

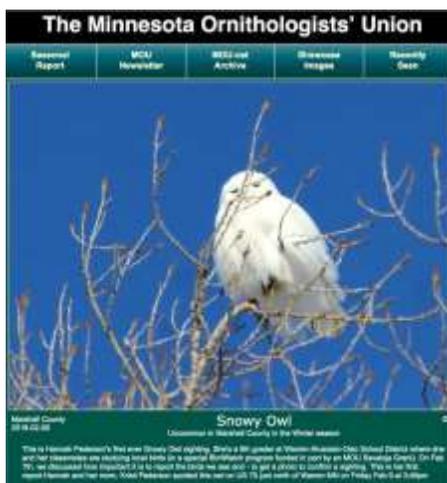
**WAO 6th Grade BirdWatch Project**  
 2017-2018 School Year Final Report for MOU  
 Savaloja Grant

The goal of the Warren Alvarado Oslo (WAO) BirdWatch Project is to put the tools of bird watching in the hands of every 6<sup>th</sup> grade student and help them learn how to use them - then with the help of others who are passionate about birds – introduce students to field “citizen science” projects to which they can contribute, and have fun doing it.

With funding from the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Savaloja Grant and the WAO Education Foundation, the Project purchased a total of 45 binoculars. The WAO School District and the WAO Education Foundation provided 37 copies of the Kaufman Field Guide to Birds of North America. Agassiz Audubon donated 5 copies, and Cassie Szklarski of Argyle donated 3 copies of the Spanish edition of the Kaufman Field Guide for students whose families who speak Spanish at home. The Warren Sheaf newspaper printed 50 4-color posters of the birds likely to visit the feeders - one for each student to take home and a dozen extra to have on hand in the classrooms that overlook the feeding station.



Agassiz Audubon provided a wrought iron pole, a seed funnel/scoop, bird seed and three feeders (suet, sunflower and thistle). D & D Commodities also donated bird seed and birding Activity Books. Mr. Wall installed the pole and feeders outside the HS Science lab rooms.



**Birds Of The Warren Area: Vesper Sparrow**  
 By Adam Kozarski, WAO Schools 6th Grade Bird Study Project

You're likely to hear their birds before you see them. They're known for singing in early evening. In fact, they were named for the evening prayers known as "vespers" - which is also the Latin word for "evening." Follow their song and you'll find them. Look for Vesper Sparrows in late spring, sitting on posts, power lines and shrubs along roads, near farms and CEP fields. They're little brown streaked birds with a white eye ring, and white outer tail feathers. During breeding season, you might see the male running around on the ground with his wings and tail spread, chattering in the air near a female.

Vesper Sparrows build their nests on the ground near a clump of grass, a weed or a shrub. They use twigs and grasses, and sometimes line their nest with animal hair. When finished, the adults do a "distraction display" to lure intruders away from the nest. Females lay 2-6 eggs, and both parents feed the nestlings caterpillars, moths, bugs and grasshoppers. fledglings leave the nest a week or two after they hatch.

States: Common in summer  
 When to look: Summer evenings at dusk  
 Summer Range: Northern & Western US  
 Winter Range: Southern & western US, Southern Canada, Northern Mexico  
 Summer Diet: Invertebrates  
 Winter Diet: Seed seeds  
 Conservation: Declining  
 Threats: Chemicals and early snowing  
 References:  
 Cornell University "All About Birds"  
 Minnesota Ornithologists' Union "Marshall County"  
 Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas

Students researched a "bird biography" (the life history, range maps, diets, etymology, habitats, behavior and relative abundance information). MOU member Sandy Aubol of East Grand Forks provided one-time use of her bird photos to illustrate them. The Warren Sheaf newspaper published the biographies and the

photos students submitted. Hannah Pederson's first ever Snowy Owl sighting (and photo) was also posted on the MOU website Feb 9, 2018.



Agassiz Audubon Society created and moderated posts the "WAO BirdWatch Project" Facebook page (@WAObirdwatch) and also placed stories about the Project in the *Warren Sheaf* and *Crookston Daily Times*.

Agassiz Audubon members helped with 2 bus trips to the Agassiz Valley Impoundment - one in September 2017, the other in May 2018.



