

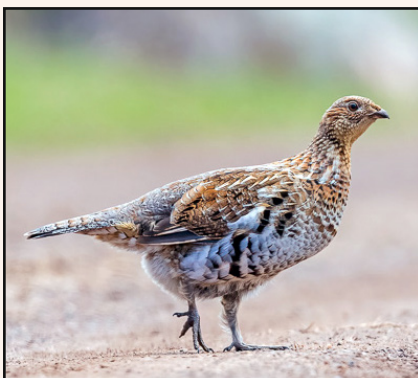


Minnesota BIRDING

November
December
2023
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Ruffed Grouse, by Jean Brisance

My FOY Birding Challenge

by Brad Abendroth

Late in 2022, I was thinking what my birding goals might be for 2023. I am deep into both county-listing and day-listing (i.e., recording a species on all 366 calendar days of the year), so there are always things to do on those two fronts. But I wanted to give myself a new challenge. Here's what I came up with: Starting on January 1, how many days in a row could I see or hear a different bird in Minnesota? I first had to establish some ground rules on trying this. Well, I could only think of one: I would need to choose a bird by the end of the day, and that choice could not be changed.

I literally had no idea how long this would last. Having an 8-5 job would be a disadvantage, especially during the winter. However, I do have the advantage of living near the open water of Blue Lake and the Blue Lake Sewage Lagoons, as well as near Shakopee Mill Pond, where I would have the potential to pick up at least 17 waterfowl species. I thought this should make the streak easy to continue at least through the end of February. Another limiting factor, of course, would be the weather. Winter can be unpredictable, but if I didn't feel like going out, I could always count a feeder bird at my house. I also made the decision not to drive to the far reaches of Minnesota just to keep the streak going.

As many of you know, January 1 can offer an absolute whirlwind of possibilities, with so many birders out

looking for their first birds of the year. Although I saw some birds that day worthy to be chosen for my the first-of-the-year list, the obvious choice was the continuing Varied Thrush that had been found at Ritter Farm Park in Dakota County. January 2 is a company holiday, so I had all day to search. As far as I can remember, the previous day was devoid of any other local rarities, so my plan was to head to Jordan to try to refind the Townsend's Solitaire that I had spotted there on December 30. I didn't have much trouble finding it; there may actually have been two of them. January 3 was the first workday of the year. This was also the beginning of a long streak of being able to bird only during the lunch hour because of the limited daylight. At the end of the day, this was also the first day I had to choose a "non-rarity." I wanted to stick with the thrush theme from the previous day, so I picked the American Robin.

There were other days when I had to regrettably choose a low hanger. The day that sticks out most in my mind was February 26. This was a Sunday, so I had all day to go birding. I was mostly in Goodhue County and, not having any luck with a good bird to choose, I decided to head to Dodge County in search of one of the multiple Snowy Owls seen the previous day. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to find any, so I resorted to American Crow for Day 57.



Day 78. Tufted Titmouse, by Brad Abendroth

On April 1, I had my first close call. This was the day after I regretfully had to choose Black-Capped Chickadee for Day 90. Thanks to a tip from Doug Kieser, though, I was able to see a Great-Blue Heron at Bass Ponds for Day 91. Then on April 5, I had my closest call of the year. I wasn't able to find a needed bird either in the morning or during my lunch break, so after work I chased a reported Glaucous Gull at 140th Street Marsh in Dakota County. Despite searching for over an hour, I could not find the bird. Considering my options, I decided that maybe the only real chance I had was to find a Green-Winged Teal somewhere. Thankfully, I was close to 180th Street Marsh. I was not aware of any previous sightings of that species there and I really didn't have time to go to multiple places, since the light was fading fast. Lucky for me, there were numerous Green-winged Teal loafing at the edge of the mudflat, so the streak continued to Day 95!

By the next day, more migrants were starting to filter in, and I started to amass a buffer for future days.

