their names and songs. What defines the threshold from bird watcher to birder? To me, being a birder always signified a level of expertise, being accountable to a life list, or at the very least, a feverish passion for the passerines. In my mind, birders wore binocular harnesses, had telephoto camera lenses, and an apparent invincibility to adverse weather conditions. *That will never be me*, I thought. But, it turns out the birds don't only appear for expensive optics, and they certainly don't sing just for the one who has heard the tune before. Birding is for everybody.

When welcoming bird watchers to a program or group outing it is important to understand the group's needs. Here are some tips to consider when sharing the wonder of birding with diverse audiences.

- ◆ Be patient when speaking to allow your audience time to process information.
- ◆ Provide hand outs and pictures so that your audience can take in information visually rather than only through listening.
- ◆ If a person prefers to share information through writing, provide an opportunity for them to ask questions or provide a response in writing.
- ◆ Become familiar in advance of the program with some tools that participants may use to communicate such as augmentative communication devices.
- ◆ Ask how you can help support your participants' experience with the program or time spent bird watching.
- ◆ Help participants prepare for their experience by sharing trip routes, bird lists, and ways to prepare for the weather in advance.

Looking for more information about bird watching at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge? Find trail maps and eBird checklists on [our website](#).

Upcoming Member Meetings

by Steve Weston, Board Vice President
and Meeting Program Chair

The Minnesota River Valley Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center is expected to be unavailable to host meetings for the foreseeable future. We are planning on holding virtual meetings in March and April. Virtual meetings start at 7:30 PM with a link emailed to members several days ahead of time. Feel free to share the link with friends.

“Bird Song: Ten Lessons in Listening”

Donald Kroodsma

Thursday, March 24, 2022, 7:30 PM

We are honored and fortunate to be able to welcome well-known author and ornithologist, Donald Kroodsma, one of the world's leading experts on the science of birdsong and a retired biology professor from the University of Massachusetts. He has researched and written on innate and learned songs, the functions, evolution, and ecology of birds songs. We'll celebrate the approaching spring with a good listening warm up.

“Report on Ornithology Research at UMD”

Kara Snow & Emily Pavlovic

Thursday, April 28, 2022, 7:30 PM

Both presenters are reporting on their master's research at the University of Minnesota at Duluth. Kara's research on Boreal Chickadees, in collaboration with the Natural Resources Research Institute, includes breeding ecology, nestling diet, and post-fledgling movement and habitat use. Emily's research in collaboration with the Hawk Ridge Observatory analyzes stable isotopes in feathers to reveal where raptors are migrating from and band recovery data for improving knowledge of migratory connectivity. Join us for a glimpse of some of the latest research today in ornithology.

**Advanced registration now required
for all MRVAC bird watching treks.
More information on page 5.**



2021 Christmas Bird Count Results

Bloomington CBC

by Rick Magee

The morning of Saturday, December 18 dawned overcast and cold. There were some flurries in the morning, but by afternoon the sky had cleared. Despite recent unseasonably warm weather, winter had arrived resulting in frozen ponds, lakes, and partially frozen smaller streams. Fortunately the Minnesota River was still open to attract waterfowl. Many birders reported that it was a quiet day in their area, however a total of 54 species were reported that day. Four other species were reported on count week. Alas, the individual numbers of several species were low this year. For instance, only one individual was reported for Cooper's Hawk, Herring Gull, Northern Shrike, Horned Lark, Winter Wren, and only 3 White-throated Sparrows.

The Bloomington Circle is centered on a point near the intersections of highways 13 and 77, just south of the river. It is divided into 20 sectors. This year there were a total of 56 people who participated in this long-running citizen science project sponsored by National Audubon and locally by the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter.

Despite it being a slow day for many there were several unusual species reported in the Bloomington Circle. Apparently the airlines were not the only flights being delayed to the south in late December. There was a diminutive Chipping Sparrow reported in Mendota Heights and a Golden-crowned Kinglet elsewhere that had neglected to fly to warmer weather with its kin. Not far away an American Pipit was observed foraging under the I-494 bridge. A Townsend's Solitaire was also recorded in Bloomington near Pond Park, another unusual species. Near the western edge of the circle near the Richardson Nature Center a juvenile Broad-wing Hawk was observed that had not yet left for warmer climes.

