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Hemp Is for the Birds

by Carrol Henderson

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources' Nongame Wildlife Program, Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, Wild Bird Feeding Industry Inc., and All Seasons Wild Bird Stores have created a new coalition of bird-feeding advocates to explore the opportunities for utilizing industrial hemp seed as a wild bird food that could be grown by Minnesota farmers.

The 2014 Farm Bill defined industrial hemp for the first time under federal law and allowed states to develop pilot programs to study the growth, cultivation, and marketing of industrial hemp. After the Minnesota Industrial Hemp Development Act (MS 148K)

became law in 2015, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture was tasked with administering the Industrial Hemp Pilot Program. Industrial hemp is not the same as marijuana because it must have a content of 0.3% or less of the chemical compound THC, which is the ingredient that contributes to the negative reputation of marijuana.

Industrial hemp is a seed grain, not unlike soybeans, that has multiple uses. It provides value in oil content for cosmetics, protein powders, and nutritional supplements among other medicinal uses, in addition to adding nutritional value to food products such as vegetable oil, snack foods, condiments, and some beverages. It also has



Hemp farmer Charlie LeVine and Minnesota Department of Agriculture hemp program coordinator Margaret Wiatrowski, by Carrol Henderson



House Finch and Black-capped Chickadee at hemp feeder, by Carrol Henderson

value as fiber for producing high quality textiles. Hemp is being widely grown across Canada, where there are 12 different varieties for differing product benefits.

In 2016 seven farmers who participated in Minnesota's pilot program for industrial hemp production planted the crop on 38 acres. In 2017 the number of license holders increased to 38, and the crop acreage grew to 1210. In 2018 the number of license holders increased to about 50, but the total acres in production declined to about 900.

So what does this have to do with bird feeding? From 2012 through 2015, I co-authored a book on bird feeding with Paul Baicich and Margaret Barker. The book, titled *Feeding Wild Birds in America: Culture, Commerce, and Conservation*, traces the history of bird feeding traditions in America from the 1880s to the present.

Perhaps the most intriguing chapter in the book highlights the use of hemp seed for bird feeding from the 1880s through the 1940s. Hemp was highly regarded as one of the very best seeds to feed a variety of birds, including finches, doves, nuthatches, grosbeaks, and woodpeckers. In fact, a hundred years ago the American Goldfinch was commonly called the "hemp-bird."

Hemp seed was advocated by national bird experts Roger Tory Peterson, John Dennis, Edward Howe Forbush, and John Terres. In 1917, the US Department of Agriculture even promoted feeding hemp seed to birds in winter on a bird-feeding poster produced by that agency.

When I became aware of the industrial hemp pilot program in April of 2017, I "connected the dots" between the history of hemp in bird feeding and the resurgence of interest in hemp production in American agriculture. I contacted the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to inquire if they had considered the potential of hemp seed for bird feeding. They were not aware of this historical use of hemp, so they invited me to a hemp forum in St. Paul in January 2018, where I shared this perspective on the value of hemp for bird feeding with the farmers enrolled in the pilot hemp program.

Further investigation into this new marketing opportu-

nity revealed that while there were various controls and restrictions on use of industrial hemp for human and livestock-related use and fiber production, there were no restrictions on marketing and use of industrial hemp seed for feeding wild birds.

Margaret Wiatrowski from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Bob Dunlap of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, Dave Netten of the Wild Bird Feeding Industry and All Seasons Wild Bird Stores, and I organized an informal working group to develop a strategy to begin promotion and sales of industrial hemp for wild bird feeding in Minnesota.

We teamed up with Dr. David Horn of Millikin University in Illinois to carry out bird food preference tests at several sites that compared use of hemp seed with black oil sunflower and white proso millet. Additional volunteers, including Cardinal Corners in West St. Paul, were solicited for a more limited testing of hemp seed in northwest, northeast, and central Minnesota. The food preference tests were funded by donations from the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union and All-Seasons Wild Bird Stores. Additional testing of bird use of hemp seed is being planned for next winter.

Meanwhile, the potential for avian use of hemp seed offers some bonus environmental benefits. This is a crop that could be locally grown by Minnesota farmers. In contrast, bird foods like nyjer are grown in Africa, India, and southeast Asia and must be imported. Furthermore, hemp plants are resistant to traditional insect pests, so pesticides and insecticides are not necessary. The tiny flowers of hemp plants are also visited by small pollinator insects, including native species.



Industrial hemp field, by Carrol Henderson

While the last chapter in this novel opportunity has not been written, it potentially could provide multiple benefits for birds, the bird-feeding retail industry, Minnesota farmers, and bird-feeding enthusiasts who derive great satisfaction as they enjoy the birds at their backyard bird feeders.

Carrol Henderson is Nongame Wildlife Program supervisor for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Message from the President

As you read this, MOU members are actively volunteering at our organization's booth at the Minnesota State Fair. Since the early 2000s, the MOU booth has provided one of the greatest opportunities for sharing our members' knowledge and passion for birds with the general public. This is but one of the many important things the MOU does as a volunteer organization.

A volunteer organization like the MOU means, at least in part, that its membership consists entirely of volunteers. The same is true for its Board and officers. Nothing that any MOU member does for the organization in any capacity results in that member being monetarily reimbursed for his or her time. As volunteers, MOU members serve both the organization and the greater Minnesota birding community by spending their free time attending events, advocating for conservation, coordinating meetings, contributing ideas, publicizing information, and guiding field trips among other actions.

Allow me to underscore a simple phrase in the previous paragraph: spending their free time. Yes, that's correct; when we all could be doing other things with our time, pursuing other hobbies and activities, we choose to spend at least some part of it, without pay, for the benefit of birds and their habitats. Why? Because we believe that spending our free time on birds is important, and that there is a need for us to be spending our time in this way.

