

Minnesota BIRDING

Nov / Dec
2014



Volume 51
Number 6

Inside this Issue

- 1 Conservation Column :
Bird Safety
- 2 Phenology Corner:
Winter's Snoozing Strigids
- 4 MOU Calendar
- 5 Minnesota Birder Bio
- 6 Savaloja Grants
- 8 MOU Membership
Information

Minnesota Ornithologists' Union
J. F. Bell Museum of Natural History
University of Minnesota
10 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Email: mou@moumn.org

Web: <http://moumn.org>

MN Birding is published bi-monthly

Editors: Diana Rankin and
Alyssa DeRubeis

Designer: Thomas Benjamin Hertzell

© 2014 Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

Conservation Column: Bird Safety and the Big Leagues

by Joanna Eckles

By now it seems that everyone in the state has heard about bird-safe glass. While so far we have not won the battle with the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority (MSFA) and the Vikings over the glass in their new \$1 billion stadium, the controversy has definitely helped us raise the profile of this ubiquitous problem — birds crashing into glass!

So what is bird-safe glass? There really isn't one magic solution. Instead, it's about the outcome. The goal is to help birds see and avoid glass and there are a variety of products and techniques that can help. It isn't even all about glass. Lighting plays a role and so do less obvious things like how buildings are sited with respect to one another, how they are landscaped, and where they are located relative to migration and stopover areas.

The glass is, of course, the crux of the matter and most solutions focus on it. For the most part, solutions involve either creating a physical barrier in front of glass (like screening or netting which can be permanent or temporary, fixed or retractable) or incorporating some kind of visual cues in or on the glass to break up the reflections or transparency. Birds are confused by both — they see habitat or sky reflected on the surface of glass or see through glass to habitat or sky on the other side.

At Audubon Minnesota, we started Project BirdSafe in 2007 to learn about the problem of bird-window collisions and promote solutions. Our work is focused on reducing both daytime and nighttime

collisions through our Lights Out program, by educating architects and planners and by working with other national groups to collaborate and stay abreast of developments in research and design. Locally, we worked with the University of Minnesota to add bird-safety requirements to a key sustainability standard called the Minnesota Sustainable Building Guidelines (MSBG).



Red-tailed Hawk photo by Michelle Hed

We first heard about bird-safety in relation to the stadium in the fall of 2012 — a good six months before the artist's renderings were unveiled in May 2013. The DNR contacted us during their environmental review for input and to let us know they were going to recommend MSFA use bird-safe design techniques. When the renderings came out, it didn't appear that those recommendations were heeded. The building was big and glassy and we got in

continued on page 3

Phenology Corner: Winter's Snoozing Strigids

by Bob Dunlap

It's the day after Thanksgiving. You tell your spouse that you're going to go look for the perfect Christmas tree. Not one from a store, you explain, but a real nice one out in the country. You drive about a half hour or so to a dense stand of conifers. Strolling between rows of red pines and white spruces, you closely examine the inner branches. You creep up to a group of eastern red cedars and poke your head into an opening in the vegetation, admiring the blue juniper berries that adorn the tree like tiny little ornaments. These certainly are nice trees. Unbeknownst to your spouse, however, your quarry is of the feathered kind.

November and December are two of the best months to find roosting owls (order Strigiformes) in Minnesota. At least four of Minnesota's regular owl species — Great Horned, Barred, Long-eared, and Northern Saw-whet — can reliably be found roosting in conifer stands throughout much of the state beginning in early November (and sometimes as early as mid-October). The first two species, of course, are year-round residents. The latter two breed mostly in northern Minnesota, but usually migrate short distances to spend the winter in southern Minnesota and states farther south, although in some winters they are found in the northern half of the state as well.

Conifers offer excellent daytime concealment and shelter for these nocturnal predators. Because they are evergreen, these trees provide insulation, shade, and cover when most deciduous trees have lost their foliage. Great Horned and Barred owls tend to favor the large pines and spruces, whereas Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet owls prefer the dense clusters of cedars.

To locate these secretive birds, a good way to begin is to look for "whitewash" (the owls' excrement) at the bases of trees or covering branches. If you come upon this sign, search the immediate and surrounding trees for an owl. Great Horned and Barred owls often perch higher up in conifers, whereas Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet owls are more often found closer to eye level or below. If it's a very active roosting spot, you might also see some grayish pellets lying on the ground. As owls have no crops and cannot digest hard parts like teeth and bones in their gizzards, they regurgitate this waste material in tightly packed pellets.



