



# Minnesota BIRDING

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## Greetings from the Conservation Committee Chair

*by Carrol Henderson*

My transition into retirement has been a smooth one over the past several weeks, thanks especially to the opportunity to accept the position as Chair of the Conservation Committee for the MOU. I appreciate the previous efforts of Pam Perry, and I look forward to opportunities to energize the members of the MOU to take actions to help ensure the future health and diversity of Minnesota's bird populations.

These actions can take many forms, as I have found out over the past 42 years during which I served as the Nongame Wildlife Program supervisor. Some of these actions are of a personal, hands-on nature. They can start with simple "in the backyard" projects like putting up nest boxes and bird feeders, or planting trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals that benefit some of our more common and adaptable birds. Doing such things provides opportunities to share the visits by those birds with children, grandchildren, and neighbors as well.

That is a major opportunity, and a major shortcoming, of our current birding culture. We enjoy our bird outings as avid birders, but usually children and fledgling adult birders are either not invited or are unaware of organized events that could introduce them to the enjoyment of bird-

ing. At Hutchinson there used to be an annual "Bluebird Day" at which more a hundred parents and children would come to learn about bluebirds. As one of the activities participants would build a bluebird house to take home. It was a great way to introduce children to attracting and learning about birds. Famed artist Les Kouba was a regular celebrity at the event; he wanted to do his part to help the birds. I made a regular appearances there too, along with other members of the Bluebird Recovery Committee, which was headed at the time by Dorene Scriven, Dick Peterson, Dave Ahlgren, and Mary Ellen Vetter, among others.

Unfortunately, there were some other "bluebird extremists" who were upset that other birds might use the bluebird nest boxes, especially if the children went home and put the nest boxes in their back yards: They might be used by House Wrens! Whenever a teacher or youth program leader would contact them about having a bluebird event, they received diagrams on how the students could cut out and assemble napkin holders!

So, I think that RECRUITMENT should be a conservation priority for MOU. We should put our heads together on how to better address the opportunities for recruiting young birders. How might you help promote

beginning birder outings in your community?

### **The Legislative Front**

A second opportunity where we should be vigilant and active is on the legislative front. Last year the Minnesota legislature gutted and redirected a significant portion of the funding allocated through the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and managed through the Legislative Citizens' Commission on Minnesota Resources. A large portion of the funding has been redirected to expenditures that are outside of the constitutional limits for use of the funds. We need to keep advised of these actions in the future and to support politicians who support the use of these funds for their intended conservation purposes.

On the national scale, there is a bill in Washington referred to as RAWA (Restoring America's Wildlife Act) that now has over a hundred Republicans and Democrats signed on as co-authors. This bill would allocate some of the funds derived from offshore oil leases in the Gulf of Mexico to states for wildlife conservation and recovery. Minnesota's share would be about \$26 million per year, including benefits for nongame wildlife. That is big! The bills are H.R. 4647 and SF 3223. Your representatives in Congress and in the Senate need to hear from you on this. We will likely not get another chance like this for federal support of wildlife conservation in our lifetime.

### **Get the Lead Out**

We have long heard about the dangers posed by lead in the environment. We know about the disaster of lead in the water in Flint, Michigan. Why do we still put lead in the environment as anglers and hunters? This source of lead pollution is avoidable. Nontoxic alternatives are increasingly available at decreased prices.

Even if you do not hunt deer or pheasants, you can help if you own land where deer are hunted: you can require all hunters on your property to use nontoxic ammo for deer hunting or pheasant or grouse hunting. If you hunt deer yourself, make the switch. If people offer you venison after a successful deer hunt and if they used firearms, ask what kind of bullet was used to take the deer. If it was lead or copper-jacketed lead, don't eat it, and don't even give it to the dog. Analysis of venison packages donated by deer hunters for the state food shelf program over the last couple years has shown that 10-15% of the packages had tiny lead bullet fragments and had to be destroyed. If the venison was kept by hunters and fed to their family and friends, consider this: Last year hunters in Minnesota harvested about 200,000 deer. If each deer provided about 40 pounds of venison, that is about 8 million pounds of venison. Ten percent of that would be about 800,000 pounds of lead-tainted venison that are being consumed by Minnesota deer hunt-

ers and their families and friends. We shouldn't have to tell people "Don't Eat Lead," but I guess we do.

Deer hunting is an important and long-standing tradition in Minnesota and it is important as a means of keeping deer populations at manageable levels that do not degrade their habitats, but we need to sustain that tradition in a manner that does not expose our citizens to lead and concurrently poison our bald eagles. Same thing for fishing tackle. We have a variety of nontoxic jigs and sinkers manufactured right here in Minnesota, but it can be hard to find them in sporting goods stores. When you restock your tackle box, take out the lead jigs and sinkers and replace them with the alternatives—bismuth, tungsten, tin, and ceramic. Give these nontoxic alternatives to your fishing friends. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency will soon begin making renewed efforts with their "Get the Lead Out" program, which will be funded by some of the BP remediation funds that will start in 2019. The MPCA will be sponsoring lead tackle exchanges, so anglers and their kids can bring in their old lead jigs and sinkers and get samples of new nontoxic tackle. Stay tuned for more info on that.

### **Hemp for the Birds**

The MOU has become a national leader in exploring the potential for use of industrial hemp as a wild bird food. This innovative project is being carried out in collaboration with the Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture and All-Seasons Wild Bird Stores. Dr. David Horn of Millikin University in Illinois is analyzing the results of late summer/early fall bird food preference testing, comparing the use of hemp seeds with black oil sunflowers and white proso millet, and including the results of additional observations by additional volunteers of birds visiting feeders stocked with hemp.

A second round of preference testing is proposed for this winter, since that is when the additional energy benefits of hemp will be more pronounced. If all goes as planned, it is feasible that hemp could become available as wild bird seed in the coming year. An additional benefit of this is that hemp could be grown as a crop by Minnesota farmers, and it does not need treatment with any insecticides or pesticides to protect it from insects, just lots of nitrogen. Stay tuned on this too.

One final thought: it would be worth considering an outreach effort by the MOU to encourage bird feeding enthusiasts to join MOU. There is huge potential for recruiting new members who may get a great thrill by attracting a diversity of birds at their feeders. If the MOU provided helpful tips and stories of how to enhance their bird feeding efforts (and incidentally attract vagrants to Minnesota that our members would flock to see), it would be a great partnership with another branch of the birding community.

That's all for now. See you at the paper session Dec. 1.

# Message from the President

As I write this, it's October 15th, and the Twin Cities metro area has already seen snow on two days, including a morning of accumulation on October 14! Upwards of a foot of snow has already fallen in parts of northwest Minnesota, and Lake Superior has experienced gale-force winds (as evidenced by many photos and viral videos coming from Duluth) more typical of November. Thankfully (unless you prefer colder temperatures), the long-term forecast for November and December actually predicts warmer-than-usual temperatures due to likely El Niño conditions forming in the eastern Pacific Ocean, which usually translate to wetter and warmer winters in Minnesota.

Birders often benefit from weird weather events. On the east coast, the days following Atlantic hurricanes and tropical storms often bring birds that have been pushed inland sometimes far from their typical oceanic haunts. It's assumed that Minnesota's first frigatebird record in early October 1988 was actually a result of Hurricane Gilbert, a powerful storm in the Gulf of Mexico that persisted as a tropical depression well north into the Midwest. Last fall I was birding on the North Shore of Lake Superior with many other birders on a weekend following a day of strong, gale-force winds not unlike the storm we just saw in Duluth, and on both days we experienced amazing numbers of migrants along the shore, including several Minnesota rarities like Mountain Bluebirds, Townsend's Solitaires, Pacific Loons, and even a Red Phalarope.