So what are some needs that can be met by volunteering under the MOU umbrella? Perhaps first and foremost, the dissemination of information on birds in Minnesota. From our database managers to our many members who faithfully staff the MOU State Fair booth each year, the expertise of our membership is invaluable in teaching others about birds. Want to learn something new about birds? Check out



Cooper's Hawk, by Harris Mallory

our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/MNornithU/. Read about a recent scientific study in *The Loon* or peruse an article about bird conservation in this very newsletter, *Minnesota Birding*. Never seen a Lesser Yellowlegs before? Check out our list of guided field trips in this same newsletter. As MOU members, we want others to understand why birds are so important, and this is achieved by disseminating information about birds.

But a volunteer organization cannot function to its potential without the many, many hours volunteered by its members. I know that we all have other things going on in our lives requiring (at least some of the time) that we not focus on birds, be it a job, our family, or other obligations. Therefore, it's a safe assumption that volunteering isn't always easy. In fact, in many cases it's downright difficult to find the time to do so. In that light, I am extremely grateful to those members in particular who continue to take advantage of opportunities to serve the MOU in some capacity and to further the goal of the organization: to foster the study and conservation of birds and to promote the conservation of birds and their natural habitats.

Are you an MOU member but have never had the time to volunteer? No worries! It's a busy world, I get that. Your membership dues and donations, like those of all other MOU members, are your contributions to achieving our goal. But if you've never volunteered and are thinking you might want to get involved, please let me know (sending me an email is easiest: president@moumn.org). The more we volunteer, the more people we reach, and the more chances we have for growth as an organization committed to Minnesota's birds and its birding community.

Thank you to past, present, and future volunteers. We can't do it without you, and I know the birds would agree.

– Bob Dunlap



Palm Warbler, by Jean Brislanice

“Mature Forest” Birds and Early Successional Forest

by Greg Hoch

Birdwatchers and ornithologists often classify woodland birds according to whether they prefer young forest or mature forest. Golden-winged Warblers, for instance, prefer young forests, while Ovenbirds like mature forests.

As researchers continue to collect data, though, the line between those two groups is getting fuzzier and fuzzier. These designations often relate to the preferred nesting habitats for the species. While nesting is critical for any individual bird and for the species overall, it's not everything. In 2006, researchers Vitz and Rodewald observed that “mature-forest birds can be viewed as a major component of early-successional bird communities, a pattern not generally recognized by ecologists.”

For migratory songbirds, summer and winter habitats are different. But habitat use can change dramatically even within a summer. For many birds the fledging habitat of the juvenile birds and the habitats that adult birds use while molting in mid to late summer are quite different from the nesting habitat preferred just a few weeks earlier.

The thick vegetation characteristic of early successional forest provides cover to hide and escape from predators. This is important when juvenile birds are still learning to fly and while adults are molting and thus possibly a little slower or less able to maneuver quickly. A Sharp-shinned or Cooper's Hawk can easily fly through a mature forest but has more trouble navigating through the dense tangle of early successional habitat.

Early successional forests often have lots of fruit-bearing vines and trees. Raspberries or blackberries will quickly sprout after a clearcut or disturbance. Within a few years, wild cherries and plums, dogwoods, and other fruit-bearing shrubs are common.

In addition, early successional forests are sunnier than mature forests and therefore warmer, and these warmer areas attract more insects. Insects are also drawn to the flowering fruit trees early in the season and to the fruit itself later in the season.

Because all of these factors are occurring at the same time, it's often difficult to tease apart which are the most important to wildlife and which ones wildlife respond to most strongly. More importantly, different species respond to different features in these areas. Porneluzi *et al.* (2014) and Schlossberg and King (2009) studied the response to clearcutting over time of both early successional bird species and mature forest bird species. They found that each

group responded differently to the vegetation in the different ages of clearcuts. Some species peaked in population during the first few years after the clearcut; others didn't peak until the clearcut was several years old.

There are several bird species directly tied to young forest, early successional habitats, and ecological disturbance and succession. The Wildlife Management Institute's booklet *Best Management Practices for Woodcock and Associated Species* (2009) lists 25 species that are likely to respond to early successional forest management and another 12 listed as exhibiting variable response to management. These are actually limited lists, since they include only species that are classified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by Michigan, Minnesota, or Wisconsin. Thirteen of those 37 are listed as SGCN in all three states.

One songbird species that is most closely tied to early successional habitat is the Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*), a species that has been doing very poorly in recent years. Often managing for this bird and other species that use the same habitat can be unpopular with the general public. McLeish (2007) noted that when Golden-winged Warbler researcher John Confer “supported a plan submitted to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation to do some clear-cutting in the Hudson River Valley to create shrub habitat... it blew up in their faces and they had to retract it.” He observes: “Politically, you just can't clear-cut... It seems that some of the land uses hated most by the general public are turning out to be the best land uses for golden-winged warblers.” Others have made similar obser-



Golden-winged Warbler, by Richard Gotz



American Woodcock, by Gerald Hoekstra

uations. In a 1997 report for the National Wildlife Federation, Michael Lipske quotes John Hagan, director of conservation forestry at Massachusetts' Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences: "We were kind of surprised at the number of species that were using, in fact had their highest abundance in, clear-cuts or the scrubby growth that comes in 5 to 10 years after a clear-cut," says Hagan. "The birds included species of concern to conservationists, such as chestnut-sided warbler, Nashville warbler and Lincoln's sparrow."

Six years later Mike Freeman quoted Tim Mooney of the Rhode Island Nature Conservancy making similar observations: "I had carried into my professional life a desire never to see a tree cut, but having seen the bird diversity jump by a third following the harvest—especially some troubled species like field sparrows, prairie warblers, and woodcock—that emotional wrestling is gone. You walk through those transitional zones in spring now and hear a great deal more chatter than you used to. Now all I think is, 'Where can we do more?'"

There's a false impression in the minds of some that game birds like American Woodcock and Ruffed Grouse prefer young forest while songbirds prefer mature forest, but that is not really the case. This is an area where birders and bird hunters can have a common voice when it comes to habitat management.

I do not mean to argue that all forests should be cut. We need large tracts of mature or old-growth forest. Many species of wildlife depend on them (notably the Northern Goshawk), and of course many people enjoy hiking or camping in these areas.

