



# Minnesota BIRDING

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## Early Bird Special: 100 Species in 7 Days

*by Liz Harper and Alex Sundvall*

We are not sure when we decided to actually commit to trying to break the “earliest date to see 100 species” record as a team. We had both tried separately in 2017 and failed, with Alex getting to 80 species, and Liz getting to 92. The record of 10 days had been set by Jeff Stephenson in 2001, and by Anthony Hertzell prior to that, with 19 days.

We talked about the potential to chase the record on and off during 2017 as we travelled pretty much the entire state. By November we began talking about it seriously and we started to plan possible routes. We scouted out the spots we intended to visit the first week of January. We were watching weather forecasts and trying to decide which part of the state to start in, when we decided to commit to helping with the Dec 30 Fredenberg Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

In spite of a realfeel temp of -42°F, we managed to have a great time on the CBC. Turns out, it was good practice for what was to come. December 31 was another scouting day for us, and we woke up to a realfeel of -48°F. Still, we picked up some good birds that day. One of them, Black-backed Woodpecker, we would not see again on our race to 100 species.

### Day 1

We got up before dawn on January 1 in order to get to the Sax-Zim Bog by 7:15 a.m. It was -20°F outside, with a realfeel of instant death. Liz headed out to start the truck and let it warm up a bit. Her truck had been parked outside and had started fine the last two days, but today it refused. Day 1 was going to get off to a slower start than planned.

We immediately started problem solving — both Googling on our phones and making phone calls — but the reality was, it was pre-dawn on January 1st, and no one could help us. By mid-morning we were able to get a jump, but it was so cold that even that didn't help. We did get our first bird for 2018 though, a Ruffed Grouse!

At this point it was after 10:00 a.m., and we weren't sure



*Happy Liz and Alex after Bird 100,  
by Michael & Tristan Mann*

what to do. Our hosts offered to drive us somewhere and drop us off to bird, but at the current temps there was no way we would survive that. We thought about walking the neighborhood and picking up at least a few birds, and then trying again the next day. In the end, though, we phoned a friend who was 2.5 hours away and was amazingly willing to drive up to help us. While we waited, we hiked the open space behind where we were staying. It was there that we saw our only Great Horned Owl, as well as nine other species.

Even with our late start, we were able to pick up several good species in the Bog and ended Day 1 at 18 species. A bit



*Eastern Screech Owl, by Alex Sundvall*

lower than our 50 species from January 1, 2017, but higher than expected when the truck wouldn't start.

## Day 2

With our rocky start, we needed to hit Day 2 hard. Our original plan was to go for Spruce Grouse first and then do the lakeshore. However, since our first day had not gone as planned, we needed to rethink our strategy. The new plan was to clean up what we missed in the Bog, and then, with the time left, try to get some birds on the lakeshore.

Thankfully, the Bog birds were very cooperative. The Sharp-tailed Grouse didn't dance for us like they had the week before, but they were out in the open, and we got to watch them come out of the snow banks where they roost. While we were waiting for the grouse to show up, a flock of Pine Grosbeaks flew into the birch trees in the front yard of the house! We found a number of Hoary Redpolls in the Bog mixed in the larger flocks of Commons, but the ones frequenting the Visitor Center feeders as well as Loretta's feeders were the most cooperative. The bird Alex was most excited about, however, was the extremely easy Boreal Chickadee found on Arkola Avenue, giving him the best looks he'd ever gotten of the species. It was right on the road and actively feeding and calling with its Black-capped Chickadee brethren.

In total, we added eight species at the Bog on Day 2. With half the day left, we raced to the lakeshore to try for gulls and, hopefully, some ducks. Two Harbors was our destination. We were hoping to get the two long-staying Harlequin Ducks.

That's when the snow started. A proper blizzard. Not only was it cold, but large snowflakes were blowing at our

faces and horizontal to the ground, regardless of which direction we faced! With visibility low, we looked for the ducks to no avail. Thankfully, there were still some gulls around, among them a Glaucous Gull and one Iceland Gull. With light fading, we drove back to the Twin Cities for the next day. We had added 12 species over the course of Day 2.

## Day 3

Day 3 again brought sub-zero temps, with dangerously low windchill. We started our day at Lake Byllesby Regional Park, with hopes of owls and a dozen or so potential species. As we got out of the truck, we could hear Cedar Waxwings and Yellow-rumped Warblers, and we had a brief sighting of a Fox Sparrow. We hiked the trails in search of more year birds, and Liz somehow managed to stab herself in the eye while adjusting her facemask. It wasn't even 8:00 a.m. yet, and we were down an eye.

With this new predicament we headed back to the truck. As we neared the parking lot we slowed. There was a lot of bird activity. Alex was able to pick up a single note of a Hermit Thrush and entice it out of hiding so we could see it. We continued walking, and before we had made it ten feet, two Fox Sparrows perched in the trees to the left of the path. We had missed a few targets, but we were both very happy with the birds we had gotten.

As we neared the truck, there was a clear high note of a Townsend's Solitaire, and then a second bird responded. Our twelfth species for the morning!

We wound our way through several south Metro counties, picking up year-birds as we headed towards Scott County to search for waterfowl. We were picking through waterfowl at



*Boreal Owl, by Alex Sundvall*



the Wilkie Unit of the Minnesota Valley NWR, seeing the expected species, when something caught Liz's good eye—a Greater Scaup! A welcome and unexpected addition.

We ended the day at 68 species, 34 of them new. Things were looking up!

#### Day 4

Realizing that there was a lot of ground to cover and a lot of birds to see within the Twin Cities, we stayed an extra day to try for a few more species. We started north of the Cities and then gradually made our way south, since our plan for the next day was to hit the southeast part of the state.

The birds were playing nice; we got the Red-headed Woodpeckers on the Fish Lake Nature Trails at Cedar Creek without even leaving the parking lot. Actually, Alex's brilliant navigation skills didn't take us to the parking lot; they took us into the neighborhood adjacent to the parking lot. We got the woodpeckers anyway, five to be exact. A far cry from the 92 reported on the CBC, but we took it. Next stop was the Rum River dam for the Northern Pintail and American Black Duck, which proved easier to find than we expected. In fact, the *two* of us independently found a pintail; it turned out there were two males overwintering at the dam.

It was a slower day, though, and we only added eight more species to the total, bringing us to 76 species in just four days.

#### Day 5

Heading south we had hoped for warmer weather. We woke up to -17°F realfeel, thinking, What are we doing? We were again up in the dark and getting ready to head out. As we were packing up, Liz noticed open water visible from the porch of our Airbnb, and in it were hundreds of waterfowl. As the light came up we were able to find a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers among 500 or so Common Mergansers.

We then headed to Read's Landing, where we were hoping for Tufted Titmouse, but there were none to be heard or seen. There was, however, a group of waterfowl down the road, and we were able to find all three species of swans in that flock—a fantastic consolation prize. It was only 8:40 a.m., and we had two new year birds, bringing us to 78 species.

We wound our way through Whitewater WMA and Whitewater State Park with a mental check-list of dozen species we were hoping for, but got only three. We headed west anyway, since we had plans to end the day looking for Short-eared Owls.

Several hours and miles passed without a new year bird. It was getting late, and our spirits were getting low. We were both doing the math in our heads and were losing faith that we could beat the record. We were cold, tired, and hungry, and we decided to find a place to get snacks and gas.

We had barely pulled out of the parking lot, when Alex



*Mute Swan, by Liz Harper*

announced, "Belted Kingfisher!" There in its glory was #83. This was followed shortly by field birds—four hunting Short-eared Owls and Northern Shrike chasing a small bird across the prairie. It was an amazing sight against the backdrop of the setting sun.

Thankfully, the end of the day was kinder to us than the start and middle, bringing us 12 new species. We ended the day at 88 total species and sat in the truck formulating a plan for the next day. We weighed going west for Greater Prairie-Chickens and then heading south for a suite of potential birds, or going back to the Cities for several species we had missed there. The decision was made easy when we looked at what species remained. Back to the Cities it was.