While birders may reap the rewards of weird weather, the birds themselves are often, unfortunately, worse for the wear. And while we can't directly control the weather, there

are certain things that humans do that contribute to the magnitude and frequency of certain weather events, which are well understood as causes of climate change. Whether we care to admit it, humans are responsible for major changes in the health and resilience of our natural ecosystems, climate change being one of them.

Therefore, in light of an upcoming chance to participate in the democratic process on Tuesday, November 6th, I strongly urge you to not only vote but also to do your part in understanding the environmental views of each candidate running for office. While some candidates may have few differences from their opponents when it comes to the environment, others have major differences on local, state, national, and global environmental issues, all of which may impact birds and the natural habitats they call home.

Part of our rich heritage in Minnesota is a strong history of environmental ethics, from the creation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (one of the most visited natural areas in the United States) to our ever popular state parks and recreation areas that offer year-round chances to connect with birds and nature. We continue to harbor vast tracts of coniferous woodlands, bogs, and peatlands in northern Minnesota, as well as strive to recreate the extensive prairies that once stretched from the Canadian border in northwest Minnesota all the way to Iowa in the southern extent of the state. The birds we enjoy observing are no less a part of this same heritage.

Please, make your vote count for the birds. They deserve no less from us.

– Bob Dunlap



*Tundra Swan, by Mary Graves*

# Using Math to Fuel Optimism and Determination in Searching for Rarities

by Josh Wallestad

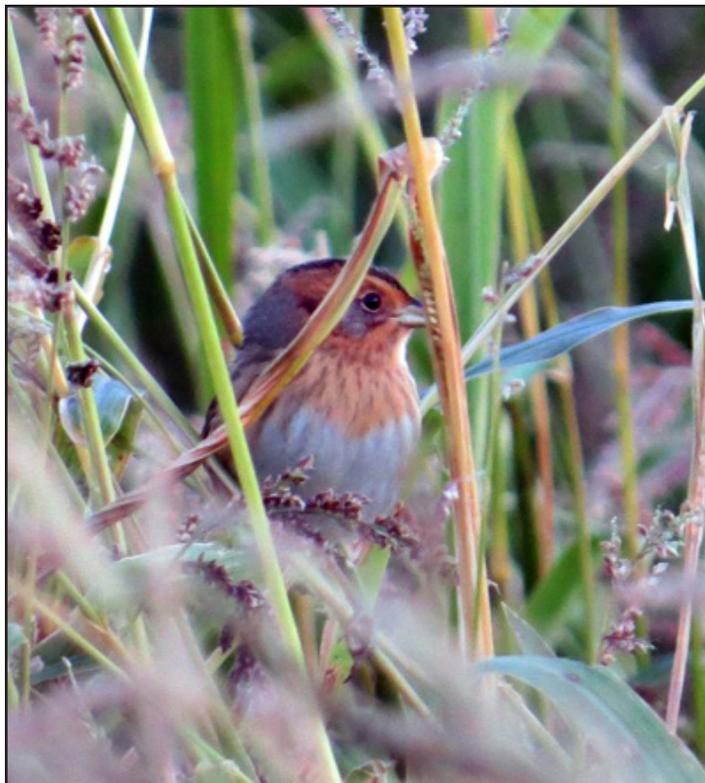
Almost any birder can recall a former nemesis bird—that one bird that proved to be incredibly elusive over a long period of time until it finally fell. Chances are you are thinking of one right now. And often, as the story goes, the conquering of the nemesis ushered in a new era where the once impossible bird is now ubiquitous and easily found—relatively speaking, of course. We may view this as just a birding cliché, but perhaps the phenomenon can be explained through a probability concept known as the Law of Large Numbers. More to the point, having a solid understanding of this concept can give you greater perseverance as you target your next rarity.

Ask almost any student in upper elementary or older grades what the probability is that a flip of a coin will result in heads, and they will respond correctly with 50%. And if you probe further, they will be able to tell you that in ten flips you should get five heads. They also recognize that when you actually conduct an experiment of ten coin flips, you are not guaranteed five heads. Someone could get lucky and end up with eight heads in the ten flips; someone else might get just one. You press the student further and ask if the lucky kid could sustain the 80% success rate over 1,000 coin flips, or the unlucky kid the 10% success rate. Intuitively they know the answer is no.

In my classroom and many others, we don't just stop at having an intuitive understanding; we run the experiment. Using technology, we run simulations of a large number of coin flips. Students see firsthand that the data "levels out," and that in the end both the lucky kid and the unlucky kid get a number of heads close to 50%. In short, the more trials that are run, the closer the experimental probability gets to the theoretical probability. This is known as the Law of Large Numbers.

So what does this have to do with searches for rare birds? Well, everything! Of course, with birds there is no theoretical probability for finding a given bird. We can't quantify it. However, we are able to project whether the chances for a certain bird are very low, relatively low, moderate, or high. Take an inland sea duck, for instance. We know that during the months of November and December, there is a low chance of finding a sea duck on an inland lake. We are not surprised by such discoveries, but the probability is low enough that such a find is deemed a rarity and gets birders excited.

For the sake of argument, let's assign a probability to



*Nelson's Sparrow, by John Wallestad*

this event, like a 1% chance. This means that, theoretically, a sea duck would only be found only one time out of every 100 outings or site visits. If we run the experiment and actually visit the proper habitat 100 times during the sea duck window, we are not guaranteed the one sea duck sighting. In fact, we may get zero sightings in 100 attempts. Does this mean we should give up? No! The Law of Large Numbers will start to work itself out, but only if one perseveres. It's that next 100 outings where things could get really exciting. Remember, the experimental probability will eventually catch up, so the next 100 outings could end up holding two sea ducks, which would put us back at the 1%. And if we get skunked on the first 200 outings, that's all the more reason to go back out for trip #201. Because the luck will turn.

I'm not just pontificating on this intersection of birding and mathematics—I have actually put it into practice and been successful on several occasions. Two years ago I found out that Kandiyohi County had no record of a Surf Scoter. This baffled me greatly, since we have two resident birders who have amassed lists of 290+ species for the county.



*Townsend's Solitaire, by Josh Wallestad*

It became even more baffling when I began paying greater attention to reports of this species around Minnesota and in Iowa. I quickly realized that Surf Scoters show up regularly all over both states. This meant that there was a low, but very real, chance that Kandiyohi County had them pass through each fall. When one takes into account that there are 200+ lakes in Kandiyohi County, the probability is even higher, since there is an abundance of appropriate habitat. So I made up my mind: I was going to find that Kandiyohi Surf Scoter. I knew it was just a matter of putting in the reps of checking appropriate habitat during the right time frame in order for the Law of Large Numbers to play itself out.

