



# Minnesota BIRDING

July  
August  
2022  
Volume 59  
Number 4

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## Conservation Column Birders Recovering America's Wildlife

by Tom Will

It should no longer be a surprise to Minnesota birders that we've lost three billion birds from North America's breeding populations since 1970. This loss of nearly a quarter of the avifauna was documented in the [Rosenberg et al.](#) paper published in *Science* in 2019. The powerful graphics and [coordinated public communication](#) developed from that report have appeared in magazines and in the appeals for funding from bird conservation organizations of all sizes and reach, and they include a list of [seven simple actions](#) that individuals can take to participate in bird population recovery. Individual and local community commitments are certainly important, but it should come as no surprise that it will require sustained action at large social and geographic scales to bring back three billion birds.

**Recovery is possible**, however, with the allocation of sufficient resources and public will. Sustained investments in wetland conservation have played a major role in the rebound of North America's waterfowl populations. Funding released as a result of listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), coupled with coordinated research to elucidate specific causes of decline, have returned Kirtland's Warbler populations from

a low of only 330 breeding individuals in 1974 to a current population of around 4,500. Mid-continent and eastern populations of Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon recovered from near extirpation as a result of ESA protection, banning of DDT, and falcon captive breeding and release. Although full recovery of the Whooping Crane remains a challenge, the increase from a single migratory flock of 15 wild adults in 1938 to an estimated 677 birds living in the wild in 2020 comprises one of the most inspirational stories of innovative management and passionate dedication in the history of bird conservation. Such efforts are expensive, however: it costs about \$100,000 to captive-raise and reintroduce one crane, for example. Although the regulatory restrictions that accompany federal listing are sometimes viewed as controversial and burdensome, the ESA's conservation success stories demonstrate that the release of substantial funding and consequent coordinated action can save birds.

It's a very different story for non-federally listed species. Recovery options for more abundant species should be more available; populations, even though declining, should still theoretically be large enough to respond to conventional habitat management.

Unfortunately, funding for declining nongame bird conservation is limited. Significant nongame conservation work is accomplished by non-governmental organizations, but the burden of responsibility for on-the-ground change rests on state agencies whose focus tends to be driven by game species. For nongame bird conservation, many states rely solely on federally administered State Wildlife Grants (SWGs), funded largely through excise taxes on firearms and ammunition via the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act. Minnesota's SWG allocation currently runs between \$1 and \$1.3 million annually, must be appropriated yearly by Congress as part of the annual budget, requires a 35% match of non-federal funds, and can be used for programs that benefit all wildlife taxa and their habitats (including both game and nongame species). Beginning in 2005, states submitted State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a condition for receiving SWG funding. Although the plans designated nongame Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCNs) to help prioritize conservation action, limited SWG program funds still stretched across a plethora of needs. It is no surprise, then, that achieving sig-

*American Avocet, by Jerry Pruett*



nificant rangewide changes in non-ESA-listed bird populations—despite the initiation of many dedicated and creative projects—remains largely aspirational.

Enter the **Recovering America's Wildlife Act** (RAWA), legislation that promises to become a huge game changer on the bird conservation stage. RAWA is the culmination of literally decades of work, spearheaded largely by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), to secure a dedicated, sustained, and ample funding stream for wildlife conservation. In the late 1990s, a broad coalition of over 6,500 organizations and businesses (Teaming With Wildlife) joined with other groups to support the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), which passed the U.S. House of Representatives in 2000 but did not advance in the U.S. Senate. In 2008, the Teaming With Wildlife Act, which called for \$350 million in funding, was introduced in the Senate but did not advance. In response, AFWA formed a 26-member Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources. The panel's 2016 recommendations formed the backbone of what then became RAWA, versions of which were introduced in both houses of Congress at various times in the intervening years, but which never passed.

On June 14, 2022, a bipartisan RAWA ([H.R.2773](#)), introduced by Rep. Debbie Dingell of Michigan, reached the floor of the U.S. House and passed by a vote of 231-to-190, thanks in part to the many letters of support to Congressional representatives written by birders and other conservationists. As of this writing, a parallel bipartisan bill ([S.2372](#)), sponsored by Sens. Martin Heinrich of New Mexico and Roy Blunt of Missouri, has moved from the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee onto the Senate legislative calendar. The Senate bill has 35 co-sponsors (including Sen. Amy Klobuchar), 16 of whom are Republicans, so it has a good chance of passing if it reaches the Senate floor before the end of the current session. Differences between the Senate and House versions would still need to be worked out; for example, the House version will power the bill via the General Fund (i.e., the national debt), whereas the Senate version will leverage revenues from corporate environmental fines. Even though the House Rules Committee made last minute changes to the bill to better align it with the Senate version, it is still unclear what will happen in the Senate. The Senate could pass the House-passed version, send it back to the House with modifications, or pass its own version and convene a conference committee of both chambers to resolve differences. If it passes both chambers this Congressional session, it will almost certainly be signed into law by President Biden.

RAWA proposes to create a *dedicated* funding stream (not dependent on annual Congressional appropriations) for wildlife conservation of \$1.4 billion annually. The funds will go to states and territories, with \$97 million reserved for tribes, and a small percentage to the U.S. Fish and Wild-

life Service for grant administration. While 15% of the conservation dollars would be required to support restoring populations of federally listed endangered species, most of the funding would be directed toward proactive conservation of non-listed species, particularly those designated as SGNs in SWAPs (remember those acronyms?). Compared to the 35% non-federal match for State Wildlife Grants, RAWA match will be reduced to 25% and can include volunteer time. To allow time for implementation, the funds will be made available on a graduated scale over the next few years; if the bill becomes law this session, roughly 65% of the annual \$1.3 million allocated to states will be released in 2022.

Based on apportionment rules, Minnesota's share of RAWA would be \$20.6 million annually. That's 20 times the resources currently available in the DNR for proactive wildlife conservation! That is a huge difference, and it would offer a grand and unprecedented opportunity for reimagining bird conservation in our state and across the nation.

*What can Minnesota birders do?* By the time this article reaches you, we either will be lifting a glass and celebrating RAWA's passage — and maybe sending a thank-you note to our federal Senators and Representatives — or again writing passionately to those same officials, urging them to do whatever is possible to move RAWA forward in the current or next session. But seeing RAWA over the finish line and signed into law is only a first step in recovering bird populations and working to obviate future declines. RAWA will provide an unprecedented opportunity for MOU birders to participate actively in bird conservation moving forward.

Fortunately, Minnesota is well positioned to take advantage of RAWA's opportunities. It has an excellent [State Wildlife Action Plan](#) (SWAP), access to other sources of funding for match (most notably the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund), and a small but extremely talented, dedicated, and energetic DNR Nongame Wildlife program staff. Projects funded with RAWA grants will be based on SWAP priorities for all nongame species, not just birds, and can be used for habitat management, plant species conservation, and outreach and education. Even if funded projects are focused on non-avian species or ecological communities, birds still will remain central as the program's primary monitoring tool for evaluating project success.

Minnesota's SWAP, although coordinated by the Minnesota DNR, is not just a DNR plan; it is and will be an action plan developed by all conservation partners involved in wildlife conservation in the state. The current 2015–2025 SWAP will soon initiate a process for revision, thus affording Minnesota birders an opportunity to participate in reimagining and moving bird population recovery to the forefront of the state's conservation agenda. Since volunteer time can be used for RAWA project match, there will also be increased opportunities for mobilizing birder expertise

for bird conservation — as consultants, banders, observers, or monitors, among other roles.