The highlights from then to when my streak ended were Minnesota lifers Swainson's Warbler on April 29 for Day 119, California Gull on June 18 for Day 169, and Swallow-Tailed Kite on August 6 for Day 218. I also enjoyed a first-ever Tufted Titmouse in my yard on March 19 for Day 78. September 28 was the day it all ended. The previous day I had seen a Savannah Sparrow in a farm field south of Murphy Hanrahan Park Reserve for September 27. Since that was a workday, I had limited time to find something that I still needed. Before work, I chased a reported Merlin and Nelson's Sparrow from the day before at Bass Ponds but was unable to find either. I also went out during my lunch hour

and after work to other locations but could not find anything I needed.

Besides the fact that I reached 270, the other cool thing accomplished was the fact that I was able to tally every Minnesota regular duck, goose, and shorebird that I saw during the year. September 26 stands out for me, since I thought I had no chance to pick up a Wilson's Phalarope, but I was able to refind the very late individual seen at Bass Ponds that day. I was also able to choose all 34 warblers I saw. The two that I did not see at all were Connecticut and Black-Throated Blue. I was at 283 species on September 27 but I was not able to choose ten of the regular species seen earlier during the year (Ruffed Grouse, Common Gallinule, Merlin, Yellow-Bellied Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Canada Jay, Bohemian Waxwing, LeConte's Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, and Brewer's Blackbird), because I had used different birds for the days when I had seen them, and I could not find any of them again before the streak ended. Well, actually I was not able to choose 13 of the birds that I had seen, since I didn't see the three casual species I had seen earlier again either (Red Knot, Scissortail Flycatcher, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow) and I had picked a different species for the days on which I had seen them. Thus, $270 + 13 = 283$ when I failed. I was hoping to reach the weekend and thus go into October, but it was not in the cards. My species goal continued to change throughout the year. I originally was thinking that if I got by the slow late winter/early spring timeframe I could perhaps reach 220. Then it changed to 230, 240, and so on. I picked up a lot of birds during the summer while on my daily trek to Blue Lake in order to day-list the Lesser Scaup and the Ring-Neck Duck drakes that had been hanging out there. This made it easier to crawl out of bed every morning, since I had two goals.

Would I pursue this challenge again? Probably. But maybe not for at least five years.

Day 119. Swainson's Warbler, by Brad Abendroth



Message from the President

by Michelle Terrell, MOU President

I find it hard to believe that the time has come for me to write my last newsletter message before my term as MOU President comes to an end in December. It is amazing how quickly the last two years have passed. In the wake of COVID, it was a joy to resume the annual cycle of MOU activities, but a calendar full of events, projects, and meetings has also caused the time to fly.

It has been my pleasure to serve as President of the MOU and to represent Minnesota's statewide birding organization. As a historian, I value the depth of the MOU's contributions to the historical record of Minnesota's birds as well as the legacy of past leadership that grew this organization. At the same time, it is important to look ahead to the role that we can play in the future study and conservation of Minnesota's birds of which an important aspect is reaching a wider and more inclusive audience of Minnesotans, who might not consider themselves to be "ornithologists" but who thoroughly enjoy birds and value nature. Some of my favorite moments as President have been connecting young and new birders with the MOU, whether through judging the Hastings Earth Day Birding Festival youth birding competition, leading bird walks, or greeting first-time Paper Session attendees.

I have also enjoyed having the opportunity to work collaboratively with my fellow MOU officers and board members. We are fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated group of individuals come together to volunteer their leadership skills, knowledge, and time to both their service on the board as well as their respective committees/publications. It has been good to get to know each of them better during my time on the board as Vice President and President. In recent years, we have worked together, among other tasks, to bring the Spring Primer and Paper Session to a wider audience through online events and recordings; rebooted our field trips program and the Salt Lake Birding Weekend; supported the projects of individuals and groups through Savaloja Grants; provided public comment on several conservation issues; and partnered with the Bell Museum of Natural History, Carpenter Nature Center, the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, Pheasants Forever, and other organizations to advance shared goals on behalf of Minnesota's birds. I know that incoming President Justin Watts is committed to continuing these activities, broadening our membership, and strengthening our collaborative relationships with other birding and conservation organizations. Please join me in giving him your support.