There were also a couple northern species that had arrived. White-winged Crossbills had been reported in the general area before the day of the Count and one was reported in Savage, the southwest corner of our territory. Several Snowy Owls had been at the MSP airport the week prior to the count and, fortunately for our tally, there were still two observed there on the 18th. Thank you to all who participated in the 2021 Bloomington Christmas Bird Count.

The Christmas Bird Count is a great opportunity each year to participate in a bird survey that tells us trends. We get an idea of species present and an idea of individual numbers of birds. In the past it was also a social event for the humans to get out and be with other birders. Unfortunately, this was Year of the Plague 2.0 and there were Covid protocols in place that limited the

opportunities of people to work together. This year there were sectors that did not have enough people to adequately search for birds. Let us hope that the 2022 Count will be a better year and we can flock together again. You may participate by birding an area on foot and/or from a vehicle, by reporting what you see at your feeders that day, or by taking on the task of compiling the reports and reporting the numbers to National Audubon. The 2022 Bloomington Christmas Bird Count will be on Saturday, December 17, 2022. Put it on your calendar!



Townsend's Solitaire at Ponds Mission Park during the Bloomington Christmas Bird Count. Credit: Bart Anderson

Cedar Creek Bog CBC

by Steve Weston

The 76th annual MRVAC sponsored Cedar Creek Bog Christmas Bird Count, one of Minnesota's oldest, was a good count. On typical winter day, cold, but tolerable, an enthusiastic experienced crew of birders tallied a bird list of 48 species, just one below the highest count. We had a full complement of field observers and, as usual, were forced to turn away some aspiring volunteers.

Of the 41 regular species only one, the Wood Duck, was missed. Common Ravens were found for the 18th year in a row. For the first time in four years, redpolls, which are irrupting this year, were found. A moderate acorn crop enticed 39 Red-headed Woodpeckers, about half of this year's Cedar Creek Bog's population to stick around. This was approximately three-quarters of those reported in the state. Out-of-the-ordinary finds included Green-winged Teal for the fourth year in a row, Northern Harrier for the second time in 10 years, Cooper's Hawk for the third time in 10 years, Snow Bunting for the first time in 10 years, Red-winged Blackbird for the second time in 10 years, and a Swamp Sparrow for only the third time on the count.



2021 Christmas Bird Count Results

Excelsior CBC

by Howard Towle

The 70th edition of the Excelsior Christmas Bird Count was held on December 18, 2021, under weather conditions that were quite normal for this time of year. Seventy-four field counters and 14 feeder watchers participated, including 25 counters working at Carver Park under the direction of Park Naturalist Kirk Mona, ten counters from the Bush Lake Chapter of the Izaak Walton League coordinated by Paul Erdmann, and nine counters from the West Metro Chapter of the Minnesota Master Naturalist organized by Mary Beth Pottratz.

The combined efforts of all resulted in a total of 56 species and 5,758 individuals being observed during the day. While 56 species fell far short of last year's record-tying and state-leading 68 species, it was almost identical to the 20-year average of 57 species for our count. The 5,758 individuals counted was quite typical of years when Lake Minnetonka is frozen, sending large numbers of Common Mergansers that stage there on their way south. By comparison, last year's total was 15,991 individuals, the second highest total ever for this count. This year there were a total of 20 Common Mergansers compared to last year's total of 2,810; there were 146 Canada Geese compared to last year's total of 2,012; and there were 1,863 Mallards, far less than last year's total of 4,495.

Renner and Martha Anderson found two Green-winged Teal south of the Minnesota River near Shakopee. These were the first on the count since 2010. The count's only American Coot was found by the team of Dick Sandve, Charlie Greenman and Bonnie Mulligan who having been doing the count together since Noah's ark landed – well almost. Coots have been found on the count every year since 1991, so having only a single bird was noteworthy.

Speaking of single birds, only one Ring-necked Pheasant was reported for the second year in a row by the Carver Park crew. Pheasant used to be quite abundant on the count (301 were tallied in 1978), but they have been steadily decreasing in the past 15-20 years with increased urbanization in the circle. We've never totally missed on them, but I suspect it will happen in the near future.