MOU birders, get involved! Wildlife will always rely on our advocacy for visionary public policy, but RAWA, if passed, will empower new and different opportunities for nurturing, sustaining, and growing the connection between our avocation and the avian resource that fuels our passion. What Minnesota birders can do, in brief:

- Should RAWA fail to become law by the time this column appears, track its progress in the U.S. [Senate](#) and [House](#) and contact your Congressional representatives as needed to advocate for positive action.
- Review Minnesota's [SWAP 5-Year Report](#) to get a feel for the scope of SWAP projects, and review the Minnesota [SWAP itself](#), including the [list of SGCNs](#), to get a feel for the process and how priorities are determined.
- Take part in the upcoming SWAP revision scheduled to begin this fall through the MOU or another partner organization; contact Kristin Hall, SWAP Coordinator, for more information.
- Monitor the development of bird conservation project grants in the state or participate as a partner in developing a RAWA grant proposal; consider how you as an individual might contribute your expertise as a volunteer on a RAWA-funded science or habitat management project.
- Volunteer — or continue to participate — in monitoring programs that form the foundation of our knowledge about the status of birds in Minnesota: the [Breeding Bird Survey](#), [NestWatch](#), [Project FeederWatch](#), or simply uploading [complete eBird checklists](#) for your birding trips.
- Volunteer on an education project locally, growing the future for birds and birders. Participate in the MOU's [Youth Mentorship Program](#) or the [Urban Bird Collective](#); keep an eye out for the launch of the DNR Nongame Wildlife Program's Bird by Bird initiative and the rebirth of Bird City Minnesota.
- *Stay involved* in helping to keep birds common on the landscape for the benefit of future generations. Be a part of the change.

Once again, the successful passage of RAWA is just a first step along a challenging and exciting path of opportunity. RAWA can provide the fuel, but the spark of ignition and the magnitude of the fire will depend on our commitments to making real the connection between our lives and avocation and the lives of those with whom we share our space and from whom we draw our inspiration. Saving birds is saving people.

*Before retiring in December 2020, Tom Will was a Migratory Bird Biologist with the USFWS.*

# Message from the President

I have been thinking lately about partnerships. While organizations may choose to function in isolation, they are made stronger through collaboration. This is particularly true for non-profits like the MOU. Partnering with other non-profits allows us to share information and expertise, assist one another with programming, and to advocate together for our commonly held missions and goals. (The Minnesota Environmental Partnership, of which the MOU is a member, is an excellent example of the latter.)

Indeed, the MOU is founded on the idea of collaboration between member organizations for shared benefit. It is the reason for "Union" in our name. In April of 1938, three of the state's bird clubs, the Minnesota Bird Club, the T. S. Roberts Ornithology Club of St. Cloud, and the Duluth Bird Club, joined forces to form the MOU "to further ornithology in Minnesota through the combined efforts in publishing a single magazine, sponsoring a state wide meeting, and promoting field trips" (*The Loon* 1973:81). In time, other bird clubs and similar organizations from across the state also affiliated with the MOU. The number of associated organizations peaked at just over 20 in the late 1990s, but over the past two decades the number of affiliated clubs has dwindled significantly.

At the March meeting of the MOU Board of Directors, the Board chose to not let the affiliate program fade away, but rather to actively reinvigorate it. The Board took a first step towards this goal by amending the MOU by-laws to include an Affiliate Bird Club class of membership. Board members also shared a variety of ideas for what this revitalized program could look like for affiliate clubs and the MOU. In the coming months, an ad hoc committee chaired by Vice-President Justin Watts will work toward defining the benefits of affiliate club membership and reaching out to existing and potential member organizations. As our

state's birds and their environment face increasing challenges, perhaps now more than ever we need to be a statewide union not only of individuals but of organizations working in partnership.

On a related note, two of the MOU's long-time partners, the Bell Museum and the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, are both celebrating momentous anniversaries this year. The Bell Museum is marking its 150th year with a yearlong celebration at the center of which is the *Seeing Birds* exhibit (on display through October 2), of which the MOU is pleased to be a supporting sponsor. Later this year, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory will be celebrating its 50th anniversary with a special event on September 22 and throughout the annual Hawk Weekend Festival (September 22-25). It is a pleasure to work with these organizations to advance our understanding of birds, both within Minnesota and globally. I hope you will have the opportunity to visit both locations this year and to help them celebrate these significant milestones.

Happy Birding!

– Michelle Terrell, MOU President

## FORM UNION OF ORNITHOLOGISTS

St. Cloud Club Member of  
New Minnesota Federation.

Representatives from the ornithology clubs of Minneapolis, Duluth, and St. Cloud T. S. Roberts club convened at the zoology building at the University of Minnesota Thursday to organize the Minnesota Ornithological union. The new union will help combine efforts all over the state and will publish a quarterly journal, "Flicker," which will print bird records of clubs over the state, according to Dick Voth of St. Cloud who was named secretary-treasurer of the newly organized group.

### BIRD LOVERS ORGANIZE.

George Rysgaard, St. Paul, Tuesday had been named president of the Minnesota Ornithologists' union formed to co-ordinate the work of preserving and studying bird life. Other officers named were: Miss Mary Elwell, Duluth, vice president; Richard Voth, St. Cloud, secretary-treasurer; and Dr. Charles Evans, Minneapolis, editor of the union paper.

# Common Birds at Uncommon Times

by Ben Douglas

The rarest birds every year understandably get the most fanfare from bird watchers hoping to add them to their year, county, and life lists. Anytime a wayward avian friend drops in from outside of its normal range, it ends up spurring delight and excitement in the birding community.

Many other species, though, are relatively easy to find during large swaths of time in the spring all the way into fall. We spend so much time with or around them that it can be easy to become almost indifferent to their near omnipresence.

What I would like to discuss here are some recent examples of bird species that were found in exceedingly small numbers overwintering within the state, the type of species where the vast majority will exit the state in advance of the first snowfall, while a scant few will stay behind and attempt to tough out a brutal Minnesota winter. Although history has shown that this type of behavior is not always successful, it is something we can expect annually and indeed can target even in different ways.

It wasn't until this year that I truly grasped how many bird species can be seen in Minnesota during the winter. For example, eBird shows that in January of 2022 bird watchers reported 137 species within the state. Beyond the expected winter finches, owls, gulls, and rarities, what are the most interesting common birds? What might we learn or infer from their presence deep into the winter months?