Starting in mid October, I hit up our biggest diver-duck friendly lakes repeatedly and from many vantage points. I went to lakes in the county that had historical sea duck sightings. Day after day I would drive from lake to lake, getting out to scan the waters, only to get back on the road to the next lake and repeat. Even on days when I had to drop my son off at swimming practice, I'd sneak away to the nearest lake for a quick scan before heading back to pick him up. It was repetitive, boring, and discouraging work. But I persist-

ed because I knew the probability of a Surf Scoter was very real—I just had to make the Law of Large Numbers play itself out. Finally, after two weeks of doing this, I spotted two Surf Scoters on Lake Lillian. It was a Kandiyohi County first record. The Law didn't lie. Some people ascribed this just to luck. I have had many serendipitous encounters—driving by a Gyrfalcon, having a White-faced Ibis land next to my car, spotting a Piping Plover at the city beach while taking my daughter to the park—but finding this Surf Scoter was not a matter of luck. It was probability.

Most recently this played out for me again. Kandiyohi County also had no record of a Nelson's Sparrow. Like the Surf Scoter, this bird is sighted regularly all across the southern half of Minnesota and throughout Iowa during September. Moreover, Kandiyohi County is filled with sloughs, potholes, and prairies that would be a dream rest stop for a migrating Nelson's. We had the habitat—lots of it. The probability of a Nelson's in the county every fall was real, and perhaps not even particularly low. Two years ago I made one attempt at looking for a Nelson's in late September. Last year I put in a few more attempts. This year, on my first try, I found the Nelson's Sparrow first county record. I knew it was a matter of just putting in attempts, and this time I didn't even have to put in that many.

So was I just the lucky kid who got the eight out of ten flips of the coin, or was the theoretical probability of a Nelson's Sparrow in the county even higher than I imagined and my success rate spot on for the theoretical probability? It is impossible to know what that probability is, but it is not impossible to have an intuition about how high or low that probability might be. And it's that intuition, coupled with the Law of Large Numbers, that helps me know how hard I should push in order to find the prize bird.

Other times I have made the Law play out for "lesser" birds, like personal county tics. I once asked my fellow Kandiyohi birder Randy Frederickson if he thought our county held a Snowy Egret every summer. He was pretty sure it did. That gave me enough confidence in the probability to put in some visits to appropriate heron/egret haunts. In a half day, after visiting a half dozen or so locations, I found a Snowy Egret. Another time, we Kandi birders assembled into teams on a February morning to look for a Townsend's Solitaire. Chances for a Solitaire are "decent", so with multiple teams checking multiple locations, we were putting in the reps. Almost right away, one of our teams found the bird. In both of these cases, my intuitive feeling was that the theoretical probability was fairly high and that it would require fewer trials for the experimental probability to close in on the theoretical.

Irruptive events are also opportunities to make the Law of Large Numbers work for you. When Red Crossbills were showing up everywhere across western Minnesota during the summer of 2017, Randy Frederickson and I knew that

we just had to keep checking and rechecking appropriate habitat in order to find one in our county. The probability of Red Crossbills being in the county at the time was high. It took lots of reps and many hours of searching cemeteries and other places with the right habitat of cone-laded spruces, but we knew it would eventually pay off. And it did when Randy found some Red Crossbills at a local golf course.

It is easy to talk about the successes, but what about the failures? Birders already know when there is a good chance to find a bird and go looking accordingly, but we often quit looking for a certain species, like the Long-eared Owl, after trying once or twice or even a few times without success. However, when a birder is armed with the knowledge of how the Law of Large Numbers works, he or she can then become doggedly habitual in searching. The misses will not deter such a birder. Quite the opposite, the misses embolden the learned birder to go back out for another try, because each new miss brings them closer to the moment that the experimental probability will catch up with the theoretical. Mathematically speaking, a long string of misses means we should actually start doubling down on our efforts instead of quitting, because the bird you are after could just be around the next bend. The Law will play itself out. It is a numbers game, plain and simple.

Of course, the probability of finding a given target needs to be considered before one undertakes such a determined

effort of repetitive birding. A birder must know the optimal time window, correct habitat, and proclivities of a certain species. Once could look for a Snowy Owl in October in a forest in the middle of the day, of course, but the chances of finding are infinitesimally low, bordering on zero. On the other hand, looking for that same bird in flat agricultural land in January near dusk will maximize the probability of finding the Snowy Owl. It is therefore only under those conditions that a birder should put the Law of Large Numbers to the test by putting in the reps or piling on the miles. Then it is just a matter of time before the probability turns into a reality.

Admittedly, it can be hard to be met with failure time and time again. Walking the same paths, looking at the same lakes, and so on, can be wearisome. Had I not known about the Law of Large Numbers and had success with it, I could easily be convinced to give up in the face of continual disappointment. But because of my experiences, I'm still out there pushing hard for certain species. I have many, many check marks in the "miss" column for a county Northern Saw-whet Owl. I'm okay with that. Saw-whets are known to come through every year; one of these days will be payday. And because of the debt the Law owes me, when that day comes there should be three in one tree!

*Surf Scoter, by Josh Wallestad*



# Birder Bio: Dave Bartkey

## Tell us about yourself.

I've lived in Minnesota my entire life. I was born and raised in Stillwater. After graduating from high school in 1985, I moved to Pine City to work for a family-owned screen printing company. I worked there for 11 years before moving to Faribault in 1996 and finding a job with Northern Tool & Equipment shortly afterward. I'm still there to this day, working in the shipping department.

## When did you start birding?

When I was a boy my dad had an old Peterson Guide that I would look through with wonder and think that those colorful birds couldn't possibly be found here, but in some tropical paradise, somewhere. Certainly not here, where all we see are grackles! Then my dad would sometimes tell me stories of seeing Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks when he was a boy. My young mind thought of them as mythical! After that time, I had always had an above average interest in birds, but it wasn't until 1995, living on Lewis Lake, outside of Braham, that I finally picked up my roommate's binoculars and identified an Eastern Kingbird perched on a dead cottonwood across the road from our place. From there I began casually checking out the birdlife around our place. This gradually led to me purchasing my first pair of binoculars in May of 1996, and I headed out to Nerstrand Big Woods State Park to try them out. After a frustrating couple of hours, not being able to get any of the fast moving birds focused in my new bins, I was ready to throw in the towel! I stood on a trail, feeling that this hobby wasn't for me, and then looked straight up. There, on a low branch, was my most desired mythical bird from childhood—a beautiful male Scarlet Tanager! And he sat still for quite a long time, allowing for spectacular looks. I was completely hooked! I traveled to River Bend Nature Center in Faribault that same day, and the first bird I saw, following its song, was an Indigo Bunting. I even saw a Rose-breasted Grosbeak a day later. I'll never forget that magical feeling, despite the fact that as I've become a more experienced birder, I've found that the "Mythical Three" are all very common birds around Faribault.

## How did your interest expand after that first experience?

After that weekend, I got out and birded every chance I got! Living in Faribault, I mostly birded River Bend Nature Center, eventually meeting local birder Tom Boevers. Tom introduced me to keeping records of birds and later to joining the MOU and submitting my data via seasonal reporting. He also recruited me for the local Christmas Bird Count, which I've been doing since 2001. On New Year's Day, 2003, I found a Carolina Wren along a bike trail behind



an apartment building in downtown Faribault. Reverend Forest Strnad lived in that building and had already recorded that species coming to his feeders. That mutual sighting led to a friendship between Forest and me that lasted until his death in 2012. Forest introduced me to birding outside of my home county, chasing rarities, going on MOU-led group field trips, attending the MOU Paper Session, and in doing all of these things meeting other birders with like-minded interests. A core group of guys evolved from all of this. John and Chris Hockema, Dedrick Benz, Bob Dunlap, Ben Fritchman, Shawn Conrad, Andy Nyhus, and I have been taking two extended weekend trips per year. One, which we call "Wang Chung Waterfowl Weekend," is taken somewhere in the state in the spring, and the other, started by Ben, is our North Shore trip, affectionately known as "Croissant Jaunt." I have some amazing memories from these trips over the years, and these guys have become like brothers to me!

