

# Minnesota BIRDING



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# Phenology Corner Songbird Sundry

by Bob Dunlap

To say that the months of May and June are like breaths of fresh air to us birders is a gross understatement. Particularly given one of the coldest winters in decades that probably kept us cooped up indoors more than we would have liked, I'm sure we're all itching to get out and into the field at every opportunity that presents itself. All it takes is one look at a Blackburnian Warbler during lunch or the bubbly song of an Indigo Bunting heard while walking the dog to assure us that the long, cold wait was worth it.

Although some neotropical migrants have been trickling in since mid-April, the number of songbird species greatly increases during the first week of May. Eastern Kingbirds, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Bobolinks begin to appear and stake out territories in fields and prairies. In woodlands and suburban areas, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Baltimore Orioles adorn treetop and birdfeeder alike. Sparrow migration is arguably at its peak during the first week of May; watch especially for Harris's and White-crowned among the larger numbers of White-throated (although the previous two species can form large flocks). Yellow-rumped Warblers are usually in greatest abundance during this week as well, with good numbers of Ruby-crowned Kinglets accompanying them.

By the second week of May, more warblers, vireos, flycatchers, thrushes, and tanagers are making their way into the state. In southern Minnesota, peak warbler migration tends to occur during the second

or third week of May, whereas in the north it almost always occurs in the final week. The best times to see much-coveted warbler waves are mornings following the passage of weather fronts, particularly storms that cause these nocturnal migrants to become grounded for the night.

A few songbirds arrive later still, often not appearing in good numbers until the final week of the month. Migrating Mourning and Connecticut warblers are perhaps best looked for in the final week of May, and Willow and Alder flycatchers appear on their breeding grounds during this same week. Many warblers straggle through into the first week of June, just as Dickcissels — one of the last songbirds to arrive — are returning to prairies in southern Minnesota.

As breeding season commences in June, many of these birds, particularly warblers and vireos, become much more difficult to see as they're either perched high in trees or obscured by dense foliage. For those of us who have learned these species' songs, birding by ear is often the easiest way to detect their presence. Toward the end of June, however, even songs become less prevalent as nestlings hatch and adults are spending more time feeding young than defending territories.

The last day of June affords us time to reflect on the gems of our previous two months' pursuits. But this reflection need not last long, for migration of another variety has already begun! Stay tuned for shorebird migration in the upcoming July/August issue.

# Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Presents Certificate of Appreciation to Lewis's Woodpecker Host

by Alyssa DeRubeis

photo by Dave Cahlander

Some of Minnesota's most sought-after rarities are the ones that visit bird feeders: Painted Bunting, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Rufous Hummingbird, and Lewis's Woodpecker, to name a few. It is understandable why dozens of birders flock to such holy bird feeding stations. What is sometimes overlooked is why landowners would not want a dozen gawkers peering into their yards with binoculars, scopes, and cameras, especially if those gawkers are trespassing or blocking entrance ways. For those reasons, some landowners that host a rare bird ask that their home addresses are never shared with the public. Fortunately, there are some landowners that welcome birders to their backyards. Janet Anderson is part of the latter group.

In early November 2013, Minnesota birders learned that a Lewis's Woodpecker was frequenting a bird feeder in Roosevelt (Roseau County), marking only the fourth state record. The landowner, Janet Anderson, shared information about her property, including the exact location and where the bird feeders are situated, to the public. The colorful woodpecker attracted many visitors from around the state, and, for most of them, the bird was at least a new state bird, if not a life bird. Great looks and photographs were taken by numerous birders.

Aware of the increased traffic, Janet asked that visitors stay on the



road, not block the driveway, and, of course, be mindful of the Lewis's Woodpecker. It appears that all birders obeyed her requests, and some even donated bird feed to her. Janet would also come out to the road to chat with visitors. Overall, it was a win-win situation, where Janet's property was respected and birders were rewarded with stellar views of the woodpecker.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union (MOU) Awards Committee also recognized Janet's hospitality, and in late February the committee gave her a Certificate of Appreciation. In response, the MOU received a hand-written note from Janet that

read: "Thank you so much for the wonderful plaque. It means a lot to Lowell (family member) and I to be recognized for being winter hosts to 'Lewie'. He continues to visit our feeders several times a day and is quite the character! We will treasure this opportunity for the rest of our lives!"