Also, when it comes to questions of clear-cutting, different standards apply to different types of forest. Deforestation of tropical rainforests, or cutting old growth forest in the Pacific Northwest, are fundamentally different from aspen management in the Great Lakes area. Cut those forests

down and it may be thousands of years before they return to their pre-cut condition and can host the same wildlife species. With aspen and some other Midwestern forest types, on the other hand, recovery can be very quick—months to years, not centuries to millennia.

Not all tree harvesting is bad for wildlife. When done carefully and thoughtfully, it can be very beneficial to a number of wildlife species. Some, in fact, are dependent on it. As a side benefit, tree harvesting can also be beneficial to local rural economies.

How much should or can be cut? How often? How big should those cuts be? How should those clearcuts be arranged on the landscape? Those questions still need more research.

Greg Hoch is Prairie Habitat Team Supervisor for the Minnesota DNR, working out of the DNR St. Paul Central Office.

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Vesper Sparrow, by Pete Nichols

Birder Bio: Jerry Pruett

Tell us about yourself [where you live, what you do, how long you have lived in Minnesota, whatever else you think relevant].

I currently live in Rochester Minnesota, but was born and raised in Illinois. I have been a resident of Minnesota since getting my Minnesota driving license in 1968 in order to pay in-state tuition at Winona State. So I really do feel like a native even if I don't technically qualify.

After college (BA in biology and chemistry) I taught science in junior and senior high school in Plainview, was assistant coach in wrestling and track, and became a Boy Scout Master. But I have always been attracted to birds. As such the Science Club, consisting of my interested students, would frequently meet at nearby Carley State Park for early morning pre-school bird and flower walks.

Later I switched careers, moved into Rochester and began working for the Mayo Clinic and I retired in 2010 after 30 years.

When did you start birding? Or, Serious about birding since...

In childhood my grandparents lived in Joliet Illinois and our family took an annual trip to the Brookfield Zoo near Chicago. The large aviary there was one of my favorite places to see. There was a Golden Eagle on exhibit that really imprinted on me. The highlight of the zoo visit was seeing that bird, so exotic to me. Years later I moved to Minnesota and eventually to Rochester. In 1978 I was driving through Whitewater State Park on January 1st and to my astonishment I saw a Golden Eagle! I thought, jeepers, there must be someone else that would be interested in knowing about this. New to town, I called the *Post Bulletin* and was put in touch with John Weiss the Outdoor writer. He suggested I call Quarry Hill. That's when I met Vince Herring, one of the naturalists, who had just finished teaching a community education bird watching class. I never had the opportunity to take his class, but he invited me to do a Big Day bird count with him in May. I was also introduced to two of his bird class students Bob Eckblad and Jerry Bonkoski. You may recognize the names as former MOU presidents ('92-'93, '03-'04). I was also introduced to the local Audubon Club and the MOU. I began going on the scheduled field trips and learning from experienced birders. With their enthusiasm, interest and skills I learned what birding as a hobby was all about and have enjoyed every step of the way since then.

How did your interest expand after that first experience?

I joined the local Audubon club, (Zumbro Valley Nature Club at that time), and joined the MOU. I began regularly



attending programs and going on the state-wide field trips led by Kim Eckert. I found I really enjoyed traveling around the state seeing birds and sights from locations farther from home. I hadn't traveled much earlier in life, so that added to my excitement. The challenge of learning and improving my skills at finding and identifying birds was fun and stimulating. Bob and Jerry were very much my mentors in this process.

Then I signed up for Kim's Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley trip in 1988 (I think). And suddenly the horizon expanded exponentially. I had never dreamed of Green Jays before. Subsequently I took several more trips out of state including Arizona and Florida. Then in 1992 we took a family trip to Belize and once again the horizon fell further away, and I mean that in a good way. I have been to many countries since, mostly tropical, for a thrilling career as a hobby birder.

What is the main attraction of birding for you?

The birds! I really enjoy seeing birds and always want to know what they are. My wife says a trip to the grocery store is a “bird trip” for me. At home we often comment that watching the feeders out our bay window is like an unending Disney reel. We live in a rural area on a woods/prairie edge. I have two pond features and our landscaping is very floriferous and slightly rough, this attracts a lot of birds; 160 on the yard list to date. Of course it is always exciting to see a new or infrequent visitor in the yard. I never tire of it. I have two microphones mounted outside the house with their speakers inside, so we are always listening to the bird and wildlife sounds around. In addition to feeder birds we get the predawn chorus in the kitchen, and the nighttime songs of owls and coyotes after sunset wafting through the house.

Once out of my yard, birding transforms from a leisure hobby to an active sport. I can't deny there is a competitive edge to it; but the challenger is always myself. I'm not trying to outdo anyone, I just try to improve my skills and my own listing numbers. My listing numbers are a gauge for myself.

The second most attractive thing about for me birding is travel. In pursuit of birds I have been to 37 states and 22 countries. It's obvious but fascinating fact; different places equate to different birds. And there is no end in this lifetime.

How did you originally become acquainted with the MOU?

I don't remember the year, but way back in the early 1980s I was asked to join a carpool from Rochester going to attend the paper session at the Bell Museum. I was so impressed with the size of the attendance, the stately museum setting, the scholarly talks, the friendly conversations, I joined immediately. Subsequently I began signing up for some of Kim Eckert's *Minnesota Birding Weekends*. It was very exciting to be exposed to the friendly atmosphere and learning environment these trips provided, under Kim's expert knowledge, patience and wry wit.

Favorite places to bird inside or outside Minnesota?

My wife Sara and I live on a small wooded acreage with a couple of acres of restored prairie. Although we have cut back since we've retired in 2010, we still garden seriously, raising both vegetables and flowers. There is enough maintenance that I'm outside a lot and always have an eye and ear open for what may be around.

Outside my yard, I enjoy birding northern Minnesota including the north shore and Sax-Zim Bog. Leaving Minnesota, I usually head for Texas for the lower Rio Grande Valley, or chasing some rarity in Arizona or Florida. Although I love the owls and finches of winter I find the climate and birds south of here a great winter distraction.

