



# Minnesota BIRDING

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## Conservation Column: Windows and Birds— A Terrible Combination

*by Andy Forbes*

Thunk! We've all heard that sound at some point in our lives—the sound of a bird that just flew into a window. It's a sound that is created all too often. Some studies estimate that up to one billion birds (yes, that's billion with a "b") die from window collisions every year in North America. As urban areas expand, and as glass-heavy designs become more prevalent, this problem is not going away anytime soon.

So why do birds fly into windows? The answer isn't as simple as you might think. Yes, birds can't see windows and glass doors, just as we sometimes embarrassingly can't at times. However, they usually aren't flying into windows simply by chance. During the daylight hours, birds can be confused by the optical illusion of reflected vegetation on glass-sided buildings and hit the glass as they try to fly into the "trees." Potted plants in homes or trees inside a lobby of an office building can create the same illusion—and end result. Even small recessed windows surrounded by normal siding can cause bird strikes, as they resemble dark areas between

branches in conifers, where birds naturally look to fly for shelter.

At night, when many birds such as warblers, sparrows, and other songbirds are migrating this time of year, the issue is a little different. Birds aren't tricked into flying into windows because of optical illusions but because of the light that emanates from behind the windows. We don't really know why birds are drawn towards light, but they are. When they are drawn into a lighted object, such as a building or a cellular tower, they tend to fly around the object aimlessly, confused. Sadly, this usually results in them either colliding with a window, another bird, or other structure. Some species, such as White-throated Sparrows, are far more vulnerable than others to evening collisions, and recent research suggests that species that call during their evening flights are more likely to be killed in this manner.

Birds also hit windows when they attack their reflections during the breeding season. Territorial males will frequently, and annoyingly, fly into glass in a vain attempt to drive

away their clone intruders. While this can be irritating and a cause for worry, the good news is that this usually isn't fatal, and this behavior generally ends once the peak of breeding season ends.

So, what is being done about this issue? And what can you do in your home to prevent collisions? A lot!

While sports stadiums sometimes generate bad headlines due to concerns about bird deaths, the recently completed stadium of the Minnesota United soccer team is an exception to this rule. The team has earned praise not just for its proactive approach by avoiding massive glass walls and bright spotlights, but also for incorporating native plantings and other strategies that are specifically intended to prevent bird/building collisions. Across the border in Wisconsin, the new arena for the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team became the first sports stadium to receive the Green Building Council's Bird Collision Deterrence Credit.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Urban Bird Treaty Program works with partners in cities throughout the United States to both reduce hazards to birds as well as educate and work with communities on bird conservation issues. The National "Lights Out" program is a great example. This program promotes the importance of migratory birds and ensuring their safe passage through urban areas and also provides building owners with a way to sign up and shut their lights off during peak migratory periods, thus saving birds and saving energy. You can find more information about this program at <https://www.fws.gov/urban/urbanbirdtreaty.php>. In the Midwest Region, we host six Urban Treaty cities—Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Lansing, and Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Around your home, there are also a lot of things that you can do to help prevent deaths from bird/glass collisions as well. This is actually where almost half of bird/window collisions occur—at residences. One the easiest is looking at where your bird feeders are located compared to where your windows are. Birds spooked from feeders will often be less able to assess their surroundings and accidentally collide with glass. While it may not seem to make sense, feeders that are placed close to windows—like within three feet—are actually pretty safe. Birds may still hit windows if spooked, but they will not have built up much speed, and thus the likelihood of fatal injury is a lot lower. (Keep in mind, though, that accumulated seed can attract rodents, which you don't want in your home, so make sure to keep the ground clean underneath.) The other option is to make sure the feeders are further away from the windows—more than 30 feet being preferable. This will give startled birds time to change course before a fatal collision. Between these distances, though, bird feeders can cause quite a few bird deaths by window strike.

There are also ways to make the windows themselves more bird friendly. The American Bird Conservancy has a wealth of information available on their website at <https://>



*Fox Sparrow, by Richard Gotz*

[abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/](http://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/). There you can find specific recommendations on different types of material that can be affixed to your worst (or all) areas for bird strikes, with a variety of designs, shapes, and materials to consider. It can even be as simple as applying non-toxic glass paint, which you can find at most craft stores.

While a conservation challenge, working to reduce bird strikes with buildings is also a great way to initiate conversation with your neighbors, family, employers, communities, and others about birds and why they are important. Nobody likes finding dead birds, and there are many simple solutions available to reduce and eliminate these unnecessary fatalities.

*Andy Forbes is the coordinator for the Upper Mississippi River/Great Lakes Region Joint Venture. He is currently a member of the MOU Records Committee.*

# Message from the President

As we enter what many Minnesota birders consider the highlight of the year—peak warbler migration in mid-May—I’m thinking back to this past February, when my wife and I, along with seven other birders from Minnesota, spent the majority of the month in Colombian coffee country. Among a total of 395 bird species we saw as a group were a few birds already quite familiar to us, and these included some of the wood-warblers we look forward to seeing here in Minnesota each May.

I think we often consider many warblers to be “our” birds, since they breed in Minnesota and are indeed emblems of the North Woods in summer. When we’re looking at the birds’ full annual cycles, however, we see that the greater part of their lives are actually spent away from Minnesota, during migration and on the wintering grounds in the neotropics of Central America and northern South America. “Our” birds are really only ours for three or four months, and we share them with other countries with just as much claim to the birds’ homes.

On our Colombia trip, we saw Blackburnian Warblers nearly every day; this species is quite common in the Andean regions of northwestern South America. Foraging with mixed flocks in cloud forests with mountain-tanagers, cone-bills, and flower-piercers among other birds that you’ll have to leave Minnesota (and North America) to see, these fiery warblers appear just at home as they do in Minnesota’s coniferous forests in June. We also found Canada Warblers to be quite frequent in many of the same areas, calling into question the national common name that this species has been given. Our group encountered fewer American Redstarts, Bay-breasted Warblers, Yellow Warblers, and Northern Waterthrushes during our travels, but neither did they seem out-of-place. We even saw a few Cerulean Warblers one day; Colombia comprises a significant wintering population of this species.

These warblers, “our” warblers, unfortunately face threats not only here in Minnesota but also on their wintering grounds. For these and other neotropical migrants, conservation measures undertaken in the northern breeding grounds don’t necessarily result in population increases when habitat continues to be lost in the southern wintering grounds, and vice-versa. Cerulean Warblers, for example, are rapidly declining across their entire breeding range despite efforts to conserve large tracts of mature deciduous woodland, and part of the problem is that forested habitat in their northern Andean wintering grounds continues to disappear at an alarming rate. Shade-grown coffee, which incorporates coffee plants grown under a larger canopy, provides suitable habitat to the warblers and a myriad other species, but coffee that is grown on treeless plantations in

the full sun does not. Unfortunately, the latter method offers higher yield, providing farmers more incentive to plant in the full sun.

Multi-national efforts to address these birds’ full cycle needs, addressing issues in both the breeding grounds and the wintering grounds, are needed to ensure the best chance for success. In the case of the Cerulean Warbler, Fundación ProAves in Colombia, with the help of the American Bird Conservancy, is actively working to protect wintering habitat for the species. This effort has resulted in the creation of the first area specifically set aside for the protection of a neotropical migrant, the Cerulean Warbler Bird Reserve in north-central Colombia.