#### Day 6

Second time (or sometimes third or fourth time) is the charm with some birds it seems. On the second go around, we got the Bohemian Waxwing that had been seen in Eagan. We then decided to head south again with a stop to Ninemile Creek. Eastern Bluebirds sometimes overwinter there, and the park is also good for overwintering sparrows and Tufted Titmouse.

We walked the trails for an hour with no luck. Then, nearing the truck, we encountered a flurry of activity around the creek. Alex saw a Song Sparrow and went off to investigate that. While he was doing so, a pair of bluebirds flew into the branches above Liz's head! Then Alex heard an interesting chip note, which upon further investigation turned up an overwintering Chipping Sparrow.

To end the day, we headed to the Colvill Park and the Mississippi River for some overwintering waterfowl. We succeeded in finding nearly all the missing waterfowl on our list. A pair of American Wigeons flew in shortly after we got there, and the Redhead that had been seen earlier and a new female Canvasback were cooperative as the light was fading. Miraculously, we managed to add nine more species to the total, despite being so far along, and we ended the day at 97 species.

## Day 7

Starting the day with 97 species, our spirits were high. It was nearly 20°F outside, and we had a plan for the day. We headed first to see the Spotted Towhee hanging out in Ramsey. As we got to the site and opened the doors, we both heard it call immediately. We walked to the feeder that the bird had been frequenting and were able to see it, even though it was barely light outside. Not even 8:00 a.m., and we were at 98 species. By 9:00 a.m. we were at 99, with 9 of the 10 regular owl species.

We thought that it would be great for species #100 to be a Northern Saw-whet Owl, our last regular owl, and to have it be with friends. So we met two friends and started our search. After three hours, though, we decided we needed to move on to an easier target—the Minneapolis Peregrine Falcons.

We had both had luck finding them easily in the past, including during our December scouting trip. We walked the streets of Minneapolis but found no Peregrine. We decided to move on to Kaposia Landing, where we had found a Great Blue Heron when we were scouting the week before. Unfortunately, the river had mostly frozen since then, and there was no heron to be found. We headed to a few more sites, but found no new year birds. It was nearing 3:00 p.m., and we had maybe 1.5 hours of sunlight left.

Then, at 3:16, we got a message from one of the friends we had been owl searching with earlier in the day: “Hey, you still need 100?” We messaged back and forth and headed to meet him. We were only 20 minutes away.

We arrived at the location and started hiking through the snow to meet our friends. We found them near a dense conifer stand. One friend pointed and said to both of us, “See that pine cone? Look just to the left.” And there, nearly completely hidden in a pine tree, we simultaneously saw bird #100—a Northern Saw-whet Owl.



*100th bird, Northern Saw-whet Owl, by Liz Harper*

We had done it with almost no light left in the day, and we got what we had hoped for several hours earlier—breaking the record with our tenth owl species and with two great friends.

## Day 8

What does one do after seven days of intense birding? Some people would need a break and maybe sleep for a couple days, but not us. No, we decided to go birding. A Tufted Duck had been sighted in Colvill Park, and that would be a potential first for the state. Arriving at dawn and a good 30 minutes before another birder showed up, we scanned the river. There were hundreds of ducks on the water, and Liz spotted the Tufted Duck as dawn broke. It was mid-river with some other ducks being harassed by eagles. It flew north and disappeared around a bend into Wisconsin waters. It took us over an hour searching through all the ducks before Liz eventually spotted it again with the same Redhead and Canvasback that had been there a few days before. As the light increased, so did the number of birders. Unfortunately, the Tufted Duck soon flew off and it wasn't found again until light had nearly faded.

On the way back home, on roads we had driven countless times the days before, we saw an American Kestrel perched on a wire. This species and all its falcon friends had evaded us during our quest for 100, but it was nice to be able to check it off as bird #102. Never again will we be able to say that we saw a Tufted Duck in Minnesota before seeing an American Kestrel!

**Acknowledgments:** A number of people helped us along the way, whether they knew it or not. We are very grateful for the help and encouragement provided by our friends and we would like to acknowledge them. Thank you very much to Gavin Anderson, Dave Bartkey, Cole Bauer, Ryan Brosch, Richie Cutts, Isaac, Ezra, and Caleb Hosch, John Jonas, Michael and Tristan Mann, Kevin Manley, Frank Nicoletti, Andy Nyhus, Kevin Smith, Kara Snow, Joey and Victor Sundvall, and Jeanne Tanamachi, and Airbnb hosts Jayme and Josh.

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*Liz Harper got her first field job working with birds in 1990 and has enjoyed watching birds with increasing interest and intensity ever since. Her favorite places to bird in Minnesota are... all of them.*

# Message from the President

As MOU President I'm faced with many challenges, but I firmly believe the greatest challenge is that of attracting a younger generation to the world of birds and birding. To be sure, this challenge is not unique to the MOU. In a world of increasingly competing interests and distractions, it's difficult for any group or organization to attract new members, let alone young members who are still trying to find their passions in life. But if you think that birding organizations don't have a major age problem, then I'm afraid you haven't been paying attention.

Sure, you might argue that people generally don't become birders until later in life, and that we shouldn't worry about attracting younger people right now who will eventually join the organization in another decade or two. While perhaps there is some truth to this, it's nonetheless a short-sighted viewpoint to assume that the same conditions exist today that resulted in us, our parents, or our grandparents getting into birding years or decades ago. I assure you, things have changed by orders of magnitude.

So what can we do to foster an atmosphere in which young people want to be a part of the MOU and the birding world? That is the question that we, as an organization and a community, need to address. Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this question, but I have a few ideas that might lead us in the right direction:

"Take a child outdoors today!" This is an important message from DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr, and it rings just as true for us birders. In fact, according to the 2016 Outdoor Participation Report by the Outdoor Foundation, data show that adults are more likely to spend time outdoors if

they spent time outdoors as children. If you have children, grandchildren, nieces, or nephews, be sure to take them on a birdwalk this year. Yes, that means your attention will have to focus on something else in addition to birds, but your shared experience has the potential to be a formative one for them. And I promise that you will get more satisfaction from seeing their reaction to a roosting Northern Saw-whet Owl than you would from simply ticking the bird off your personal list.

Don't shy from talking about birds in public. This might seem intuitive, since most of us probably do it already. But the more we talk about birds with non-birders, the more mainstream the conversation becomes, and the less weird it seems. And to a young person, "weird" is a potential barrier, as it often invites isolation, bullying, and even ostracization from his or her peers. Having been a young birder myself, I can attest to this.

Show your excitement about birds! Admit it, you have fun when you're birding. Whether you're tromping around a muddy wetland with your scope, sitting motionless inside a blind with your camera, or driving just over the speed limit to chase down that Tufted Duck, you're enjoying your time. People, and especially young people, need to understand that we're having fun when we do these things and that they too can share in this fun.

Years down the line, my hope is that the MOU can be judged as successful in terms of the number of young people participating in the organization. To reach this goal, we've got some work to do, and we should start right now.

Bob Dunlap

## 2017 Paper Session Venue Survey

*by Cindy Thury Smith*

Thank you to all the MOU members who responded to the Board's request for comments on the 2017 Papers Session at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

As expected, respondents were equally divided over whether this location was closer or farther for them. More than one out-state attendee observed that the Arboretum was easier to get to than a location in the heart of the Twin Cities.

The free, close parking was much appreciated, as were the other perks available at the Arboretum: the gift shop, the art display, plentiful bathrooms, and the opportunity to take a bird walk on the grounds. The double projection screens also scored high; no respondents mentioned trouble seeing or hearing.

There were definite cons, though. Many thought that the table seating made the room too full. A number of respon-

dents mentioned the long line for coffee and refreshments. And others expressed confusion about, or complained about, the lunch options.

There are solutions, of course, if we decide to hold the session at the Arboretum again. A mix of row seating and tables around the sides could alleviate the feeling of congestion and also allow a choice of seating. The long line for coffee could be remedied by providing two stations. And for lunch we could do a better job of informing members of options other than the pre-ordered box lunch. For instance, we could provide a map listing nearby local dining spots.

Many respondents mentioned how much they look forward to the Papers Session each year. We appreciate your attendance and comments. If you have suggestions for the next Papers Session, please send them to [mnlystig@gmail.com](mailto:mnlystig@gmail.com).