## What's the main attraction of birding for you?

As far as the birds themselves, it's like an unending treasure hunt. What might you see next? Will it top the best thing you've seen so far that day? The times when it does

provide an amazing feeling! I also love the camaraderi, especially when chasing a rarity. It can be like a big family reunion, running into friends you haven't seen in awhile, having a few laughs and reminiscing.

**What are your favorite places to bird inside or outside of Minnesota?**

I don't usually bird outside of Minnesota, but within the state I love Duluth. If I had a dime for every time I wished that I lived there, I'd be able to afford a mansion on Park Point! Unfortunately, it's a long drive. But birding there, and along the North Shore, is always special. Especially in late October, where anything can be found! In spring, I have a special place in my heart for Rock County, in the opposite corner of the state. In May, a couple of years ago, my daughters and I, inspired by my pal Bob Janssen's book about Minnesota state parks, traveled there for a long weekend. I hit Blue Mounds State Park the first morning there and had Snowy Egret, Western Kingbird, and Northern Mockingbird all before noon! Every bush and tree was crowded with migrating birds. It was busy everywhere I looked. An overwhelming dream! On the last day of that weekend, Ron Erpelding showed up at the park looking for "my" mockingbird, which was still present. When Ron followed up on a flooded field where I had seen many shorebirds the day before, he found a breeding-plumaged Pacific Loon in a small pond nearby! Crazy...but magical!

**What's your favorite bird or bird family?**

I love Black-capped Chickadees. They are cute and feisty! They are the first bird to a new feeder. When you hear them in the woods during migration, they are usually travelling with warblers and the like. Thirty-five below zero!

# Save the date!

## MOU Paper Session

Saturday, December 1, 2018, 9 AM - 4 PM  
Northstar Ballroom in the student center of  
the St. Paul campus, University of Minnesota  
2017 Buford Ave, St Paul, MN 55108  
Featuring tours of the Bell Museum  
and Raptor Center!

Additional details and program to follow on  
our website, MOU-net, and our Facebook page.



*Bohemian Waxwing, by David Brislanca*

They're still around, feisty as ever! And I love their spring song. I remember hearing that often in our big elm tree in Stillwater as a boy, and hearing it now touches my heart and makes me a little sad.

**Any advice on how to be a better birder?**

It's always wonderful birding with newcomers and seeing their excitement and enthusiasm. I love helping out with experience and advice. The one constant thing I tell them when they are frustrated by not being able to focus on a moving bird or not being able to identify a call is to just keep trying. I once had those same thoughts and felt those feelings of frustration, but I kept at it, surprising some people, none more than myself. Just get out there and saturate yourself with nature. It will all fall into place for you!

**Any other hobbies when you're not birding?**

I've been a lifelong Twins and Vikings fan, and have great—and frustrating—fun with Fantasy Football every year. I also love listening to many types of music. My typical playlist will play Black Sabbath one song, and the next song will be something from The Oakridge Boys! Music has always been a happy constant in my life.

**What new bird would you like to see?**

I didn't chase any of the Lewis's Woodpecker sightings over the last few years, so there's that, but I have four birds I consider nemesis birds: Say's Phoebe, Red Knot, Piping Plover, and Parasitic Jaeger. I know, I know! Most of those have been seen recently, but I don't get the chance to chase as much as my heart desires.

# Savaloja Grant Applications and Donations Sought

*by Steve Wilson,  
Chair, MOU Savaloja Committee*

MOU will award grants for bird-related projects to be funded from the Savaloja Memorial Fund in 2019. Grants can be awarded for projects that increase our understanding of birds, promote preservation of birds and their natural habitats, or increase public interest in birds. Proposals that include those currently underrepresented in Minnesota's birding community are welcome as a means of broadening public support for birds and their habitat.

Awards typically range from a few hundred dollars up to as much as \$4000. In 2018 eight grants, totaling nearly \$15,000, were awarded by MOU for education, research and habitat management (further details on these and past projects can be found at <http://moumn.org/grants.html>). If your organization has an idea for a great project, please consider applying!

Application information may be obtained at the link given above. The deadline for receipt of grant applications is January 20, 2019. Grant recipients will be notified by April 1, 2019.

Even though MOU was able to support a diverse array of worthy projects last year, more than \$10,000 in requests for project support went unfulfilled due to a lack of funds. If you'd like to help MOU further its support of projects that benefit birds in 2019, please go to <http://moumn.org/signup.html>, click on the Donate link and contribute what you can. Just be sure to put "Savaloja Donation" in the "Add Special Instructions to Seller" box.



*Bohemian Waxwing, by Larry Wilebski*

## New MOU Members

Tina Gandy, *Faribault, MN*  
Jeff Iseminger and Susan Taylor, *Excelsior, MN*  
Thomas & Kathryn Nelson, *Tonka Bay, MN*  
Catherine & Ford Nicholson, *Dellwood, MN*  
Alicia Petersen, *Mahtomedi, MN*  
Douglas Winn, *St. Paul, MN*  
Ginger Worwa, *Hopkins, MN*

*Bald Eagle, by Vija Kelly*



# MINNESOTA BIRDING WEEKENDS & WEEKS

~ <http://www.mbwbirds.com> ~

APRIL 2019 - FEBRUARY 2020 • OUR 34th SEASON



Minnesota Birding Weekends and Weeks (MBW) will soon enter its **34th season (!)**, offering unique and *modestly priced* birding trips **in association with the MOU**. (Note that we originated back in 1986 as MOU Birding Weekends, and MBW participants are still expected to be members of MOU.) *Also note that the MOU receives a portion of MBW receipts in return for including the MBW schedule and other updates on the mou-net listserv and in the MOU's newsletter.*

During these past 33 years of MBWs, there have been over 400 MBWeekends, a total of 115 MBWeeks, more than 9,200 total registrations, a composite list of 363 species recorded on our MBWeekends, and an overall total of 711 species (!) once you include all the MBWeeks. In addition to our MBWeekends, please note this season's selection of out-of-state MBWeeks (*and be advised that some MBWs may even fill up on the first day of registration*). Also note that our MBWeekends fees are *only \$20/day pre-paid*, and our fees for MBWeeks are typically *less than half the cost of similar tours operated by others sometimes even closer to a third!*

**PLEASE NOTE** – Complete descriptions of all MBWs, summaries of previous MBWs, registration information, cost estimates of MBWeeks, and more will be **posted on the MBWbirds website (<http://www.mbwbirds.com>) on NOVEMBER 25**. Please read that additional information before registering. **NOVEMBER 26 at NOON will be the first day/time that a registration for a 2019-20 MBWeekend or MBWeek will be accepted.**