Favorite birding style (i.e., by yourself, with others, etc.)?

I prefer birding with others in small groups. I'm still learning birding skills and tips and enjoy the experiences of shared stories. There are many fascinating tales to be told in the birding world.

Favorite bird or bird family?

This is a question I've been asked before and always have struggled with it. I love the hummingbirds of the tropics. There are a lot of close contenders for favorite bird, but the Magnificent Spatula-tail of Peru was a real highlight.

Any advice on how to be a better birder?

Join a bird tour group as part of your birding experience. There are many local and MOU opportunities. I am always impressed by the skills and knowledge of the leaders. Many participants are also quite knowledgeable. And it's fun.

Look at the field guides studiously. There is a lot of information there. Also read Kim Eckert's *Birding by Hindsight* book to get a more complete sense of the identification nuances and challenges we all face.

Ever had an unusual experience while birding?

Many. One of the more memorable ones occurred when birding in the Philippines in the highlands of Luzon. Overnight there was a huge landslide nearby that buried a large section of the road we needed to travel for the day. There was tens of feet of mountainside debris, including huge trees and boulders across the road for a couple hundred yards. Our leader and several of the more adventurous ones of our group (including Don Kienholz) scooted across the sliding rubble to where the road was again exposed. Then we hiked downhill the sharply winding road around several hairpin curves to the edge of the wedge-shaped valley. Then down a long stone staircase, past terraced rice patties tended by water buffalo to the white water rapid river to search and locate our target bird (Luzon Redstart). Then retraced our route and back across the slide to return at the end of the day to our vehicles and the rest of our waiting party. A fun, but long, strenuous rewarding day.

Any other interests or hobbies when you're not birding?

I've had several additional interests over time including, Audubon volunteer, Boy Scouts, Beekeeping, and I have run a few marathons. But currently my time outside birding is keeping up with my two young Grandsons (6, 3) and maintaining our gardening and yard.

What new bird would you most like to see most?

The bird family that I would most like to see more of are the Birds of Paradise in Papua New Guinea.

Savaloja Grant Reports: Bird-parasite Nest Project

This summer Lauren Albert, a student from the University of Connecticut, conducted a research project in Minnesota on Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) and Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) funded in part by a \$1500 Savaloja grant from the MOU. Lauren worked under the guidance of Dr. Sarah Knutie, a professor at UConn, and alongside Alexandra Parker, an undergraduate from the University of Minnesota. The study questioned whether temperature may have an effect on the immune response in each species of birds to parasitic blow flies, *Protocalliphora sialis*, which feed on the blood of nestlings.

To test the effect of temperature, Lauren placed UniHeat multipurpose heat packs inside nest boxes inhabited by Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds. The parasite load was also manipulated in the nests by using either a water or Permethrin treatment to control for the effect of parasite abundance on host immune response. The 170 nest boxes used for the project are located around the north end of Itasca State Park. They were built by Dr. Knutie to act as home for birds and for use as a system to study host-parasite interactions.

After the nests were assigned to a treatment Lauren took growth measurements, fecal samples, and blood samples from the nestlings when they were five and 10 days old. These measurements, as well as blood samples, will be used for immunological analysis to see how the experimental manipulation of temperature affected the nestlings' immune system. Lauren also took growth measurements, fecal samples, and blood samples from adult birds when nestlings were around



*Lauren Albert holding an adult Tree Swallow,
by Alexandra Parker*

five days old for similar analysis. The immunological analysis will take place during the fall semester in the Knutie Lab.

While in Minnesota Lauren examined the nests after all birds had fledged. The team looked for parasite larvae and pupae to quantify parasite abundance in each nest. Although further analysis will take place to complete the study, some exciting preliminary results were achieved from the measure of parasite abundance. Tree Swallow nests that were parasitized and heated had a lower parasite abundance compared to those that were parasitized and non-heated. However, in Eastern Bluebirds, parasitized-heated nests had a greater parasite abundance compared to parasitized, non-heated nests. The immunological analysis will contribute to a better understanding of the effect of temperature on host defense against the parasites.

The goal of the study is to determine the potential implications of climate change on host-parasite interactions. By exploring how temperature may be affecting the development of the immune system, we can also understand the effect on resistance to parasitism. Using the avian model system in northern Minnesota allows for a larger sample size and methods that may be impossible to use with other avian systems; thus, the results from this study could be applied to systems of conservation concern on a larger scale. Broadly, exploring the effect of temperature on the formative times of development is important in understanding how to decrease infection risk and improve host health.



The inside of a nest box used in the study, by Lauran Albert

My Favorite Local Patch: The Little Town of Laporte

by Becca Engdahl

One of my favorite places to bird in all of Hubbard County is just down the road from where I live. This spot, a cow pasture with a little pond along North Willow Road across County Road 39 from Laporte High School, is arguably one of the best places in the county year round.

The unassuming little pond is the main attraction. It has hosted a surprisingly wide variety of waterfowl. Just about every regularly occurring Minnesota species of duck has shown up here over the years, as have several species of grebe, and once there was even a Common Loon.

Because of the shallow edges, lots of shorebirds are attracted to this pond during migration. I have seen many different species stopping over here to feed, from the smallest peeps to the larger plovers, as well as both species of godwits. In the summers I find Sora and Wilson's Snipe in the pond pretty regularly, and Virginia Rails show up from time to time as well. Gulls and terns frequent the pond and often come with their young in late summer and fall. I always enjoy watching the juvenile Caspian Terns begging for

food. Killdeer nest in the field. Every summer since we've moved up here, I've been entertained by fluffy baby Killdeer scrambling around the pond.

Lots of blackbirds visit the pond too—in fact, nearly every kind. My favorite is the Rusty Blackbird, but the most frequently encountered are Red-winged or Brewer's.