# 2018 — Year of the Bird

by Janet C. Green

A number of conservation organizations have proclaimed 2018 as “Year of the Bird.” What makes this year special? It is the one hundredth anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a cornerstone of bird protection, and it marks a century of conservation efforts underpinning this important statute. The celebration is an opportunity to inspire a commitment to do something for the birds as we also enjoy them.

## Bird Conservation History

In the nineteenth century, population expansion, land development, and resource exploitation changed the face of the continent. Recognition of what that meant for wildlife and habitat came late in the century, when bird populations plummeted due to illegal and unregulated hunting of game species and the commercial trade in feathers and birds for the adornment of women’s hats and clothing. The dramatic pictures of hunters’ excessive displays of ducks and shorebirds, the huge shipments of both to urban markets, and carnage in heron colonies from the feather trade all attest to this. The extinction of the Passenger Pigeon in 1914 called attention to this wanton waste and destruction. Other birds also became extinct from killing or habitat change, notably, Carolina Parakeet, Bachman’s Warbler, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Heath Hen, and probably the Eskimo Curlew (last confirmed record in 1963, specimen in Barbados).

The American Conservation Movement began in the late nineteenth century as a reaction to landscape degradation throughout the continent. It is best known for the conservation of land in local and national parks, beginning with

Yellowstone National Park in 1872, and the nature preservation movement led by John Muir. Two other champions of conservation in this era that focused on wildlife protection were game clubs and bird protection societies. The Boone and Crockett Club, which was formed in 1887 by George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt, was followed by the formation of hundreds of local sportsmen’s groups. The first local Audubon society was formed in 1886, after an editorial by George Grinnell in *Forest and Stream*. It was followed by others, notably the Massachusetts Audubon Society, established by two society women in 1896 and still an independent organization, and soon by 35 other state societies. The National Audubon Society was established as an umbrella group in 1905.

## Bird Conservation Laws

The first national legal response to the organizational efforts of the Conservation Movement was the Lacey Act of 1900. This law protected game and wild birds by making it a federal crime to illegally kill wildlife in one state and transport it across state lines. It also prohibited the introduction of foreign species in violation of any state, federal or foreign law.

The Migratory Bird Treaty followed in 1916. This treaty is a convention, signed by the United States and Canada in August 1916, that allowed the treaty-making power of the federal government to override state law. Its major provision covers migratory birds and makes it unlawful, unless permitted by regulations, to “pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill or sell birds listed therein.” Certain exemptions allow for ceremonial use by American Indian tribes. The treaty was a legal recognition that birds migrate across legal boundaries. Other countries later joined the convention: Mexico (1936), Japan (1972), and Russia (1976).

The Migratory Bird Treaty was followed in 1918 by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), a law that implements the treaty’s conventions. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, besides issuing hunting regulations, can issue waivers for prohibited activities, covering, for example, taxidermy, falconry, scientific collecting, and control of geese and gulls at airports. In 1920 the act weathered a challenge to its constitutionality over violation of states’ rights. In 1972 predators (raptors, corvids) were brought under the Act.

In recent years enforcement has tackled the difficult issue of what constitutes “incidental take” by industrial activities like solar farms, towers, wind turbines, and open oil pits. In 2013 penalties were imposed on wind farms for killing Golden Eagles. In 2016, though, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of



Carolina Parakeet, by John James Audubon



*Great Egret, one of the species decimated for its feathers in the 19th Century.*  
**By Gerald Hoekstra**

Appeals ruled, in an issue of an oil company killing ducks, that the MBTA only prohibits “deliberate acts done directly and intentionally.” The interpretation of “incidental take” is currently under legal review by the Department of Interior.

There are over 1000 species on the MBTA list of migratory birds. It covers all native species, including permanent residents. The complete list of species covered by the MBTA can be found in statute at 50 CFR 10.13. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service also has a “List of bird species to which the Migratory Bird Treaty does not apply.” It was last issued in 2013. This list, which is informational rather than regulatory, covers nonnative bird species that have been introduced and do not have a self-sustaining wild population. Several of these birds have occurred in Minnesota: Black Swan, Blue Tit, Great Tit, and European Goldfinch.

### **Year of the Bird**

This centennial celebration of the 1918 MBTA has been cooperatively organized by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Geographic Society, BirdLife International, and National Audubon Society, and embraced by more than 100 organizations. It follows the 2016 centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty itself. That celebratory year produced a collaboration between three countries—Canada, United States, Mexico—that assessed all native bird species across the continent (1,154 birds) and determined which are at high risk of extinction (432). The report that was issued, the State of North America’s Birds 2016, summarizes the review (<http://www.stateofthebirds.org/2016>).

The 2018 Year of the Bird celebration opened with the

January issue of *National Geographic* magazine showcasing an African Secretarybird on the cover and a lead essay, “Why Birds Matter,” by novelist Jonathan Franzen, which examines “how our changing environment is leading to dramatic losses among bird species around the globe” and what can be done about it. Their message is a commitment “to protecting birds today and for the next hundred years” (<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/year-of-the-bird/>).

Other organizations in the campaign offer both inspirational and practical information on their websites. BirdLife International shows “How small actions can make a big difference” (<http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/flyway>). The Cornell Lab of Ornithology offers six resolutions to help you in birding your world in 2018 (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/6-resolutions-to-help-you-birdyourworld-in-2018/>).

National Audubon has an essay on “How Birds Bind Us” and urges everyone to pledge to take some action that helps birds. Their website also has thoughtful messages from many authors on “Why Do Birds Matter?” that inspire and direct one to action (<http://www.audubon.org/news/why-do-birds-matter/>).

People who watch birds do so for many different and overlapping reasons: aesthetic, recreational, scientific, nature study, listing, discovery, travel, and others. Recent news about declining species, climate change, bird kills from pesticides, towers, windows, turbines, and violent weather give one a sense of foreboding. Besides awareness, how can birdwatchers make a difference for the birds they love? The purpose of the Year of the Bird is to give back to the nature we enjoy through individual acts. There are many examples: keep feeders full and clean; protect windows from bird collisions; plant a tree; keep cats indoors; introduce others to the joy of birdwatching; volunteer at nature centers; join a bird organization—the list goes on (see the websites above). In the *National Geographic*, noted biologist Thomas Lovejoy observes: “If you take care of the birds, you take care of most of the big environmental problems in the world.”

*Jan Green has been involved with Audubon since 1960, both at the local and the national level. She is a long-time birder, conservationist, biologist, and author of several books, including Minnesota Birds: Where, When, and How Many, which she co-authored with Bob Janssen, and she was one of the co-authors of the 2017 Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas (published online: [mnbirdatlas.org](http://mnbirdatlas.org)).*



# A Big Year in Washington County

## Part 2

by Ben Douglas

*Editor's note: The first installment of this article appears in the Jan/Feb issue of Minnesota Birding.*

As May 2017 came to a close, so did the prime window for spring migration in central Minnesota. I had the remarkably good fortune to see 20 county life birds and a total of 222 species thus far for the year. I was sure we were in the midst of a singular year of county birding and wanted to do my best to make it even greater.

With the massive migratory influx waning and most birds settling into breeding territory, Peter Nichols and I found ourselves scheming ways to add new or unique species to our lists, while at the same time picking up any missed or late arriving birds.

On June 7, I set out for Afton State Park after work, intent on finding a Summer Tanager that had come back for the fourth or fifth year in a row. Encouraged by some photos posted by Tony Lau, I went to a trail junction known to be a part of the birds territory. Finally, after about an hour and half, the brilliant male popped up in the mid canopy, chattering away and providing the best view of a Summer Tanager I've ever had. It also gave me a chance to snag my first photos of the species. By this point in 2017 Afton State Park already had reports of Western Kingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Ruffed Grouse, and Hooded Warbler.