## MBW REGISTRATION PROCEDURES FOR THE 2019-20 SEASON:

- **All MBW registrations will be by e-mail**; there are no longer any registrations by U.S. mail. Registrations will be e-mailed to [eckertkr@gmail.com](mailto:eckertkr@gmail.com) and will need to include: 1) the name of the MBWeekend or MBWeek; 2) your name; and 3) your e-mail address. MBWeekend fees and MBWeek deposits are payable later – not with registrations (see below). **Multiple persons can register in the same e-mail only if they reside at the same address.**
- **Only one MBW registration (either a MBWeekend or MBWeek) can be e-mailed per day, starting at NOON on NOVEMBER 26**. (Exception: a pre- or post-MBW registration can be in the same e-mail with its associated MBWeekend.) If you wish to register for multiple MBWeekends or MBWeeks, the second MBW registration cannot be e-mailed until November 27 or later, the third registration not until November 28, etc.
- **Payment for a MBWEEKEND** can either be made **by U.S. mail** after the information on that MBW is sent to those registered (about a month before the MBW), **or in person** when the MBW meets. **The fee for those paying in advance will be \$20 per MBW day** (e.g., the pre-paid fee for a 2-day MBWeekend plus its pre-MBW is \$60 for the 3 days). The fee is \$25 per MBW day if payment is made at the time of the MBW. However, fees paid in advance will be **non-refundable**, unless another person can replace the person who cancels.
- **Payment for a MBWEEK deposit** (\$100) will be made after the initial information is sent to those registered, 3-4 months in advance of the MBWeek.
- As noted above, the complete 2018-19 MBW schedule with full descriptions and other information for all MBWeekends and MBWeeks will be published on **NOVEMBER 25** on the MBWbirds website: <http://www.mbwbirds.com>.



PHOTO CREDITS: BOREAL OWL / BILL MCGUIRK  
SNAIL KITE / BILL MARENGO

~ April 2019 - January 2020 MBWEEKENDS ~

As of NOVEMBER 25, see <http://www.mbwbirds.com/mbweekends.html> for information on each MBWeekend. Note that future changes in this schedule are possible, and updates on these will appear on <http://www.mbwbirds.com>. (Also note the \$20/day fees listed below are pre-paid amounts; fees not paid until the MBWs meet are \$25/day.

- April 19 pre-MBW ~ Grant County ~ \$20 (Base Fergus Falls)
- April 20 - 21, 2019 ~ Rothsay W.M.A., Wilkin County ~ \$40 (Base Fergus Falls)
- May 10 pre-MBW ~ Minnesota River Valley I (Brown County) ~ \$20 (Base New Ulm)
- May 11 - 12, 2019 ~ Minnesota River Valley II (Renville & Redwood Co's) ~ \$40 (Base Redwood Falls)
- May 24 pre-MBW ~ Jackson County ~ \$20 (Base Jackson)
- May 25 - 26 - 27, 2019 ~ Southwestern Minnesota ~ \$60 (Base Luverne)
- August 30 pre-MBW ~ Lake of the Woods I (Beltrami Island State Forest) ~ \$20 (Base Baudette)
- August 31 - September 1 - 2, 2019 ~ Lake of the Woods II (Roseau & Lake of the Woods & Koochiching Co's) ~ \$60 (Base Baudette)
- September 20 pre-MBW ~ Minnesota River Valley III (Le Sueur County) ~ \$20 (Leader Craig Mandel / Base Mankato)
- September 21 - 22, 2019 ~ Minnesota River Valley IV (Nicollet & Blue Earth Co's) ~ \$40 (Leader Craig Mandel / Base Mankato)
- October 11 pre-MBW ~ Iowa Border I (Mower & Freeborn Co's) ~ \$20 (Base Austin)
- October 12-13, 2019 ~ Iowa Border II (Faribault & Martin Co's) ~ \$40 (Base Fairmont)
- October 31 - November 1, 2019 ~ North Shore I ~ \$40 (Base Duluth & Grand Marais)
- November 2 - 3, 2019 ~ North Shore II ~ \$40 (Base Duluth & Grand Marais)
- January 10 pre-MBW ~ Duluth I ~ \$20 (Base Duluth)
- January 11 - 12, 2020 ~ Duluth II ~ \$40 (Base Duluth)
- January 13 post-MBW ~ Duluth III ~ \$20 (Base Duluth)

~ April 2019 - February 2020 MBWEEKS ~

As of NOVEMBER 25, see <http://www.mbwbirds.com/mbweeks.html> for additional information on each MBWeek, including the cost (all MBWeek deposits are \$100/person). Note that future changes in this schedule are possible, and updates on these will appear on <http://www.mbwbirds.com> (e.g., dates may have to be adjusted due to leader availability, limited lodging, or to coincide with the schedules of flights, ferries, pelagic trips, etc.)

- APRIL 14 - 24, 2019 ~ SOUTH FLORIDA I
- JUNE 16 - 23, 2019 ~ BLACK HILLS, BADLANDS, and WESTERN DAKOTAS
- JULY 27 - AUGUST 4, 2019 ~ CENTRAL CALIFORNIA
- JANUARY 26 - FEBRUARY 2, 2020 ~ SOUTH FLORIDA II
- FEBRUARY 16 - 24, 2020 ~ SOUTH TEXAS



PHOTO CREDIT:  
MOUNTAIN QUAIL / JERRY PRUETT

Questions? Contact Kim R. Eckert ~ [eckertkr@gmail.com](mailto:eckertkr@gmail.com) (e-mail) ~ 218 349 5953 (cell)

# 2018 Paper Session Program

December 1, Northstar Ballroom, St. Paul Student Center, University of Minnesota, 2017 Buford Avenue, St. Paul

8:00-8:45 AM	Registration
8:45-9:00 AM	Welcome Clinton Nienhaus, Education Director at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory and MOU Young Birders Committee Chair
9:00-9:20 AM	The New Bell Museum Holly Menninger, Director of Public Engagement and Science Learning, Bell Museum
9:20-9:30 AM	Bell Museum – MOU Relationship Denise Young, Executive Director, Bell Museum
9:30-10:15 AM	Genomics of Avian Phylogeny Keith Barker, Associate Professor, EEB, University of Minnesota
10:15-10:45 AM	The Potential for Hemp Seed as an Alternative Birdfood Carrol Henderson, Retired MNDNR Nongame Wildlife Program Director and MOU Conservation Committee Chair
10:45-11:10 AM	BREAK
11:10-11:30 AM	Birds of the MNWAP Kristin Hall, MNDNR Conservation Focus Area Coordinator
11:30 AM-Noon	Northern Saw-whet Owl Research Jennifer Vieth, Executive Director, Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center
Noon-1:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK
1:00-1:15 PM	MOU Business Meeting
1:15-1:30 PM	MOU Awards: Thomas S. Roberts Award, Brother Theodore Voelker Award, Young Birder Award
1:30-2:00 PM	Birding by Hindsight Kim Eckert, MOU Awards Committee Chair
2:00-2:20 PM	Current Status of Motus Wildlife Tracking System Alexis Grinde, Wildlife Ecologist, Natural Resources Research Institute, UMD
2:20-2:40 PM	Ten Years of Monitoring Grassland Birds in Western Minnesota Mike Worland, Nongame Wildlife Specialist, MNDNR
2:40-3:00 PM	Breeding Counts and Migration of Common Nighthawk Steve Kolbe, University of Minnesota Duluth
3:00-3:20 PM	Minnesota Biological Survey Results from North-Central Minnesota Steve Stucker, Ornithologist, Minnesota Biological Survey, MNDNR
3:20-3:30 PM	ADJOURN
4:00 PM	OPTIONAL TOURS: Bell Museum, Raptor Center

*Please see [moumn.org](http://moumn.org) for more information about the MOU Paper Session, including registration information.*