Along the Mississippi River, just below Lock and Dam 2 in Hastings, we had a curious case of three American White Pelicans. Now, the presence of this species late into fall is not really an oddity, as those of us local to this part of the river know. The water stays open below the spillway

*American White Pelicans, Lock and Dam 2, Dakota County (1/30/22), by Ben Douglas*

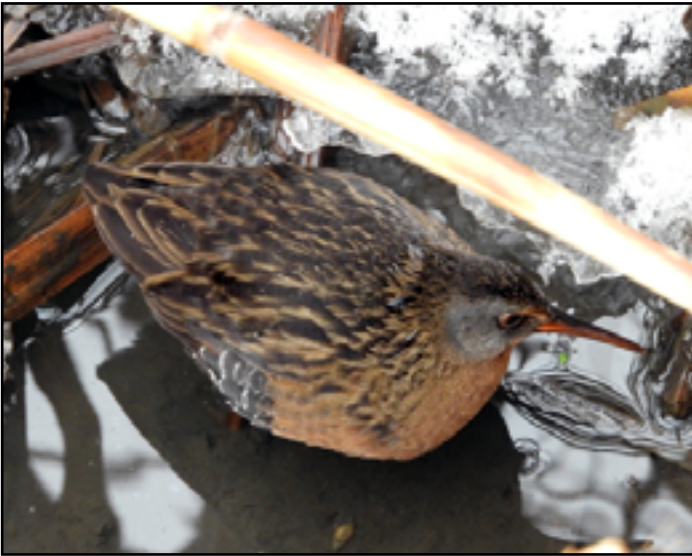


for a long time, and pelicans often linger deep into the fall months. The remarkable thing about these three, though, was the obvious broken wing on one of the birds, making it impossible for this bird to exit the area; yet, whether by flocking instinct, broodmate affinity, or some other unknown factor, the other two stayed with this bird when others left the area. As winter turned hard and the river started to freeze up, these three birds began to focus in on a small pool of open water that provided schools of fish for them to hunt. In the coldest days of winter, they would roost on the open ice just a little way off shore. The two that could fly would also move about the area, often using the aerated water at the very south end of Lake Rebecca to feed. As winter churned on, unwilling to release its grip, the trio was reduced to two sometime in mid-January. The broken-winged bird, unable to make flight to open water tantalizingly close by, was ultimately captured and euthanized.

I'm not afraid to admit that when the party narrowed down to just one bird around the third week of February, I became invested in its survival. There were just a few more weeks until the river would likely thaw out; I tracked reports and hoped that it would hold out the entire winter. Alas, reports stopped after the first week of March, and winter held on longer than usual in the state. I soon got word from one of the locals that, of all things, the last bird succumbed not to predators or lack of food, but to a power line. All winter long it had moved from the river to the aerated lake space without issue, but one mistake in flight cost this last bird everything. Although it was not a happy ending, I can say I was beyond impressed by the resilience of these birds when thrust into a very challenging and bitterly cold winter.

The next example I want to look at focuses more on an overwintering hotspot for more than just a single species, because I think it shows what is possible in the context of specialized habitat along the river valleys in the state of Minnesota. The area around Old Cedar Avenue in the Minnesota River Valley is a historically prime location for overwintering species. Although most of Long Meadow Lake and the entire backwater system of the river eventually freezes over, there are a number of Artesian Wells, spring fed areas, and run-off from human establishments at the top of the valley that provide open water. The areas along the river valley between I-494 and I-35W provide a case study in survivable spaces for birds looking to scratch out an existence.

One of the most fascinating to me personally was first hearing about and then observing at least two different Virginia Rails that decided to stay the entire winter under the Old Cedar Bridge. In a spring fed area with cattails, these



*Virginia Rail, Old Cedar Bridge, Hennepin County  
(1/04/22), by Ben Douglas*

birds somehow were able to stay warm enough and forage enough food to survive the entire winter. Reports came in daily from January all the way into mid-March. These birds just continued to go about life as if it were normal, based on eBird reports during this time, though you would have had to drive a few hundred miles to see another Virginia Rail. A truly remarkable wintering success story in my opinion.

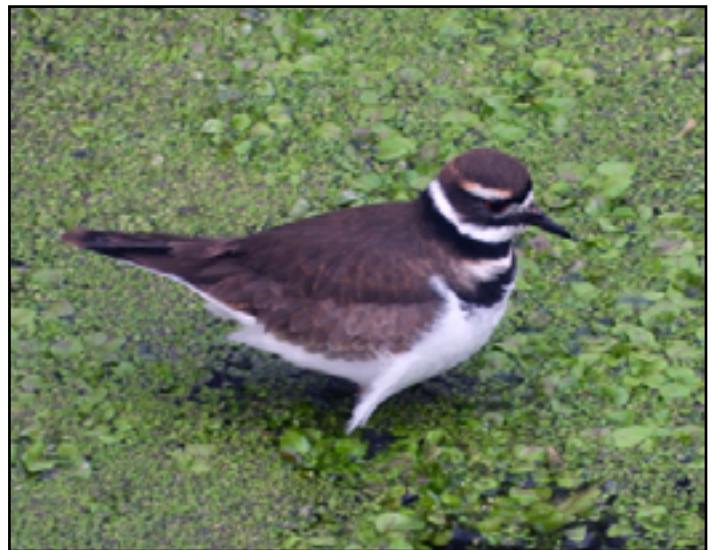
This isn't where the story of this area ends, though, as the Minnesota River Valley is actually notable for many species of birds that are just on the edge of being hearty winter species. During the Virginia Rail observations, it was relatively common to also have birders report Swamp Sparrows in the area going about their daily visits to the small patches of open spring water while feeding on grass seeds in the area. Farther south along this corridor, many birders got out to Pond Dakota Mission Park to get a look at an overwintering Townsend's Solitaire. Perhaps the more interesting bird, though, was at least one Hermit Thrush in this area hanging out with the American Robins and the occasional Eastern Bluebird feeding in buckthorn and cedar trees. With several spring-fed areas along this river valley, one can regularly find birds exploiting the water and accompanying food sources even on the coldest of days. Year in and year out you will find reports of Winter Wren, Wilson's Snipe, Brown Creeper, and Golden-crowned Kinglet all trying to scratch out an existence in the valley. This year also had a Great Blue Heron spend a few days around the area, often perched in a dead tree adjacent to some of the open water sources. These sightings came deep into January, and the bird was flying freely to various open water hunting pools along Long Meadow Lake and the river. It's a great challenge for some species to survive the entire winter when taxed by temperatures, snow, and limited food supplies, but we see this type of behavior every year, despite the risks.

There are also spring-fed areas and seeps that provide

open water along the river in the St. Croix River Valley. Since I live in Washington County, I have become familiar with the St. Croix over the last ten years, and one thing I've found to be pretty common is for Wilson's Snipe and Belted Kingfisher to use the very limited feeding areas to spend the winter farther north than normal. My favorite stop is the Boom Site Boat Launch just north of Stillwater. This location provides public river access and a view of the Heron Rookery out on the state-owned St. Croix Islands SRA. The added benefit of this location, though, is that both north and south of the launch itself are springs and seeps that provide open water and ground the entire winter. Wilson's Snipes will use this open and wet shore to probe for food, while Belted Kingfishers will move up and down the river among numerous small pools to feed on small fish. With open water provided also by some marina and private aerators along the river, an overwintering kingfisher always seems to do pretty well even in the harshest of winters.

In what I would consider the smallest of overwintering opportunities, the Hampton cattle feedlot at the junction of MN52 and MN56 in Dakota County provides what could perhaps be construed as an accidental overwintering opportunity for Brown-headed Cowbirds. The cowbird is native to Minnesota and evolved to follow grassland grazing mammals as a way to survive. Because of this, they are always ready to move when the mammals move at the end of the fall season. The cattle lot in Hampton, though, always has animals getting prepped for market all the way through winter, so Brown-headed Cowbirds started staying with them. In my own January observations, they could be found literally picking at food around the cattle laying in the hay spread out in the lot. Not the most glamorous of species, but certainly an anomaly in a frigid winter that shows what is possible when conditions are just right for a species regardless of temperatures and snow cover.