While boundaries such as county lines, state lines, or national lines tend to be important to birders, to birds they are less so and even problematic. As you witness the spectacle of the coming warbler migration, I encourage you to take at least a few minutes to understand that we share these birds with other parts of the world quite different and removed from Minnesota, but no less home to the birds we love.

– Bob Dunlap

## New MOU Members

Judith Alnes, *St. Paul, MN*  
Kerry Anderson, *Plymouth, MN*  
Michelle Appell, *Minneapolis, MN*  
Brad Argue, *St. Paul, MN*  
Ellen Grace, *Minneapolis, MN*  
H. Peter Grant, *Delano, MN*  
Mary Henshrot, *Shell Lake, WI*  
Lisa Jeanetta, *Duluth, MN*  
Anna & Kirk Joles, *Minneapolis, MN*  
Valerie Klumper, *Pipestone, MN*  
Cathy Kohn, *Edina, MN*  
Lucas Lake, *Moose Lake, MN*  
Deborah Longley, *Edina, MN*  
Sheri Lutz & Barbara Case, *Roseville, MN*  
Don Markey, *Rollingstone, MN*  
Jean Mueller, *Houston, MN*  
Kimberly Rewinkel, *Manhattan, KS*  
Rhonda Schwartz, *Brainerd, MN*  
Sofawolf Press, *Mendota Heights, MN*  
Cynthia Vehe, *St. Paul, MN*  
JoAnn Will, *Minnetonka, MN*  
Mathew Zappa, *Edina, MN*  
Jeanne Zlonis, *St. Paul, MN*



# My Favorite Home Patch: Crow-Hassan Park Reserve

by *Howard Towle*

I'm standing in the midst of a thick woodland at 5:35 a.m. on a chilly June morning, reeking of mosquito repellent and carrying a clipboard and a pair of binoculars. I've been standing at this exact spot on more-or-less the same day each year for the past 15. I'm ready to count some birds. But strangely, it's quiet. I'm on a first name basis with every Red-eyed Vireo and Eastern Wood-Pewee in these woods. Where are they and why aren't they singing? After a few minutes of silence, I look up. On a dead snag directly over my head, a large pair of eyes stares back at me—a Barred Owl. I smile and realize that the owl is doing the same thing that I'm doing—surveying. And our count is exactly the same—one.

This scene takes place in my favorite local birding patch in the Twin Cities area—Crow-Hassan Park Reserve in northwestern Hennepin County. I love birding in this park of the Three Rivers Park District. Compared to most other parks in the system, there is little development for other recreational purposes, and I often have the park to myself early in the morning. The park hosts a rich variety of habitats and offers the opportunity for productive birding in a serene setting only minutes from the bustle and noise of urban life. I have birded extensively in Crow-Hassan over the past 25 years, including over 20 years doing bird counts as a volunteer. I have seen 175 species in the park; yes, I'm one of those. According to eBird, 218 species have been reported from the park, so I still have some 'work' left to do. Let me share some of the highlights of this park with you.

Crow-Hassan Park Reserve spans 2600 acres along the banks of Crow River about four miles west of Rogers, with over 15 miles of trails for hiking, horseback riding and cross-country skiing. Habitats include hardwood deciduous forest, oak savanna, open secondary growth woodland, scrub, marsh, ponds and lakes. But the truly outstanding feature of Crow-Hassan is an extensive restored and well-maintained tall grass prairie. The prairie comprises 840 acres, the majority of which was first planted in the 1970s. Within an easy drive from the Twin Cities, it allows one the experience of walking through prairies like those that once covered a large portion of western Minnesota.

Let me take you on one of my favorite birding walks through Crow-Hassan to introduce you to some of the habitats and birds you might encounter there. We'll walk in early summer, my favorite time to visit. To get to the park, exit from I-94 northwest of Twin Cities at the state highway 101/



*Entrance to the prairie area, by Howard Towle*

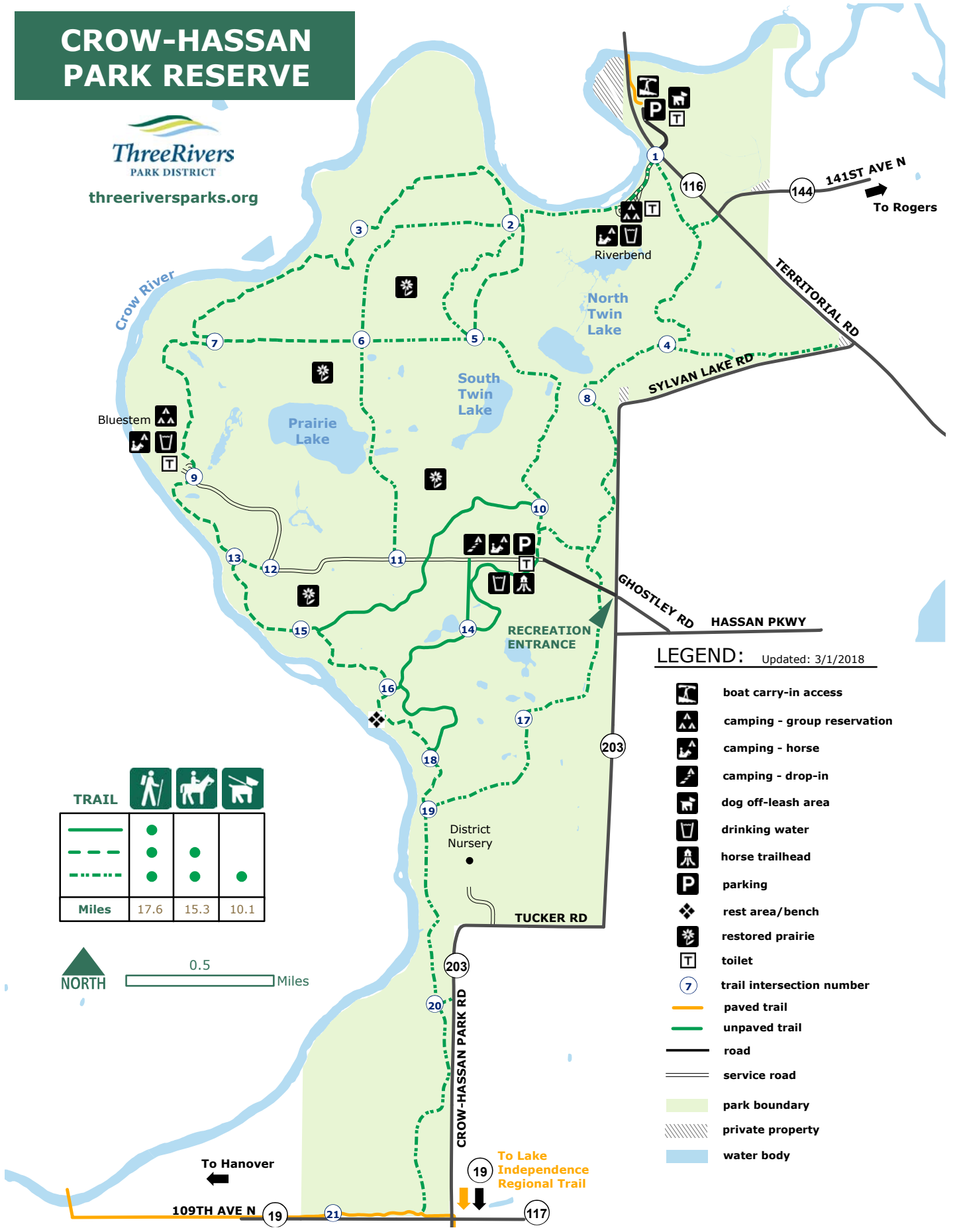
Rogers exit. If you don't have any insect repellent with you, you might want to stop at Cabela's on the north side of I-94, as the park has a robust population of wood ticks in spring and summer. Incidentally, the only remaining sewage ponds that I am aware of in Hennepin County lie just north of this interstate exit. They can be viewed from S. Diamond Lake Road for ducks and gulls, if you are so inclined. Next head south on county road 150/Main Street through downtown Rogers (don't blink, you might miss it) until you get to county road 116/Territorial Road. Turn right and head northwest for three miles until you get to Hennepin Park Access Road 203/Sylvan Lake Road. Sylvan Lake will be on your left and can be scanned here for divers and other waterfowl during migration. Follow the road west and then as it turns south to the Crow-Hassan Park entry and main parking lot. Don't be surprised to find a number of horse trailers here, as this park is a favorite for horseback riding. If you encounter horses while hiking, make sure to be vocal and visible, so as not to startle the horses. I learned this the hard way.