I hope I will have the opportunity to see many of you at this year's Paper Session, which will be held on December 2 in the North Star Ballroom of the University of Minnesota's St. Paul Student Center. The organizing committee has cho-

sen for this year's theme: Minnesota's Grassland Birds: A Fragile Community. As we look to the future, habitat loss in concert with climate change are significant challenges facing individual species as well as global bird populations, and our native grassland species have suffered significant declines. What role can we as birders, and the MOU as an organization, play in curbing these losses? As always, it promises to be an informative and interesting program of speakers. Look for registration information elsewhere in the newsletter.

While my duties as President will soon end, I look forward to continuing to work with the board and the membership to advance the mission of the MOU in the role of Past President and through the committees on which I serve.

Happy birding!

MOU Book Sale

If you have bird books that you no longer use, please consider donating them to the MOU for the annual MOU Book Sale. The sale will be held at the Paper Session on December 2. All proceeds from the Book Sale go toward the MOU's Savaloja Grants Program, which provides funding to bird research, conservation, and education in Minnesota.

To donate, you may either bring your books directly to the Paper Session or email Alex Sundvall (asgreenplanet4077@gmail.com) to schedule a pickup prior to the event.

NB: Due to quantity, we are only accepting books about birds. We cannot accept journals or magazines.



Conservation Column

Species Spotlight: White-throated Sparrow

by Andy Forbes

Of the many beautiful birdsongs in Minnesota, the frequently heard “Old Sam Peabody Peabody Peabody” (or “Oh Sweet Canada Canada Canada,” if you prefer) is one of my favorites. It is the song of one of our more common species of sparrow, the White-throated Sparrow. This widely distributed and well-known bird has a fascinating life history, and its relative abundance and ease of detection and capture has made it the subject of several very interesting research efforts.

The White-throated Sparrow is one of five species in the genus *Zonotrichia* (which loosely translates as “band hair”). Two of the other species in this genus can be regularly found in Minnesota as well, the White-crowned Sparrow and Harris’s Sparrow. Others are the Golden-crowned Sparrow, which is found in the western United States, mostly along the Pacific Coast, and is casual in Minnesota, and the Rufous-collared Sparrow, a widely distributed species found throughout the Neotropics. Only the White-throated Sparrow breeds in Minnesota, where its song rings through the coniferous bogs of the north in the spring and summer. White-throated Sparrows are very common throughout the state during migration and are frequent visitors to bird feeders.

White-striped and Tan-striped

The White-throated Sparrow is broadly distributed across much of United States, breeding across much of Canada and along the border with the lower 48 states, from Minnesota to Maine. It winters across much of the eastern lower 48 as well as along the Pacific coast in lower numbers, mostly in California and Oregon. For a species with such a huge range, it’s surprising that there is no significant variation in size or plumage nor any different subspecies described, as you might expect for a bird that ranges across much of the continent.

However, this species does have a fascinating dimorphic variation that is unique among birds. Genetic differences in their second chromosome result in two very distinct morphs: White-striped and Tan-striped. White-striped birds have much brighter white on their heads and throats, and are slightly larger on average,



White-throated Sparrow, by Allan Meadows

whereas Tan-striped birds only really show white on their throats.

Perhaps most interesting is that individuals of both morphs breed almost exclusively with an individual of the other morph rather than one of their own. White-striped birds are more aggressive than their Tan-striped counterparts, are less focused on caring for young, sing more (White-striped females will sing also, whereas Tan-striped females do not), and more aggressively defend territories. Tan-striped birds are less aggressive in general, and males are more focused on mate guarding and parental care than their White-striped counterparts. White-striped females will assist with territory defense, whereas Tan-striped females are much less likely to do that.