Northern Saw-whet Owl photo by Bob Dunlap

If there has been recent snowfall, it is likely that whitewash or owl pellets won't be visible. In that case, you can do one of two things. The first is to simply scan the inner parts of trees in the hopes of spotting the owl before it spots you. Indeed, Great Horned, Barred, and Long-eared owls will often flush before you've even laid eyes on them, but Northern Saw-whet owls tend to be more approachable and will sometimes allow very close encounters without flushing. The second is to listen for any birds giving alarm calls. Crows and jays will often harass the large owls (Great Horned and Barred) in the hopes of pushing them out of their territories. Chickadees and nuthatches frequently mob the smaller owls (Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet). A flurry of songbird activity, when followed to its source, will often lead you to a roosting owl, but try to be as sneaky as possible so that you don't flush it before you see it.

In many cases, you won't find any owls at a given

conifer stand, but if you repeat as often as your schedule (and family) permits, the odds will be in your favor. Additionally, there are a few other interesting birds that you might meet along the way. In eastern red cedars, look and listen for overwintering Golden-crowned Kinglets and Yellow-rumped Warblers which often survive the cold by feeding on the berry crops. In these same trees, watch especially for the vagrant Townsend's Solitaire. This western thrush is perhaps best looked for in cedars with abundant berries and more seem to be found each winter. In the taller pines and spruces, you might happen upon an overwintering Cooper's or Sharp-shinned hawk;

sometimes these raptors are found in the same stands as owls. And, depending on the year, you might even chance upon a flock of crossbills (both Red and White-winged are possible) feeding on the cones high atop the conifers. As temperatures continue to drop, you'll inevitably be spending more and more time indoors rather than out and, by the end of December, you'll be looking forward to another year of birds. The roosting owls will persist well into early spring, which means you'll have many opportunities yet to go out and find them. You just won't be able to use "finding the perfect Christmas tree" as an excuse to do so.



Conservation Column, continued from page 1

with stadium officials to discuss bird-safety almost immediately! From there unfolded over a year of meetings and correspondence — a fateful choice on their part and a powerful response on ours.

The MSFA did agree early on to modify lighting design and operations to reduce nighttime risk to birds. We stressed that daytime collisions were also a serious cause for concern given the location of the stadium and the apparent scope of the glass. This building, as planned, sits just blocks from the Mississippi River, a major migration corridor, and features huge expanses of highly reflective glass.

We urged the stadium authority to meet either the MSBG or another standard for bird-safety — LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). We introduced a range of bird-friendly solutions, including glass patterned with ceramic "frit" (permanent silk-screen) or etching, glass with an ultraviolet pattern (that birds can see but humans can't) and mechanical solutions such as retractable screens and netting. As time passed, all these options were dismissed and the fritted glass option was the remaining choice being investigated further.

By spring of this year (2014) time was short and conversations were stalled. Because the focus was on fritted glass and the worry was about cost we brought back three scenarios to illustrate, based on information provided about the building, how they could meet or exceed LEED or MSBG for between \$600,000 and \$950,000 using fritted glass. We also talked about the considerable positive media their choice to meet one of these standards could bring. We left anticipating another meeting to talk in more depth about the potential energy and cost savings using this type of glass.

But that next meeting never happened. Instead, a call came saying the project was over budget with no money

for any change to the glass.

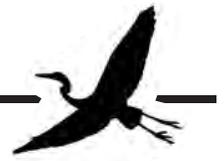
The cost excuse didn't fly with us based on a litany of other multimillion dollar expenditures in the news and the overall cost of the project — about \$1 billion. We felt our best course of action was to bring the information to the public. The following week we sent out a press release accompanied by an online "change glass, save birds" petition and email campaign aimed at the MSFA and Vikings. The interest in the story was remarkable. The MSFA response was spare and steadfast — one statement saying the budget didn't allow the added expenditure for fritted glass. The media and public outcry continued. Then, we heard three exasperating bits of news: one, that the Vikings covered a \$46M budget shortfall with no money for the glass; two, that "it was never about the money, it is about aesthetics"; and three, that the glass had already been ordered. That was the same week in late August that we delivered over 76,000 signatures in support of "change glass, save birds" to Governor Dayton's office.

Where do things stand now? In their media, the stadium authority is maintaining the aesthetics argument, indicating that changing to fritted glass will ruin their design. We will continue to push them to meet one of those standards in whatever way does fit their aesthetic vision. We will also work with them to fulfill their commitment to participating in Lights Out.