From the parking lot, we are going to head west along the dirt 'road' past the gate. Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens, and Indigo Buntings will greet us as we head off on the sandy trail. Within a few hundred yards, we will come to a reasonably mature forest and turn south on a trail through the woods. Along with the Red-eyed Vireos, Great Crested Flycatchers, and Eastern Wood-Pewees that are

# CROW-HASSAN PARK RESERVE



threeriversparks.org



TRAIL			
	●	●	●
	●	●	●
	●	●	●
Miles	17.6	15.3	10.1



LEGEND: Updated: 3/1/2018

- boat carry-in access
- camping - group reservation
- camping - horse
- camping - drop-in
- dog off-leash area
- drinking water
- horse trailhead
- parking
- rest area/bench
- restored prairie
- toilet
- trail intersection number
- paved trail
- unpaved trail
- road
- service road
- park boundary
- private property
- water body

calling and singing from high in the trees every few feet along the trail, we should see or hear several other woodland species, including Scarlet Tanagers, Yellow-throated Vireos, Ovenbirds, American Redstarts, and Wood Thrush. Red-shouldered Hawks, and Barred Owls nest in these woods and might be heard or seen. In a short time, we will come to a vernal pond, where I have seen Yellow-billed Cuckoos during several years and one summer found an Acadian Flycatcher nesting. Once we've had our fill of woodland birds, we will return to the main road and continue heading west. Before long, the view opens up to the extensive prairies of the park.

We will turn north at the T intersection to head through the prairie, kicking up Vesper Sparrows that seem to lead us along. Henslow's Sparrows and Grasshopper Sparrows nest in the fields on either side of this trail. From year to year the fields that they chose vary, and I've never been able to figure out the pattern. I suspect that it has to do with the number of years since the last burn and the height of the vegetation. Also to be seen regularly in these fields are Eastern Meadowlarks, Eastern Kingbirds, Sedge Wrens, Bobolinks, and Dickcissels. An occasional Northern Harrier may be coursing the area, joining the more commonly seen Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks. Ring-necked Pheasants, which are decreasing dramatically in the Twin Cities area, are heard and seen frequently here. If we are lucky, we might spot a Bull Snake or Blanding's Turtle in the prairie or a Coyote loping in the distance. If we return later in the summer, a rich variety of colorful prairie flowers will be blooming, including Butterfly Weed, Prairie Blazing Star, and Leadplant among the few that I can identify.

As we walk north on the road, we will come to Prairie Lake—one of my favorite spots in the park. Prairie, forest and oak savannah converge on the shore. The lake often has pairs of Trumpeter Swans and Common Loons. The scattered trees on the northeastern edge of the lake host Orchard Orioles every year, one of the easiest places to find this species in the Twin Cities area. There is a small segment of remnant prairie on the northeast corner of the lake where I have found Lark Sparrow, although not every year. A couple of picnic tables on the lake shore provide a nice spot to rest and have a snack.

The road continues north through much more prairie, but we will turn west to follow the trail along the north side of the lake. Black-billed Cuckoos are often heard and occasionally seen along this stretch, as are Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. As we follow the trail around the lake, we will come to an open hilly section that overlooks a long slough to the west. This area is home to a pair of nesting Sandhill Cranes, again one of the closest spots to find this species in the Twin Cities area. The trail continues around the south side of the lake in open woodland that has an increasing population of Blue-winged Warblers and another place where Black-billed Cuckoos can be found. After tramping over a few more hills,

we will be back to the main east/west track from which we can return to the parking lot. This route is roughly three miles and usually takes me a well-rewarded two to three hours to walk depending on the number of birding stops.



*Henslow's Sparrow, by Gerald Hoekstra*

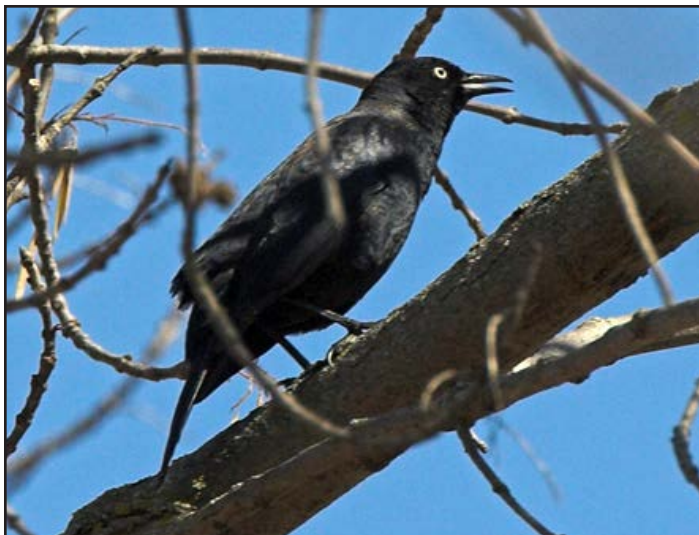
We've covered only a small portion of the park, although this route does go through many of the varied habitats. There are also trails that run along the Crow River through riparian woodland habitat. These trails are productive for migrating warblers, thrushes, and flycatchers in the spring and fall. Although early summer is probably the best time to visit Crow-Hassan, the park is also a great spot for migrating sparrows, especially in the fall season. The brushy areas along the main road west of the parking lot often hold a mix of Lincoln's, White-crowned, and Harris's Sparrows, along with more common species. And one of the better places to find migrating LeConte's and Nelson's Sparrows in Hennepin County is the marshy grasslands around the pond just south of the horse barn on the north side of the park. American Woodcocks can be heard in spring calling at dusk from the area surrounding the horse trailer parking lot. And if you want to find a Short-eared Owl, you might try walking through the prairie near dusk in late October. I hope this article tempts you to take the time to visit Crow-Hassan in order to appreciate the opportunities provided by our great park system for enjoying nature and birds in this wonderful setting.