In the case of White-throated Sparrows, it seems that not only do opposites often attract, but they also are most likely to successfully raise young. You can see why this might be the case: two White-striped birds are perhaps too focused on fighting and singing to be very good at parental care, whereas two Tan-striped

birds might be a little too meek and easily overrun by a pair with a White-striped morph, and thus perhaps not be able to find or defend good territories. Also of interest — and perhaps to muddy the water a bit — studies in laboratory settings suggest that males of both morphs prefer White-striped females, and females of either morph prefer Tan-striped males. This suggests that both male and female choice is involved in pair formation. A fascinating phenomenon to try to wrap your head around.

Research and Conservation

White-throated Sparrows are a very well-studied species in general as mentioned above. The species has been the subject of several studies related to the impact of pesticides. Several insecticides commonly used to control forest insects negatively impact reproductive success and behavior related to the onset of migration and possibly the trajectory of migratory pathways, although the species is likely less impacted than other forest bird, due to its use of lower levels of forest, in comparison with those higher in the canopy and thus more exposed to aerial application of pesticides.

While populations seem mostly stable overall (although the impact of recent widespread intense wildfires across their boreal breeding range on populations is still unknown), White-throated Sparrows are among the most likely to collide with windows and other structures, a problem that would seem to only be increasing with more urbanization and associated hazards and

White-throated Sparrow, by Gerald Hoekstra



light pollution. Proper placement of bird feeders away from windows and application of window treatments can have a major impact on reducing deaths — for these as well as many other of our cherished birds.

Andy Forbes is Acting Assistant Regional Director for the Midwest Migratory Bird Program with USFWS.



White-throated Sparrow, by Gerald Hoekstra

New MOU Members

Welcome to the MOU! (Note to members: Please notify the Membership Chair (membership@moumn.org) of any email or address changes so you can continue receiving the MOU's two publications. We would also appreciate notification when a MOU member dies.)

Carrie & Chet Cisek, *Mahtomedi, MN*
 Kelli Dugger, *Maplewood, MN*
 Michael Hay, *Spring Lake Park, MN*
 Ron Hendricks, *Princeton, MN*
 Haylie Hewitt, *Minnetonka, MN*
 Joel Hoeger, *New Brighton, MN*
 Tesia Kosmalski, *St. Paul, MN*
 James Levitt, *St. Paul, MN*
 Sarah Mooradian, *Minnetonka, MN*
 Mark Nordby, *Bloomington, MN*
 Steven Payne, *Minneapolis, MN*
 Jack St. Ores, *Stillwater, MN*
 Jennifer Schulz, *Minneapolis, MN*
 Samantha Troff, *Harris, MN*

Savaloja Grant Applications and Donations Sought

by *MOU Savaloja Committee*

MOU will award grants for bird-related projects to be funded from the Savaloja Memorial Fund in 2024. Grants are awarded for projects that increase our understanding of birds, promote preservation of birds and their natural habitats, or increase public interest in birds. Proposals that include those currently underrepresented in Minnesota's birding community are welcome as a means of broadening public support for birds and their habitat.

Awards typically range from a few hundred dollars up to as much as \$4000. Details on past projects and application information can be found at [Savaloja Grants request](#). For 2024, we anticipate that at least \$12,000 will be available for grants. The deadline for receipt of grant applications is **January 20, 2024**. Grant recipients will be notified by April 1, 2024. If your organization has an idea for a great project, please consider applying!

Thanks to you, MOU members, we have supported a diverse array of worthy projects over the years. You can help MOU make sure fewer worthy projects go unfunded by upgrading your membership next time you renew, or donating now by following the Donate button at the top of MOU's homepage, being sure to note "Savaloja Fund" in the instructions to the seller. Minnesota's birds will appreciate it!

Prothonotary Warbler, by Mihael Oetken

Save the Date

Minnesota Ornithologists'
Union Paper Session
University of Minnesota
St. Paul Student Center

December 2, 2023
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

The theme of this year's event is "*Minnesota's Grassland Birds: A Fragile Community*".

Presenters will include current graduate students working on grassland bird studies, researchers involved with long-term monitoring projects, and expert advocates for grassland conservation. We look forward to spending the day learning about this unique and vulnerable bird community with you.