After an early July vacation to Michigan—and a lifer Kirtland's Warbler—I came back to Washington County wondering what would be next. Pete Nichols suggested we begin a search for Blue Grosbeak. This would be a first county record, but with the recent finds in Dakota County (2016) and Anoka County (2017), the idea was not far-fetched. Back in 2016 Pete and I drove west and spent time with Garret Wee on a grosbeak search in Lyon and Lincoln counties, and then we joined Josh Wallestad on a search in Renville County. We found a singing male with Josh in Renville and gained valuable field experience for where and when to find such a bird. Pete did the heavy work of designing a route for Washington County, using his extensive knowledge of the county and Google maps. On July 23 I picked Pete up in Cottage Grove, and we set out for our first location, an area adjacent to a rail yard with a buffer zone of scrub land and a park and ride facility. Seeing no activity, we moved on after a bit to our next prime location. This patch included large areas of razed land filled in with scrubby bushes and trees, along with a park buffer zone to the north. As we rounded

the corner with the windows down, we heard a complex song waft into the car almost immediately. "Was that a House Finch?" Pete asked. "We'd better stop. They kind of sound like House Finches."

I parked the car, and we got out to scan a scrub-filled mound and small copse of trees at the edge of the empty industrial park. Within seconds a Blue Grosbeak perched on a Mullein rod directly in my binocular view. I could scarcely form the words..."Blue Grosbeak!" So that is how the first county-record Blue Grosbeak for Washington County was discovered. Pete put a number of hours into research, selecting locations and pulling me in to consult on his planned route. Then it all happened in less time than it takes to eat lunch. Eventually the bird was reported with a female by Doug Keiser and later seen carrying food, behavior indicating an active nest.

County bird finds cooled off a bit during the hottest days of the summer. I went all of August without adding any new species and, in fact, dipped deep into September. Then it was time to begin targeting key migrant species.

Health limitations kept Pete out of play for fall migrant sparrow hunting, so I began looking at prairie grass hikes on my own. I was dead set on finding LeConte's and/or Nelson's Sparrow and began using historical references for favored timing of peak migration. In the last week of



*LeConte's Sparrow, Grey Cloud Dunes SNA, by Ben Douglas*



September I focused on Afton State Park and Grey Cloud Dunes SNA. On the 28th, after I had been in the grasses of Grey Cloud Dunes for over an hour and had covered several acres, a sparrow popped up near me and flew a short distance before diving again into the grass. I moved up slowly, but the bird rose and flew back the other direction, dropping back into the grass again. I angled my next approach, hoping that it might retreat to a small bush. The strategy worked! The sparrow retreated right to the base of the bush and began working its way up the stems to check me out. I began snapping pictures and backed off as quickly as possible. When I looked over my pictures at the car, I discovered that what I thought was a single bird was, in fact, two LeConte's Sparrows—an adult and a juvenile. The LeConte's was my twenty-second county life bird of the year. I was gaining confidence in my ability to personally find birds with the use of migrant data, tips from friends, and determined effort.

With sea duck and hawk season approaching fast, I felt the odds were on my side. I had 17 days of vacation left before the end of the year and a desire to go birding every day if necessary. Pete and I continued our solo and team efforts regularly in October, and on the 15th I ventured north on a large lake circuit for sea ducks. I pulled into Big Marine Park thinking it had to be time for a scoter to arrive. With my Swarovski scope I was able to make out four distant dark-bodied diving ducks nearly a mile out. I watched them for at least 20 minutes, noting facial characteristics, general shape, and habits. I was soon confident I had found my county lifer Surf Scoter and quickly began getting the report out to friends and various groups. The drawback to large water bodies like Big Marine is that they can often demand high-end optics for solid identification.

Of course, any time you make an identification from a mile out, you may also get what I had on Lake Elmo on October 30. This lake—and park by the same name—are just a mile down the road from my home. I spend more time birding there than at any other spot, and moments after exiting the car I locked on a dark-bodied duck I knew immediately was a White-winged Scoter. The bird was close enough to me that a binocular ID was possible, and later I got views within a hundred feet of shore, as the bird was continually being set upon by a hungry Bald Eagle. A nearby family of Common Loons seemed to look on with amusement as the eagle ran several angles of attack, but the Scoter was alert and quickly dove each time to avoid becoming a migrant statistic.

With a pair of personally found county lifer scoters in October, I turned my eye toward a Northern Saw-whet Owl. I knew from discussions with others and experience that I would need to prepare for a lot of failed attempts. Fortune smiled, though. A location I had investigated the year before proved just right on November 1. I took my third hike of the year into a large evergreen grove. After about an hour of searching trees, looking for pellets and white wash, I found my county-lifer Northern Saw-whet Owl roosting high in a pine tree. It can't be said enough how challenging it is finding a bird that goes out of its way to remain hidden from the world during daylight hours. My persistent efforts to explore proper habitats for specific species was a paying large dividends for me in the second half of the year. My own finds began to outnumber chase efforts.

Back at my favored patch (Lake Elmo Regional Park) on November 4, I began looking over Eagle Point Lake for duck species. Minutes into my search I stood dumbfounded. A flock of five Red Crossbills flew across the lake, weaving around each other in chaotic flight. I picked up their flight call as they headed toward the parking lot and I ran after them trying in vain to get a perched view. The process of getting ready for fall migration by studying flight calls of winter migrants paid off in that moment.

On November 12 I found myself back at Big Marine Park, with ice floes forming and duck hunters set up at key locations on the lake. Back on the 4th I had seen my second White-winged Scoter of the year on the lake, and I quickly spotted the bird again sitting just off an island



*Black-legged Kittiwake, Hazen P. Mooers, by Ben Douglas*

about a mile from the parking lot. While watching this duck I noticed hunters on the island with decoys in the water. The scoter and a few companions were swimming in close proximity to the decoys. I soon realized that one of the ducks diving with the scoter was very light and hard to identify as a regular species for the area. After the hunters churned up the area to break the ice a bit, the lighter duck separated and flew into an open stretch about a half mile closer to me. I quickly realized I was looking at a Long-tailed Duck! I now had a third species of sea duck in Big Marine Lake in a single year.

Peter and I had also started driving southern county gull routes about this time looking for rarities. We followed up on a report from Gavin Anderson of a potential Sabine's Gull seen in flight over the Hastings bridge. We ran into Kevin Smith doing the same, but we dipped and moved up river

to Hazen P. Mooers Park in Cottage Grove and reported an Iceland Gull present. Two days later Karl Isley was at Hazen P. Mooers Park, picking through gulls roosting on a patch of ice and looking for the Iceland Gull, when he found something far better. Karl chatted with Pete online, describing what he saw. Pete ID'd it as a Black-legged Kittiwake! Karl did an outstanding job writing up a report of what he had seen and describing characteristics of what could be only the second county record of Black-legged Kittiwake. Maybe this was the same bird that Gavin saw over the Hastings bridge a few days earlier? I arrived the next day at 7:00 a.m. and wasn't surprised to find that I was not the first. In total, I would spend five hours at Hazen P. Mooers Park that day. Liz Harper was the first to re-find the bird about an hour and half into the hunt. It was several hundred yards out, floating with a raft of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, and we quickly updated social media channels. Woodstock for birding ensued, as this bird was a lifer even for many that travel outside the state for birds. I personally recognized 25 people that visited during my five hours of birding that day and I was finally able to meet Bill Litkey, the single most prolific birder in Washington County history and someone I had benefited from directly on more than one occasion this year. These kind of rarities are excellent networking opportunities, and I would wager most birders know each other by having met for the first time while looking for one.

As cold weather set in, my efforts only increased, and on December 10 I rolled into Point Douglas Park hoping to add another rare gull. As I parked my car, I spied a massive white-winged gull circling over the river. I jumped out of the car with the engine still running and got on the bird with my binoculars. The snow-white wing tips and size had this bird easily marked it as a Glaucous Gull. I watched it circle three times and fly over the rail bridge. Unlike the kittiwake, this bird hung around a while, with reports out to December 26, affording many an opportunity to view it.