Thanks to the thousands that rallied behind us. We are proud of the way Audubon and our partners like MOU came together to stand up for the birds. We are encouraged by the opportunity we now have to move forward to reduce bird-window collisions in the wake of vastly increased public awareness.

Joanna Eckles is the Bird Friendly Communities Manager and Project BirdSafe/Lights Out Coordinator for Audubon Minnesota.

MOU Calendar



November 2: Bird Language

Organization: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Details: Explore what the birds are telling us about our surroundings. Time split between the classroom and outdoors. Led by Donnie Phyllaier, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Bloomington Education and Visitor Center, 3815 American Blvd E, Bloomington. Register at www.mntracking.org/.

November 3: Our Climate. Our Birds. Our Choices.

Organization: Prairie Lakes Audubon Chapter

Details: Presenter is Matt Anderson, Executive Director, Audubon Minnesota. 7 p.m. Senior Center, Alexandria, MN. For information, email Tony Warner (tony_warner_06@hotmail.com).

November 8, 20: Tundra Swan Watching Field Trips

Organization: MN Dept of Natural Resources

Details: Caravan through the Whitewater Wildlife Management Area to Weaver Bottoms on the Mississippi River to observe tundra swans. Nov. 8 -- 10 a.m.-12 p.m.; Nov. 20 -- 12-2 p.m. White Water State Park, 3 miles south of Elba on State Highway 74. For information, call 507-932-3007.

November 8, 10, 22: Bird Watching Trek

Organization: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Details: Join in on these bird walks during fall migration. Led by Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist. 8:00-10:30 a.m.

Nov 8: Old Cedar Avenue, 9500 Old Cedar Avenue S.,
Bloomington

Nov 10 and 22: Wilkie 7701 County Road 101 E.,
Shakopee

November 11: Owls

Organization: Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Details: Presenter is Dave Benson, author of *Owls of the North: A Naturalist's Handbook*. 7 p.m. at the Beth El Synagogue, 5224 W. 26th Street, St. Louis Park 55416. Free and open to the public.

November 13: The Effects of Oil and Gas Development on Birds: From Behavior to Population

Organization: St. Paul Audubon Society

Details: Presenter is Hannah Specht. 7 p.m. at the Fairview Community Center, 1910 West County Road B in Roseville. Open to the public with free parking.

November 15: Our Climate. Our Birds. Our Choices.

Organization: Headwaters Science Center

Details: Presenter is Matt Anderson, Executive Director, Audubon Minnesota. 2 p.m. At Headwaters Science Center, 413 Beltrami Avenue NW, Bemidji. Free for HSC members or with paid admission to the exhibit floor - \$7 adults, \$6 seniors & military, \$5 children 2-11, under 2 free.

November 15: BOW – Tundra Swan Migration

Organization: Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge, Winona

Details: Bus tour open to the general public, hosted by Mary Stefanski, district manager of the Refuge. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Cost: \$25 (includes bus tour, instruction and lunch). For information and to register, call 507-494-6238.

November 22: Tundra Swan Trip

Organization: Zumbro Valley Audubon

Details: Travel thru La Crescent and down the Mississippi to Brownsville to see Tundra Swans and other waterfowl. Led by Terry & Joyce Grier. Meet at the east side parking lot of the Heintz Center in Rochester at 8 a.m. to car pool; trip will return early afternoon.

November 25: Owls

Organization: Zumbro Valley Audubon

Details: Presented by Karla Bloem, Executive Director of the International Owl Center, Houston, MN. 7-8 p.m. Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester.

December 2: Rare Plants and Bogs

Organization: Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Details: Presenter is Jason Husveth, restoration ecologist and botanist and Principal Ecologist and President of Critical Connections Ecological Services, Inc. 7 p.m. at the Beth El Synagogue, 5224 W. 26th Street, St. Louis Park 55416. Free and open to the public.

December 5: MOU Board Meeting

Details: To be communicated via the MOU listserv. Open to all MOU members.

December 6: MOU Paper Session

Details: To be communicated via the MOU listserv.

December 11: Birds of Cuba

Organization: St. Paul Audubon Society

Details: Presenter is Carroll Henderson, supervisor of the Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Program and well-known author. 7 p.m. at the Fairview Community Center, 1910 West County Road B in Roseville. Open to the public.