The MOU strives to maintain positive interactions with landowners. If you know of an individual or a business in Minnesota that welcomes birders to see rarities on their properties, please e-mail the Chairperson of the MOU Awards and Recognition Committee, Kim Eckert, at [eckertkr@gmail.com](mailto:eckertkr@gmail.com).

# Minnesota Birder Bio: Craig Mandel

*Born:* Menasha, Wisconsin

*Currently living:* Minnetonka, Minnesota.

*Occupation:* I've worked in the food service industry since 1973. I have been the head cook at a number of restaurants and the head chef at a yacht club. I am currently employed at Lakewinds Natural Foods.

*Serious about birding since:* While I've enjoyed birds since I was a child, I didn't begin seriously studying and keeping records of birds until the early 1980s.

*Favorite bird or bird family:* I don't really have a favorite bird, but I do have a favorite family of birds, and that would be shorebirds. Observing shorebirds, especially in Minnesota, offers many challenges. First, you need to figure out a location where you can observe them. Then, if you're lucky enough

to find that spot, you need to figure out what species are there.

*Favorite place(s) to bird in Minnesota:* Minnesota Valley NWR is the top on my list of locations to bird in Minnesota. With the wide variety of habitats within the different units, one can find over 200 species of birds, with more than half of them being nesting species.

*Favorite place to bird outside of Minnesota:* Boyce Thompson Arboretum in Superior, Arizona, would be my favorite location to bird outside of Minnesota. The birding is great year round and there always seems to be an unusual bird. And if the birding is slow, they have an amazing collection of cactuses from around the world that one can enjoy.

*Birding style (i.e. by yourself, with others, etc.):* While I do enjoy just getting out by myself on

occasion to see what I can find, I am also very comfortable birding in a group as a participant or as the group leader.

*Best advice on how to be a better birder:* Study the birds you find out birding and then study your field guides when you get home. The main attraction or joy of birding for you- It's a very relaxing hobby that gives you the opportunity to continually learn new things.

*Interests/hobbies when you're not birding:* I also enjoy tropical fish. While I have not had much success in observing tropical fish in the wild, I do enjoy my three aquariums at home. The Gold Angelfish is probably my favorite species of aquarium fish.

*What new bird you would like to see the most:* Spoon-billed Sandpiper.



Northern Cardinal  
Photo by Mary Graves

## Deadlines for Submissions to MN Birding:

July/August: May 25

September/October: July 25

November/December: September 25

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# MOU Calendar

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## **Every Saturday, May through September: Early Birders**

Organization: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board  
Details: Takes place at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary; 7:30-9:00 a.m. Free. To register or for more information call 612-370-4903.

## **Every Saturday in May: Spring Birding at the Garden**

Organization: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board  
Details: Takes place at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary; 9:30-11:00 a.m. Free. To register or for more information call 612-370-4903.

## **Various Dates, May-June: Birding Basics**

Organization: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board  
Details: Takes place at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary on the following dates and times: May 4<sup>th</sup> (3:00-4:00 p.m.), May 24<sup>th</sup> (1:00-2:00 p.m.), and June 1<sup>st</sup> (3:00-4:00 p.m.). Free. To register or for more information call 612-370-4903.

## **May 3: Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge Celebration of International Migratory Bird Day**

Organization: Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge  
Details: The Refuge Headquarters and Visitor Center located five miles south of McGregor on Highway 65 will be open from 7:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m.

## **May 6: "Butterflies" movie & discussion by Dean Hanson**

Organization: Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis  
Details: Features native butterflies and their required plants at the Namekegon Barrens Wildlife Area in Wisconsin. 7:00 p.m. at the Beth El Synagogue, 5224 W 26th Street, St Louis Park, MN 55416. Free and open to the public.

## **May 10: Crane Meadows NWR Spring Bird Tour**

Organization: Friends of Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge  
Details: Led by Frank Gosiak and/or Milt Blomberg. 8:00-11:30 a.m. at the Refuge headquarters. MOU afternoon extension 12:30-5:00 p.m.; visit other NWR or Little Falls birding sites. Sign up with Milton Blomberg (mjblwrm@msn.com). For more information contact Paul Soler at the Refuge: 320-632-1575.

## **May 10: Carver Park Birding**

Organization: Three Rivers Park District  
Details: Led by a naturalist. Beginners welcome; ages 12 and older. 7:30-9:30 a.m. Meet at Lowry Nature Center. Reservations required; go to [www.threeriversparks.org](http://www.threeriversparks.org) or call 763-559-6700. Cost: \$5.