*Howard Towle is a retired University of Minnesota Professor of Biochemistry living in Golden Valley, MN.*



# 2019 Savaloja Grants Awarded

by Steve Wilson, Chair, MOU Savaloja Committee



*Rusty Blackbird, by Dave Cahlander*

Rusty Blackbirds. St. Louis Park kindergartners. An Urban Bird and Outdoor Collective for minority communities. Cancer patients and their families. These are just some of the beneficiaries of 2019 Savaloja grants. In all, ten grants were awarded at the March 17 board meeting, totaling a record \$19,052—both program records. In other words, the generosity of MOU members went further than ever this year in helping to advance MOU’s mission by supporting projects that increase our understanding of birds, promote preservation of birds and their natural habitats, or increase public interest in birds. This year’s diverse projects include:

- Ely Field Naturalists received \$525 to work with Ely Elementary School students and help them conduct a bird window-strike prevention study on their campus’s newly-installed reflective windows. It’s a simple but elegant low-cost project that should be effective in piquing students’ interest in birds, bird conservation, and experimental science.
- Westwood Hills Nature Center was awarded \$3023 to send all 400 kindergarten students in the St Louis Park school district to the nature center’s Winter Bird Program. The nature center uniquely tailors the program specifically to kindergarten and preschoolers. All activities, including an age-appropriate Powerpoint presentation, puppets, live raptor demonstration and outdoor exploration are designed to spark an emotional connection between these younger children and nature, using the uniqueness of their age-group’s perspective. The schools in question draw from an economically-

challenged area, and without MOU’s support many of the students wouldn’t be able to attend.

- Community Birding Leaders, an affiliate of St. Paul Audubon, was selected for a grant of \$3500. Their goal is to diversify Minnesota’s birding community by applying novel approaches to addressing the unique issues that inhibit urban minorities from joining the mainstream birding community. There’s an excellent piece on last year’s pilot project in the last issue of Minnesota Birding: file:///C:/Users/Steve/Downloads/2019-03 (3).pdf.
- The Natural Resources Research Institute received \$3710 for monitoring Rusty Blackbird use of the St. Louis River Estuary during fall migration. They’re one of the most rapidly declining songbirds in North America. This study will identify the timeframe, duration, locations and habitat use for the species during fall migration, which will allow conservation of key habitats and provide an outline for future information needs.
- Carpenter Nature Center in Hastings was awarded \$2900 to erect a MOTUS tower at the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. MOTUS is a collaborative, international array of towers that tracks radio-tagged birds as they move through each tower’s detection field. It will increase knowledge of bird movements through the area, and allow the nature center to incorporate the tower and the information it generates into their education programming, helping to inspire future conservationists and bird researchers.
- Staring Lake Outdoor Education Center in Eden Prairie received \$419 for 30 copies of a children’s field guide to use in their introductory birding programs. The center serves about 2000 children during the school year, another 400 in summer camps, and offers nature-based programs to the general public.
- Crosslake Community School was awarded \$1720 to help improve their science curriculum for all grade levels by increasing the emphasis on bird study. They’ll use the grant to purchase binoculars and *Flying Wild* materials for a teacher training workshop.
- Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory received \$1410 to expand last year’s pilot interpretation effort at their spring migration count. The interpreter provides identification and behavior tips, formal education programs to schools and the general public, along with an assortment of fun

facts as only John Richardson can. John also helps count on the busiest days, like March 21, when a North American-record 1076 bald eagles passed by.

- Belwin Conservancy in Afton was awarded \$1000. They'll use it to restore degraded habitat around their bird observation area. Only native plants will be used to make the habitat more bird-friendly and enhance teaching opportunities about types of habitat that promote bird health, abundance, and diversity. Each year more than 5000 students spend focused formal instruction time in the birding area.
- Gilda's Club Twin Cities received \$845 to provide bird-watching opportunities to members living with a cancer diagnosis. Time spent outdoors offers benefits for those impacted by cancer, and the club believes introducing birds and birding to members and their families will offer an important addition to their Healthy Lifestyle offerings. The appeal for MOU is being able to expose an audience to birds and birding who otherwise wouldn't be reached by our traditional outreach offerings.

MOU members can justifiably be proud of MOU's singular role in supporting bird research, appreciation

and habitat restoration across the entire state. That's the good news. The bad news? Only three projects received the amount they requested, and six more, all worthy of support, didn't receive a Savaloja grant because there simply wasn't enough money to go around. They included research and monitoring for two increasingly rare species, habitat restorations, and bird appreciation projects for children and adults. You can help us avoid the bad news next year by upgrading your membership type when you next renew, or right now by donating to the Savaloja fund. It's easy. Just go to <https://moumn.org/signup.html> and the Donate link. Follow the instructions, and be sure to click on "Add special instructions to the seller" and enter "Savaloja Donation." You'll feel better. Minnesota's birds will do better!

You can get an even better view of how MOU is helping birds by checking out Savaloja final project reports from the last seven years at [https://moumn.org/grant\\_reports.php](https://moumn.org/grant_reports.php). I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge Savaloja Committee members Ann Kessen, Chuck Neil, Sue Keator, and Mike North, who went where no Savaloja Committee has gone before when they waded through more than 90 pages of material so we could make considered recommendations to the board.

# Savaloja Grant Report: Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory

*by John Richardson, HRBO*

Hawk Ridge is well known as the site of one of the best fall migration counts in the nation, but the spring migration count is now also gaining some well-deserved attention. Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO) provides educational opportunities for the public to view, enjoy, and learn from counters and naturalists during both fall and spring migrations. Offering interpretation and education about the migration for visitors has proved to be very popular and valuable and has been made possible thanks to funding from the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union in 2018 and 2019.

The Spring Count starts on March 1 and continues through the end of May each year. HRBO staff conduct the count on West Skyline Parkway at either of two sites, depending on wind direction. This March proved challenging, since winter was reluctant to let go. Nevertheless, that did not stop HRBO recording a world-record one-day count for Bald Eagles, with 1,076. In addition, a record number of Golden Eagles have also been recorded this year, with 207 so far.

According to Frank Nicoletti, Spring Count Director

since the spring count's inception back in 1997, HRBO has had more visitors this year than ever before: "Seeing 60 people on a Saturday in Mid-March braving the cold is a true testament to what we do and offer!"

We just wrapped up our first HRBO Spring Migration Celebration weekend at the end of April. With education staff on hand, we were able to offer a workshop, three fields trips, kids activities, and interpretation about the birds and migration. Carrol Henderson delivered a wonderful presentation, "The World of the Peregrine Falcon and its Return to the Skies of Minnesota." The event weekend was well attended and received great reviews from the participants.

There's still time to visit the HRBO Spring Count and enjoy the bird migration. Broad-winged Hawks are now moving through in good numbers: one day during the last week in April we counted over 4,000. There are many more to come: the neotropical migrants have barely started. Twenty-two thousand raptors have been tallied so far, and May should bring many more.



# Minutes of the MOU Board Meeting, March 17, 2019, Abbreviated

*by Susan Barnes Elliott, Recording Secretary*

*[Note: Opportunities for membership involvement appear in italics; MOU encourages your participation.]*

Present: Bob Dunlap, President; Richard King, Vice-President; Ann Kessen, Treasurer; Cindy Smith, Membership Secretary; Bob Bossert, Out-going President; Susan Barnes Elliott, Recording Secretary; Bob Janssen, Mark Lystig, Gerald Hoekstra, Anthony Hertzal, Steve Wilson, and Pete Nichols.