Minnesota Birder Bio:

Charlene Nelson

Born:

Moorhead, MN, but grew up in Perham, MN

Currently living:

Elbow Lake, MN and Floral City, FL

Occupation:

Retired

Serious about birding since:

I've been serious about birding just the last 10–15 years. I've always had an interest in birds, but didn't start a life list until just recently. And I'm too busy finding new birds to add to my list to know what number I'm at. I'll figure it out someday.

Favorite bird or bird family:

My favorites change all the time, but I consistently come back to the Black-capped Chickadee. Favorite bird family may have to be hummingbirds. There are so many more I would like to see. Getting to see the Rufous Hummingbird this summer in MN and last winter a Calliope Hummingbird in FL was a real treat and didn't require a passport or an expensive airplane ticket!

Favorite places to bird in Minnesota:

My own front and back yard at the farm. I have a dead tree in each yard that attracts everyone and at the same time exposes them all so they are very easy to see. I've placed my feeders and bird baths near these trees and it is so much fun to see the birds stage for feeding in the dead tree. This summer it looked like a decorated Christmas tree with all the colorful birds, like orioles, finches, hummingbirds, and jays.

Favorite place to bird outside of Minnesota:

Our winter home in FL is a completely different habitat than what we have here in MN, but still experiences the variations of seasonal migrations. I migrate to and from FL to enjoy the migratory activity of both homes, in MN and FL. So for me, migration is continuous.

Birding style (i.e. by yourself, with others, etc):

It usually is spur of the moment and alone. I enjoy a good outing in different locales with small groups, just to be alongside other birders and to experience new locations.

I'm always impressed by the knowledge of other birders and always learn something when I have the chance to share in other birders' perspectives and knowledge. I enjoy extended birding trips away from home, when possible, to see larger numbers of life birds and different types of birds than what we have here in MN.

Best advice on how to be a better birder:

Practice, practice, practice, just like I used to tell my piano students! The more I study and the more I search for new birds and new locations, the more I realize how much there is to see and learn. I understand better now my Grammy's fascination with all of nature, especially her enchantment with birds.

The main attraction or joy of birding for you-Hope — In spite of all that happens in this world, birds seem to survive. I'm amazed at their resilience and sheer beauty. I've witnessed several flyovers of the Whooping Cranes led by ultralight planes from WI and the International Crane Foundation to our home county in FL. That is truly a life-changing experience.

Interests/hobbies when you're not birding:

Reading all sorts of books. The most interesting birder biographies I have read recently are of Phoebe Snetsinger and Sue Leaf's biography of Thomas Sadler Roberts. I also play piano and harpsichord and I'm hoping to learn dulcimer this winter in FL. Painting in watercolor or oil pastel and figure study drawing are other art forms I enjoy. I take great pleasure in traveling to see and learn about other countries and cultures. And it's a good day if I am knitting, visiting with friends, or drinking a tasty cup of bird-friendly coffee.

What new bird you would most like to see:

Any bird that surprises me next. Sometimes it is a familiar bird in a new or unexpected location, like the surprises we had this spring in Grant County with a White-winged Dove, and later in the summer a lifer Black-billed Cuckoo, which was the first thing in the morning with my first cup of coffee at my bird feeder. Or the pair of nesting Black-necked Stilts at the Herman WTP, which are birds I am accustomed to seeing at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in FL. Or a Song Sparrow on board a cruise ship in Glacier Bay, Alaska. Or a lifer Cape May Warbler on a bottlebrush bush in full bloom in my FL front yard. As always, the next life bird is my most favorite bird of all.

Savaloja Grant Applications Due by January 31, 2015

by Steve Wilson, Savaloja Committee Chair

Every year the MOU supports several bird-related projects through the Savaloja Grant Program. This year five diverse projects were supported with grants ranging from \$600 to \$4,400. Grants were awarded for an elementary school program using birds as an integrating theme between different disciplines, binoculars for a nature center, production of a booklet using the Ojibwe names of common northern Minnesota birds, and studies of red-headed woodpeckers and purple martins.

For 2015 MOU welcomes applications for Minnesota projects that increase our understanding of birds, promote preservation of birds and their natural habitats, or increase public interest in birds, including in populations currently underrepresented in Minnesota's birding community.

Application information may be obtained by emailing grants@moumn.org or going to <http://moumn.org/grants.html>.

The deadline for receipt of grant applications is January 31, 2015. Grant recipients will be notified during April 2015.