— MOU Calendar

November / December 2023

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

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

			November 1	2	3	4 CNC: MN Campus Bird Hike IOC: Owl Prowl MOU: West Metro Sea Duck Run ZVAS: Quarry Hill
5 DAS: Superior Entry Gull Watch	6	7	8	9 SPAS: Great Horned Owl Soap Opera	10	11 CNC: Wi Campus Bird Hike MRVAC: Old Cedar Ave. Bridge ZVAS: Tundra Swan Field Trip
12 DAS: Superior Entry Gull Watch MRVAC: Bass Ponds	13	14	15	16	17 CNC: MN Campus Bird Banding	18 LNC: Bird Banding MRVAC: Old Cedar Ave. Bridge
19 DAS: Superior Entry Gull Watch LNC: Raptors Up Close	20	21	22	23	24	25 IOC: Owl Prowl
26 DAS: Superior Entry Gull Watch	27	28	29	30	December 1	2 CNC: MN Campus Bird Hike MRVAC: Old Cedar Ave. Bridge ZVAS: Quarry Hill
3	4	5 ACM: No. Hawk Owl Webinar	6	7	8	9 CNC: Wi Campus Bird Hike
10 MRVAC: Bass Ponds	11	12	13	14	15	16 MRVAC: Wilkie Unit ZVAS: Christmas Bird Count
17 CNC: MN Campus Bird Banding LNC: Raptors Up Close	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29 CNC: MN Campus Bird Banding	30 FOSZB: Winter Birding Trips IOC: Owl Prowl
31 FOSZB: Winter Birding Trips						



— MOU Calendar

November / December 2023

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

AUDUBON CHAPTER OF MINNEAPOLIS

<https://www.minneapolisaudubon.org/events>

Dec. 5: Northern Hawk Owl Movement and Habitat Use Webinar

7–8:15 pm. The Northern Hawk Owl Project, led by Hannah Toutonghi, is looking at the movements and winter habitat use of Northern Hawk Owls in northern Minnesota and southern Manitoba. There is little known about what hawk owls do in harsh winter conditions and how far they move within a single season. We will discuss the species, what we previously knew about hawk owls, and new results of using telemetry to track individual hawk owls throughout the winter season. Please come with your curiosity and questions about this nomadic denizen of the Northwoods. [Advance registration](#) for this free webinar is required.

CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

<https://carpenternaturecenter.org/events>

Nov. 4 & Dec. 2: MN Campus Bird Hike:

12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings.
9–11:00 am. Learn to identify birds with local experts. Binoculars and field guides available or bring your own. Program fee: \$5 per participant or free for “Friends of CNC,” SCVBC members, and students. Space is limited and reservations are required. Please call the Carpenter Nature Center at 651-437-4359.

Nov. 11: WI Campus Bird Hike:

279 South Cove Rd., Hudson, WI.
9–11:00 am. Learn to identify birds with local experts. Binoculars and field guides available or bring your own. Program fee: \$5 per participant or free for “Friends of CNC,” SCVBC members, and students. Space is limited and reservations are required. Please call the Carpenter Nature Center at 651-437-4359.

Dec. 9: WI Campus Bird Hike:

300 East Cove Rd., Hudson, WI.
9–11:00 am. Learn to identify birds with local experts. Binoculars and field guides available or bring your own. Program fee: \$5 per participant or free for “Friends of CNC,” SCVBC members, and students. Space is limited and reservations are required. Please call the Carpenter Nature Center at 651-437-4359.

Nov. 17 & Dec. 29: MN Campus Bird Banding:

Carpenter Nature Center 12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings
8:30–12:00 pm. See birds up-close and watch the experts band birds at CNC. Banding runs continuously, so come and go as you please. Donations of bird seed and suet are appreciated in lieu of a program fee. All banding, marking, and sampling is being conducted under a federally authorized Bird Banding Permit issued by the U.S. Geological Survey’s BBL. Call 651-437-4359 for any questions.