## **1. Savaloja grants recommendations for 2019**

Steve Wilson reported on the Savaloja Committee recommendations for 2019 grant awards. The committee received 17 proposals, the highest number of proposals ever. Following a robust discussion of the proposals and budgeting issues, the Board voted to approve the Committee's recommendations [see Steve's descriptions of approved grants in a separate article in this newsletter]. In light of the number of compelling proposals versus the budget, Steve Wilson and Mary Shedd will donate an additional \$1,632 to fund the recommendations made by the committee (Thank you, Steve and Mary!). The Board commended Steve and the Committee (Ann Kessen, Sue Keator, Mike North, Chuck Neil, and Pam Perry [on leave this year]) for the tre-

mendous job that they do each year. *Steve is seeking one or two new members for the committee and would especially love to involve young people. Please contact Steve if you are interested in joining this effort.*

One of the proposals that did not get funded due to budget restrictions is the Snake River Valley Conservation Club's proposal to build a viewing platform at the Pine City Water Treatment Plant. The Board discussed the possibility of funding this project directly rather than through the Savaloja Committee. [Following a post-meeting review and discussion of the project, the Board voted to approve a grant of \$2,500, conditioned on a requirement that the MOU receive a liability waiver from Pine City and the Conservation Club.]

## **2. Change in MOU bylaws**

The Board discussed amending the portion of the bylaws that requires the MOU to mail the newsletter to members. An email with a link to the pdf to the newsletter goes out to the entire membership each time an issue comes out. All members have access to this pdf, which can be read online or downloaded. Accordingly, the mailing requirement is outdated. [Subsequent to the meeting, the Board voted via email to so amend the bylaws.]



*Gadwall, by Richard Gotz*

### 3. 2019 Spring Birding Primer

Susan Elliott updated the Board on plans for the 2019 Spring Primer on March 30 at CNC. All 100 seats were claimed again this year and there is a waiting list. Thank you to the speakers: Joanna Eckles, Bob Janssen, Clinton Nienhaus, Kim Eckert, Keith Barker, and Ann Kessen.

### 4. Discussion of MOU budget and savings

Ann Kessen presented three questions for discussion:

- 1) What are the MOU's priorities for spending its money?
- 2) Should the MOU's normal annual expenditures be covered by its normal annual income?
- 3) How much money should the MOU have in reserve, over and above what is needed for normal expenses? (Average normal expenses over the past few years have been approximately \$42,000.)

Following discussion, the Board concluded regarding question no. 1 that the MOU's spending are: a) To support the MOU's mission to further bird-related conservation and education; b) To provide service to the MOU's membership (i.e., maintain the website, etc.); and c) To provide services to the birding community as a whole.

With respect to question 2, the Board agreed that its goal is to cover annual expenses with income, recognizing that the MOU doesn't always reach this goal. A primary concern is how to maintain and update the MOU's website once Dave Cahlander is no longer interested in doing so. *Any tech-savvy MOU members who are willing to help would be most should contact Bob Dunlap.*

Regarding question 3, Dick King reported that most organizations have two years of reserves to cover annual expenses (in the MOU's case, that would be roughly \$80,000). The Board agreed that that amount should be considered

as a minimum but that it would be best to keep approximately \$100,000 in reserve to meet annual expenses and that the reserve should be reviewed and assessed annually. The Board then discussed, but reached no decision, on what if anything should be done with excess funds (i.e., non-reserved funds).

### 5. Proposal for a County Birding Challenge

Pete Nichols presented a proposal from Ezra Hosch for a County Birding Challenge MOU fundraiser. The goal would be to increase coverage of under-birded counties and raise funds for the MOU. Milestones would be set for each county (such as reaching 200 species in one county for the year, finding new county breeding records, finding 100 species at a single eBird Hotspot, etc.). Participants could choose to pledge to the MOU a set sum for each milestone they reach in the challenge counties for the year. The Board is very appreciative and supportive of this idea and looks forward to fine-tuning details. A big thank you to Ezra for this idea.

#### Announcements:

- Bob Dunlap reported that everything is on track to set up *a bird feeding station outside of the Bell Museum's Touch & See Lab, to be filled and maintained by MOU volunteers.* MOU will also partner with the Bell Museum to *offer bird walks for Bell Museum attendees, to be led by MOU volunteers.*

- Kim Eckert is stepping down as chair of the Awards Committee. Thank you, Kim, for your ten years of service! Susan Elliott has agreed to chair this Committee.

**Next board meeting:** Sunday, July 21, 1:00-3:00 p.m. at the Bell Museum.



*Rough-legged Hawk, by Allan Meadows*

## May / June

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
			<b>MAY</b> 1	<b>2</b> So. MN. Birding Days, MRVAC, May 2-3	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> MN Campus birding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr Crex Meadows SWA birding, MRVAC ZVAS Big Birding Day, ZVAS
<b>5</b> Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Rapids Lake Bird Walk, MRVAC	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Timberdoodle Walk, Afton SP, DNR	<b>11</b> Western MN Shorebirds, MOU Field Trips Tiffany Bottoms Bird Train, Audubon Chap. of Mpls WI campus birding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr Tropical Wings Migration Celebration, Carpenter Nature Ctr Warbler Walk, Wolsfeld Wds SNA, DNR Hok-Si-La Warblers, MRVAC
<b>12</b> Bird Walk, Bloomington Visitors Ctr, MRVAC Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR	<b>13</b> Bird Walk, Carver Park Reserve, MRVAC	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Detroit Lakes Festival of Birds, May 15-18	<b>16</b> Central Minn. Birding Days–Wadena, MRVAC, May 16-17 Urban Birding Festival of the Twin Cities, May 16-19	<b>17</b> Bird Banding, Minneopa SP, DNR	<b>18</b> Detroit Lakes Birding Festival Field Trip, DNR Bird Banding, Minneopa SP, DNR Bird Banding, Carver Pk Res., 3RPD Bird Banding, Eastman Nat. Ctr, 3RPD ZVAS Bird Walk and Potluck, ZVAS
<b>19</b> Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	<b>25</b> Birdin Walk Afton SP, DNR
<b>26</b> Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>JUNE</b> <b>1</b> Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC MN Campus bird hike, Carpenter Nat Ctr. ZVAS Bird Walk, ZVAS
<b>2</b> Dakota Co. Prairie Birds, MRVAC	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> ZVAS Big Birding Day, ZVAS	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> NE Minn. Birding Days, MRVAC, May 16-17	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> WI campus birding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr
<b>9</b> Miesville Ravine Co. Pk Birding, MRVAC	<b>10</b> Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	<b>11</b> Central MN Birding Days, MRVAC, June 11-12	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC
<b>30</b>						





# MOU Calendar

## May / June 2019



### MOU FIELD TRIPS

#### **May 11: Western MN Shorebirds Trip, led by Garrett Wee**

*Details:* 8 am start. Garrett Wee is once again leading a shorebird outing this spring in the Cottonwood area (Lyon and Yellow Medicine Counties). Public and private land will be explored to see as many shorebirds and marsh birds as possible. Participants should plan to meet Garrett at the Cottonwood Co-op at 8 a.m. Garrett is planning to run the same itinerary as last year and is expecting a fun trip. Highlights from last year include Ross's Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Western Grebe, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, Marbled Godwit, Willet, Red-necked Phalarope, Red-headed Woodpecker, Summer Tanager, and Smith's Longspur. One never knows what they will turn up when going with Garrett in this exciting part of the state. Participants are certain to have a great time! Bring your scopes, mud boots, and any provisions you need for a fun day afield. Please email [fieldtrips@moumn.org](mailto:fieldtrips@moumn.org) for more information.