Warblers and sparrows too. During migration the fence line that runs along North Willow Road and the trees on the south side are sometimes sprinkled with brightly colored warblers and all kinds of sparrows and flycatchers. Last year a most cooperative flock of Harris's Sparrows stayed here for several days, offering great looks. Once I even found a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher perched right out in the open. In the pines behind the cemetery down the road to the west I have heard Barred Owls, and I have reason to believe there may be other owl species roosting nearby. Elusive Black-billed Cuckoos lurk in the shadows and thrushes sing from deep in the woods on the south side of the road.

The open fields and pastures that surround the pond and



run along the north side of Willow Road have hosted everything from American Golden-Plovers and Buff-breasted Sandpipers to a lone Cattle Egret. Bluebird and Tree Swallow nest boxes spaced along the fence provide a number of nice places for birds to raise their young in the spring and summer. Sometimes in the late fall or winter you may come across Snow Buntings along this road, and every now and then a Rough-legged Hawk soars overhead. Sandhill Cranes love these pastures, and I hope someday a Whooping Crane will land here. Or maybe a Prairie Falcon? Or a Crested Caracara?

One can often see a Northern Harrier hunting low over the fields, and Black-billed Magpies frequently patrol the area. Occasionally a Bald Eagle or Red-tailed Hawk will pass through, and sometimes you might be lucky enough to run into a Cooper's or Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Across county road 39 on the Laporte High School athletics fields there is a light post where a pair of Ospreys has nested for many years. I have enjoyed watching and trying to photograph them. They are such characters!

Though North Willow Road is perhaps the best, it is just one of the good birding spots in Laporte. On the northeast side of town, less than half a mile from the cow pond, is a small public water access on the edge of Garfield Lake. To get there, just go into the town of Laporte, head northeast on 2nd St., and follow it as it turns into 2nd Ave. When you get to the T, take a right on 1st St.; that will take you to the access on a small peninsula. This spot can be surprisingly productive during migration. While looking and listening for passerines in the trees, you may notice a nice set of bird feeders in the yard next to the public access. These can be good for a variety of species in all seasons. If you look out across Garfield Lake from the dock in the summer, you will almost always find Black Terns hunting over the water. They are so much fun to watch! Often you will see some waterfowl and a few American White Pelicans loafing on the lake. If you visit when the water is low, you may be able to see some small exposed mudflats in the middle of the lake. These have been host to several species of shorebirds, including once a small



Caspian Tern, by Gerald Hoekstra

flock of Ruddy Turnstones.

Traveling back through Laporte and heading southeast down Highway 200, you will drive through a nice little area of bog habitat with black spruce and tamarack trees that set the landscape ablaze in the fall when their needles turn gold. If you turn east on county road 45, you will find another small stretch of this habitat. Finches like Red and White-winged Crossbills can often be found here in the winter. I suspect other boreal species frequent this area as well. The Paul Bunyan State Trail passes right through the heart of Laporte, and there's even a parking lot next to the Laporte grocery store where you can park and go for a walk or a bike ride through some pretty good habitat.

Laporte and the surrounding area is just one of the many great birding spots in Hubbard County that I could write about. But if I have to pick one, this is my favorite.

Becca Engdahl is a student at Bemidji State University majoring in Wildlife Biology.

Save the date! MOU Paper Session

Saturday, December 1, 2018, 9 AM - 4 PM
Northstar Ballroom in the student center of the
St. Paul campus, University of Minnesota
2017 Buford Ave, St Paul, MN 55108
Featuring tours of the Bell Museum and Raptor Center!
Additional details and program to follow on our website,
MOU-net, and our Facebook page.

New MOU Members

Ronald Borchardt, *Eden Prairie, MN*
Henrietta Burke, *Maple Grove, MN*
Betty Erickson, *Ramsey, MN*
Leslie Gillette, *Hopkins, MN*
Paul Gunderson, *Elk River, MN*
Mary Johnsonspear, *St. Peter, MN*
Rosemary Shea, *Golden Valley, MN*
Ayriel Steffes, *St. Cloud, MN*
Beth Tollefson, *Mantorville, MN*
David Zens, *Edina, MN*

Call for Nominations for MOU Awards and Recognition

by *Kim Eckert*

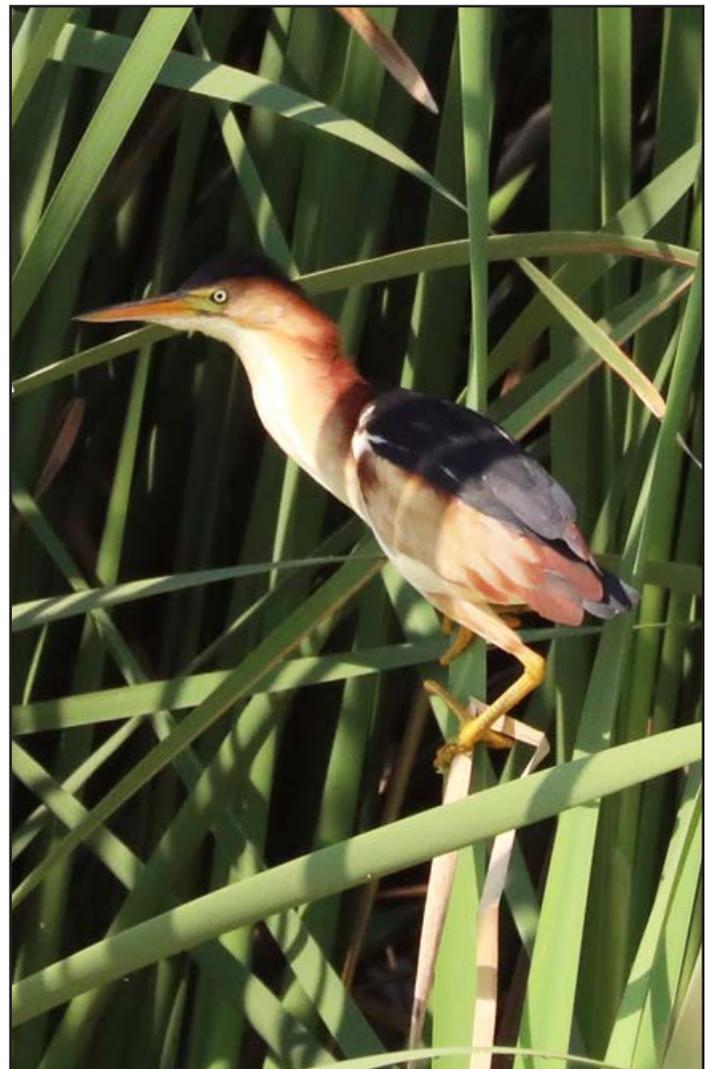
It's again that time of year when the MOU Awards & Recognitions Committee is beginning to look for nominees to be recognized for their contributions to the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union. This annual tradition of recognition takes the form of presenting the Thomas S. Roberts, Brother Theodore Voelker, and Young Birder awards at the MOU Papers Session on December 1, 2018.