DULUTH AUDUBON SOCIETY

<https://duluthaudubon.org>

Nov. 5, 12, 19 & 26: Superior Entry Gull Watch

10:00 am. Join obsessive gull watcher and Duluth Audubon Society Vice President Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus on these Sundays for this season’s Duluth Audubon Society Superior Entry Gull Watch. These trips have the intention to view and learn about gull identification in the field. Gulls can be a difficult group of birds to identify, and this field experience will work to help attendees better understand the more common gulls in Minnesota, as well as give pointers on how to spot the more uncommon species of gull that make their way to the state every fall and winter. We will meet at the Superior entry Breakwall (very end of Wisconsin Point). The gulling could last between 2-4 hours. For more information, go to the DAS [website](#).



Gray-cheeked Thrush, by Allan Meadows

FRIENDS OF SAX-ZIM BOG

<https://saxzim.org/>

Dec. 30 & 31: Winter Birding Field Trips

8:00 am–2:00 pm. As this issue of “Minnesota Birding went to press these great winter trips were not yet listed on the FOSZB website. For more information and registration go to <https://saxzim.org/events/>

INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER

126 E Cedar St., Houston

<https://www.internationalowlcenter.org/>

Nov. 4, 25 & Dec. 30: Expert-led Owl Prowl

Nov. 4, 5:00 pm -

[Click here to get tickets \(starting October 1\)](#)

Nov. 25, 4:00 pm -

[Click here to get tickets \(starting Nov. 5\)](#)

Dec. 30, 4:00 pm -

[Click here to get tickets \(starting Nov. 26\)](#)

Join expert owl caller Jo Severson for an indoor session to learn local owl calls and owl prowl etiquette, then drive your vehicle following Jo to 3-4 rural stops to call for wild owls. Owls are usually heard but not seen. Pre-registration is required and is \$10 for Owl Center members and \$15 for non-members. For more information or to register go to: <https://www.internationalowlcenter.org/owlprowls.html>



Spruce Grouse, by Richard Gotz

LOWRY NATURE CENTER: THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria.

Note: For more information on these events please go to the [Three Rivers Park District website](#).

Nov. 18: Bird Banding

9am–12:00 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied, and banded with numbered rings. Discuss what scientists learn from these banded birds. Drop in anytime. All ages. Free.

Nov. 19: Raptors Up Close

3–4:30 pm. Raptors have been a part of education at Lowry for many of our 50 years. Meet the current captive raptors, learn about these amazing birds of prey and how they help teach. This program is entirely outdoors. Drop in anytime. All ages. Free.

Dec. 17: Raptors Up Close

2:30–4:00 pm. Raptors have been a part of education at Lowry for many of our 50 years. Meet the current captive raptors, learn about these amazing birds of prey and how they help teach. This program is entirely outdoors. Drop in anytime. All ages. Free.

MINNESOTA GLOBAL BIRDERS

This informal group of people interested in birding throughout the planet has monthly online gatherings. Details on the events, and on how to register for the Zoom sessions, will be provided via MOU-NET and also on the Minnesota Global Birders and Minnesota Birding pages in Facebook a few weeks before each session.

MINNESOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

<https://moumn.org/>

For questions, please contact Trey Weaver, MOU Field Trip Chair: fieldtrips@moumn.org

Nov. 4: West Metro Sea Duck Run

9:00 am–2:00 pm. Join Trey Weaver on a caravan through the West Metro (Hennepin, Wright and if time allows Carver County) in search of ducks, especially sea ducks such as Black, White-winged, and Surf Scoters. A spotting scope is recommended, but not required. We will meet at East Medicine Lake Park, 1740 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth. Registration required. Limited to ten people. [click this link for more information and to register.](#)

MN RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER

www.mrvac.org

Note: Registration process for MVNWR Field Trips: Registration for these walks is available on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge website. Registration for some dates will remain locked for about a month prior to the date of the walk. Please indicate in your registration if you would like to receive a birding summary and species list from the walk. Registration is required online at the following link: [signup](#). For information about MRVAC birding events, contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647 or EgretCMan@msn.com

Nov. 12 & Dec. 10: Bass Ponds Trailhead

8–10:30 am. Explore some of the best Refuge units for bird watching in the Winter Season. We will spend time on these walks searching for birds that over winter on the refuge or are late migrants. We will study the different species of birds and learn about some other local locations to search for birds during the Winter Season. Birders of all skill levels are welcome to attend these walks. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Registration required: see above. Meet at 2501 86th St. E., Bloomington.