### BIRDING FESTIVALS IN MINNESOTA

#### **May 15–18: Detroit Lakes Festival of Birds**

Whether you're a beginner or experienced birder, or somewhere in between, the Detroit Lakes Festival of Birds has something for you. Detroit Lakes is located in a transition zone of tallgrass prairie, hardwood and conifer forests, and a landscape peppered with lakes and wetlands. It's a migration hotspot with more than 250 species of birds. Our goal is to provide you with a quality birding experience. Each field trip by coach bus includes a naturalist and experienced birding leaders to help you get the best looks. We'll take new looks at favorite locations, as well as first time visits to sites. You can register online. Schedule of events:

#### **Wednesday, May 15:**

Registration at Chamber of Commerce  
"The Return of the Peregrine Falcon" by Carrol Henderson at Maplelag Resort

#### **Thursday, May 16:**

Hotspot maps to bird on your own; Registration at Chamber Office. 10 am–2 pm: Bus tour to Becker Pet, lunch at Hub 41, Forest Edge Gallery. 4:30–7 pm: Social at Hub 41, Birding by Pontoon at City Beach

#### **Friday, May 17:**

Field trips to North Ottawa Impoundment and Tamarac/Hamden Slough Refuges  
"Birds Help us Tell our Stories" by Al Batt at Detroit Country Club

#### **Saturday, May 18:**

Fieldtrips to Blue Stem Prairie, Buffalo River State Park, and Agassiz Refuge  
Bazaar, exhibitors, book signing at M State College  
"Mozart's Starling," by Lyanda Haupt at M State College  
Online program/registration at <https://www.visitdetroitlakes.com/events/festival-of-birds>. Contact: Detroit Lakes Regional Chamber of Commerce, 218-847-9202, [dlchamber@VisitDetroitLakes.com](mailto:dlchamber@VisitDetroitLakes.com).

#### **May 16–19: Urban Birding Festival of the Twin Cities**

The Urban Birding Festival is a weekend-long celebration of humans and birds living together in our shared environment. It is an opportunity to meet our neighbors, connect with nature, and increase our understanding of how our lives intersect with the lives of birds. The Saint Paul Department of Natural Resources will be screening the documentary "Hometown Habitat" to kickoff the 2019 Urban Birding Festival of the Twin Cities. Hometown Habitat tells inspiring stories of communities' commitment to the protection of native species. You can find out more about the movie at [themeadowproject.com/hometown-habitat/](http://themeadowproject.com/hometown-habitat/). Come to this event or check out our events calendar for a full list of festival events and activities. Contact: [urbanbirdingfestival@gmail.com](mailto:urbanbirdingfestival@gmail.com). Location: Twin Cities, Minneapolis (see online for specific location for various events)

### AUDUBON CHAPTER OF MINNEAPOLIS

#### **May 11: Tiffany Bottoms Bird Train on the Chippewa River** (about 5 miles south of Durand, WI)

*Details:* 1–5 pm. Boarding at 12:45. The train is a small car open air trip for about 5 miles along the river. Several stops are made along the way to look for migrating birds. Guides are along to help identify the approximately 70 species usually seen. \$20 per person; \$15 for Audubon members. Send a check to Susan Tertell, 2841 40th Ave. S, Minneapolis; include email address. Bring liquids, binoculars, cushion, and any snacks.

## CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

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

### May 4: MN Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 8 am–10 am. Join bird expert Kevin Smith 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 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: Minnesota Campus

### May 11: WI Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 8 am–10 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 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: Wisconsin Campus

### May 11: Tropical Wings Migration Celebration

*Details:* 8 am–12 pm. Morning Bird Walk at 8 am. Bird Banding 8–11 am. Habitat hike 11 am. Come to our WI Campus for a morning of birding. Welcome tent with refreshments and information on birds and habitat, kids activities, and hikes through the prairie. This event is part of the Tropical Wings St. Croix River Flyway Bird Migration Celebration. Program fee: Free. For more information please call, 651-437-4359. Location: Wisconsin Campus

### May 24: 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: Minnesota Campus

### Jun 1: MN Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 8 am–10 am. See May 4 description above. Location: Minnesota Campus

### Jun 8: WI Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 8 am–10 am. See May 11 description above. Location: Wisconsin Campus

## DNR

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

### May 5: Bird Banding Demonstration

*Details:* 12:30–2 pm. Join Master Bird Bander, Greg Munson, at the visitor center bird feeders for close-up experiences with birds. Program participants will have the opportunity to handle and release birds after they have been caught in nets, studied, observed and banded with an aluminum tag. In the event of rain, the program will be cancelled. For more information call 507-312-2300. Location: Whitewater State Park

### May 10: Timberdoodle Walk

*Details:* 8–9 pm. Timberdoodle is the nickname given to a ground nesting long beaked little bird called the American Woodcock. The mating flight and dance of this little bird is pretty amazing. For more information, contact 651-231-6968 or [Linda.Radimecky@state.mn.us](mailto:Linda.Radimecky@state.mn.us). Location: Afton State Park

### May 11: Warbler Walk

*Details:* 7:30 am. Led by Bill and Esther Marengo and the Friends of Wolsfeld Woods. Warblers are often plentiful during spring migration. Bring binoculars and bird books. See the Wolsfeld Woods SNA web page for a map and description of the site. Location: Wolsfeld Woods SNA, Hennepin County

### May 12: Bird Banding Demonstration

*Details:* 12:30–2 pm. Join Master Bird Bander Greg Munson at the Whitewater State Park visitor center bird feeders for close-up experiences with birds. Program participants will have the opportunity to handle and release birds after they have been caught in nets, studied, observed, and banded with an aluminum tag. In the event of rain, the program will be cancelled. For more information call 507-312-2300. Location: Whitewater State Park

### May 17: Bird Banding Demonstration

*Details:* 5–8 pm. Spring migration will be in full force and this will give people an up-close view of some birds that make Minneopa their home. Merrill Frydendall of the Friends of Minneopa State Park will be leading the bird banding event. Dr. Frydendall is a retired biology professor from Minnesota State University, Mankato and had maintained and documented blue bird houses in the park for over 30 years. Location: Minneopa State Park; meet at the Group Campground area.

### May 18: Bird Banding Demonstration

*Details:* 8 am–12 pm. See May 17 description above. Location: Minneopa State Park; meet at the Group Campground area

### **May 18: Detroit Lakes Birding Festival Field Trip**

*Details:* 6 am–1:30 pm. More than 275 species of birds are found in Becker County. Why? Because the Detroit Lakes area is in the heart of a transition zone of tall grass prairie and northern hardwood and conifer forest ecosystems. Serious birders flock here each spring for the annual Detroit Lakes Festival of Birds. Sign up for the Bluestem Prairie Field Trip online today. For more information contact Paula Comeau at 218-498-2124. Location: Bluestem Prairie SNA, Becker County

### **May 19: Bird Banding Demonstration**

*Details:* 12:30–2 pm. See May 12 description above. Location: Whitewater State Park

### **May 25: Bird Watching Walk**

*Details:* 8–9:30 am. Spend your morning with the park naturalist on a two mile hike through prairie and flood-plain forests. Binoculars and bird guides will be available. 651-231-6968. Location: Afton State Park. Meet at the visitors center.