## **May 10: Boulder Birding Big Day**

Organizations: Boulder Lake Environmental Learning Center and Duluth Audubon Society  
Details: Boulder Lake Environmental Center, 7328 Boulder Dam Road, Duluth, MN. Sign-in/breakfast treats 6:15-6:45 a.m.; birding 7:00-11:00 a.m. To pre-register (cost is \$5 before May 1st and \$7 after) call 218-721-3731 or email [boulder@d.umn.edu](mailto:boulder@d.umn.edu) or [das@duluthaudubon.org](mailto:das@duluthaudubon.org). Pay at sign-in.

## **Every Wednesday from May 14-28:**

### **Spring Bird Watching**

Organization: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board  
Details: Takes place at Loring Park from 7:00-8:00 a.m.; \$15/resident; \$22.50/non-resident. To register or for more information call 612-313-7725.

## **May 15-18: Annual Detroit Lakes Festival of Birds**

Organization: Detroit Lakes Chamber of Commerce  
Details: Thursday, May 15, 1:00 p.m.: Wildlife Photography workshop, Carrol Henderson; 5:30 p.m. Passenger Pigeon presentation, Joel Greenberg. Friday, May 16: Prairie Chicken blind field trips; 5:15 p.m. A Love Affair with Birds, Sue Leaf. Saturday, May 17: morning field trips; 1:00 p.m. free Shorebird I.D. workshop; 6:00 p.m. Double Life of Bobolink, Rosalind Renfrew. Sunday, May 18: morning prairie and water impoundment field trips. Online program and registration at [www.VisitDetroitLakes.com](http://www.VisitDetroitLakes.com).

## **May 17: Spring Birding Day**

Organization: Saint John's Outdoor University  
Details: Hike through Saint John's Abbey Arboretum, a 2,500-acre Minnesota "Important Bird Area." 5:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.. All tours start in Room 150 of the New Science Center. Includes continental breakfast and lunch at the Saint John's Refectory. Sitings in recent years have included Gray-cheeked thrush, Cerulean warbler, Mourning warbler, Eastern towhee, American Avocet, and Harris's sparrow. Optional birding to the Albany wastewater ponds after lunch. Cost is \$12 for Arboretum members; \$16 for nonmembers.

To register or for more information visit [www.csbsju.edu/outdooru/education/events/springbirdingday](http://www.csbsju.edu/outdooru/education/events/springbirdingday). The checklist is available at [www.csbsju.edu/Documents/OutdoorU/land\\_steward/plantsandwildlife/2013FinalBirdChecklist-124species.pdf](http://www.csbsju.edu/Documents/OutdoorU/land_steward/plantsandwildlife/2013FinalBirdChecklist-124species.pdf).

# Calendar

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## May 17-18: St. Louis County Birdathon

Organization: Friends of Hawk Ridge

Details: May 17 — Find as many bird species as possible within a 24-hour period. May 18 — potluck and results of birdathon at Hartley Nature Center. Cost: \$30.

Proceeds to support Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. For more information and to register visit [www.hawkridge.org/events/birdathon.html](http://www.hawkridge.org/events/birdathon.html).

## May 17 and June 21: Bird Banding

Organization: Three Rivers Park District

Details: Takes place at Lowry Nature Center from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Free and open to the public with no reservation required.

## May 30-June 1: Boreal Birding and Northern Landscapes Festival

Organization: North House Folk School

Details: Discover the birds, wildflowers, geology and more of the dynamic and rich Northern landscape.

The Northern Landscapes Festival features a series of interrelated, field focused courses, complimented by presentations and programs. Geologist Richard Ojakangas is the featured speaker. For a full list of courses and to register for them, visit <http://www.northhouse.org/programs/events/birdingfestival.htm>

## June 6-8: Birding Bonanza Weekend

Organization: Audubon Center of the North Woods

Details: The rich biological diversity of Pine County and the surrounding area provide a bonanza of birding opportunities. Includes field trips and on-site workshops, bird banding sessions, a live raptor presentation, and keynote speakers. All-inclusive weekend package rates (includes lodging, meals, and all programming): \$245-\$295. Commuter rates also available. EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT - 10% off regular rates if registered and paid by 5/2/14. Online registration at <http://audubon-center.org/event/birding-weekend/> or call 1-888-404-7743.