Agassiz Audubon Society presented 12 classroom programs. Subjects included "How to use Binoculars," "How to Use a Field Guide to Identify Birds," "Backyard Bird Feeding," "Identifying Birds at Feeders," "Winter Owls of the Warren Area" and "Birding Q & A." The most abundant winter birds at the feeders? Common Redpolls. The birds that created the most buzz? Snowy Owls.



One of the most "memorable" student experiences happened when one of our "bird of the week" programs was interrupted by a fire drill. While the 6th graders waited for the signal to go back indoors, our Agassiz Audubon speaker noticed some bird action in the park across the street from the High School. A Cooper's Hawk caught a Northern Flicker, and everyone watched as the hawk plucked and ate it! Student comments ranged from "eww, gross" to "way cool - can we get closer?"



The Godel Library in Warren contributed to the project by providing a venue for two programs (*Ducks on a Stick* and *How to identify winter songbirds*). The library also installed three birdfeeding stations to create "on-site" birdwatching opportunities for students and the community at large. And the library sponsored evening programs on birds for adults and families.



Due to the immense amount of goals as well as unforeseen changes in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade as a whole, some goals went unaccomplished. I would not say the project was a failure as many of those unfinished were partially completed.

Our 6<sup>th</sup> grade class was moved to the high school building the year after we began this project. With less flexibility in schedules we were unable to leave the building as much as we had anticipated which affected our ability to collect as much data as we would have liked. Our students each chose a bird that was common for our area and completed research projects regarding their migratory patterns and eating habits. They created Google Slides of their research and published a few articles in the local newspaper, but many struggled to make them publishable due to an inability to properly avoid copyright infringement. With all the other things they had going on, our revising and editing began to fatigue them to the point where they lost interest in what the original goal was and that was to bring a greater interest to birding.

The bird research has been a part of the curriculum for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year now. While it has shrunk in scale, a unit will be taught each year. We were doing it for a day a week for an entire year, but as I stated previously, this caused the students who were not as excited about it to grow tired of it. This year, and for the years to come we will do a unit to focus on birds in Western Marshall County to provide information and increase awareness, preservation, etc.

Overall I would view the project as a partial-success with many struggles. Since only a fraction of the students continued to maintain an interest throughout, creating a “birding club” would probably be more affective for a project of this nature. For this reason some of our resources will be allocated to the public library, which has agreed to schedule events related to birds and bird watching and will invite our 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to these events. I feel this will be the most affective route to travel to reach those interested beyond the classroom level and allow them to continue it as a hobby, or even as a career, in the future.

Aaron Wall, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
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WAO 6th Grade BirdWatch Project  
2017 -2018 School Year  
Budget Report

45 - 8.5x 32 Vortex Raptor binoculars

**\$2,380.00 (MOU Savaloja Grant)**

945.00 (WAO Education Foundation Grant)

45 copies - Kaufman Field Guide to Birds

\$360.05 19 copies (WAO school district - from 2012 grant)

341.10 18 copies (WAO Education Foundation Grant)

151.60 8 copies (donated by Agassiz Audubon + Cassie Szklarski)

2 programs Godel Memorial Library programs

\$100 Winter Birds of the Warren Area (donated by Godel Library) \$100

How to identify ducks (donated by Godel Library)

12 programs - Agassiz Audubon (donated)

How to use Binoculars

How to write a bird biography

How to use Field Guides

How to identify Hawks and Eagles

How to identify Birds

Who are those Little Brown Birds

Backyard Birdfeeding

Bird Q & A (4 programs)

Owls of the Warren Area

2 bus trips to Agassiz Valley Impoundment (guides: Agassiz Audubon)

Fall 2017 Sept 21

Spring 2018 May 4

Bird Feeding station (pole, baffle, 3 feeders, funnel/scoop)

Agassiz Audubon (provided)

Bird seed/suet and Bird Activity Booklets - D & D Commodities (donated)

50 digital images of local birds for bird biographies - (donated by Sandy Aubol)

50 - Color Posters of Feeder Birds of the Warren Area (printing donated by Warren Sheaf)

(1-time printing rights donated by ABBS)

Large format Warren City map (donated by NWRDC)

Facebook Page images and moderator (provided by Agassiz Audubon Society)