### **May 26: Bird Banding Demonstration**

*Details:* 12:30–2 pm. Join Master Bird Bander, Greg Munson, at the visitor center bird feeders for close-up experiences with birds. Program participants will have the opportunity to handle and release birds after they have been caught in nets, studied, observed and banded with an aluminum tag. In the event of rain, the program will be cancelled. For more information call 507-312-2300. Location: Whitewater State Park

## **MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER**

### **MN Valley Nat'l Wildlife Refuge Bird Watching Treks**

Join us for a bird walk on one of the Refuge's many 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. Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist, 952-240-7647

Refuge Bird Watching Treks: May-June

Sunday, May 5, 8-10:30 am, Bass Ponds

Tuesday, May 7, 8-10:30 am, Rapids Lake Education & Visitor Center

Sunday, May 12, 8-10:30 am, Bloomington Visitor Center

Sunday, May 19, 8-10:30 am, Bass Ponds

Saturday, June 1, 8-10:30 am, Bass Ponds

Monday, June 10, 8-10:30 am, Bass Ponds

Saturday, June 29, 8-10:30 am, Bass Ponds

Locations:

Bass Ponds Trailhead: 2501 86th St. E., Bloomington  
Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center: 15865 Rapids Lake Rd, Carver

Bloomington Visitor Center: 3815 American Blvd. E., Bloomington

### **MRVAC Field Trips**

#### **May 2–3: Southern Minnesota Birding Days**

*Details:* 7 am. We will visit a variety of habitats within Faribault and Freeborn Counties. Some of the locations we will likely bird include Geneva Lake, Myre Big Island State Park, White Woods & Phi's County Parks, Walnut Lake, and a few other WMAs. \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members. For information and to register, please contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647.

#### **May 4: Crex Meadows State Wildlife Area**

*Details:* 9 am–3 pm. Join us for birding at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, the largest wildlife sanctuary in Wisconsin. Carpool from Panera Bread in Burnsville at 6:30 am or meet at the Grantsburg Minit Mart, 639 State Road 70, at 9 a.m. Participants can either bring food and beverages or purchase them at the Minit Mart. Note: Besides the Refuge headquarters, there are restrooms on the north end of the Refuge. Contact: Bart Anderson, 612-719-6103.

#### **May 11: Hok-Si-La Warbler Watching**

*Details:* 7:30 am. Join us for this traditional field trip (30+ years). We never know what we will find. Meet at Hok-Si-La Park, on US Hwy 61 north of Lake City. Bring a lunch, if you want to stay for the afternoon's birds. Moderate effort; some walking on trails. No reservations needed. Contact: Steve Weston, 612-978-3993.

#### **May 13: Carver Park Reserve Birding**

*Details:* 7 am. Carver Park reserve is an excellent birding location, with a nice variety of habitats. Join us for this early morning walk at the peak of spring migration. On past spring trips to Carver Park reserve, we have observed over 140 species of birds, including 14 species of sparrows and 23 species of warblers. Each year is a little different, so join us to find out what surprises are in store this year. \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members. Please contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647 to register..



### **May 16–17: Central Minnesota Birding Days**

*Details:* On this Wadena-based trip we will spend time birding in Wadena and Todd counties. Some of the locations we may explore include, Blueberry Lake, Old Wadena County Park, Sunnybrook Park, Twin Lakes Public Boat Access, Dower Lake Park, Staples WMA and a couple water treatment plants. Waterfowl, shorebirds, sparrows and warblers are all possible in these areas at this time of year. \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members. For information and to register, please contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647.

### **June 2: Dakota County Prairie Birds**

*Details:* 7 am. After a short hike of Schaar's Bluff Picnic Area, we will drive the "prairies" of Dakota County in search of grassland species and other birds. Except for walking in the picnic area, the effort level will be easy, birding at road side stops. Just show up. Bring a lunch if you want to continue into the afternoon. No reservations needed. Contact: Steve Weston, 612-978-3993. Location: Schaar's Bluff Picnic Area, 8395 127th St. E, Hastings, MN.

### **June 6–7. NE Minnesota Birding Days**

*Details:* We will be birding in Carlton and Pine Counties. Some of the locations include Moose Lake, Banning and St. Croix State Parks, the Nemadji & Fond Du Lac State Forests and maybe a couple of sewage ponds. \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members. For information and to register, please contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647.

### **June 9. Miesville Ravine County Park**

*Details:* 7:30 am. Join us to explore Dakota County's least known county park. Target birds include Cerulean Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, and Yellow Billed Cuckoo. Bring a lunch if you want to stay for the afternoon. Moderate effort, walking on trails. Contact: Steve Weston, 612-978-3993. No reservations needed. Location: 27970 Orlando Trail, Cannon Falls, MN (north parking lot).

### **July 11–12. Central Minnesota Birding Days**

*Details:* On this Litchfield-based trip we will be birding in Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties. Some of the locations we may explore include the Litchfield Nature Center, Lake Ripley and Lake Washington, Sibley State Park and the Dassel & Darwin city parks. On this trip we'll be searching for birds that nested in the area and some early fall migrants. \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members. For information and to register, please contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647.

## **THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT**

### **May 18: Bird Banding**

*Details:* 9 am–12 pm. Celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lowry Nature Center at one of our longest-standing traditions. Watch as migrating birds are studied and tagged during this special banding and reminisce about our adventures over the years. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Carver Park Reserve—Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria, MN

### **May 18: 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

## **ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY**

### **May 4: ZVAS Big Birding Day**

*Details:* 7 am–5 pm. Join us as we spend the day birding at numerous locations throughout the Rochester area. Our goal will be to count and tally as many species as we can find, while also enjoying the beauty of our local parks. Come to one, two, or all of the sessions listed. Be prepared for the weather and bring binoculars. Participants should be able to walk on uneven ground. This event takes place rain or shine and is not suitable for young children. For a printable map and schedule see: [https://www.zumbrovalleyaudubon.org/uploads/9/8/5/0/98502830/bbd\\_info\\_map2019.pdf](https://www.zumbrovalleyaudubon.org/uploads/9/8/5/0/98502830/bbd_info_map2019.pdf)

### **May 18: ZVAS Monthly Bird Walk and Potluck Social**

*Details:* 2–6 pm. Ask at the kiosk for the picnic shelter location where we'll be meeting at 2pm. We'll take a 2.5–3 hour (approximate) walk looking for migrating warblers and more. Bring binoculars and come dressed for the weather. You may want to bring bug spray. Trails are generally very good but are not paved so be prepared for uneven ground. After the walk we'll head back to the shelter for our potluck and conversation. (See website for additional information.) Note: A County Park sticker or day pass is required for entrance to the park. Location: Chester Woods County Park, 8378 14 Hwy SE, Eyota, MN

### **June 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, 701 Silver Creek Rd NE, Rochester

# Birding by the Numbers, 2: Beastmode Interrupted

by Ben Douglas

With a healthy disrespect for winter, I catapulted into the new year racking up county ticks at a record pace. Early into February I even stole a day south with college student Alex Franzen as we canvassed the southern border counties in a massive fog bank and 37-degree temperatures. So prolific was the effort that we managed to break or tie three MOU county big day records for February in a single day. We reeled in Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, and Pine Siskins as though they were the easiest of neighborhood birds. Just days after my last installment in this series, though, mother nature let us know where we stood in the grand scheme of things. My 2019 birding journal is littered from February 4 to March 1 with days that read simply: “All day snow storm; 0T” (Meaning zero ticks that day.) In fact, this happened so often that I started to question everything I had put together—all the work, the planning, the coordination.