*Killdeer, Spring Lake Park Dakota County  
(1/31/22), by Ben Douglas*



The last location and set of species that I want to cover is down in Goodhue County along the Canon River along Sunset Trail. This river is relatively swift and narrow here, and it provides open water all winter. Early in this past winter, Chris and John Hockema found and reported a Townsend's Solitaire visiting the cedars that are bountiful in this area. As more birders came to add the solitaire to their county or year list, it became apparent that the area was supporting a large number of Eastern Bluebirds as well. Soon birders began reporting large numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers feeding here too, with one birder taking photos of a number of them feeding on castoff berries on an ice shelf on the river itself. Others found a Golden-crowned Kinglet having a go at survival, along with a Winter Wren and Sharp-shinned Hawk in the area. Just down the road, Liz Harper and I found a Fox Sparrow on the roadside as well, also thriving. As more people visited the spot, more bird species were holding out for spring.

I could continue on for many more locations from late 2021 and early 2022. We had species such a lone Killdeer in Dakota County in a small valley with open water dumping

into the Mississippi River that appears to have made it the entire winter, the state's first Henslow's Sparrow in December all the way up just west of Two Harbors, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in a Hennepin cemetery deep into February, and an Eastern Towhee in Kandiyohi County at Sibley State Park well into February. Every winter seems to bring something different, but one thing is certain, and that is that more species than we realize are trying to hold over into warmer weather by exploiting sometimes very small feeding habitat and open water.

It is really easy to get absorbed with the winter finches and owls coming from the north, even while chasing wonderful rarities that pop up all winter long. I would encourage birders to think about and look for more common species during uncommon times as a way to learn what is possible for the crafty individuals holding out against the odds.

*Ben is a volunteer with the MOU's Social Media Committee and the annual Awards Committee. Ben also volunteers providing event and guide support for Carpenter Nature Center birding events annually.*

# Savaloja Grant Report

## South High School — Indigenous Bird Knowledge

*by Carmen Vanegas, Chemistry, Biology, Physics and Physical Science Teacher, All Nations Program, South High School.*

South High students are very grateful for the support of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Savaloja Grant. The Indigenous Bird Knowledge Project brought Ojibwe bird stories, basic birding skills, and knowledge of bird habitat needs to 130 Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee students at South High.

Students engaged in weekly bird learning and larger quarterly projects. Learning activities included weekly bird walks through the neighborhood on Fridays, readings from Charles Grolla's book, *Ojibwe Bird Stories*, individual research projects about birds and the native plants that support them, and live interactive presentations by Mr. Grolla, which took place both over Zoom and in person.

The work with Mr. Grolla had a profound impact on many Ojibwe students and families, many of whom were excited about the opportunity to connect with bird knowledge from their own community for the first time or to build on their families' existing knowledge. For example, students were interested to learn about the important role of *migizi* (bald eagle) in Ojibwe culture and understand teachings from elders in their own families about eagles. Mr. Grolla's Zoom storytelling visits motivated many questions and inspired interest in bird behavior. For example, students

wanted to understand why some birds migrate and some stay behind, and were amazed to learn that small birds like *gijigijiganeshiinh* (black capped chickadees) have adapted to survive Minnesota winters.

Students especially appreciated Mr. Grolla's in-person visit. During that visit, students were able to practice following proper Ojibwe cultural protocol for receiving oral teachings and learn about how bird knowledge is integrated with teachings about growing up and becoming contributing community members. Through these teachings, students understood that they have a responsibility to gain the knowledge needed to care for their bird relatives and to pass this knowledge to the next generation.

Reading Mr. Grolla's book and hearing his stories inspired non-Ojibwe students, including Dakota, Lakota, Oromo, and Quechua students, to seek out bird stories and teachings from their own communities. A student even shared a webinar recording with our class so we could learn about Dakota bird stories from Dakota elder Dr. Neil McKay.

One of the highlights of the year came when students created a slide deck about a bird to present to the community. Due to coronavirus transmission rates, we had to move to distance learning for a time and were not able to have



Students used recycled materials held down with large rocks to suppress turfgrass in the area for the bird garden.

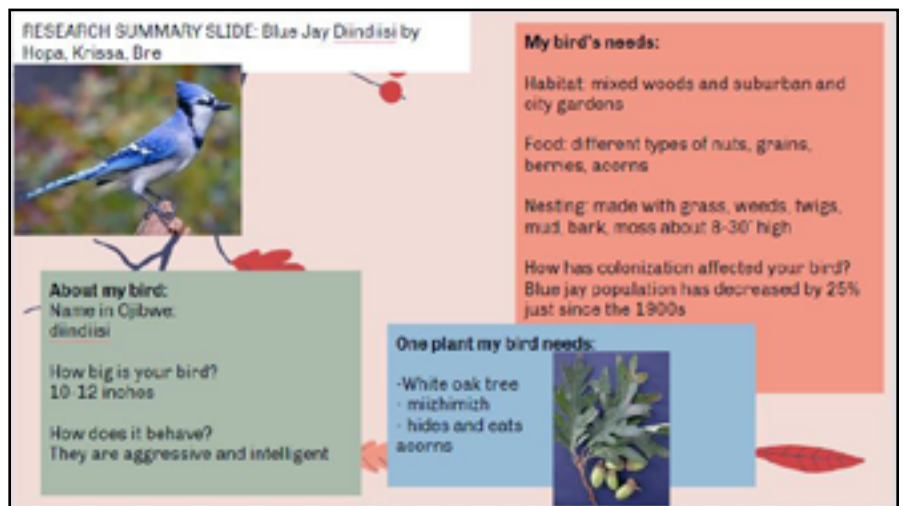
students share their presentations at an in-person gathering, so I assigned each student to go home and share their slides with family members, as well as interview elder family or community members about their bird knowledge. It was amazing to hear the many stories shared by community members when we returned to class, and to see the broader impact of the students' work as they told of birding experiences with their families. Students mentioned pointing birds out to family members and were excited to share sightings of new birds in their neighborhoods.

Students were able to use iNaturalist and eBird to find out what species were being observed in the area, and they used the Cornell All about Birds website to find the identifying features of different species. Through in-school and out-of-school obser-

vations, students learned to use shape, size, color pattern, habitat, songs and behavior to identify birds. Many students who could not name any birds in the fall and were able to identify common neighborhood birds by spring, including *misko-bineshiinh* (cardinal), *aandeg* (crow), *diindiisi* (Blue Jay), *opichi* (robin), *migizi* (Bald Eagle), *nika* (Canada Goose), *ininishib* (Mallard), and *baateshiwsh* (Dark-eyed Junco).

In spring, students wanted to do even more to share their work with the broader school community, so they created posters about birds they had studied and their habitat needs and posted them in one of our school's display cases and in the hallways. Many students and staff were interested to learn more about the birds in our neighborhood and how we can improve habitat for them.

After a visit to Oheyawahe (Pilot Knob) in fall to participate in ecological restoration and learn about the importance of restoration for birds, students learned about native plants from experienced restoration workers from Great River Greening and developed a plan for a bird garden on the South High school grounds. Work on the garden was delayed due to the Minneapolis teachers' strike, but our classes persevered nonetheless, getting permission from the district for the project, smothering turfgrass and weeds and applying cardboard, hay, and compost to the garden site, and finally developing a list of native species beneficial to birds that would thrive at the site. Students developed a garden design including plants that provide food, shelter, and nest materials for local birds, a bird bath and feeders. Our class secured additional funding and support from Great River Greening to complete this expanded garden project next fall. Students hope that this garden will serve as a learning space for students and community members to observe birds and learn more about how to improve urban ecosystems to better support them.



