



Minnesota BIRDING

May / June
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Savaloja Grant Awards

by Steve Wilson, Savaloja Committee Chair

Too much of a good thing? That's what I began wondering as Savaloja proposals cascaded into my inbox in January. In the 20+ years of the Savaloja Grant Program, we've never had so many proposals, of such high quality, asking for so much money: \$46,000. Fortunately, thanks to the generosity of MOU members and donors this past year, the MOU board was able to award a record \$17,290 in grants at their March board meeting. That's \$5,000 more than our previous record, and almost three times our long-term average for annual grants.

The eight projects receiving Savaloja grants this year help increase our understanding of birds, promote preservation of birds and their natural habitats, or increase public interest in birds – many for young people who otherwise would have little or no access to the outdoors and birds. The recipients include:

- Fond-du-Lac Band in Cloquet received \$2,160 for a holistic bird awareness and appreciation project for middle school students incorporating Ojibwe language, traditional ecological knowledge, cultural significance, and stories. It employs intergenerational knowledge exchange from elders to children through interviews, and then reverses that when the children create an app they'll share with families. Notably, the app will introduce awareness of bird song because the students will be recording songs to include in the app.
- Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis was given \$2,000 for their long-term Red-headed Woodpecker study. The MOU has awarded them several grants in past years, and we're providing this small piece of their 2017 budget because they have a good track record of project execution, they disseminate their findings well, and the species is still in need of attention. This year they hope

to determine whether and where Cedar Creek's woodpecker population migrates.

- East Side Neighborhood Services of Minneapolis received \$3,360 to enhance appreciation and knowledge of the Mississippi Flyway and its birds in east Metro communities of color which are largely absent from the birding community and cut off from nature by circumstances. Family involvement and art will be two avenues used to engage students.
- Murray Middle School of St. Paul was awarded \$2,730 so their advanced middle school students can learn and practice birding skills; collect, record, and analyze data; build a database; and then share the results with parents. It's a well-designed, immersive curriculum on birds and nature, with an unusually rigorous overlay of science.
- Warren Alvarado Oslo Elementary School, Marshall County, received \$2,380 to integrate a birding curriculum into 6th grade classes. They'll go on field trips and post their observations to eBird and Nestwatch, as well as social and traditional media. Located on the border between Marshall and Polk counties, where there are only four MOU members, this project should inspire more members of the next generation to become birders.
- Audubon Center of the Northwoods in Sandstone received \$1,400 to establish a beginning birder trail. It will include bird cutouts posted along the trail – an innovative approach to solving the problem of keeping beginning birders engaged when birds are absent, and avoiding frustration when learning to use binoculars on the moving targets birds inevitably become.

New MOU Members

- Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center in Lanesboro received \$2,460 to double the capacity of their Birding Class offerings, which primarily serve 5th–8th grades. An appeal of this proposal was that the Center already has the staff, expertise, and programs in place to make sure the money is well spent.
- Bemidji State University was awarded \$800 for counting and banding Purple Martin nestlings and locating pre-migratory roosts, monitoring their use, and describing the roost habitat. Purple Martins are in decline, and while much has been learned in the last decade, there is much more to learn and this project should help.

Savaloja Committee members Ann Kessen, Pam Perry, Chuck Neil, Mike North, and Sue Keator went above and beyond by combing through the 15 submitted proposals and winnowing them down to eight that received grants. Still, painful decisions had to be made because the lack of available money meant qualifying proposals went unfunded and most of the projects awarded grants received less than they needed. So next year our goal is to breach the \$20,000 threshold in grants given. Now is an excellent time to help us achieve that goal by becoming a Savaloja Grant supporter, because a \$5,000 matching grant is available this year that will double any Savaloja Fund donation, new membership, or increased portion of an existing membership. Go to <http://moumn.org/signup.html>, or simply send a contribution earmarked for Savaloja Grants to the MOU.