For the third consecutive year, only a single Red-shouldered Hawk was seen, this one by the Izaak Walton group. This species has been seen on 10 of the past 20 years, but never more than one or two birds. The Izaak Walton crew also found the count's only Common Redpolls, a group of 10.

A Northern Saw-Whet Owl was found by Michelle Cook and Rod Flancher at Carver Park, only the third one found in the past 20 years on count day. These cuties are probably more common than those figures would indicate at Carver, but their small size and reclusive nature make them a tough find.

One of the most remarkable observations on the count came from feeder watcher Sue Long who photographed a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in her yard. This was only the second

sighting in the 70 years of the count. Although a few sapsuckers linger in Minnesota every winter, they have been avoiding our count assiduously. Another uncommon bird on the count, the Merlin, was observed by Nathan and Barb Cooley in the Chaska area. This marks the third consecutive winter for spotting this small falcon, but only the sixth in the past 20 years.

A Carolina Wren that has been seen nearly daily at the feeders of Bruce and Lori Whitehouse in Minnetonka cooperated on count day, providing only the third record in the past 20 years. With the warming climate in Minnesota, expect to see more and more of this southern species.

A group of four Eastern Bluebirds seen at Carver Park was the fourth record in the past ten years. This is another species that we're likely to see more of in Minnesota with milder winter conditions. The counts' only Red-winged Blackbirds also were found at Carver Park.

Two late White-throated Sparrows seen at the feeders of Paul Worwa in Chanhassen were the only reported on the count. We've only missed this species three times in the past 20 years, as a few usually stick around at feeders long enough for our CBC. A single Common Grackle was located by Ken Larson in the Big Willow Park area, only the third in the past ten years.

Another remarkable observation from a feeder watcher came from Denny and Barb Martin, but unfortunately a day late for the official count. They observed and photographed a Rusty Blackbird in their Shorewood yard on Sunday, making it a 'count-week' bird. The last Rusty Blackbird on the count was also a 'count-week' bird seen in 1999. The last one with the sense to show up on count day was 30 years ago in 1990.

No species on this year's count set record high counts (which is a bit unusual), but Trumpeter Swan came close with a total of 310, the second highest number to 323 in 2017. Four Cooper's Hawk observations equaled the highest count set six different times in the past 20 years. This is a species that seems to be adapting well to increased urbanization and urban feeders.

Misses: every year there a few birds that don't cooperate. No Northern Shovelers were spotted in the usually reliable Blue Lake area after a run of eight consecutive years. Buffleheads were missed for the first time in nine years. Note that part of the problem stems from our not accessing the Blue Lake water treatment facility during Covid times. Pine Siskins were conspicuously missing, although this is a species that we only find on about 75% of counts. No Song Sparrows were noted, a species that is seen on about 50% of counts.

And whether your name appears above or not, please realize that your efforts are important and appreciated. The CBCs are not primarily about finding rare birds; they're about censusing birds in our environment over the years. A count like the Excelsior CBC with its history going back 70 years provides important information about the changes occurring over time in our increasingly urbanized area. Thank you for participating and I hope you will join us again next year!



Regional Programs of Interest



Osprey Wilds
Sandstone, Minnesota

Women's Wellness Weekend

Friday – Sunday, April 29 – May 1

Join us at Osprey Wilds for our Spring Women's Wellness Weekend! Reconnect with nature alongside a friendly and welcoming community. The retreat is hosted twice a year (spring and fall) and is an opportunity for anyone who identifies as a woman to spend time in nature, meet new people, and learn new skills. The weekend is full of possibilities! You can choose how to spend your time during the weekend by choosing from a large list of classes and activities that focus on the mind, body, and spirit. Proof of vaccination or booster is required to participate. You will be asked to wear a mask during the event. Pricing is based on lodging occupancy in each accommodation. More information, including how to register, is available online. www.ospreywilds.org



Friends of Sax-Zim Bog
Meadowlands, Minnesota

Winter Webinar Speaker Series:

Northern Hawk Owl Winter Ecology:

What Do We Really Know?