On December 16 my wife asked me to attempt to show her the Bohemian Waxwings that were reported at Lake Byllesby Regional Park in Dakota County a few days before. After a late morning Starbucks run, we were heading south toward Hastings, when my Messenger app chimed. Then, a moment later, a double chime, and I knew something serious was up. I pulled over and checked. Greg Jahner had found, and was currently looking at, a Bohemian Waxwing near Grey Cloud Island. We turned abruptly, and I messaged Greg that we were on our way. We arrived and zipped over to Greg's scope to get a peek at the bird. Seconds later, the Cedar Waxwing flock that it was with lifted after the approach of what we thought was a Northern Shrike. It turned out it was a Townsend's Solitaire! The bird sat in the tree above us for a few minutes. It is not often you can look at a Bohemian Waxwing and a Townsend's Solitaire at the same time in central Minnesota. The waxwing was county lifer 252 and year-bird 242, extending what felt like an impos-

sibly high total for a county other than St. Louis.

On Christmas Day I found myself with a few spare hours and wanting to hit some spots in hopes for one last magical moment before the year ended. I did find some nice birds, but as I drove home I found myself thinking about the year Pete Nichols and I had put together and about how happy I was with what we found and were able to share with the birding community. I turned the corner to Island Trail, which leads into my neighborhood, and saw a large flock of song birds that I knew had not been present in prior days. I stopped the car to look. Common Redpolls. I was excited to add them to my neighborhood list. I got into my driveway and ran down the street with my camera. The birds were swirling overhead and started landing in the small trees of the sales office parking lot. As I began taking pictures of perched birds, I found one that was a lot lighter than the others to the naked eye. I focused on this bird, with sub-zero temps making my eyes water and fingers numb. I scampered back home and quickly reviewed my pictures. I was astounded to find that the bird met every ID marker for Hoary Redpoll, and my pictures were diagnostic for the species, showing a frosty complexion, limited streaking, short bill, and clean white undertail coverts. One more time I contacted Pete, and he quickly came up to Lake Elmo to get a look at a life bird that had evaded him many times before.

In 2017 I had added 31 species to my county life list, while racking up 243 species for the year. Peter finished with 241 species and moved into fifth on the all-time life list for Washington County.

By no means did either of us get every potential species. We both missed Cape May Warbler, and my nemesis, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, refused to be found. Other birds, like Tristan Mann's Common Gallinule and Spotted Towhee, revealed themselves to just a single birder and were never seen again. No matter how dedicated the birder, something is always left to be found. Or the coin may land the other way, and you will miss the window of opportunity on a rarity. The magic of birding is that the next great discovery is just around the corner, waiting for you to make the effort or improve your skills enough to detect a hidden gem.

I sincerely want to thank all the birders that reported their Washington County findings in 2017 and those that followed up on my reports to see a bird that they may have long sought. I especially want to thank Peter Nichols for being a great friend, birding companion, and someone just crazy enough to see how far we both could take birding in Washington County during 2017. It was a great year! I encourage everyone to spend some time in Washington County in 2018.

*Ben Douglas is a contributor to the MOU's Social Media Committee, posting content for the MOU Facebook page. He works full time on Windows server compliance for industry standards and volunteers for birding events as a guide and presenter on technology for birding.*



# Woodpecker Habitat Management and Research Needs in Minnesota

by Michael North

Nine species of woodpeckers occur regularly in Minnesota, with most being year-round residents. Woodpeckers are ecological keystone species for two primary reasons. First, they are primary cavity nesters, meaning that they excavate cavities in trees for nesting or roosting that in turn are used by other species for nesting, resting, and shelter. Secondary cavity users include Wood Ducks, Buffleheads, mergansers, goldeneyes, small to medium-sized owls, American Kestrels, Great Crested Flycatchers, Tree Swallows, chickadees, nuthatches, bluebirds, Flying Squirrels, Gray and Fox Squirrels, bats, Deer Mice, Pine Martens, Fishers, and Tree Frogs. The full suite of woodpecker species is needed to provide cavities for all of these secondary users, but Pileated Woodpeckers may be the most important, since only they create cavities large enough for some secondary users.

Second, woodpeckers consume vast quantities of insects, as do other birds, but they are one of the few guilds of birds that do so year-around in the north woods. The overwinter consumption of adult insects and insect larvae by birds has been identified as a major factor in preventing forest insect epidemics. With woodpeckers being so important to the ecology of Minnesota forests, one would think they have been well-studied. But that is not the case. For one thing, their nests are not easy to find in a quantity that allows for statistically meaningful testing of scientific hypotheses or experimentation.

The nine species of woodpeckers in Minnesota are:

- Pileated Woodpecker
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Northern Flicker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Black-backed Woodpecker
- American Three-toed Woodpecker
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Red-headed Woodpecker

Most of these species are associated with deciduous or mixed deciduous-coniferous forests, the exceptions being the Black-backed and American Three-toed Woodpeckers, which are more associated with conifers. Also, most of these species are permanent residents. Exceptions are the Northern Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, both of which are migratory, and the Red-headed Woodpecker, which is at least partially migratory.

As a DNR manager of forest wildlife habitat, I think the



*Black-backed Woodpecker at nest hole, by Steve Maxon*

key questions for managing woodpecker habitat are the following:

- What tree species do they nest in?
- What diameters are the trees they nest in?
- How many years does it take trees to reach these diameters?

There are few studies that can be reviewed to answer the first two questions. Those that do exist are mainly from Canada and U.S. National Forests. They include locations from Virginia, New Brunswick, the Black Hills of South Dakota, Alberta-Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and Montana. Four of the best sources of information are *Wildlife Habitats in Managed Forests* (U.S. Forest Service Handbook 553, 1979), a U.S. Forest Service conservation assessment of woodpeckers in the Black Hills (Anderson 2003), a thesis conducted by Tara Warren in New Brunswick; and a study by Hilary Cooke and Susan Hannon published in 2012. The only data sets from Minnesota



*Pileated Woodpeckers checking out a nest hole,  
by Gerald Hoekstra*

that I'm aware of are from Cedar Creek Natural Area (Red-headed Woodpeckers), Steve Wilson (Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers), and my own.

From these data sources, we can answer the first two questions generically. For most woodpecker species in most locations where they are available, aspens are the preferred trees for nesting and roosting in. And for most woodpecker species, trees larger than 25 cm (10 inches) diameter (dbh) are preferentially selected for nest sites. Smaller woodpeckers such as Downys and sapsuckers can use trees as small as 15 cm (6 inch) dbh, and medium-sized woodpeckers such as

Hairys can use trees as small as 20 cm (8 inch). Twenty-five cm is also the minimum size tree that Pileated Woodpeckers can use, so that is a good size for addressing the answer to the question about how long it takes trees to reach this size. Fortunately, we have the *Manager's Handbook for Aspen in the North Central States* (U.S. Forest Service GTR NC-36) to answer that question. On good growth sites, it takes about 65 years for aspen to reach 25 cm dbh, but on poor growth sites it can take longer than 70 years. This is important, because in Minnesota we typically manage aspen on a 40–50 year rotation. Just across the border in southeastern Manitoba, the minimum harvest age is 75 years on their best growth sites.

Fortunately, in Minnesota best management practices have been identified by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council, and monitoring shows that minimum retention standards for reserve trees and snags are usually exceeded on most harvest sites. This assures habitat to support some sub-optimum population of woodpeckers, for at least one timber harvest rotation. But what about after the second rotation? And what woodpecker population levels could we achieve if we altered our leave standards and/or rotations on some land categories?

To answer these questions, we need to build a database of woodpecker nest site selection. I am asking birders to look for woodpecker nests and send me data: woodpecker species, date, specific location, nest tree species, nest diameter or circumference (preferably measured), tree condition (alive, dead, or alive with broken top), nest height, and any other noteworthy details. Send them to me at [tjnorth@brainerd.net](mailto:tjnorth@brainerd.net). Actually, it is much easier to find woodpecker nests by listening for them than by looking for them. There is a narrow window of time where nestlings can be heard begging incessantly and loudly for food, and with a little patience an adult will soon show up to feed them and expose the location of the nest cavity. For various species, the period when begging young are audible extends from about May 22 to July 6.