Students summarized their learning in poster form to share with the larger school community.



# MOU Calendar

## July / August 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<b>JULY 1</b>	<b>2</b> CNC: MN Campus Bird Hike ZVAS: Quarry Hill Nature Center
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> SPAS: Silverwood Park: Birding Summer Style #2	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> CNC: Trails & Ales MN Campus	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> CNC: WI Center Grand Opening CNC: WI Campus Bird Hike MRVAC: Birding the Bass Ponds
<b>10</b> CNC: WI Center Grand Opening	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> SPAS: Prairie Tuesday Summer Walks #2	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> SPAS: Langton Lake Park: Birds and Trees
<b>17</b> MRVAC: Birding Old Cedar Ave.	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> MRVAC: Nobles County Birding Days	<b>22</b> CNC: Public Bird Banding MN Campus MRVAC: Nobles County Birding Days	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> MRVAC: Birding the Bass Ponds MGB: Birding Ecuador: Zoom Session	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> SPAS: Vadnais-Snail Lakes Park: Birding & Biking
<b>31</b>	<b>AUGUST 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> CNC: MN Campus Bird Hike MRVAC: Birding Old Cedar Ave. SPAS: Bass Ponds: Summer Style #3 ZVAS: Quarry Hill Nature Center
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> SPAS: Late Summer Blooming Prairie: Tuesday Summer Walks #3	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> CNC: WI Campus Bird Hike
<b>14</b> MRVAC: Birding the Bass Ponds SPAS: Carpenter Nature Center: WI Campus	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> MGB: Birding Honduras: Zoom Session	<b>18</b> MRVAC: Pine County Birding Days	<b>19</b> MRVAC: Pine County Birding Days	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> FSZB: Fall Migration Field Trip MRVAC: Birding Rapid Lake



# — MOU Calendar

## July / August 2022

**Note: Readers are advised to check the web sites of the respective organizations before going.**

### BELL MUSEUM

<https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/>

#### Now through Oct. 2, 2022: “Seeing Birds”

10 am–4 pm. Open Wednesdays–Sundays. Visit the Bell Museum and explore the beauty of birds in the Bell Museum original exhibition <https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/seeing-birds/>. The exhibition integrates art, science, and nature to ignite curiosity and wonder about the biology of birds, engaging visitors in an exploration of birds, their environments, and their evolution. Learn more about the world of research at the University of Minnesota and the impact of collections-based research on our world. *Seeing Birds* highlights the ways that we learn from and connect with nature and the environment with birds as an entry point, while also recognizing the Bell Museum’s past and present contributions to the field of ornithological research, and to habitat and bird conservation efforts. Get tickets at <https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/admissions/>. “Seeing Birds” special exhibition is generously supported by the Dellwood Foundation and Minnesota Ornithologists’ Union. Feel free to peruse <https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/events/> where we continue to add more birding related events throughout the summer.

### CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

#### Minnesota Campus:

12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings, MN

#### Wisconsin Campus:

300 East Cove Road, Hudson, WI

<https://carpenternaturecenter.org/events/>

#### July 2 & Aug. 6: Minnesota Campus Bird Hike

8–10 am. Join an expert birder on a morning hike around the Nature Center. Learn to identify birds by sight and sound. Field guides and binoculars are available. Program fee: \$5.00 or free for “Friends of CNC,” Hastings Environmental Protectors, Hastings High School students, and St. Croix Valley Bird Club members. Please RSVP by calling 651-437-4359.

#### July 7: Trails & Ales: Minnesota Campus

6:30–8:30 pm. Enjoy the beauty of the St. Croix River Valley. Learn about the history of CNC, listen for various songbirds, and more during a 45-minute naturalist-led

hike. Dress for the weather. After the hike, we will meet at nearby Spiral Brewery in Hastings for a guided tour of the beers on tap in the taproom! This includes a flight of beer for each participant and a staff member leading a discussion around each sample of beer. This experience will take approximately 45 minutes. The fee is \$30 per participant and includes a guided hike, 1 beer flight, and guided tasting. Must be 21+ to participate. Please RSVP by calling 651-437-4359. Cheers!

#### July 9 & 10: Grand Opening: Al & Laurie Hein Visitor Center and Masters of the Sky Celebration

Join us in celebrating the success of CNC’s decades-long dream of building a visitor center on our Wisconsin Campus. We will be hosting a Grand Opening event in conjunction with our popular *Masters of the Sky* program. The weekend will be filled with ways to explore our new building while enjoying live raptor shows presented by World Bird Sanctuary. You can register and prepay for Masters of the Sky programs at [here](#). Prepayment is required for raptor shows. Get more information on the Grand Opening at <https://carpenternaturecenter.org/plan-your-visit/annual-events/>.

*Blackburnian Warbler, by Allan Meadows*



### **July 9 & Aug. 13: Wisconsin Campus Bird Hikes**

8–10 am. Hike various trails on our Wisconsin Campus and learn to identify birds with local experts from the St. Croix Valley Bird Club. Meet at 300 East Cove Road, Hudson, WI. Program fee: \$5 per participant or free for SCVBC members and Friends of CNC. Please RSVP by calling 651-437-4359.

### **July 22: Public Bird Banding: Minnesota Campus**

8:30 am–12 pm. Join CNC's expert bird banders as they catch, band, and release songbirds on our Minnesota campus. Banding runs continuously, and visitors may come and go at any time. Program fee: Free. For more information, please call 651-437-4359.

### **FRIENDS OF SAX-ZIM BOG**

<https://saxzim.org/>

### **Aug. 27: Fall Migration Field Trip**

8 am–2 pm. Meet at the Welcome Center. Migration season offers some difficult bird watching in northern Minnesota, as many of the breeding species rush out of our area on their way south. The last bird-based field trip of the season will hope to experience a little of what migration has to offer in the Sax-Zim Bog. Because of the amount of habitat, it can be quite difficult to find birds in the Sax-Zim Bog, and this field trip will hope to show you how to best navigate the Sax-Zim Bog during migration. At this time of year, birds are migrating, but there might be a chance to experience migration from insects (like Painted Lady butterflies and Common Green Darner dragonflies moving at this time of year). Register for this field trip here: <https://saxzim.org/events/>



*Lesser Yellowlegs, by Doug Kieser*

### **MN RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER**

<https://mrvac.org/trips-events/>

Registration required for all trips at <https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/627016203191954040/false#/invitation> Questions: call Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647.

### **July 9, 25, and Aug. 14: Birding the Bass Ponds**

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
8–10:30 am. Meet at Bass Ponds Trailhead, 2501 E. 86th, Bloomington. Search for birds that nest at the Refuge. Bring binoculars and a field guide.

### **July 17 and Aug. 6: Birding Old Cedar Ave.**

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
8–10:30 am. Meet Old Cedar Ave. Trailhead, 9551 Old Cedar Ave. S., Bloomington. Search for birds that nest at the Refuge. Bring binoculars and a field guide.

### **Aug. 27: Birding Rapid Lake**

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
8–10:30 am. Meet at Rapids Lake Trailhead, 15865 Rapids Lake Rd., Carver. Search for birds that nest at the Refuge. Bring binoculars and a field guide.

### **July 21 - 22: Nobles County Birding Days**

On this trip we will be spending time birding in Nobles County. Some of the locations we may explore include Hawkeye and Fury Island County Parks and Lake Bella WMA. With some luck we may find some early migrant Shorebirds and we should get some of the late nesting species as well. Meet at 6:30 am. Please contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647 to register for this trip. Fee: \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members.