- Since 1963 the **Thomas S. Roberts Award** has traditionally been our **lifetime achievement award**: “For Outstanding Contributions to Minnesota Ornithology and Birding”, as stated on the plaque. Previous recipients have contributed to the MOU in many different ways, which in some years were not necessarily related directly to ornithology or birding. (Also note that our policy has always been that a person would only receive this award once.)
- The **Brother Theodore Voelker Award** is “For Special Achievement in Field Ornithology” **during the past year**, which would be from November 2017 through October 2018. The original intent in 1988 was that this recipient's achievement would be related to field ornithology in one of three categories: significant bird sighting(s), something written (e.g., journal article, book, or technical paper), or a field research project. (In some years, involvements in special events, conservation, mentoring, and education have also been included in the criteria for this award.)
- The **Young Birder Award** is for someone **under 25 years old** contributing to knowledge of Minnesota birds or to the MOU; as it reads on the plaque: “For Contributions to Birding in Minnesota”. This is our newest award, presented for the first time in 2005.

Note that the names of all previous recipients of these awards can be found on the MOU website (<http://moumn.org/awards.html>), so you might want to check to see if the person you have in mind for an award has already received it. Accordingly, please contact me if you have someone you'd like to nominate for any of these awards, and include his or her qualifications and contributions which you feel would make your nominee a worthy recipient. I would like

to receive all nominations no later than October 25, and the committee thanks you in advance for your interest and input in these awards.

Kim R Eckert, Chairman
MOU Awards and Recognition Committee
eckertkr@gmail.com
1921 W Kent Rd
Duluth MN 55812
(218) 349 5953



Least Bittern, by Harris Mallory

MOU Calendar — September / October 2018

Sun xxx	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat September 1 Roberts Sanctuary Bird Walk W. MN Shorebirds – MOU MN Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr Hunters of the Sky, Kathio SP, DNR Monthly Bird Walk, ZVAS
2 Upper Sioux Agency SP – MOU Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR Peregrine Falcons, Whitewater SP, DNR	3	4	5	6 Eagle Walk, Lake Bemidji SP, DNR	7	8 Roberts Sanctuary Bird Walk WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr Bird Language, MVNWR Bird Banding, Eastman Nat. Ctr, 3RPD
9 Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR	10	11	12	13	14	15 MN Global Birders Roberts Sanctuary Bird Walk Birding for Kids, Roberts Sanctuary Ney Nat. Ctr Bird Walk, MRVAC Bird Banding, Carver Pk Res., 3RPD
16 Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR	17	18	19	20	21	22 Roberts Sanctuary Bird Walk Raptor Release, Carpenter Nat. Ctr
23 Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR	24	25 "Birds of Hawk Ridge," ZVAS Bird Trek, Bass Ponds, MRVAC	26	27 Sherburne Co. Birding, MRVAC "Finding Rare Birds," MRVAC	28 Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	29 Rapator Count & Hawk Watch, MOU & Carpenter Nat. Ctr Rapids Lake Bird Walk, MVNWR
30 LeConte's & Nelson's Sparrows - MOU Bird Banding, Whitewater SP, DNR	October 1	2	3	4	5	6 Monthly Bird Walk, ZVAS Bird Trek, Bass Ponds, MRVAC MN Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr
7 Root River Co Pk field trip, ZVAS	8 Rapids Lake Bird Walk, MVNWR	9	10	11 W. MN Birding Days, MRVAC (10/11-12)	12 Saw-Whet Banding, Lowry Nat. Ctr, 3RPD	13 Saw-Whet Banding, Lowry Nat. Ctr, 3RPD WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr
14 Bird Trek, Bass Ponds, MRVAC	15	16	17	18	19	20 Bird Banding, Lowry Nat. Ct., 3RPD
21 Ramsey County Birding - MOU	22 MN Global Birders	23 "Remarkable Woodpeckers," ZVAS	24	25 Ney Nat. Ctr & Sibley Co., MRVAC "Wildlife in New Zealand," MRVAC	26 Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	27 Bird Trek, Bass Ponds, MRVAC
28	29 Bird Trek, Bass Ponds, MRVAC	30	31	30		



MOU Calendar

September / October 2018



CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

Minnesota Campus:
12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings, MN
Wisconsin Campus: 300 East Cove Road, Hudson, WI

Sept 1 and Oct 6: 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: Minnesota Campus

Sept 8 and Oct 13: 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: Wisconsin Campus

Sept 22: Raptor Release

Details: 10 am–3 pm. Join Carpenter Nature Center and the University of Minnesota’s Raptor Center as we release rehabilitated raptors at the CNC. After sustaining injuries in the wild, these beautiful birds are now ready to be released. This fun-filled day includes hay ride tours, children’s activities, raptors on display and much more. An inspiring and educational event open for free to the general public, CNC’s raptor release is enjoyed by visitors of all age groups. Dogs are not allowed at this event. Location: Minnesota campus

Sept 28 and Oct 26: Bird Banding

Details: 8:30 am–12 pm. Bird 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 who share our ecosystem. Banding runs continuously for the full 3 ½ 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: Minnesota campus

Sept 29: Fall Raptor Count & Hawk Watch

Details: 10 am–2 pm. Each fall, thousands of raptors and other bird migrants follow the St. Croix/Mississippi River Flyway south to their wintering grounds in the southern US and beyond. Our team of friendly spotters and greeters will set up behind the Administration Building to count raptor migrants as well as songbirds, gulls, and other southbound birds. Come ask questions, check in on the count totals, or participate in the count! Binoculars will be available upon request. Please RSVP at 651-437-4359 and let us know you are coming. Location: Minnesota campus

MINNESOTA DNR

(See www.dnr.state.mn.us for directions to locations)

Sept 1: Hunters of the Sky, Mille Lacs Kathio State Park

Details: 7 pm–8 pm. The Audubon Center of the North Woods will use live birds to illustrate this family-oriented program about raptors of Minnesota. Meet at the Interpretive Center Council Ring. In case of rain the program will be held inside the Interpretive Center.