*Mike North is a forest wildlife planner with the Minnesota DNR.*

# When to Look/**Listen**

	Hairy Woodpecker	Downy Woodpecker	Northern Flicker	YB Sapsucker
Nest building	20 April	11-20 April	25 April – 10 May	13 May
Nestling - range	13 May – 6 July	12 May – 10 July	15 May – 6 July	10 June – 17 July
<b>Nestling - peak</b>	<b>22 May – 13 June</b>	<b>3 June – 1 July</b>	<b>14-16 June</b>	<b>16 June – 6 July</b>
Fledgling	7 June – 27 July	29 May – 27 July	7 June – 31 July	19 June – 1 August



# Searching for Kirtland's Warbler in MN

*by Jack Hauser*

The Kirtland's Warbler is an endangered species that nests on the ground, under young Jack Pine trees and primarily in Michigan. In the 1980s the number of nesting pairs in Michigan was down to 188 due to habitat degradation and parasitism of nests by Brown-headed Cowbirds. Management to restore the species began in 1976 with the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Plan, and today, after assiduous efforts to control cowbirds and manage the nesting habitat by the Michigan DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service, the population has rebounded. Last year there were 2500 nesting pairs.

In 2007 the Kirtland's Warbler showed up in Adams County, Wis., and today it is found in five Wisconsin counties. In 2016 a pair fledged five chicks in Bayfield County, Wisconsin. The species has been sighted in Minnesota only twice in the last 150 years, though, and there is no record of the species nesting in the state.

We plan to organize an army of birders to survey Pine County for the Kirtland's Warbler in the spring of 2018. An organizational meeting is planned for April 9, 7:00–9:00 p.m. at the Southdale Library Meeting Room (2nd floor).

Come prepared to volunteer your years of experience to make a big difference and contribute to this project.

Teams of three to four people will be assigned to survey each township (6 miles square). Birders are encouraged to organize their own teams with friends. Tools required are a cell phone with bird guide app, GPS, notebook, and binoculars. To play male Kirtland's Warbler songs, you will need some kind of speaker, such as Bluetooth.

Surveying will take place between May 10 and June 16. Teams can set their own schedule for when and how often to survey, but each team is encouraged to survey at least once per week or as often as they can. Surveying should take place between sunrise and 10:00 a.m.

If you plan to come to the meeting, please contact Pat Hoglund ([pathoglund@msn.com](mailto:pathoglund@msn.com)). If you have a team, please provide the names of other team members as well. There are 10 townships to choose from, all on the Wisconsin/Minnesota border in Pine County. You may choose one or wait to be assigned. Questions can be directed to me at [jgshauser@gmail.com](mailto:jgshauser@gmail.com).

*Kirtland's Warbler, by Gerald Hoekstra*



## MARCH

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur 1	Fri 2	Sat 3
					Intl. Festival of Owls	Intl. Festival of Owls MN Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr. "Bird Language," MVNWR Bird Banding, Eastman Nat. Ctr.
4 Intl. Festival of Owls MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds	5	6 MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds	7	8	9 MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds	10
11	12 MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds	13	14	15	16	17 MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds "Tech Nature," MVNWR Bird Banding, Lowry Nat. Ctr.
18	19 MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds	20 WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr.	21	22	23 Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr. MOU field trip: Boreal Owl Survey #1	24 MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds "All About Bluebirds," Afton SP, DNR MOU field trip: Boreal Owl Survey #1 MOU field trip: SW MN Waterfowl
25 MOU field trip: Twin Cities Metro Waterfowl	26 MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds	27 "What Are You Seeing?" ZVAS	28	29	30	31 Fitzpatrick, "Birds Can Save the World," Cornell Lab

## APRIL

Sun 1	Mon 2	Tues 3	Wed 4	Thur 5	Fri 6	Sat 7
	MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds	"Wrens & Friends," Audubon Chap. of Mpls			Timberdoodle Dance, DNR, Afton SP MOU field trip: Boreal Owl Survey #2	"Bird Language" MVNWR ZVAS Bird Walk at Quarry Hill Nat. Ctr. MOU field trip: Boreal Owl Survey #2 MOU field trip: Sibley
8 MVNWR Birding Trek at Bass Ponds MOU field trip: Nicollet	9 Kirtland's Warbler Project Org. Mtg.	10 MVNWR Bird Trek at Bass Ponds "Woodcocks: Dusk Sky Dancers," Eastman Nat. Ctr.	11	12 ZVAS Woodcock Walk at Chester Woods	13 DNR Bird Walk, Gateway State Trail	14 MOU field trip: Jackson
15	16	17	18	19	20 DNR Bird Walk, Brown's Creek State Trail	21 Hastings Area Birding Festival, Carpenter Nat. Ctr. Bird Banding, Lowry Nat. Ctr. ZVAS Rochester Reservoir Field Trip
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 ZVAS Root River County Park Field Trip
28 Full Moon Woodcock Stalk, Eastman Nat. Ctr.	29	30				





# MOU Calendar

March / April 2018



*Note: In addition to these events, see the descriptions of the new MOU Field Trips on pp. 19*

## AUDUBON CHAPTER OF MINNEAPOLIS KINGFISHER DIVISION

### March 6: 2018 Red-headed Woodpecker Research at Cedar Creek

*Details:* 7 pm. Presentation by Dr. Elena West on the Red-headed Woodpecker (RHW) research accomplished and in progress at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve in East Bethel, MN during 2017 and continuing in 2018. Discussion will center on the 35 adult and nestling RHWs that had transmitters attached during the summer of 2017. Discussion will include what we learned and expect to learn as recaptures occur in 2018. There will also be information about the citizen science projects that are in progress to help this research. The program will include close-up photographs of RHWs and the research process. Location: Beth El Synagogue, 5225 Barry St W, St. Louis Park. All program meetings are free and open to the public.

### March 9: Penguins of Antarctica

*Details:* 1 pm–2 pm. Presentation by Katy Shannon, naturalist and retired science teacher. In 2015–2016, Katy and her son went on an expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula. They had the adventure of a lifetime on an expedition to the Falkland Islands, the South Georgia Islands, the Shetland Islands, and the Antarctic Peninsula. During the voyage they saw seven different types of penguins and many other birds and mammals. The programs is free and open to the public. For more information call 763-533-8381. Location: Bryant Square Park Building, 3101 Bryant Ave S, Minneapolis.

### April 3: Wrens and Friends

*Details:* 7 pm. Presentation by Keith Olstad. Minnesota regularly hosts four wren species, but they are sometimes hard to distinguish by sight or sound, if one can find them at all. Another three species show up here occasionally. Beyond the wren family are several species quite similar in size and behavior. Come to learn more about Minnesota's wrens and their friends. Keith is a retired Lutheran pastor who has been photographing birds most of his life. He serves on the board of the ACM and is the convener of the research team for the ACM-sponsored Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Project. He annually leads eco-tours to Nicaragua to explore migratory birds and economic development issues between our countries. Location: Brookdale Library 6125 Shingle Creek Parkway, Brooklyn Center, MN.

## CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

### March 3: MN Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 8 am–10 am. Join bird expert Kevin Smith on a morning hike around the nature center. Learn to identify birds by sight and sound. Field guides and binoculars available to use or bring your own. Program fee: \$6.00 or free for Friends of CNC, Hastings Environmental Protectors, and St. Croix Valley Bird Club members. Please RSVP at 651-437-4359 and let us know you are coming. Location: CNC, Minnesota Campus: 12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings, MN.

### March 9: WI Campus Owl Prowl

*Details:* 7 pm–9 pm. This time of the year many of the Midwest's 12 owl species are vocalizing to attract mates. Explore CNC on a guided night hike to look and listen for these owls. If there is enough snow cover, snowshoes will be provided, or you may bring your own. Program fee: \$6.00 per person or \$4.00 for Friends of CNC. Please call 651-437-4359 to register. Location: CNC, Wisconsin Campus, 300 East Cove Road Hudson, WI.

### March 20: WI Campus Bird Hike

*Details:* 8 am–10 am. Join the St. Croix Valley Bird Club on a morning hike on our beautiful WI campus. Learn to identify birds by sight and sound. Program fee: \$6.00 or free for Friends of CNC, Hastings Environmental Protectors, Hastings High School students, and St. Croix Valley Bird Club members. Please RSVP at 651-437-4359 and let us know you are coming. Location: CNC, Wisconsin Campus: 300 East Cove Road, Hudson, WI.