Nov. 11, 18 & Dec. 2: Old Cedar Ave. Bridge

8–10:30 am. Explore some of the best Refuge units for bird watching in the Winter Season. We will spend time on these walks searching for birds that over winter on the refuge or are late migrants. We will study the different species of birds and learn about some other local locations to search for birds during the Winter Season. Birders of all skill levels are welcome to attend these walks. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Registration required: see above. Meet at 9551 Old Cedar Ave. S., Bloomington.

Dec. 16: Wilkie Unit Trailhead

8–10:30 am. Explore one of the best Refuge units for bird watching in the Winter Season. We will spend time on this walk searching for birds that over winter on the refuge or are late migrants. We will study the different species of birds and learn about some other local locations to search for birds during the Winter Season. Birders of all skill levels are welcome to attend these walks. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Registration required: see above. Meet at 7701 County Road 101 E., Shakopee.

January 11 thru 13: Sax/Zim Bog Birding Days

7:00 am. We will search for any over wintering Owls in the area and spend a day at some of the feeding stations in the Sax/Zim Bog. This will give your 2023 birding checklist a good start with a fair number of northern specialties. Please contact Craig to register for this trip: 952-240-7647. Cost: \$35/non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members.

ST. PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

<https://www.saintpaulaudubon.org/upcoming-events/>

Nov. 9: Great Horned Owl Soap Opera

6–9:00 pm. In this Zoom-only presentation Karla Bloem will present a real-life soap opera playing itself out over the past 19 years between more than 25 captive and wild Great Horned Owls, forming the basis of an in-depth vocal study on the species. In this presentation, you will experience owl dating, divorce, territorial defense, and more as you learn about the owls' various vocalizations and meanings. For further information and to join Zoom go to the SPA [website](#).

ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

<https://zumbrovalleyaudubon.org/calendar.html>

Note: For full information on these events, go to the ZVAS [website](#).

Nov. 4 & Dec. 2: Quarry Hill Bird Walk

9–10:30 am. Leaders: Terry & Joyce Grier. Join us on a casual walk around [Quarry Hill Park](#), Rochester. Meet by the Nature Center west entrance - 2100 9th St. N.E. Bring binoculars if you have them. Dress for the weather. Stay for any length of time. Free and open to the public; no registration required.

Nov. 11: Tundra Swan Field Trip

8:00 am–mid-afternoon. Leaders: Terry & Joyce Grier. Meet at the east side parking lot of the Heintz Center 1926 Collegeview Road E., Rochester at 8:00 am to carpool. We'll travel thru La Crescent and down the Mississippi to Brownsville to see thousands of migrating Tundra Swans and other waterfowl. Trip will return early afternoon. Bring your own lunch or eat at a local restaurant before returning to Rochester.

Dec. 16: Annual Christmas Bird Count

7:15 am–4:45 pm. Each year teams of interested bird-watchers search designated sections of the Rochester area to see what birds can be found. We'll meet at the west Silver Lake parking lot (near the former fire station) at 7:15 am and divide up into groups. There will be at least one experienced birder in each group. Each group is assigned a count area and then off we go. A mid-day tally is held at Quarry Hill Nature Center from noon to 1:00 pm and a final tally at 4:45 pm at the same location. Want to help? Contact our master count compiler Clifford Hansen at clhroch@yahoo.com

Birder Bio: Yasushi Nakagawa

Tell us about yourself:

I live in Shoreview with my wife Naoko, who is also a birder, two cats, and a Russian tortoise. I study brain development at the U of M. I am originally from Japan, and moved to San Diego in 1996 before relocating to Minnesota about 20 years ago. Our two grown children, residing on the opposite coasts, have recently started to go birding as well.

When did you start birding; what first sparked your interest?