Thursday, March 17, 6:30 – 8:30 PM

The Northern Hawk Owl Project, led by Hannah Toutonghi, just finished the first full field season of tracking hawk owls in Northern Minnesota. We will discuss the species, what we previously have known about hawk owls, and the novel preliminary results of using telemetry to track individual hawk owls throughout the winter season! Please come with curiosity and questions about this nomadic denizen of the Northwoods! Register online. www.saxzim.org



Project Learning Tree
Saint Paul, Minnesota

Free Outdoor Teaching Kits

Nominate yourself or other educators to receive a free Project Learning Tree Outdoor Teaching Kit. Easy nomination form, nominate as many educators as you would like by March 14. Kits contain a \$50 certificate to buy seeds, 25 clipboards, 1 cedar raised garden bed, 25 student journals, 1 PLT Explore Your Environment K-8 Activity Guide, 1 PLT Green Jobs Guide, a PLT mug, water bottle, and a backpack!

www.plt.org/giveaway#nomination-form



Lowry Nature Center
Victoria, Minnesota

Maple Syrup Festival

Saturday, March 26, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Celebrate Minnesota's oldest tradition – the making of maple sugar and syrup! Learn history, observe a tree being tapped, discover different collection methods, and stop at the Sugar Shack for a taste of sweet, liquid gold. Reservations required. All ages. \$5.

www.threeriversparks.org



International Owl Center
Houston, Minnesota

International Festival of Owls

Saturday – Sunday, April 30 – May 1

The International Festival of Owls in Houston, Minnesota is changing in 2022 due to COVID. The dates will change from the traditional first weekend in March to April 30 – May 1 so the event can be held outdoors. On Saturday you can enjoy live owl programs by the Illinois Raptor Center, kids' crafts, nest box building, pellet dissection and all kinds of fun owl merchandise. Sunday will include only special pre-registration events such as a birding and natural history bus trip and an outdoor owl photo session. World Owl Hall of Fame award winners from Serbia and India will give presentations either in person or online. Check the latest details online. www.festivalofowls.com



City of Burnsville
Burnsville, Minnesota

Burnsville Bluebird Volunteers Needed

The City of Burnsville is seeking volunteers to build, install, and/or monitor bluebird houses in select parks. The City has converted about 10 acres to prairie in five different units in two parks. If interested, send an email to caleb.ashling@burnsvillemn.gov.



International Crane Foundation
Based in Baraboo, Wisconsin

Annual Midwest Crane Count

Saturday, April 9, sunrise

Join over 1,600 volunteers across the upper Midwest to monitor the return of the Sandhill and Whooping Cranes to their northern breeding grounds. Contact Steve if interested. sweston2g@gmail.com



MRVAC Birding Treks

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 field trips to other locations. Refuge addresses and maps can be found on page 6.

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

NEW REGISTRATION PROCESS

There will be a new registration process for bird watching treks beginning with the walk on March 5. You will be required to pre-register for each MVNWR walk. Each walk will be limited to 25 participants, so register early. To register for each walk, you will need to go to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge website. Click on 'Events Calendar' under the 'Visit' tab and you will find a link to a SignUp registration page.

Refuge Bird Watching Treks (March - April)

Saturday, March 5 (8:00-10:30 AM) Old Cedar Ave.
Sunday, March 20 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds
Monday, March 28 (8:00-10:30 AM) Old Cedar Ave.
Sunday, April 3 (8:00-10:30 AM) Bass Ponds
Saturday, April 16 (8:00-10:30 AM) Old Cedar Ave.
Saturday, April 23 (8:00-10:30 AM) Rapids Lake

Join us for a spring walk on one of the many Refuge Units. Each spring offers a chance to observe a variety of birds that stop at the Refuge during their migration. The early spring walks will feature waterfowl, and the later walks will see the first migrant sparrows and warblers of the season. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Led by Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist. To register for this walk, visit the MVNWR website. For questions about these walks, please contact Craig at 952-240-7647. Refuge addresses and maps on page 6.

For the safety of staff and participants, outdoor programming will be cancelled in the event local areas are under an active advisory (Winter Weather, Wind Chill, or Lake Effect Snow) or an active warning (Blizzard, Winter Storm, Ice Storm, Wind Chill). Programming will also be cancelled in the event the temperature is at or below 0°F. Participants will be notified of cancellation via SignUp message.

CANCELLED: 2022 Salt Lake Festival

Due to the continuation of the COVID19 pandemic, the MRVAC Salt Lake Festival usually scheduled for late April near Marietta, Minnesota, has been cancelled.