*Sedge Wren, by Vija Kelly*

### **March 23: Bird Banding**

*Details:* 8:30 am–12 pm. Have you ever wondered what bird banding is all about? Banding records help us learn how long birds live, where they travel, when they migrate and many other interesting facts. CNC has been banding birds for over 30 years. Our bird banders welcome you to see songbirds up close and learn about the birds that share our ecosystem. Banding runs continuously for the full 3½ hours, but visitors may come and go at any time. Please call ahead so we know you are coming. Donations of bird seed or suet will be greatly appreciated in lieu of a program fee. Location: CNC, 12805 St. Croix Trail S, Hastings, MN.



*Bird-banding at Carpenter Nature Center,  
by Joanna Eccles*

### **April 21: Hastings Area Earth Day Birding Festival**

*Details:* 8 am–4 pm. Celebrate the many birds of Minnesota at the Hastings Area Earth Day Birding Festival. This is the sixth year the Hastings Environmental Protectors has teamed up with CNC for the Birding Festival. Some of the highlights are an “Introduction to Birding” class, a “Raptors 101” class, bird banding demonstrations, youth birding competition, and guided bird trips in the Hastings area. Program fee is \$5 per person or \$15 per person including a box lunch. RSVPs are required: call 651-437-4359 to reserve your spot. Location: CNC, 12805 St. Croix Trail S, Hastings, MN.

### **CORNELL LAB of ORNITHOLOGY**

#### **March 31: John Fitzpatrick, “Birds Can Save the World”**

*Details:* 10:00 am. Cornell University is sponsoring a free lecture by John Fitzpatrick, PhD, Director of the Cornell University Ornithology Laboratory. For further information, please contact Alexander or Lucy Levitan at 651-317-3720 or llevitan@comcast.net. Location: Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Visitors Center, 3815 American Blvd E, Bloomington, MN.



*Eastern Bluebird, by Heidi Hermes*

### **DNR**

#### **March 24: All About Bluebirds**

*Details:* 10–11 am. Bluebirds are one of Minnesota’s most admired songbirds, yet many people have never seen one. Learn about the life history of bluebirds and how you can help restore their populations. No registration required. Free, but state park permit is required on each vehicle (\$7/day pass or \$35 annual pass, available at park office upon entry to park). Location: Afton State Park Visitor’s Center, 651-231-6968.

#### **April 6: Timberdoodle Dance**

*Details:* 7:30–8:30 pm. Timberdoodle is the nickname given to a ground nesting long-beaked little bird called the American Woodcock. The mating flight and dance of this little bird is pretty amazing. Location: Afton State Park Visitor’s Center, 651-231-6968.

#### **April 13: Bird Watching Walk**

*Details:* 7–8 am. Join the naturalist for a birding stroll and learn about the basic techniques of bird identification during spring migration. Binoculars and bird guides will be available. 651-231-6968. Location: Gateway State Trail (Hadley & 10th Street location). Directions: Hwy 36 to Hadley Ave, south to 10th St., turn left onto 10th. Parking area 1 block east.

#### **April 20: Bird Watching Walk**

*Details:* 8–9 am. Join the naturalist for a birding stroll and learn about the basic techniques of bird identification during spring migration. Binoculars and bird guides will be available. 651-231-6968. Location: Brown’s Creek State Trail (Neal Ave. near McKusick St., Stillwater, MN).



## FRIENDS OF MAPLEWOOD NATURE CENTER

### March 6: Smartphone Birding

*Details:* 7–8:15 pm. Presented by Sharon Stiteler. Smart phones have changed birding. You can take out multiple field guides, get real-time bird reports, and take incredible photos and videos of your favorite birds. This program gives you the latest information on how to maximize your phone for birding. Location: Maplewood Community Center, 2100 White Bear Ave, Maplewood, MN.

## INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER

### March 2-4: International Festival of Owls

*Details:* Immerse yourself in owls at the only annual, full-weekend, all-owl festival in North America. Highlights include live owl programs by the World Bird Sanctuary and Scottish Owl Centre as well as field trips. Each year the International Owl Center presents World Owl Hall of Fame awards to people who are making the world a better place for owls. Special Achievement award winner Jonathan Haw of EcoSolutions in South Africa will be the keynote speaker at the banquet. Californian Lisa Owens-Viani, founder of Raptors Are The Solution (RATS) will speak on Saturday afternoon. Location: International Owl Center, 126 E Cedar St., Houston, MN.



*Boreal Owl, by Roy Zimmerman*

## KIRTLAND'S WARBLER PROJECT

### April 9: Organizational meeting, Kirtland's Warbler Project

*Details:* pm–9 pm. Needed: Birders to participate in a survey of Pine County for Kirtland's Warbler. Come prepared to volunteer your years of experience to make a big difference and contribute to this project. All interested birders are invited. Come if you can, leave when you must. Surveying will take place between May 10 and June 16 between sunrise and 10:00 a.m. on as many days as a team is able. Tools required: cell phone with bird guide app, GPS, notebook, binoculars. Contact: Jack Hauser (jgshauser@gmail.com). Preregister to help with the survey by sending your

name, cell phone number, and email address to Pat Hoglund (pathoglund@msn.com). Location: Southdale Library, 7001 York Ave S, Edina, MN, Meeting Room on 2nd floor.

## MINNESOTA VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### March 3 or April 7 (2 dates): Bird Language

*Details:* 9 am–1 pm. Join us as we gather on the slopes of the Minnesota River Valley to explore what the birds are telling us about our surroundings. We will split the time between the classroom and outdoors. Bring a notebook, pencils, and something to sit on outdoors. Led by Jonathon Poppele and Donnie Phyllaier, Volunteer Refuge Naturalists. To register, visit [www.mntracking.org/](http://www.mntracking.org/). Location: MVNWR Visitor Center (Classroom A), 3815 American Blvd. E, Bloomington, MN.

### March 4, 12, 17, 19, 24 or 26 (6 dates in March)

### April 2, 8, 10 (3 dates in April): Bird Watching Treks at Bass Ponds

*Details:* 8 10 am. Join volunteer Refuge naturalist Craig Mandel for a bird walk at the Bass Ponds Trailhead to learn about the birds that migrate to and through the wildlife refuge. During these walks Craig will help you search for migrating waterfowl and raptors. The group may also see some early spring migrants, with a mix of sparrows and the first Yellow-rumped Warblers of the season on the later walks. Birders of all skill levels are welcome on these walks. Bring along your binoculars and favorite field guide, and dress appropriately for the weather. Location: The Bass Ponds Trailhead, 86th St. East, Bloomington, MN.

### March 17: Tech Nature

*Details:* 1–3 pm. Join National Park Service Ranger Sharon Stiteler, alias Birdchick, to learn more about how to find and identify wildlife, report your sightings, and even take pictures and video, all with the amazing smartphone in your pocket. Bring your phone and unlock some of the secret powers it offers to give you a great day outdoors. The program will start with a brief presentation and then move to testing out photography at the feeders. Free, no registration needed. Class provided by Mississippi National River and Recreation Area & Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. MVNWR Visitor Center (Classroom A), 3815 American Blvd. E, Bloomington, MN.

## THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

### March 3: Bird Banding

*Details:* 9 am–12 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied, and tagged with numbered rings. Groups of 10 or more, please call 763-694-7700 to reserve a time slot. Bring a camera. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Elm Creek Park Reserve, Eastman Nature Center, 13351 Elm Creek Rd., Osseo, MN.

**March 17 and April 21 (2 dates): Bird Banding**

*Details:* 9 am–12 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and tagged with numbered rings. Groups of 10 or more. Call 763-694-7700 to reserve a time slot. Bring a camera. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Carver Park Reserve, Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria, MN.

**April 10: Woodcocks: Dusk Sky Dancers**

*Details:* 6:45–9 pm. Learn the natural history of woodcocks. Rush for position at dusk as the male swoops and twitters in a high aerial dance, then hope he lands nearby. \$5.00. Reservations required. Call 763-694-7700. Location: Elm Creek Park Reserve, Eastman Nature Center, 13351 Elm Creek Rd., Osseo, MN.