## June 7-8: Twin Cities Urban Birding Festival

Organization: Audubon Minnesota

Details: Multiple locations throughout the Twin Cities. Events include bike hikes, bird crafts, bird banding, canoeing, story time, puppet shows, films, and more led by naturalists and guest presenters. For a full list of locations and programs visit <http://mn.audubon.org/urban-birding-festival-twin-cities>.

## June 28: Banding Osprey Babies

Organization: Three Rivers Park District

Details: Takes place at Lowry Nature Center from 9:00-11:00 a.m. Reservations required; go to [www.threeriversparks.org](http://www.threeriversparks.org) or call 763-559-6700. Cost: \$5.

## PLAN AHEAD

### October 3-5: Sparrow Workshop

Organized by: Doug Buri

Details: Registration is open for the three-day sparrow workshop that Bob Janssen and Doug Buri host each October in Milbank, SD. Half of the workshop time is spent in classroom sessions, starting with the basics through advanced identification. The remaining time during the three days is spent on field trips to some of the best sparrow locations in the Midwest. Complete details on the web site at [www.douguri.com/sparrow](http://www.douguri.com/sparrow). Space is limited, so please contact Doug Buri at [douguri@tnics.com](mailto:douguri@tnics.com) if you want to attend this workshop.

## Calendar Highlight: MOU Youth Mentor Training Workshop

Date: June 17, 2014

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Location: Carpenter Nature Center's Trailside Lodge:  
12355 St. Croix Trail, Hastings, MN 55033

Cost: FREE to MOU Mentors

Join other MOU mentors for a day of learning and networking. Learn effective techniques for teaching youth. Experts will share methods for keeping the students and leaders safe in the classroom and in the field.

Explore options for incorporating technology and MOU teaching tools into your presentation to better engage young learners. Contribute your ideas to the future of the MOU Mentor Program. Optional birding excursion available in the area before the program begins.

Bring your own lunch or order a box lunch for \$10. Register by emailing [Jennifer@CarpenterNatureCenter.org](mailto:Jennifer@CarpenterNatureCenter.org) or call the CNC office at 651-437-4359.

# Conservation Column: Purple Martin Study Cooperators Sought in Western Minnesota

by *Mike North*

Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) historically nested in natural cavities in trees and among rocks. Some still do in the western United States, but in the east — including Minnesota — they appear to be entirely reliant on man-made martin houses and gourds for their nesting. After the nesting season, however, they leave their breeding colonies to forage widely. In the evenings, martins gather in large numbers to spend the night in a roost, most often a large cattail stand in a lake. Major roosts contain more than 100,000 birds, while minor roosts have only a few thousand. These roosts change as the pre-migratory season progresses with birds using one roost area and then some of them switching to another. Viewing the martins as they gather then dive down into a major roost at sunset is an amazing spectacle when there are thousands and thousands of birds!

The Minnesota Purple Martin Working Group has documented five major roosts in central Minnesota: emergent vegetation islands, primarily cattail, in Big Spunk Lake near Avon, Big Swan Lake in Todd County, and Lake Osakis and cornfields near Willmar and Parker's Prairie. A few other minor roosts have also been identified. The importance of these roosts to breeding colonies throughout Minnesota — from Park Rapids to Aitkin to Washington County to Chaska to Heron Lake in Jackson County — has been documented through color



band recoveries and radio telemetry. From banding we also know that individual martins use multiple roosts.

Major roosts can be detected on NEXRAD weather radar at dawn as flocks disperse, provided the flock is of sufficient size and weather conditions are suitable. A few other minor roosts have also been identified (i.e., near Big Stone, Fargo-Moorhead, Bald Eagle Lake in Ramsey County, and Lake Sissabagamah in Aitkin County).

We also know that not all of Minnesota's martins use in-state roosts. In 2011, we attached tracking devices to 41 Purple Martins in Minnesota to record their daily locations on their migration to Brazil and back. In 2012 we recovered five of the tracking devices and, to our surprise, not one of those martins used a Minnesota roost. Four departed on their southward migration

directly from their breeding colony and headed straight south to the Gulf of Mexico. One from Forest Lake staged at a roost near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, before migrating south through Florida and Cuba.

We do not know the locations of pre-migratory roosts used by Purple Martins nesting in western Minnesota. If you have a Purple Martin colony anywhere in that region and would be willing to have your martins banded, the Purple Martin Working Group would love to hear from you. Interested cooperators should contact Kelly Applegate at 763-221-0320 or at [madisonscout@gmail.com](mailto:madisonscout@gmail.com). The information we obtain is critical to conserving the important roost areas that Purple Martins still rely on in Minnesota and surrounding states.