### **Aug. 18 & 19: Pine County Birding Days**

6:30 am. On this trip we will be birding in Pine County. Some of the locations we may explore include Banning & St Croix State Parks, Nemadji and Chengwatana WMAs. We should also have time to visit a couple water treatment ponds. Meet at 6:30 am. Meet at 6:30 am. Please contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647 to register for this trip. Fee: \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members.

### **MINNESOTA GLOBAL BIRDERS**

*This informal group has monthly virtual gatherings. Details on the events, and on how to register for the Zoom sessions, will be provided via MOU-Net and on the Minnesota Global Birders and the Minnesota Birding Facebook pages a few weeks before each session.*

### **July 25: Birding Ecuador**

7–9 pm. This session will feature a presentation by Nina Hale on a birding tour to Ecuador, a country about a third larger than Minnesota with about 1700 bird species.

### **Aug. 17: Birding Honduras**

7–9 pm. Gregg Severson and Kellie Hoyt will talk about and show photos of their trip to Honduras, focused on birds, but also touching on Mayan ruins, a painting “class,” mosaics, and an orphanage visit.

### **ST PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**NOTE:** Be sure to look for *further information* on these birding trips <https://www.saintpaulaudubon.org/events/>.

### **July 5: Silverwood Park: Birding Summer Style #2**

6–8:30 pm. Silverwood Regional Park  
2500 County Road E., St. Anthony.

This evening walk is the second of three great Birding Summer Style trips offered at a variety of days and times. Why? Summer birding is more relaxed and presents possibilities for observing different behaviors once birds are settled on family territories. Birders have opportunities for lingering identifications with group interaction at a summer-time relaxed pace. The slower pace is also ideal for beginning birders to learn and experience the basics to locate, describe and identify birds. Dress for the weather and wear closed-toe shoes. Bring a brimmed hat, water, sunblock and a field guide with maps or a smartphone with app. Leader: Chase Davies 651-246-9754. Email: RockyBirder@gmail.com

### **July 12: Prairie Tuesday: Summer Walks #2**

6:30–8 pm. Meet at 680 MN-62, Mendota Heights. Enter from MN-62; bear left to park by the barn or right to park in the church parking lot. Meet by the red barn. Note: Do not park at the 590 MN-62 site. This is the second of three prairie Tuesday evening walks to highlight numerous bird-native plant interactions. Bring your binoculars, a 10-power magnifier, and consider a camera and bug repellent. This easy, two-mile walk will focus on prairie restoration and blooming flowers. Wear closed-toe shoes with socks above

*Yellow Warbler, by Tom Gilde*



the ankle. Usually no toilet facilities on site. No registration required. Leader: Chase Davies 651-246-9754. Email: RockyBirder@gmail.com

### **July 16: Birds and Trees: Langton Lake Park**

7:30–9 am. Meet at 1950 County Rd. C2 W., Roseville. Gather at the parking lot on County Road C2 at the west side of the lake. Join us for a stroll at Langton Lake Park to observe and identify birds and trees and consider their interactions. Bring binoculars, bird guide, tree guide and 10-power magnifier if you have them. No registration required. Leader: Kathy Robbins 651-636-6475 (Krobbins@umn.edu) and Cathy Croghan (crogh001@umn.edu)

### **July 30: Bird and Bike the Vadnais-Snail Lakes Regional Park**

8 am–12 pm. Meet at 4191 Snail Lake Blvd., Shoreview. Enter park from Snail Lake Blvd at lake level (near restrooms and boat launch), go straight ahead to park and meet group. We are reviving birding by bicycle! Discover the fun of birding from a bicycle on more than five miles of mostly level, paved, multi-use trails that connect four lakes in Shoreview: Grass, Snail, Sucker, and Vadnais, all of which are prime birding locations for Ramsey County. Bring your bicycle, helmet, binoculars, snacks, and water. Leader: Sherry Gray. Contact Sherry (sherrygray@yahoo.com) for required registration; limited to 8 participants who will be asked to sign a liability release form at the start of the trip.

### **Aug. 6: Bass Ponds: Birding Summer Style #3**

8–10:30 am: Meet: Bass Ponds on the Minnesota River, 2400 E. 86th St., Bloomington. Take Cedar Avenue south from 494, exit onto Killebrew Dr., go to Old Shakopee Rd., turn right (south) onto East 86th St., at the sign for Bass Ponds, bear left and come to the parking lot. If the lot is full, street park on the right as you enter or in the larger parking lot back near the corner of 86th and Old Shakopee. See “Birding Summer Style #2 above for details on dress and what to bring. Free. Leader: Chase Davies 651-246-9754. Email: RockyBirder@gmail.com

### **Aug. 9: Late Summer Blooming Prairie: Prairie Tuesday Summer Walks #3**

6:30–8 pm. Meet at Valley View Park, Oak Park Heights, 5575 Ozark Ave N., Oak Park Heights. Travel east on Hwy 36 to Osgood Avenue N., go south past 56th St. N. then turn left onto Valley View Park Road, meet in the first parking lot on the left. This is the third of three Prairie Tuesday evening walks to highlight numerous bird-native plant interactions. Bring your binoculars, a 10-power magnifier, and bug repellent. Wear closed-toe shoes with socks above the ankle. Usually no toilet facilities on site. No registration required. Leader: Chase Davies 651-246-9754. Email: RockyBirder@gmail.com

**Aug. 14: Carpenter Nature Center, Wisconsin Campus**  
8:30–11 am. Meet at 279 S. Cove Rd., Hudson, WI. Drive east from St. Paul on I-94; cross St. Croix River into Wisconsin; take exit 2 toward Carmichael Rd. Keep right at the fork, follow signs for Prescott/Crestview Dr. Merge onto Carmichael Rd. Travel 4.2 miles. Turn right onto S. Cove Rd. Travel 0.2 miles. Turn right to stay on S. Cove Rd. Travel 0.7 miles. Destination on left. We are birding at the newly expanded Wisconsin Campus of the Carpenter Nature Center. The expansion includes a visitor center, paved and mowed trails, and remote teaching areas. CNC staff will provide a brief introduction prior to our group exploring the trails. Bring binoculars, bird guide, and water. No registration required. Leaders: Chase Davies 651-246-9754 RockyBirder@gmail.com and Jane Braun.

**ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
<https://zumbrovalleyaudubon.org/calendar.html>

**July 2 & Aug. 6: Quarry Hill Nature Center  
Monthly Bird Walk**

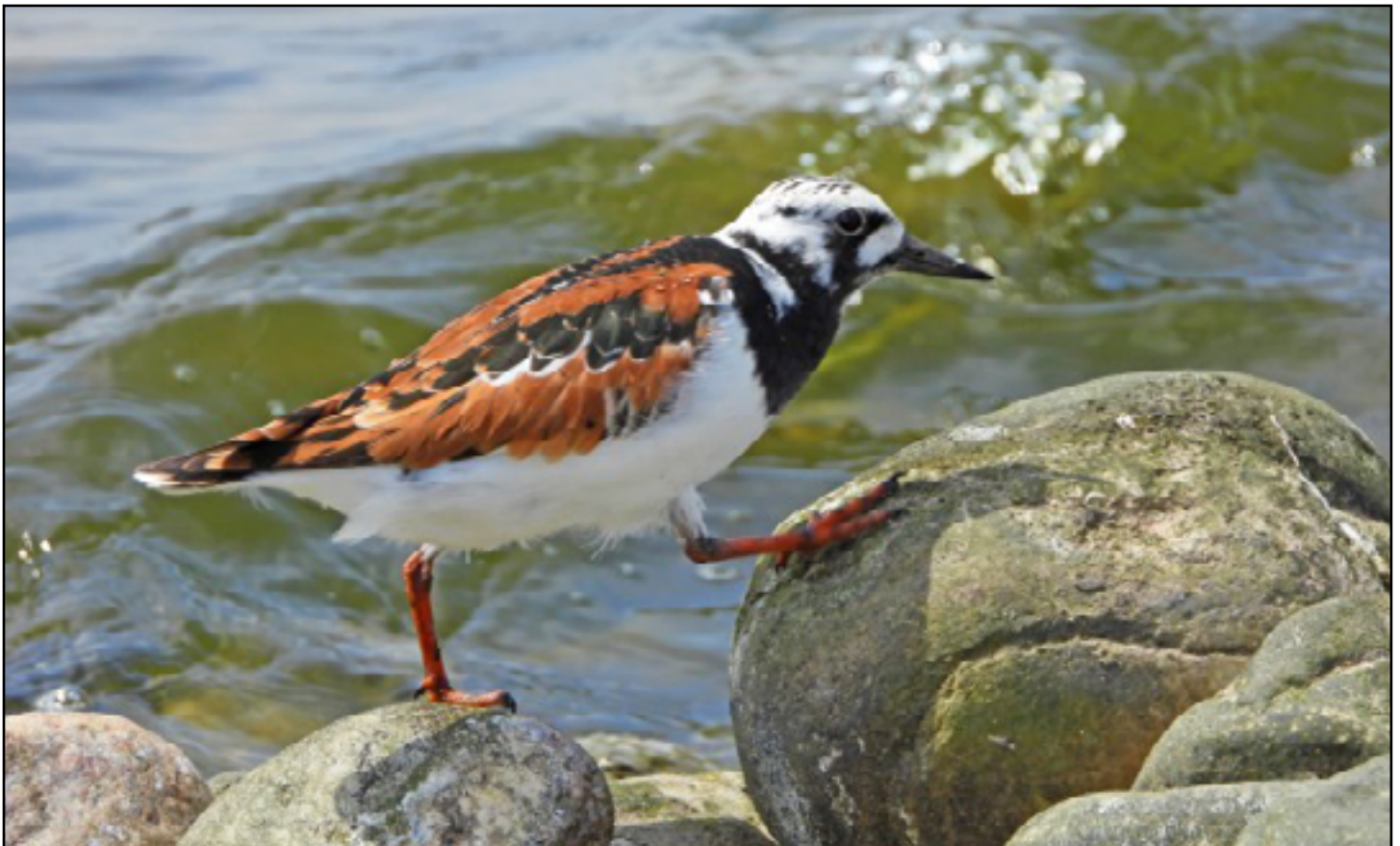
9 am. Leaders: Terry & Joyce Grier. Join us on a casual walk thru Quarry Hill Nature Center (<https://qhnc.org/>). Meet by the Nature Center entrance. Bring binoculars if you have them. Dress for the weather. Stay for any length of time. Walks usually last about 60–90 minutes. Free and open to the public; no registration required.

## New MOU Members

NB: Please remember to notify the MOU Membership Secretary ([membership@moumn.org](mailto:membership@moumn.org)) when you change your address or email. If you are renewing for more than one year, please indicate that on your check.

David Elfelt, *Anoka, MN*  
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Zachary Hansen, *Lindstrom, MN*  
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Laura Savin, *St. Paul, MN*  
Marilyn Trouth, *Plymouth, MN*  
David Williams, *Duluth, MN*

*Ruddy Turnstone, by Heidi Hughes*



# My Favorite Home Patch

## Lake Hiawatha Park

by Cole Bauer

*Note from the editor: Do you have a favorite local spot for birding? I'd like to hear about it, and I'm sure other birders would too. Please send me a note at newsletter@moumn.org if you would like to write about your favorite local patch for this column. GH*

Lake Hiawatha Park really became my home patch by happenstance. When I moved to South Minneapolis a number of years ago, it was simply the nearest park and nearest lake. It was a convenient stop for me before or after work, and was even walkable in times when I didn't have a car. Checklists began adding up, data became more fleshed out, and before long, the park established itself as an important site in my birding routine.

Now, Lake Hiawatha Park isn't known for being a birding hotbed in Minneapolis or Hennepin County. At roughly 54 acres, the lake is on the small side compared to our other prominent city lakes (by comparison, Lake Nokomis is 210 acres). In addition, much of the land is part of the Hiawatha Golf Course. Even with these perceived limitations, there are still numerous small-scale habitats that offer enough room for many migrant and resident birds alike.

Perhaps because of its smaller size, Lake Hiawatha is a good (though not great) place to look for waterbirds. Weather seems to be a big factor in how busy the lake gets, particularly in the spring. During colder springs, the lake will often host a larger number of waterbirds. This is likely due to the Minnehaha Creek and its current, as the moving water will open up sections of the lake. This often leads to Lake

*Black-and-white Warbler, by Cole Bauer*



Hiawatha having some open water before many of the other city lakes. For this reason, the lake tends to be a better draw for waterbirds during spring migration. The frigid spring of 2018 found numerous Horned and Red-necked Grebes using Lake Hiawatha as a stopping point. Coincidentally, this was the same spring that longtime park Hiawatha Park birder Bruce Fall found seven American Avocets huddled on the ice for a single April day. Both Common and Red-breasted Mergansers are easy to find here in spring.

As spring progresses and more open water becomes available in the metro, migrant numbers can quickly drop as birds look elsewhere. However, that doesn't mean scanning the lake occasionally doesn't still reveal surprises. At the end of May in 2021, before I departed for a trip to Michigan to look for Kirtland's Warbler, I decided to briefly stop at the park just to take a look. To my excitement, while scanning the water, I spotted two Eared Grebes loafing on the lake. It was quite a joy to find these uncommon migrants.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the tiny sandbar that is sometimes present on the north end of the lake. Birds will use it as a resting place, away from the reaches of people. Just last year, Wendy Pepin found a small flock of Willets taking a respite there during spring migration.

As is the case with most birding around the metro, the most exciting times to visit the park are during spring and fall migration. When songbirds begin their arrival, arguably the best place to look is the small section of the Minnehaha Creek that stretches from the footbridge to the 28th Ave Bridge. Generally, this area gets little disruption from people, and the birds seem to take notice. Much of this strip is wooded and the ground is usually covered in leaf litter. Thrushes are fond of this area, probably because very few people wander through here. During migration, you will often see migrant thrushes foraging out in the grass at the edges quickly dash back into the brush as people approach. Warblers also like the area around the creek, with its mixed vegetation.

The footbridge is a focal point of the park, stretching over the creek just as it leaves the lake and heads east towards Minnehaha Falls. Here, on either side of the footbridge are dense willow thickets, which I find to always be the most promising place in the park to find songbirds.

Warblers, flycatchers, sparrows and various other songbird species all enjoy the cover and food it provides. Of the 24 species of warbler that I've seen at the park, I found 23 in these thickets and this stretch of the creek. Even some of the more difficult warblers to find, like Black-throated Blue, Mourning and Connecticut, have been seen in this area. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers have proven to be reliable here too, foraging deep in the thickets. Various vantage points also help in searching. Standing on the footbridge provides wonderful views down both sides of the creek. Keep your ears peeled, too for the Belted Kingfishers that rattle their way up and down the creek.