## November

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur 1	Fri 2	Sat 3
						Central MN Sea Duck Search, MOU MN Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr. Bird Banding, Eastman Nat. Ctr, 3RPD ZVAS Bird Walk
4	5	6	7	8 Carver County Birding Day, MRVAC	9	10 No. Shore Sea Duck Trip, MOU NE Metro Sea Duck Circuit, MOU Tundra Swan Field Trip, ZVAS Bird Walk, Wilkie Unit, MRVAC
11 Superior Entry Gull Watch, MOU	12 Bird Walk, Wilkie Unit, MRVAC	13	14	15 MRVAC Holiday Auction	16	17 WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr. Bird Banding, Lowry Nat. Ctr, 3RPD Swans on the Mississippi, MRVAC
18 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	19 xxx	20 xxx	21	22	23 Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr.	24
25	26	27 "Shade Coffee & Birds," ZVAS	28	29 Metro Saw-whet Owl Search, MOU	30	

## December

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat 1
						MOU Paper Session Bird Walk, Bass Ponds, MRVAC ZVAS Bird Walk
2	3	4	5	6 Washington County Birding Day, MRVAC	7	8 WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr. Bird Walk, Bass Ponds, MRVAC
9	10 Bird Walk, Wilkie Unit, MRVAC "Columbia," MN Global Birders	11	12	13	14 Itasca SP Winter Bird Count, DNR	15 Bloomington CBC Excelsior CBC Rochester CBC, ZVAS
16 Cedar Creek CBC	17 Itasca SP Winter Bird Count, DNR	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29 Winter Owl Prowl, Whitewater SP, DNR
30	31					



# MOU Calendar

## November / December 2018



### CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

Minnesota Campus: 12805 St. Croix Trail S.,  
Hastings, MN  
Wisconsin Campus: 300 East Cove Road, Hudson, WI

**Nov. 3:**

#### MN Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 9 am – 11 am. Join expert birders on a morning hike around the nature center. Learn to identify birds by sight and sound. Field guides and binoculars available to use or bring your own. Program fee: \$6.00 or free for “Friends of CNC”, Hastings Environmental Protectors and St. Croix Valley Bird Club members. Please RSVP at 651-437-4359 and let us know you are coming. Location: CNC Minnesota Campus

**Nov. 17:**

#### WI Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 9 am - 11 am. Join the St. Croix Valley Bird Club on a morning hike on our beautiful WI campus. Learn to identify birds by sight and sound. Program fee: \$6.00 or free for “Friends of CNC”, Hastings Environmental Protectors, Hastings High School students, and St. Croix Valley Bird Club members. Please RSVP at 651-437-4359 and let us know you are coming. Location: CNC Wisconsin Campus

**Nov. 23:**

#### Bird Banding

*Details:* 8:30 am - 12 pm. Bird Banding records help us learn how long birds live, where they travel, when they migrate and many other interesting facts. CNC has been banding birds for over 30 years. Our bird banders welcome you to see songbirds up close and learn about the birds who share our ecosystem. Banding runs continuously for the full 3 ½ hours but visitors may come and go at any time. Please call ahead so we know you are coming. Donations of bird seed or suet will be greatly appreciated in lieu of a program fee. Location: CNC Minnesota Campus

**Dec. 8:**

#### WI Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 9 am - 11 am. See description above. Location: CNC Wisconsin Campus

### DNR

(See [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us) for directions to locations)

**Dec. 17:**

#### 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Itasca State Park Winter Bird Count

*Details:* 8 am – 3:30 pm. Meet at the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center Lobby between 7:30 and 8 a.m. for assignment of count areas. This holiday season take part in the annual winter bird count at Itasca State Park. For more information call 218-699-7251.

**Dec. 29:**

#### Winter Owl Prowl

*Details:* 6 pm – 8 pm. Come experience the Whitewater Valley on a winter night. After an indoor presentation, we’ll snowshoe outdoors and call to the owls. Bring your own snowshoes or use the park? To check on program cancellation due to poor weather conditions, call the park at 507-312-2300. Location: Whitewater State Park

### METRO AREA AUDUBON

#### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

There are about 80 Christmas Bird Counts being held throughout Minnesota. For more information and to participate in other counts go to: [http://moumn.org/CBC/locations\\_map.php](http://moumn.org/CBC/locations_map.php)

**Dec. 15:**

#### Bloomington CBC

This CBC is centered on the Black Dog Power Plant on the Minnesota River and includes parts of Bloomington, Burnsville, Richfield, Eagan, Apple Valley, and smaller parts of other cities. If you would like to help count in this area, contact Greg Burnes at 612-205-3071 or [gburnes@comcast.net](mailto:gburnes@comcast.net)

**Dec. 15:**

#### Excelsior CBC

This CBC is centered on the intersection of Hwy 5 and Hwy 101 in Eden Prairie and includes parts of Minnetonka, Eden Prairie, Excelsior, Chanhassen, Chaska and Shakopee. If you would like to help count in the SW Metro area, contact Howard Towle at 612-710-1451 or [towle001@umn.edu](mailto:towle001@umn.edu) no later than December 8.

Alternatively, you can participate in the Excelsior count by helping to cover a portion of Carver Park. Please contact Kirk Mona (the naturalist at the Lowry Nature Center) no later than December 8 if you would like to arrange to bird a specific portion of the park. Kirk can be reached at 763-694-7650 or [kmona@threeriversparkdistrict.org](mailto:kmona@threeriversparkdistrict.org).

**Dec. 16:**

**Cedar Creek Bog CBC**

Contact Steve Weston at [sweston2@comcast.net](mailto:sweston2@comcast.net).

**MN RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER**

**MN Valley Nat'l Wildlife Refuge Birding Walks**

Led by Craig Mandel, 952-240-7647. These walks focus on migrating waterfowl, raptors and other species that are part of the late fall migration or overwintering. All level of experience welcome. Please bring binoculars, a field guide, and dress for the weather. Registration is not required for these refuge tours.

**Bass Ponds Trailhead**

2501 86th St. E., Bloomington

Saturday, November 10 - 8:00-10:30 am

Sunday, November 18 - 8:00-10:30 am

Saturday, December 1 - 8:00-10:30 am

Saturday, December 8 - 8:00-10:30 am

**Wilkie Unit, Trailhead**

7701 County Road 101 E, Shakopee

Monday, November 12 - 8:00-10:30 am

Monday, December 10 - 8:00-10:30 am

**Nov. 8:**

**Carver County Birding Day**

*Details:* 7 am. Led by Craig Mandel. Lake Waconia, Goose Lake, Lippert Lake and Swede Lake are a few of the lakes we will check for waterfowl. We should also have time for some birding at Carver Park Reserve, Baylor County Park, and maybe the Rapids Lake Unit of the MVNWR. Call 952-240-7647 for more information.

**Nov. 15:**

**MRVAC Holiday Auction**

*Details:* 6:45 pm. Attend our fall fundraiser at the Refuge Visitor Center in Bloomington. If you have something to donate or are willing to contact companies or organizations who might make an in-kind contribution, please contact Anne Hanley at 952-936-0811. Location: MVNWR Visitor Center, 3815 American Blvd. E., Bloomington

**Nov. 17:**

**Swans on the Mississippi**

*Details:* 9 am. Led by Dave and Rita Baden. Join us on a trip along the Mississippi looking for Bald Eagles, ducks, gulls, shorebirds and Tundra Swans. Stops include Colville Park, outside Red Wing, and Alma WI, and the viewing platform at Rieck's Lake Park. We may disperse around noon or continue together to look for more birds on the way back north. For more information (times and meeting spots) and/or to register, call Dave at 952-445-4353.