Brendan Barrow, *Golden Valley, MN*
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Tamara Scott, *Jordan, MN*
Eugene Shomshak, *St. Michael, MN*
Marsha Shuff, *International Falls, MN*
Dana Sterner and Michael Sack, *Little Canada, MN*
Julien Veda, *Woodbury, MN*



Turkey Vulture by John A. Anderson



MOU President Bob Bossert presents a \$10,000 check to Denise Young, the Executive Director of the Bell Museum. The MOU donation is in recognition of the longstanding relationship between the MOU and the Bell Museum. The money will be directed to the fundraising effort for the new Bell Museum, which is scheduled to open in the summer of 2018.

MOU Calendar



May / June 2017

BOULDER LAKE ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

May 13: Boulder Birding Big Day

Details: Team up with local experts to count as many bird species as you can (the current record for the morning is 93 species). Hit the trails or ride the pontoon and help promote citizen science! The program runs from 6:45 am – 11 am (beginning with a 6:30 am sign-in with breakfast treats) and costs \$10 per person before May 1 and \$15 per person after. Lunch is included. Register online at www.boulderlake.org or call 218-721-3731.

FRIENDS OF ROBERTS BIRD SANCTUARY

Saturdays in May: Bird Walks

Details: Every Saturday morning at 8:00 am through May 31, meet in the Roberts Sanctuary parking lot for a bird walk in the Sanctuary (note that this parking lot is a pay lot, but people can park on Lake Harriet Parkway as a free alternative). All are welcome. Come and help find migratory and resident birds!

Tuesdays in May: Migration Walks

Details: During spring migration, the Minneapolis Audubon Society will lead bird walks in the Sanctuary, as it has for almost 100 years. Come and bird with people who carry on the legacy of those early birders on Tuesdays in May at 9:00 am. Meet in the Roberts Sanctuary parking lot.

FRIENDS OF SAX-ZIM BOG

May 5: Tracking and Animal Sign

Details: Often when traversing the Sax-Zim Bog, tracks are encountered. But how do you know if you are looking at dog or wolf tracks? What is the difference between a hole made by a Downy Woodpecker and a Black-backed Woodpecker? We will investigate the activity by critters in the Bog through an investigation of the area around the Welcome Center. The activity runs from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

May 6: Things that go Buzz, Croak, Hoot, and Bump in the Night Field Trip

Details: Spring in the Bog is full of burgeoning life, and dusk is a great time to see and hear some of the unique critters. On this evening event we will listen for early season

frog species, American Bittern, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock, and search for Great Gray Owls. You never know what these late-afternoon-to-dark trips might turn up! Come at 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm for an early dinner at Wilbert Café in Cotton and meet from 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm at the Welcome Center for the field trip.

May 7 & June 25: American Kestrel Monitoring Program

Details: American Kestrels are the smallest falcon in North America and are a ubiquitous feature of open landscapes throughout the state. However, these colorful falcons have become less common through their range due to a number of factors. At the Sax-Zim Bog, we regularly monitor American Kestrel nest boxes — but how do you get involved? This program will give you basic information about American Kestrels, how and where they nest, and how you can help these beautiful birds! The program runs from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm at the Welcome Center.

May 10, 17, 24, & 31: Warbler Wednesdays

Details: Warblers! That's the target of this weekly field trip. Of course there are other species of birds to see in the Bog during this time — up to 75 species can be expected in one day. The Sax-Zim Bog is home to many species of warbler, including Connecticut Warblers that draw folks from across the country each year. Join us each Wednesday to find these beautiful and diverse songsters. We'll meet from 6:00 am – 12:00 pm and begin at the Welcome Center.

June 2: Bog Specialists Hike

Details: Birdwatchers often focus their efforts on specialist species when visiting a new area, whether it is montane species in Columbia or island species in the Bahamas. Believe it or not, the Sax-Zim Bog harbors has species just as specific as southern birds. Bog Birch, Pitcher Plants, and even Boreal Chickadees are species that rely on bog ecosystems. Join us on a slog through the bog to find a few iconic bog specialist species. Meet from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm and begin at the Welcome Center.