From here I move towards the lake, where there are a number of conifers. In the warmer months, a fishing dock is installed. These conifers also attract warblers, and you may spot a Red-breasted Nuthatch if you are lucky. A largish juniper sits with these conifers, and when berries are plentiful, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Cedar Waxwings gorge themselves on the fruit, especially as the weather turns colder. A number of smaller junipers are arranged in a little group here too. During sparrow migration, watch for birds foraging underneath these trees or flushing toward them when spooked.

At the south end of the park are the "woods," a small but dense mix of deciduous and pine trees that provide cover for many species. Many locals know that the park often plays host to Great-horned Owls. They have previously nested at the park and can frequently be seen roosting high in the pines. These pines provide cover for our other owl species as well. I have found both Barred Owl and — thanks to a noisy Blue Jay one April — a Long-eared Owl. Northern Saw-whet has also been recorded here. During migration, I also check the park's conifers for Pine Warblers. They're rare here, but I have seen them.

Along the edge of the woods runs a chain link fence that is intended to separate the park from the golf course. Of course, when the fence ends at a tree that is easy to walk around and there's a giant hole in the fence, its intended purpose is somewhat defeated. It's always worth checking to see what's on the other side. I had my first Harris's Sparrow at the park just on the other side of the fence. A year later I found my first Field Sparrow at the park through the exact same hole. I have seen White-crowned Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, Brown Thrashers, and numerous other ground foragers along this fence and up the hillside that borders the woods. Lack of people and vegetation that provides a quick spot to hide makes this area very attractive to birds.

From that same fence, if you move towards the creek, you come upon a small marsh, another small wooded area, and the mouth of the creek, which over the years has deposited so much sediment that a small delta has formed. This has become a spot of interest for many birds, including waterfowl and the occasional shorebird. Of course, as fishers have discovered its draw, it's been more difficult to

consistently find birds using it as a rest area. In the summer months, look for Spotted Sandpipers and Killdeer. In the vegetation leading to the peninsula there is a good mix of willows and marsh habitat that draw in the likes of Marsh and Sedge Wrens, Swamp Sparrows, Sora, and numerous empid species. Make sure to take a look at the tall dead tree still standing strong out on the peninsula. Many species like to perch at its top; I've seen everything from Bald Eagles to Green Herons to a Purple Martin. Heck, I've even seen pair of Eastern Bluebirds attempting to nest in the cavities woodpeckers have created along its trunk.

Birding the golf course itself is often a worthwhile endeavor. Unfortunately, visitors are limited to the non-golf season. During fall migration, it's always a good idea to check the growing Canada Geese flocks as they graze upon the grass and rest upon the lake; in years past, Cackling Geese have reliably been seen mixed in with the Canadas. Also, there is small pond here that remains open late into the season as the weather turns colder. I'm sure it has a more formal name; I simply refer to it as the "duck pond." It's usually just filled with overwintering Mallards, but every so often a different lingering dabbler will be present. There are also a number of spruce trees around the course where I have been lucky enough to find White-winged Crossbills. Eastern Bluebirds are often present, as there are numerous houses set up around the course, though they've been harder to find the past couple years, possibly due to die offs from cold snaps in the south.

The final area along my Lake Hiawatha trek finds me poking around the south edge of the park near some old tennis courts. A stretch of dense vegetation and junipers provides great cover for Brown Thrashers, Gray Catbirds, migrant sparrows and an occasional warbler. From here one can see a handful of large oaks that tower over this end of the golf course. Migrant songbirds, in particular, like to forage the oak blooms in spring. One spring, I even saw a Clay-colored Sparrow foraging up the tree as if it were a warbler itself!

Lake Hiawatha Park is very much a neighborhood park. It isn't the fanciest or the largest, but if you're birding the city and happen to be in the area, it's certainly worth a peek. I'm continually surprised at what can show up. Just this year, two Semipalmated Plovers were resting on the tiniest of beaches near the dock. Past rarities reported at the park include Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Ross's Goose, Carolina Wren, and Lesser Black-backed Gull (the latter two found by Bruce Fall). Plus, it has some of the best sunsets in the city, period. Who knows, maybe you too will experience a beautiful sunset on the beach while Common Nighthawks swirl about overhead.

*Cole Bauer lives in South Minneapolis with his partner. He especially enjoys warblers and birding the Des Lacs NWR in North Dakota when returning home to see family.*

# Birder Bio: James Buckingham



*Tell us about yourself.*

I am originally from southern Michigan but I spent several years in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and Tampa, FL pursuing my undergraduate and graduate degrees in civil engineering. I moved to Minnesota in 2015 and spent my first seven years living in the Eagan/Mendota Heights area. In the spring of 2022, I relocated to Pillager, MN and have recently started growing my Cass County life list.

*When did you start birding and what first sparked your interest?*

My interest in birds started in the summer and fall of 2012. I was in graduate school in Tampa, FL and spent many weekends canoeing along the Hillsborough River. I would stumble upon various species of wading birds during my paddling trips, as the river had nesting Roseate Spoonbills, Limpkins, and Tricolored Herons. Swallow-tailed Kites

and Red-shouldered Hawks would soar overhead. The wide range of large, easy-to-identify birds led me to purchase my first field guide and soon after plan my first birding-specific trip to see find a Sandhill Crane.

*What is the main attraction of birding for you?*

Birding provides a great opportunity to be outdoors and experience nature. I enjoy hiking, camping, exploring, canoeing, fishing, hunting, etc. All of these hobbies and interests allow me the opportunity to explore the outdoors while simultaneously birding. Birding has led me to explore new places, hike new terrains, and experience the less visited corners our state and nation. I feel a stronger connection to Minnesota due to my time spent exploring the state while birding.

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

My favorite place to bird is everywhere along the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT), but especially in Lake and Cook counties. My spouse and I enjoy backpacking and hiking and we plan numerous trips along the SHT each summer. It provides a great opportunity to find nesting warblers and spend whole weekends surrounded by nature.

*What is your favorite bird or bird family?*

My favorite bird is the Swallow-tailed Kite. It was the spark bird that first got me interested in learning to identify birds and continually reminds me of the time I started birding. I admire their striking black-and-white coloration and how they fly with such elegance and ease.

*Do you have any advice on how to be a better birder?*

In my opinion, nothing teaches you better than time in the field. So much of birding is situational and contextual: the location, the habitat, the season, the visual impression, the flight pattern, the sounds, the behavior, etc. The best way to gain the knowledge is by spending time, out in the field, birding.

*Have you ever had an unusual experience while birding?*

One of my favorite birding moments was while my father was visiting me in Minnesota in November 2017. We did a birding weekend along the North Shore together and stopped near Stoney Point to try to find the American Three-toed Woodpecker that was being seen along Alseth Road. To our great fortune, not only did we find the American Three-toed Woodpecker, but we also found a Black-backed Woodpecker in the exact same tree at the exact same time. It was an experience we both remember fondly.





# Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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

## Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

Carpenter Nature Center  
12805 Saint Croix Trail South  
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*MN Birding* is published bi-monthly

**Editor:** Gerald Hoekstra

**Designer:** Thomas Benjamin Hertzell

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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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- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth (under 18)           | \$15.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual                 | \$25.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign (including Canada) | U.S. \$35.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family                     | \$35.00      |
| <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: \$ \_\_\_\_\_