This is when we often need others the most and is a time I’m honestly not very comfortable with. I have an independence streak that reaches all the way back to my college high jumping days. I often see myself as capable of anything, perhaps even to a fault; I imagine few limits to own abilities to succeed and overcome obstacles. February offered some perspective, though, and nearly broke my spirit, as I spent day after day at home watching snow storms erase the gains made in January. My ambitious plans to touch the majority of the state at least one time by early March were eradicated by the snowiest February in Minnesota history and the fourth snowiest month ever for the state. On the second weekend of March, we were met with another five inches of snow, 40 mph winds, and just an absolute beating on morale. In fact, 15 straight days rolled by without a single county tick toward my attempt on 10,000. Even when I did manage to break that streak with a solo after-work effort of 19 new ticks, mother nature followed with a fresh salvo of rain and fog lasting three straight days in the metro, often dropping visibility down to 40 feet.

Something wonderful happened at this point, though. When I was at my lowest, my friends were at their best. Peter Nichols, Alex Sundvall, Liz Harper, and Dana Sterner, all in their own ways, reached out via direct messaging and Facebook. They reminded me of what had been done already, not what had been lost. They reminded me that with the help of others I had laid the foundation for a big year that I myself had once proclaimed could not be lost in January

and February, only helped.

The weight of this goal seemed to lift after that, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March the sun was shining and I wrote in my journal the following words around 8 a.m.: “First day in a while I’m really excited about spring and migration.” A signal flare went off in the form of a small flock of geese flying by my home around 8:45 a.m. I sprinted down stairs and out into the snow in my socks, swung my Nikon P1000 up, and took a series of shots of a flash of white I had seen in the flock. My photos confirmed not only Ross’s Goose, but multiple Cackling Geese mixed in with Canada Geese looking to get a move on toward the north. It was the first reported Ross’s Goose in Minnesota for the year and was all I needed to flip the switch. Beastmode Birding was back on, and I set about pulling back the 38-day pace gap that had accumulated to that point.

In fact, in just 25 days since that Ross’s Goose flew by my home we absolutely feasted on migration. I say “we” because I really did need my friends as they piled on the road hours with me, taking as much joy in the efforts as I did, keeping me company as I put on nearly 4,000 miles of driving. I remembered to enjoy the moments and soak in the amazing splendor that is spring migration in Minnesota. Alex Sundvall and I watched over 10,000 Snow Geese in



*Snow Geese, by Ben Douglas*

three different counties in a single day present tornados of beautiful chaos and noise. Liz Harper and I stared into yet another epic fog bank at Salt Lake in Lac Qui Parle County and birded by ear to the tune of 21 species without seeing more than four of them. Erik Collins reached out looking for a date we might get out for an afterwork waterfowl effort in Anoka and Chisago. We ended up watching Northern Harriers bouncing over the bountiful wetlands of the Carlos Avery Sunrise Unit, while Eric generously shared his thoughts on the qualities of some of his favorite birding spots in the area.

Garrett Wee jumped in to provide guide support to Liz and me while also welcoming us for a night's stay in a new home that he had literally just moved into that morning. Once we discussed the needs at hand for Lyon, Yellow Medicine, and Redwood Counties, Garrett went to work directing us from memory to every spot he could think of in the tri-county area. We navigated sketchy dirt roads barely passable from the deluge of flood waters that had been plaguing the area. My fancy Google map with over 10,000 points was unnecessary with Garrett in the car. Time and again he took us from zero year-ticks to numbers that matched counties I drive through on a daily basis in the metro. We even broke the April big day record for Lyon county in the process with 74 species. (Shout out to Nolan Meyer for reporting a flock

of 29 Ross's Geese on the ground at the CHS grain elevator south of Marshall for our last bird of the day.)

I've been on a feverish pace these last three weeks, taking advantage of relatively good weather and spring waterfowl migration, along with the leading edge of insectivores arriving in the last few days. Although we can never know what the future holds in the way of challenge and difficulty, I'm learning more and more every day that our strength can reside not only inside ourselves, but with those we trust and chose to allow into our lives. Write your own symphony, paint your own masterpiece, but consider the kindness, generosity, and good nature of others, as they can help make it all the more vibrant and wonderful. As of April 10 I'm at 2,617 ticks in 70 counties. I'm staring at multiple inches of snow that has fallen in the last few hours, but I have a smile on my face. A pair of Wilson's Snipe appeared in my yard probing the soft grass for food. Mother nature will challenge us in all our endeavors, but the opportunities will come. You just have to be ready for them.

*Ben Douglas is a member of the MOU's Social Media Committee, volunteer guide, and presenter on technology for birding. His 2019 birding goal is 10,000 Minnesota state ticks. This is the second installment in a series that will keep us up to date on his efforts.*

## Comments Regarding the Great Blue Heron Article in the 1936 Star Tribune

"I was particularly interested in the clip in the latest issue of *Minnesota Birding* about the heron photography of Clarence Purdie. I knew he was quite a hunter and outdoorsman, but I hadn't known he ever got that involved with photography.

In case you didn't know of him before, he was quite well-known and influential in Faribault. He had a number of patents related to bullet loading machines, and originated Gopher Shooters Supply. His businesses manufactured and sold his invented machines, as well as other shooting supplies.

Clarence's son Dean was Faribault mayor for a number of years (my sister is a life-long friend of his wife, so I've always been acquainted with Dean). I happen to have a well-used, somewhat beat-up Canada Goose decoy that had belonged to Clarence—not pretty, but a nice keepsake.

As for your reference to Wells Lake being called Bully Wells, that is the name I knew when growing up in Faribault. I'm sure that most people of my generation still call

it that. James "Bully" Wells was an early settler and owned farmland along the Cannon River west of town. When the King Mill Dam was built, it apparently flooded much of Bully's land, so the name stuck with the locals. Once, my Boy Scout troop had a camporee on the island where the rookery is (long ago!).

I certainly enjoyed the article and thought my response might interest you. Thank you, and Allan Meadows for digging up that material."

*Jon Little, Winchester, VA*

"It is hard to fathom how far photography has come since then, and the photographer was so persistent and innovative. Most impressive. Also of interest, my dad [David Brisance] grew up not far from Faribault. He and his father fished everywhere in the area back in the 1940s and 1950s, and I am sure this lake would have been one they visited. This gives me a reason to visit this location someday."

*Jean Brisance*





# Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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

**Minnesota Ornithologists' Union**  
Carpenter Nature Center  
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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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