Ramsey County Birding Day

Thursday, April 14, 2022, 7:00 AM
 Craig Mandel – (952) 240-7647

In our search for spring migrants in Ramsey County, we may have time to bird at: Long Lake and Vadnais/Snail Lakes Regional Parks, Tamarack Nature Center and Reservoir Woods Park. Plus, a few other locations in the northern portion of the county. With luck we will observe a mix of waterfowl and some early spring migrant songbirds. Please contact Craig to register.

Chisago County Birding Days

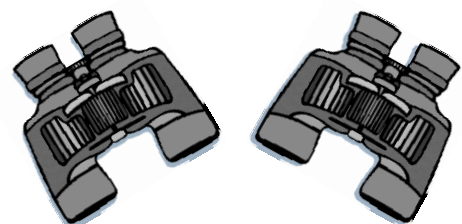
Thursday & Friday, April 21-22, 2022, 7:00 AM
\$25 per MRVAC member; \$35 per non-member
 Craig Mandel – (952) 240-7647

With two days to cover the county, we should have plenty of time to spend at most of the county's hotspots. Some that we may have time for include Wild River and Interstate State Parks, Carlos Avery WMA, and Allemansratt Wilderness Park. With luck we'll find a nice mix of waterfowl, herons, and early spring migrant songbirds. Please contact Craig to register.

Waseca County Birding Days

Thursday & Friday, May 5-6, 2022, 6:30 AM
\$25 per MRVAC member; \$35 per non-member
 Craig Mandel – (952) 240-7647

Our birding days in early May in Waseca County should be a great time to look for migrating warblers and sparrows with a dozen parks, some good WMA's, and the Janesville Sewage ponds to check. Some of the better parks we should have time to bird include Courthouse, Blowers and Goose Lake County Parks. Lakeview Park and Senn-Rich WMA should also offer some interesting species of birds at this time of year. Please contact Craig to register.





Minnesota River Valley
Audubon Chapter
P.O. Box 20400
Bloomington, MN 55420

Seeking New Board Members

by Matthew Schaut, Board President

The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter (MRVAC) is fortunate to have a strong Board of Directors who bring a diversity of strengths and experience to the work MRVAC does. This being said, MRVAC is both in need of – and quite desirous – of having new people join the Board.

Contrary to what I thought before I took the plunge, you don't need deep pockets to serve on the Board, for your role isn't to carry the organization financially. You don't need to be a mover or a shaker. You don't need to know a bunch of stuff and have a bunch of experience. You do need to care about birds, the Minnesota River Valley, and the health of the Minnesota River. Our role is to advocate for environmental stewardship, keep our full plate of field trips going, and fulfill our mission of bringing underserved youth populations into close contact with nature.

MRVAC is also seeking a new editor for *The Trumpeter* to begin at the end of the 2022 calendar year and heading into 2023. Responsibilities include coordinating 5-6 issues each year, keeping up to date on regional happenings, and creating original newsletter content when necessary. A stipend is available.

Please consider joining us. If you are interested in either role, you may contact the Board through our website or you may email or text me directly.

Matthew can be reached by phone at (612) 756-2349 or by email at Mschaut22@yahoo.com.

Effectiveness of Plastics Recycling

republished from Choose to Reuse, Hennepin County

You may have seen news stories paint a negative picture about recycling. Fortunately, recycling programs in Minnesota have remained more stable than others across the U.S. because of strong local infrastructure. Minnesota state law prohibits materials collected for recycling from being trashed. This means that the items you put in your recycling bin have a place to go, and most often, that place is right here in Minnesota. The story isn't entirely rosy, however. Plastic markets still go up and down, and plastic is mainly recycled into different products that cannot be recycled again.

Because of the challenges with plastic recycling, the best thing you can do is to look for ways to minimize your use of plastics. Hennepin County has a lot of suggestions on their web site for ways to use less plastic. Start at www.hennepin.us/choose-to-reuse/tips/2022-tips-to-use-less-plastic.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip Locations & Addresses

Rapids Lake Trailhead
15865 Rapids Lake Rd., Carver, MN

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



Gaggle of Geese at Sunset Pond. Credit: Robin Kutz