June 16: Bird Song Field Trip

Details: By the time the trees have leaves, warblers and other birds can be hard to see through the thick leaf cover. However, there is a way to still find these birds. You can enjoy the soundscapes created by their voices! Learning bird

songs can seem like a daunting task, but it can be easy if you break it down. Join us on a field trip focused on learning bird calls, from the easiest to the most difficult. Meet at the Welcome Center for an event that runs 6:00 am – 11:00 am.

MAPLEWOOD NATURE CENTER

May 12: Birds and Blooms of Fish Creek

Details: Walk the secret and marvelous canyon of Fish Creek from 6:30 pm – 7:45 pm to search for woodland wildflowers. It will be interesting to see what's blooming after buckthorn removal! We'll look and listen for colorful bird migrants on their way to their northern nesting sites. Bring binoculars and hiking sticks, or borrow from the nature center. The trail is narrow and uneven, so wear sturdy shoes and long pants. The event is for adults and children ages 10+ with an adult and costs \$5. Meet at the Oakwood Church parking lot, and register online by May 10 by calling 651-249-2170 or by visiting www.maplewoodnaturecenter.com and clicking on the Register Online Go button.

May 20: Migration Sensation

Details: It's a natural history phenomenon – thousands of birds are flying north, so don't miss your chance to observe these colorful migrants! Get out your binoculars or borrow from the nature center to see and hear birds at one of the best birding spots in the Twin Cities. Beginners welcome! Enter what we find into the eBird website. Beverages and treats provided. The program is free and runs from 7:00 am – 9:00 am at the nature center, and is for adults and children ages 10+ with an adult. Register online by May 18 at www.maplewoodnaturecenter.com and click on the Register Online Go button or call 651-249-2170. Co-sponsored by Friends of Maplewood Nature Center.

SAINT PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

May 11: The Case of the Scarlet Non-Tanager and the Disappearing Dendroica: Avian Classification Mysteries Explained

Details: In recent years, there have been many changes in the classification of Western Hemisphere songbirds. Many of these changes are the result of research conducted by Scott Lanyon and his colleagues. In this talk, he will explain where classifications come from, why they change, how he and his colleagues conducted their research, and conclude with a review of some of the changes that have resulted from their research on blackbirds, cardinals, sparrows, tanagers, and warblers — including why the Scarlet Tanager isn't a tanager and why the warbler genus *Dendroica* no longer exists. Located at the Fairview Community Center, this general meeting is free and open to the public and runs from 6:45 pm – 8:30 pm, with refreshments before the presentation at 7 pm.

TOWNSEND WOODS SCIENTIFIC AND NATURAL AREA

May 20: Guided Bird Walk

Details: Join us at 8:00 am for a two-hour walk through Townsend Woods SNA, one of the finest examples of the "big woods" that used to cover parts of south central Minnesota. The site contains a beautiful virgin forest of sugar maple, red oak, and basswood with few shrubs. Bring your binoculars and bird books on this exploration of migrant and resident birds. Footwear appropriate for hiking is recommended. There are no maintained trails and the hike will be on uneven terrain. There are neither public restrooms nor access to drinking water on this site. The tour will be conducted rain or shine and will likely require at least a mile of walking.

TWIN CITIES URBAN BIRDING FESTIVAL

May 12–21: Birding Festival

Details: The Twin Cities Urban Birding Festival is an opportunity for novice birders and experienced birders alike to explore and learn. Festival activities are held at a variety of locations across the metropolitan area from Friday, May 12 through Sunday, May 21. Visit and like the Facebook page to keep track of events listed here as we receive them: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/TwinCitiesUBF/events/>. To add your event to the Urban Birding Festival event page, contact jeckles@audubon.org.



Peregrine Falcons, by Anthony X. Hertz



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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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Please make a contribution to the Savaloja Grants

The Savaloja Grants supports research and other projects selected by the MOU for special attention. Your contributions help fund a better future for birds in Minnesota. You can add a contribution to your membership check.

Amount: \$ _____