**April 29: Full Moon Woodcock Stalk**

*Details:* 7:15–9:30 pm. Learn the natural history of woodcocks. Rush for position at dusk as the male swoops and twitters in a high aerial dance, then hope he lands nearby. \$5.00. Reservations required. Call 763-694-7700. Location: Elm Creek Park Reserve, Eastman Nature Center, 13351 Elm Creek Rd., Osseo, MN.

**ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON**

**March 3: ZVAS Monthly Bird Walk**

*Details:* 9–10 am. Join Terry and Joyce Grier on a casual walk through Quarry Hill Park. Bring binoculars if you have them; some are available to borrow from the Nature Center. Dress for the weather. Families and children are welcome. Stay for any length of time. Walks usually last about one hour. Free and open to the public, no registration required. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, 701 Silver Creek Rd NE, Rochester, MN.

**March 27: ZVAS Monthly Program – “What Are You Seeing”**

*Details:* 7–8 pm. An evening of funny and heartwarming stories as told by Al Batt of rural Hartland, MN. Al writes humor and nature columns for many newspapers and does regular radio shows about nature. He writes a number of popular cartoon strips that are syndicated nationally and is author of the book *A Life Gone to the Birds*. He is a columnist for Bird Watcher’s Digest. Location: 125 Live, 125 Elton Hills Drive NW, Rochester, MN.

**April 7: ZVAS Monthly Bird Walk**

*Details:* 9–10 am. Join Terry and Joyce Grier on a casual walk through Quarry Hill Park. Bring binoculars if you have them; some are available to borrow from the Nature Center. Dress for the weather. Families and children are welcome. Stay for any length of time. Walks usually last about one hour. Free and open to the public—no registration required. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, 701 Silver Creek Rd NE, Rochester, MN.

**April 12: Woodcock Walk at Chester Woods**

*Details:* 7:30–9:30 pm. Led by Jim Peterson. Every spring the Woodcock perform one of the strangest and most interesting mating rituals. We will observe it up close, beginning at dusk. Location: Chester Woods County Park, horse corral parking lot.



*American Woodcock, by Earl Orf*

**April 21: Rochester Reservoir Field Trip**

*Details:* 8 am–noon. Led by Lance Vrieze. The flood control reservoirs around Rochester have created some of the best bird habitat in Olmsted County and are more often than not where local rarities are found. We will visit several to see what we can turn up during migration. Location: Heintz Center, Rochester, MN. Meet in the east parking lot at the Heintz Center to car pool.

**April 28: Root River County Park Field Trip**

*Details:* 8:30–11 am. Led by Sandy Hokanson. We will visit Root River County Park just south of Rochester near Simpson to look for returning migrants and more. The park has nice walking trails and good diverse habitat for a wide variety of birds and spring wildflowers. Location: Heintz Center, Rochester, MN. Meet in the east parking lot at the Heintz Center to car pool.

## New MOU Members

Rita Doucet, *Minneapolis, MN*

Bruce Hoover, *Kenmore, NY*

Lisa Keitel, *St. Paul, MN*

Gene Merriam, *Coon Rapids, MN*

Tim Pulis, *Mankato, MN*

Lee Thomas, *New Prague, MN*

Rolf Thompson, *Wabasha, MN*

Eric Vehe, *Roseville, MN*

# MOU Field Trips

MOU is pleased to announce that it is once again hosting field trips. The MOU comprises many birders that have become not only experts in identifying birds, but also experts in where to find them. By tapping in to this expertise we hope to share our knowledge of Minnesota's birds and birding locations with you.

Starting this spring, watch for field trip announcements on MOU-NET, Facebook, and in the calendar of this newsletter. These trips are free and open to the public. Some trips may be more appealing to beginners, whereas others may be of more interest to experienced county listers, but all interested participants are welcome.

For more information or if you'd be interested in leading an MOU field trip yourself, please contact Josh Wallestad, MOU Field Trip Chair, at the following address: fieldtrips@moumn.org.

## March Field Trips

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### March 23-24: Breeding Boreal Owl Survey #1

Led by Josh Watson

The objective of this trip will be to find evidence of breeding Boreal Owls in Cook and/or Lake counties after this past winter's irruption. Teams will drive predetermined routes on remote forest roads at night, stopping frequently to listen for Boreal Owls vocalizing. This trip is for the birder who seeks adventure as the country is remote, the search goes deep into each night, and the chance of success is not guaranteed, but the payout could be huge. This trip is limited to 10 participants. Participants are expected to make their own lodging arrangements. Those interested should email fieldtrips@moumn.org by March 10.

### March 24: Southwest Minnesota Waterfowl Trip

Led by Kimberly Emerson

This goal of this trip will be to enjoy the wonder of spring waterfowl migration by looking for ducks and geese in Cottonwood, Nobles, and Jackson counties. Plan to pack a lunch and bird the whole day. Interested participants should meet Kimberly at the Windom Wetland Management District Office, 49663 Co. Rd 17, Windom, MN, at 7:30 a.m.

### March 25: Twin Cities Metro Area Waterfowl Trip

Led by Alex Sundvall

Participants will look for migrating waterfowl at Bass Ponds, Old Cedar Avenue Bridge, and other stops along the Minnesota River. Participants should meet Alex at the Bass Ponds at 7:30 a.m. The trip will last until noon.

## April Field Trips

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### April 6-7: Breeding Boreal Owl Survey #2

Led by Josh Watson

Different routes will be taken to try to cover as much ground in Cook/Lake Counties as possible. This trip is also limited to 10 participants. Those interested should email fieldtrips@moumn.org by March 24.

### April 7-8: Sibley and Nicollet Counties Birding Weekend

Led by Brad Abendroth

On this one- or two-day option, you will be able to build sizeable county lists. The focus of April 7 will be Sibley County; meet at the McDonald's in Belle Plaine at 7:00 a.m. April 8 will be devoted to Nicollet County; meet at the McDonald's in St. Peter at 7:00 a.m. Bring your own provisions if you like, but the group will make stops for food.

### April 14: Jackson County Birding Day

Led by Kimberly Emerson

If you've ever wanted to start a bird list for Jackson County or beef up your current list, this is the trip for you. Jackson is Kimberly's favorite county to bird, so you will be in good hands as you look for as many species as possible in several county parks, state lands, and federal lands. Pack your own provisions and plan to spend the whole day birding. Interested participants should meet Kimberly at the Vet's Whoa 'N Go Fuel Stop in Jackson, MN at 7:30 a.m.

## May Field Trips

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### May 12-13: Western MN Shorebirds Trip

Led by Garrett Wee

Participants may well see 20+ species of shorebirds on this one- or two-day option trip led by one of the area's top birders. Public and private land around Cottonwood, MN will be explored to see as many shorebirds and marsh birds as possible. Whether you bird one day or two, bring your own provisions and plan to spend the full day in the field. Meet each morning at the Cenex at 8:00 a.m. Participants are encouraged to bring mud boots of some kind. Garrett says that accommodations can be made for disabled birders; please email fieldtrips@moumn.org for more information.

### May 12: Warbler Walk at Frontenac S. P.

Led by Ben Douglas

Be a part of Ben Douglas's State Park Big Year by joining him to look for warblers and other migrant passerines at one of the best state parks for spring migration. Interested participants should meet Ben at the main lot at the end of Park Road at 7:00 a.m. and plan on a roughly a four-hour walk.

*Note: There may be more field trips offered in May. Look to the May/June newsletter for additional offerings.*





## Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

Carpenter Nature Center  
12805 Saint Croix Trail South  
Hastings, MN 55033

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Web: <http://moumn.org>

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**Designer:** Thomas Benjamin Hertzell

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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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### Birding Hotline

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**MOU web site:** <http://moumn.org>

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## MOU Membership: New/Renewal

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### Membership Categories

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<input type="checkbox"/> Life, joint	\$750.00

Send to: Cindy Smith, MOU Membership Secretary  
19885 Lillehei Avenue  
Hastings MN 55033-9354

### 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: \$ \_\_\_\_\_