Sept 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 (5 dates): Bird Banding Demonstration, Whitewater State Park

Details: 12:30 pm–2 pm. Join Master Bird Bander Greg Munson at the visitor center bird feeders for close-up experiences with birds. Program participants will have the opportunity to handle and release birds after they have been caught in nets, studied, observed and banded with an aluminum tag. In the event of rain, the program will be cancelled.

Sept 2: Live Peregrine Falcon, Whitewater State Park

Details: 7 pm–8 pm. The Peregrine Falcon has long fascinated people across the globe, known for its dramatic migration and amazing flight. Although the species has recovered beyond pre-DDT population numbers, there is still a lot of work to be done to gain a better understanding of peregrine falcons. Jackie Fallon, with the Midwest Peregrine Society, will present this program, with a live peregrine falcon, to help us understand the past, present and future of peregrine falcons in Whitewater and the Midwest.

Sept 6: Eagle Walk, Lake Bemidji State Park

Details: 10 am–11 am. Join a naturalist on a short journey to catch a glimpse of a Bald Eagle nest—and maybe even its inhabitants! The group will stop to learn more about the natural history of the eagle. Meet near the fish-cleaning shelter. In the event of inclement weather, this program will be cancelled.

MINNESOTA GLOBAL BIRDERS

This informal group meets monthly to discuss birding in other countries. Location: Walker Library, 2880 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis.

September 15: “Indonesia, Across the Wallace Line”

Details: 12:30 pm–2:30 pm. Steve Greenfield will give a presentation based on a visit to the islands of Sulawesi, Halmahera, and Java. Along with pictures of birds seen and description of the travels, the presentation will include stories of the people met and point out some of the special things that can be learned from global birding. This trip retraced some of the steps of Alfred Russel Wallace, who explored these islands 170 years ago, some on each side of what became known as the “Wallace Line.”

For more information and to register (so we can monitor attendance for our 50 seats), please go to: tinyurl.com/globalbirding13 or call Steve at 612-877-1137. Cost: Free

October 22: “The Diversity of Habitats and Birds in Ghana”

Details: 6 pm. The Upper Guinean Forest of West Africa is a biodiversity hotspot, but is also one of the planet’s most rapidly disappearing ecosystems. The country of Ghana offers relatively easy access to this dense tropical evergreen forest, plus a diversity of other habitats, including tropical deciduous forest and open savannah—with an attendant diversity of birds and people. Tom Will of the US Fish and Wildlife Service will share encounters with Ghana’s birds and people from an April 2018 trip. Tom will conclude with comments comparing birding in these cultures, offer tips for travelling in Ghana, and touch on conservation issues in this part of Africa. For more details and to register, go to tinyurl.com/globalbirding14, or call Gregg Severson at 612-568-5272. Cost: Free

MOU FIELD TRIPS

September 1: Western Minnesota Shorebirds Excursion, led by Jason Frank

This trip will primarily focus on finding shorebirds and waterfowl at a variety of well-known locations in western Minnesota, but the trip will also make stops to look for other species too. This would be like the fall version of the Salt Lake weekend. Locations include but are not limited to

Salt Lake, Big Stone NWR, Lac qui Parle State Park, Lac qui Parle WMA, Marsh Lake, Thielke Lake, and Plover Prairie. Meet Jason and the other guides at the 8:00 AM in Montevideo at the McDonald’s parking lot. Plan to spend all day afield, so pack your own lunch and any other provisions you need.

September 2: Warbler and Songbird Excursion at Upper Sioux Agency State Park, led by Garrett Wee

This trip, set at Upper Sioux Agency State Park in the scenic Minnesota River Valley, is timed to observe warblers and other neotropical migrants as they are beginning their trip back south to their wintering grounds. The river valley serves as a migration “highway” as thousands upon thousands of songbirds become concentrated in the wooded valleys and streamsides in a part of Minnesota that is otherwise prairie and farm land. This date was set specifically to land right in the midst of peak warbler and other songbird migration for Southwest Minnesota. One can expect to see over a dozen species of Warbler on this trip and maybe even find a rare species such as the Prothonotary Warbler which has nested here in recent years. Additionally, hummingbirds are also very abundant in the fall in the river valley. Meet Garrett at the park’s information kiosk at 9:00 AM. Expect to hike about 3.5 miles on park trails, so bring along any provisions you may need.

September 29: Carpenter Nature Center Migratory Bird Count and Stationary Hawk Watch

This event co-sponsored by the CNC and MOU will highlight the spectacle that is fall migration as friendly spotters will be on hand to count all manner of migrants: raptors, songbirds, gulls, and others. This program is designed for all ages and abilities. Binoculars will be available upon request. The event is held at the Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center in Hastings (12805 St. Croix Trail S.) from 9:00 AM until 2:00 PM. For more information, please call 651-437-4359.

September 30: Hunting for LeConte’s and Nelson’s Sparrows, led by Garrett Wee

Join Garrett to search for two of the most elusive sparrow species during the prime window of their migration. Garrett’s group will be searching suitable habitat on both private and public land, including the Sham Lake area which has previously held multiple LeConte’s Sparrows, a Nelson’s Sparrow and even a Yellow Rail just last fall! In addition to looking for sparrows, it may be possible to look for other rare birds, such as Smith’s Longspurs and ibises. Meet Garrett in the city of Cottonwood at the Cottonwood Co-op (Cenex) at 8:00 AM. Participants are encouraged to bring knee-high boots or hip waders and bug spray!