*Mike North is a member of the Purple Martin Working Group in Minnesota.*

# President's Column

*Roy Zimmerman*

Happy Spring! Thank you for selecting me to lead the MOU for the next couple of years. I am honored. As many of you know, I am relatively new to serious birding. In 2006, I retired from 3M (Scotch-Brite Kitchen Scrub Sponges) after many years of practicing chemistry with them. I soon became restless and started looking around for something interesting to do with myself. A couple of friends I had met playing poker suggested that I go birding with them. I quickly became hooked.

I had always been casually interested in birds, but had never studied them or gone after them seriously. (Are there really that many kinds of sparrows?) I fondly remember some of the birds on my grandparents' farm in Tennessee as a youth: Gray Catbirds, House Wrens, Northern Bobwhites, Belted Kingfishers, and whip-poor-wills.

When I was about ten years old, I took a photo with my Kodak Brownie of an interesting bird in my grandmother's garden. I studied the photo and my Little Golden Bird Book and identified it as a Tufted Titmouse.

Since I started seriously in this pursuit, I have been on numerous field trips with more experienced birders and I have learned a lot from many of you. The birding community is very friendly and helpful to new birders and I appreciate all the help. At least I haven't gone crazy like some folks I have met. The farthest I have chased a bird was the Lewis's Woodpecker last fall in Roosevelt, 700 miles round trip. That's not really all that far when you think about it.

Enjoy the 2014 birding season and let me hear from you with any comments or suggestions about the MOU.

# New Members

Abigail Anderson, *Golden Valley MN*  
Janet Anderson, *Roosevelt MN*  
Leif Anderson, *Hector AR*  
Robin & Charles Ermert, *Allentown PA*  
Mary Lou Freyholtz, *Hibbing MN*  
Beverly Gerdes, *Minneapolis MN*  
Lisa Hakanson, *Minneapolis MN*  
Sandy Hersperger, *Woodbury MN*  
Jena Highkin, *Long Prairie MN*  
Kevin Johnson, *Brooklyn Ctr MN*  
Victor Lewis, *Scottsdale AZ*  
Noralee Manzek, *Bethlehem PA*  
Lorrene Maroney, *Ironton MN*  
George McConnell, *Derwood MD*  
Steven Morrison, *Minneapolis MN*  
Doug Murphy, *Mound MN*  
Joan Newmark, *Woodbury MN*  
Chad Oblander, *Andover MN*  
Eugene Ollila, *Minneapolis MN*  
Denis Ostroot, *Columbia Hts MN*  
Gwen L. Papierniak, *New Ulm MN*  
Harald Parzer, *Bloomington IN*  
John Richardson, *Brainerd MN*  
Glen Scott, *Faribault MN*  
James Sharpsteen, *Minneapolis MN*  
William Sinnen, *Chaska MN*  
Bill & Sandy Sullivan, *Chatfield MN*  
James de Waal Malefyt,  
*Poestenkill NY*

*Trumpeter Swans, photo by Ann Kittelsen*





# 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.

### MOU Officers

Roy Zimmerman, President  
Bob Bossert, Vice President  
Tamara Holmer, Recording Secretary  
Elizabeth Bell, Membership  
Mark Lystig, Treasurer  
Carl Greiner, Past President

### Editors of *Minnesota Birding*:

Diana Rankin and Alyssa DeRubeis

### Birding Hotlines

Statewide: 763-780-8890  
Toll Free: 800-657-3700  
North Shore: 218-834-2858  
Northwest: 800-433-1888

## MOU Contacts

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**Conservation Chair**: conservation@moumn.org  
**Grants**: grants@moumn.org  
**Youth Mentorship**: mentorship@moumn.org  
**Field Trips**: fieldtrips@moumn.org  
**All other MOU functions**: mou@moumn.org

## MOU Membership: New/Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

County \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Categories

- Youth (under 18) \$15.00
- Individual \$25.00
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- Supporting \$75.00
- Corporate \$100.00
- Life, single \$500.00
- Life, joint \$700.00

Send to: Elizabeth Bell, MOU Membership Secretary  
5868 Pioneer Road South  
Saint Paul Park MN 55071-1143

### Please make a contribution to the Savaloja Fund

The Savaloja Fund 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: \$ \_\_\_\_\_