In my early years, my parents led my brother and me on frequent hikes around Kobe, where we resided. My formal introduction to birding came during my college freshman year when I joined a field biology club. We conducted bird censuses in the mountains, and also had many birding trips throughout Japan. Encountering a Blakiston's Fish-Owl in the deep forest of Hokkaido was one of the highlights.

How did your interest expand after that first experience?

After college, I became busy with study and family, and stopped birding for a long time, with the exception of some periods when I was in Southern California. I came back to birding again about three years ago after our kids left home and I started to have more time on the weekend. Since then, I have gradually expanded my birding areas outside of my home county.

What is the main attraction of birding for you?

I have always liked to be outdoors. Even when I was not birding actively, I went camping and canoeing with my family. Birding is a very good way of knowing who shares the earth with us. I also like the idea that you never know what you come across or sometimes do not find a target bird.

How did you originally become acquainted with the MOU?

I think I first found MOU on the internet when I was searching for field trip opportunities. The first one I attended was at Camp Spring Lake in Dakota County in 2021. That was really fun, and I felt the birding community here was very welcoming.

Where are your favorite places to bird inside/outside MN?

My favorite local patch is Sucker Lake, and I also like other nearby spots such as Snail Lake, Vadnais Lake, and Arden Hills Army Ammunition Plant Trails. I have enjoyed places like Sax Zim Bog (in summer and winter), Duluth (especially for hawks and gulls), Crystal Spring SNA, and Armstrong Wetland Preservation. Salt Lake and its surroundings are great, with lots of shorebirds and dozens of White-Faced Ibises. I recently took a road trip with my daughter to the Pacific Northwest. As we drove through western North Dakota and Montana, we started to see very different kinds of birds, including some rare ones in Minne-

sota like Spotted Towhee and Mountain Bluebird. That was a really delightful experience. When visiting Japan to see my relatives and friends, I explore a few hot spots near Tokyo, mainly for gulls and shorebirds.

What is your favorite birding style (alone or with others)?

I like various birding styles. I usually bird by myself, but also enjoy the company of my family and my fantastic birding friends. Field trips are also my favorites. I used to carry only binoculars and occasionally a spotting scope, but recently I've started to take pictures with a mirrorless camera whenever there is a chance. I am also experimenting digiscoping, although that is still a work in progress.

What is your favorite bird or bird family?

Warblers, shorebirds and gulls. Their intricate plumages and challenging identifications make them captivating.

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

Having a regular birding spot and visiting there throughout the year has helped me to better understand habitats and bird behaviors. Given my less-than-stellar visual and auditory memory, documenting birds through photographs and audio recordings has improved my identification skills. It allows for detailed scrutiny and facilitates learning through interactions with more experienced birders.

Have you ever had an unusual experience while birding?

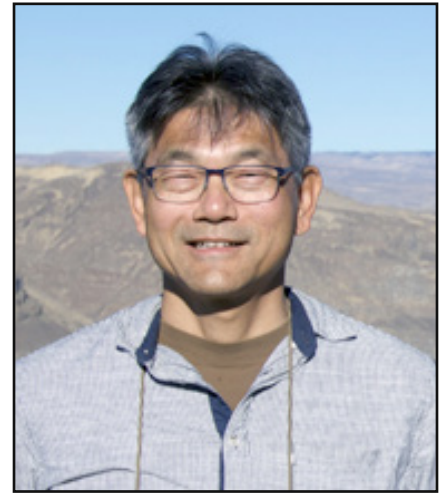
When I had just started birding during my college years, I took a train for several hours to a place called "Hills of Cormorants." I found myself surrounded by thousands of Great Cormorants, with no other human beings in sight. It was an eerie encounter, but that was probably the beginning of my fondness for solo birding.

Any other interests or hobbies when you're not birding?

I like cooking. I typically cook many kinds of Japanese and East Asian dishes. Middle Eastern/Mediterranean is another type I like to cook and eat.

What new bird would you most like to see?

Northern Hawk Owl





Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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The Mission of the M.O.U.

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

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