Help the MOU Meet the Savaloja Challenge Match

The last edition of *Minnesota Birding* carried the news that until December 7, the day after our annual meeting, every dollar donated or received in new or upgraded memberships, up to \$5,000, will qualify for matching funds. If we meet the challenge, \$10,000 will go towards Savaloja grants to support Minnesota projects that increase our understanding of birds, promote preservation of birds and their natural habitats, or increase public interest in birds. Every year worthwhile projects go unfunded for lack of money. This is a great opportunity for our members to double their donation and help support more projects that benefit Minnesota's birds. As this issue was going to press, we had raised \$2,005 and still needed to raise an additional \$2,995 to fully meet the challenge match. To help MOU take full advantage of this opportunity, use the membership/donation form on the last page of this newsletter or visit the MOU web page and click on the "Help MOU Raise \$10,000" link at the top of the page.

New Members

Joyce Anastasi, *Lindstrom MN*
Joanne Bartkus, *Minneapolis MN*
Melanie A. Brown, *Minneapolis MN*
Harry J Cloft, *Rochester MN*
Jan & David Conley, *Lake Nebagamon WI*
Janice Dunlap, *Chaska MN*
Lisa Earls, *Grand Forks ND*
Paul Suchanek, *Owatonna MN*

MOU Book Sale

The annual MOU book sale will again be held at the MOU Annual Meeting and Paper Session, December 6th. We are looking for donations of books about birds, field guides, and Minnesota nature books of interest to our members. We cannot accept magazines, VHS tapes, journals, or books on caged birds (parakeets, cockatiels, etc.).

Persons wanting to donate should contact John Moriarty at jmoriarty@threeriversparkdistrict.org to arrange a drop off or potential pickup.



White-breasted Nuthatch
photo by Alyssa DeRubeis

MOU Paper Session Registration



Saturday, December 6th 2014 • 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Bell Museum of Natural History, University of Minnesota
10 Church Street SE, Minneapolis

At the corner of Church Street and University Avenue

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| REGISTRATION <i>\$5.⁰⁰ by mail with this form \$6.⁰⁰ at the door</i> | LUNCH <i>Add \$11.⁰⁰ for each</i> <i>Includes sandwich, chips, cookie, and soda (circle drink choice):</i> Coke Diet Coke Fresca Sprite Root Beer Water | DONATIONS <i>The MOU General Fund helps finance all MOU projects and publications</i> <i>The Savaloja Grants help finance bird-related research and education in Minnesota</i> |
|--|---|---|

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|--|
| Name | | <input type="checkbox"/> None (no charge) <input type="checkbox"/> Garden Salad with Corn Muffin and Dessert Bar <input type="checkbox"/> Roast Beef Sandwich with Provolone <input type="checkbox"/> Ham and Swiss Sandwich <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey Sandwich with Havarti <input type="checkbox"/> Roasted Veggie Wrap | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Fund \$ _____ • Savaloja Fund \$ _____ • Membership/Renewal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Life (\$500) <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting (\$75) <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$35) <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$25) <input type="checkbox"/> Under 17 years (\$17) |
| Phone | | | |
| eMail | | | |
| Mailing Address | | | |

Additional Registrations — if more registrant lines are needed, attach to this form; additional forms are available at <http://moumn.org>

| | | | |
|------|--|-------|---|
| Name | | Lunch | Donations \$ _____ Membership \$ _____ |
| Name | | Lunch | Donations \$ _____ Membership \$ _____ |
| Name | | Lunch | Donations \$ _____ Membership \$ _____ |
| Name | | Lunch | Donations \$ _____ Membership \$ _____ |

| | | | |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| SUBTOTALS | \$ _____ | \$ _____ | \$ _____ |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED (sum of registration, lunch, and donations) \$ _____

Make check payable to the MOU. Send this form and check by November 25th 2014 to:

Roy Zimmerman
756 Willow Grove Lane
Vadnais Heights, MN 55127-3570



Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

Bell Museum of Natural History
10 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 90155
Twin Cities, MN

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
Northwest: 800-433-1888

MOU Contacts

Minnesota Birding: newsletter@moumn.org
President: president@moumn.org
Vice President: vicepresident@moumn.org
Membership Secretary: membership@moumn.org
Treasurer: treasurer@moumn.org
Recording Secretary: secretary@moumn.org
The Loon editor: editor@moumn.org
Web site: http://moumn.org
CBC compiler: cbc@moumn.org
Statewide RBA compiler: rba@moumn.org
MOU Records Committee: mourc@moumn.org
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 _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

County _____

Membership Categories

- Youth (under 18) \$15.00
- Individual \$25.00
- Foreign (including Canada) U.S. \$35.00
- Family \$35.00
- 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: \$ _____