**Dec. 6:**

**Washington County Birding Day**

*Details:* 8:00 am Led by Craig Mandel. We will check out Carpenter Nature Center, Grey Cloud Dunes, St. Croix Bluffs Regional and Point Douglas Park. We will search for waterfowl, winter finches and other unusual species. Please contact Craig at 952-240-7647 for more information.

**MINNESOTA GLOBAL BIRDERS**

**Dec. 10:**

**Columbia**

*Details:* 6 pm – 8 pm. Larry Sirvio will present about birding in Columbia, the country with the highest number of recorded bird species, with many endemic and near-endemic species. This is one of a series of presentations for people interested in international birding. Each session features a particular location, with a speaker presenting photos and other information. There is also time for chatting and it often includes discussion of the planning and logistics of doing a foreign birding trip. Anyone interested is welcome. We prefer to monitor the number of attendees, so please RSVP via email to Gregg Severson at [Gregg.Severson@gmail.com](mailto:Gregg.Severson@gmail.com). Cost: Free. Location: Walker Library, 2880 Hennepin Avenue S (at Lagoon), Minneapolis

**MOU**

**Dec. 1.**

**Annual MOU Paper Session.** *Details:* 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. See program elsewhere in this issue. Location: U of M St. Paul Campus Student Center, Northstar Ballroom, 2017 Buford Ave. For more information and registration information, see <http://moumn.org>.

**MOU FIELD TRIPS**

**Nov. 3:**

**Central Minnesota Sea Duck Search led by Aaron Ludwig and Ben Fritchman**

It's the time of the year to check the larger inland lakes for scoters and Long-tailed Ducks. This field trip will tour such lakes in Todd, Pope, and Douglas Counties, making stops at Lake Osakis, Lake Reno, and Lake Minnewaska, which historically have all been good for sea duck sightings. Meet in the city of Osakis at the Public Access at 8:30 a.m. and plan to spend 4-5 hours in the field. Participants may pack a lunch or plan to eat in Glenwood, which will be the last stop of the trip.

**Nov. 10:**

**Northeast Metro Sea Duck Circuit led by Ben Douglas and Pete Nichols**

An opportunity to look for inland sea ducks away from the big water of Lake Superior. This 4-5 hour trip begins at 9:30 AM and will make stops at lakes various lakes in Washington, Ramsey, and Anoka Counties, including White Bear Lake, Centerville Lake, Forest Lake, and Big Marine Lake. The group will make stops for restroom breaks and lunch, but participants may want to bring snacks and water. The trip is capped at 12 participants. Register by sending an email to [fieldtrips@moumn.org](mailto:fieldtrips@moumn.org).

**Nov. 10:**

**North Shore Sea Duck Trip led by Clinton Nienhaus**

The 4th Annual Duluth Audubon Society North Shore Sea Duck Trip, this year in partnership with MOU. This day-long trip will be spent looking for sea ducks in particular, but the group won't scoff at other late-fall rarities along the shore in St. Louis, Lake, and Cook Counties. There is a shot at all three scoters, goldeneyes, Long-tailed Ducks, and Harlequin Ducks. Past trips have also turned up Boreal Chickadee, Red Crossbill, Northern Mockingbird, Western Meadowlark, and Bohemian Waxwing. This is also a great time of year for late season migrants like Rough-legged Hawk, Snow Bunting, even a chance at Townsend's Solitaire and other rarities. Meet at the Canal Park Lighthouse parking lot for a briefing at 7:15 a.m. and a departure at 7:30 a.m., where the first stop will be right in Canal Park with some early morning viewing of birds in the canal, hoping for both winter gulls and waterfowl. From there the trip will work along the shore, hitting hotspots like Brighton Beach, Agate and Burlington Bay, Taconite Harbor and more, and end up in Hovland, just north of Grand Marais. Participants should be prepared for a long day (7:15 a.m. until 6:30 p.m.) of driving with intermittent bathroom breaks. Plan on bringing a lunch; a stop can be made for a group dinner. There will be minimal walking for this trip with lots of car time and some gaps between stops. Plan on lots of learning opportunities about the north shore and Duluth area while we are driving. Bring spotting scopes if you have them and plan for brisk weather. RSVP required: Clinton Nienhaus at [xanthomn@gmail.com](mailto:xanthomn@gmail.com) with number of folks in the party and willingness to drive for carpooling.

**November 11:**

**Superior Entry Gull Watch led by Clinton Nienhaus**

Join obsessive gull watcher Clinton Nienhaus on this joint MOU/DAS Superior Entry Gull Watch. This field trip has the intention to view and learn about gull identification in the field, less about listing. Gulls can be a difficult group of birds to identify, but this field experience will work to help attendees better understand the more common gulls in Minnesota, as well as give pointers on how to spot the

more uncommon species of gull that make their way to the state every fall and winter. Targets include Iceland gull (Thayer's and Kumlein's), Glaucous Gull, Great Black Backed Gull, and maybe even a shot at a seven-gull species day with something rare mixed in. Meet at the Superior Entry Breakwall (end of Wisconsin Point) at 10:00 a.m. Birding could last between 2-4 hours, depending on the gulls. Bring cameras, binoculars, and spotting scopes. If possible, bring one loaf of bread or more (for the gulls!). Dress according to the weather. This is a stationary event that will not have any bathroom breaks or lunch stops, so bring snacks and water as needed. RSVP required: Clinton Nienhaus at [xanthomn@gmail.com](mailto:xanthomn@gmail.com).

**Dec. 29:**

**Metro Saw-whet Owl Search led by Erik Collins**

This exciting expedition will be led by one of the best when it comes to finding Northern Saw-whet Owls. This trip is limited to just six participants who will join Erik in looking for Saw-whets in Dakota and Ramsey Counties. While it is not guaranteed that a Saw-whet Owl will be found on the trip, expect to learn valuable tips from Erik on how he looks for them. Due to the limited number of spots, this trip requires prior registration: send an email to [moufieldtrips@moumn.org](mailto:moufieldtrips@moumn.org). The trip will begin at 8:30 a.m. and last approximately four hours. Participants will be contacted by Erik regarding meet-up location and any other pertinent details.

## THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

**Nov. 3:**

**Bird Banding**

*Details:* 9 am –12 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and tagged with numbered rings. Bring a camera. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Eastman Nature Center, 13341 Elm Creek Rd, Osseo, MN 55369

**Nov. 17:**

**Bird Banding**

*Details:* 9 am –12 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and tagged with numbered rings. Groups of 10 or more, please call 763-694-7700 to reserve a time slot. Bring a camera. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Carver Park Reserve – Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr, Victoria, MN

## ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON

**Nov. 3: ZVAS Monthly Bird Walk**

*Details:* 9 –10 am. Join Terry and Joyce Grier on a casual walk through Quarry Hill Park. Free and open to the public—no registration required. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester, MN

**Nov. 10:**

**Tundra Swan Field Trip**

*Details:* 8 am. Led by Terry and Joyce Grier. Meet in the east parking lot at the Heintz Center at 8:00 am to car pool. We'll travel through La Crescent and down the Mississippi to Brownsville to see hopefully THOUSANDS of Tundra Swans and other waterfowl. Trip will return early afternoon. Bring your own lunch or stop at a sandwich shop before returning to Rochester.

**Nov. 27:**

**VAS Monthly Program – Shade Coffee & Birds**

*Details:* 7 pm – 8 pm. Presenter: Tom Will, Senior Non-game Bird Biologist, US Fish & Wildlife Service. Can you help conserve birds and nature just by having a cup of coffee? Yes, if it's the right kind of coffee! Migratory birds that spend the winter in the tropics will thank you for buying only shade-grown coffee. Find out why at this fascinating talk. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester, MN

**Dec 1:**

**ZVAS Monthly Bird Walk**

*Details:* 9 –10 am. Join Terry and Joyce Grier on a casual walk through Quarry Hill Park. Free and open to the public—no registration required. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester, MN

**Dec 15:**

**Annual Christmas Bird Count**

*Details:* 7:30 am. Led by Clifford Hansen  
Each year teams of interested birdwatchers search designated sections of the Rochester area to see what birds can be found. We'll meet at 7:15am at the west Silver Lake parking lot (near the former fire station), then take a break from noon - 1pm at Quarry Hill Nature Center for a quick lunch and tally. More counting is done in the afternoon with a final tally held at 4:45 at Quarry Hill. You're invited to participate with one of our teams for part, or all of the day's count. Be prepared for the weather, bring your own binoculars, lunch and beverages.

# Nest Boxes for Prothonotary Warblers

*by Jack Hauser*



*Prothonotary nest box in use, by Tim Collins*

When I learned in 2006 that a Prothonotary Warbler will nest in a man-made box, I went to Carrol Henderson's book *Woodworking for Wildlife* and got a set of plans for a Prothonotary Warbler nesting box. I then built seven boxes and put them up on the Minnesota River in Bloomington in the spring of 2006.

The first year I got only House Wrens, so I looked for other places to put up a trail. Doing some research, I learned that the northernmost range for the species was southeastern Minnesota. So I contacted Fred Leshner, a well-known birder in La Crosse, WI, and asked if he was willing to help me site nesting boxes for Prothonotary Warbler. He said he would, so I built ten more boxes, and we put them up on Goose Island in the Mississippi River, just south of La Crosse, in the spring of 2007. When we met to put them up, Fred showed up with hip boots; I was wearing only knee-high boots. Since Fred wanted to install the boxes in two feet of water near the shore, he was stuck with the job. When he installed the first box, his boots had sunk so deep in the muck I was afraid he wouldn't get out! So I told him: "This is too hard. Let's just put the remaining boxes on the edge of the shore." Which is what we did.

Well, that first box was the only box that had a Prothonotary nest with eggs that year. Along with the four eggs of the warbler, though, was a Brown-headed Cowbird egg. I thought I had specifically designed the entrance hole small enough so that a House Sparrow would not be able to enter



*The author with Fred Leshner, by Tim Collins*

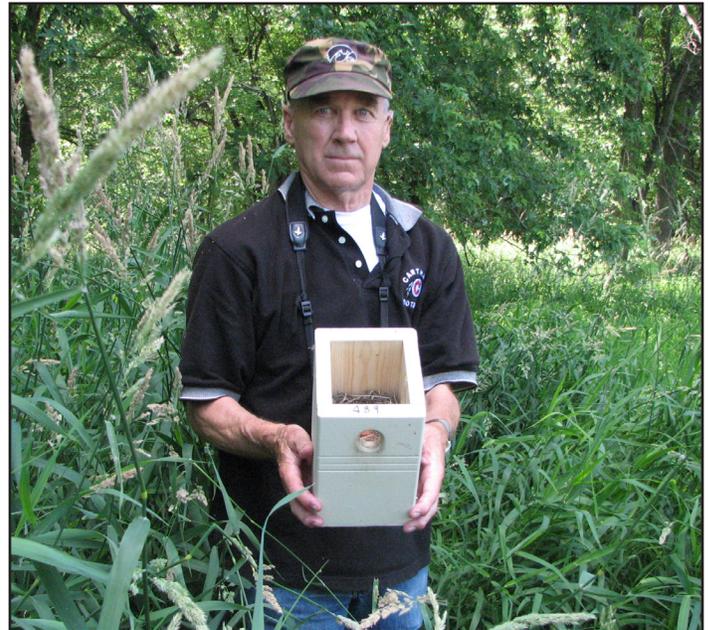
the box. With the cowbird being larger than a House Sparrow, how did she get in? Considering the design of the box, though, this seemed impossible.

After monitoring the Minnesota River Trail for three years and having no success, I took the boxes down and moved them to La Crosse too. The first year (2007) we fledged three Prothonotary Warblers. In 2008 we fledged five, and in 2009 seven. The numbers were going in the right direction, but too slowly to suit me.

After much research and thought, I realized that Prothonotarys prefer to nest over water, or at least very near to it. The problem is that they nest right during the time when the rivers are cresting from winter snow melt. The Minnesota River can crest at about 20 feet, while the Mississippi River can crest at about 12. Keeping a box close to the water surface without risking drowning the young inside is difficult. My solution was to design a floating nest box that slides up and down a 17-inch pole with the changes of water level. Tim Collins, an Audubon member who helped monitor some of the Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes, thought that was too much trouble and did not like the idea. Nevertheless, after several additional bad nesting years he finally agreed to try it. In the winter of 2016 we installed four floating boxes through the ice at La Crosse. Eureka! That year (2016) we fledged 32 young. In 2017 we fledged 23 and in 2018 we fledged 43.

The first 16 boxes were made of wood. Later we started making them out of Metamucil bottles, put a large hanger on them, and installed them in tree branches hanging low over the water. This means that monitoring has to be done by boat or hip boots, but it appears we finally have a formula for success.

We have yet to transfer this success to Minnesota,



*The author with prothonotary nest box, by Tim Collins*

though. In 2017 we put up six hanging boxes on the Minnesota side of the river. No Prothonotarys nested, so I built another ten hanging boxes, which were put up in the Hastings area in spring of 2018. Again no luck. But since Prothonotarys do nest in Minnesota, I believe it's only a matter of time.

*Prothonotary Warbler nest box with eggs, by Tim Collins*





# Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

Carpenter Nature Center  
12805 Saint Croix Trail South  
Hastings, MN 55033

**Minnesota Ornithologists' Union**  
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## The Mission of the M.O.U.

We foster the study and conservation of birds by amateurs and professionals. We promote the conservation of birds and their natural habitats. We support these aims primarily by publishing and sharing information, by serving as a repository for records, by conducting field trips, by awarding grants for research, and by supporting programs that educate members and the public about birds.

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Thomas Benjamin Hertzell

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**All other MOU functions:** [mou@moumn.org](mailto:mou@moumn.org)  
**MOU web site:** <http://moumn.org>  
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## MOU Membership: New/Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Categories

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth (under 18)           | \$15.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual                 | \$25.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign (including Canada) | U.S. \$35.00 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting                 | \$75.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate                  | \$100.00     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life, single               | \$500.00     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life, joint                | \$750.00     |

Send to: Cindy Smith, MOU Membership Secretary  
19885 Lillehei Avenue  
Hastings MN 55033-9354

### Please make a contribution to the Savaloja Grants

The Savaloja Grants supports research and other projects selected by the MOU for special attention. Your contributions help fund a better future for birds in Minnesota. You can add a contribution to your membership check.

Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_