October 21: Fall Birding in Ramsey County, led by Becca Engdahl and Ezra Hosch

Participants will be looking for a variety of migrating birds, such as waterfowl, sparrows, finches, and owls. Some of the locations that will be covered include Tamarac Nature Center, White Bear Lake, and Vadnais Lake, which has turned up some spectacular finds in recent years, including Common Raven, Pine Grosbeak, Tufted Titmouse, Townsend's Solitaire, both crossbill species, and even a Boreal Owl! Meet at the parking lot for Vadnais-Snail Lake Regional Park on Sucker Lake Road at 9:00 AM and plan to bird until 2:00 PM or so. Coordinates for the parking lot: 45.051315, -93.094553. Restrooms are available at the birding locations, but participants should plan to pack a lunch.

MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER

Sept 15: Ney Nature Center Bird Walk

Details: 8:30 am. On this walk we will explore the trails at the Ney Nature Center. Expect to observe a nice variety of resident and migrant song birds. Please contact Craig Mandel to register: 952-240-7647.

Sept 25 and Oct 6, 14, 27, and 29 (5 dates): Bird Watching Treks at Bass Ponds

Details: 8 am–10 am. Join refuge naturalist Craig Mandel for a bird walk around the Bass Ponds to learn about the birds that nest on the refuge. Learn about the different types of habitats at the refuge that support over 100 species of nesting birds. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome join. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Location: Bass Ponds Trailhead, 2501 – 86th St. E., Bloomington.

Sept 27: Sherburne County Birding Day

Details: 8 am. Much of our day will be spent exploring the Sherburne NWR, but there are also some other fun spots to bird in the county as well. These include Big and Fremont Lakes which may offer some interesting diving ducks, plus a couple other smaller parks and WMAs. For information or to register, please contact Craig Mandel: 952-240-7647.

Sept. 27: "How to Find Rare and Unexpected Birds"

Details: 7:30 pm. In 2017 Ben Douglas found 243 species in Washington County, including three first and second county records. He will share stories that draw upon previous experience, including his 2018 State Park Big Year, where he visited all 73 State Parks and Recreation Areas in just seven months. Ben will explain his process for maximizing his county and year lists and finding rarities, and will show you how you can transform the way you bird-watch. Also, he will share the equipment he uses to easily document his finds. Location: MVNWR Visitor Center, 3815 American Blvd. E, Bloomington.

Sept 29 and Oct 8: Rapids Lake Unit Bird Walk

Details: 8 am. Join us for a bird walk on one of the many refuge units and learn about some of the 220 bird species that stop at the refuge during their migration south. Birders of all skill levels are welcome; bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather. Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist. Location: 15865 Rapids Lake Rd. (was Carver Highlands Dr.), Carver.

Oct 11-12: Western Minnesota Birding Days

Details: 7 am. We will be birding in Lincoln and Lyon Counties. Possible locations include Camden State Park; Garvin and Hole-in-the-Mountain County Parks; and some WPAs and WMAs. We will be searching for migrant waterfowl, sparrows and others. For information or to register, please contact Craig Mandel: 952-240-7647.

Oct 25: Ney Nature Center and Sibley County

Details: 8:30 am. We will start the morning with a walk at the Ney Nature Center, then cross into Sibley County. Some of the locations we may check include High Island Creek County Park, Rush River County Park, Washington, Titlow, and High Island Lakes, plus a number of WMAs and maybe even a sewage pond. Contact Craig Mandel to register: 952-240-7647.

Oct. 25: "Wildlife on the Edge: Conservation in New Zealand"

Details: 7:30 pm. New Zealand is home to some of the world's most unique and endangered wildlife. After relocating several years ago, "Kiwi-sotan" Jordana Whyte, NZ Sea Lion Trust, threw herself into conservation in her new hometown of Dunedin, known as the Wildlife Capital of New Zealand, on the South Island. She will share some of her conservation experiences and the treasured native species found on the edge of the world, including the rare Yellow-eyed Penguin. Location: MVNWR Visitor Center, 3815 American Blvd. E, Bloomington.

MINNESOTA VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Sept 8: 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. Location: MVNWR Visitor Center (Classroom A), 3815 American Blvd. E, Bloomington.



Yellow-rumped Warbler, by Jean Brisance

ROBERTS BIRD SANCTUARY

Sept 1, 8, 15 and 22 (4 dates): Fall bird walk

Details: 8 am. The Friends of Roberts Bird Sanctuary will lead fall bird walks in the Sanctuary to view migrant and resident birds. Meet in all weather situations. Location: 4124 Roseway Rd., Minneapolis. Meet in the Peace Garden parking lot. Note: Some people park on Lake Harriet Parkway as a free alternative to this pay lot.

Sept 15: Beginning Birding for Kids!

Details: 10 am. Wes Nutgeren, a seasoned naturalist and experienced educator at Dodge Nature Preschool, will lead a guided bird walk especially for young people. This event is free and open to the public. People of all ages are welcome, including children accompanied by a parent or caregiver. Roberts Bird Sanctuary, 4124 Roseway Rd., Minneapolis. Meet in the Peace Garden parking lot. Note: Some people park on Lake Harriet Parkway as a free alternative to this pay lot.

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

Sept 8: Bird Banding

Details: 9 am–12 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and tagged with numbered rings. Bring a camera. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Eastman Nature Center, 13341 Elm Creek Rd., Osseo.

Sept 15: 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: Carver Park Reserve – Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria.

Oct 12 and Oct 13 (2 dates): Saw-Whet Owl Banding

Details: 8 pm–11 pm. Learn about Minnesota’s owls, their adaptations, and research. Drive within Carver Park to observe master banders safely trapping and banding Northern

Saw-whet Owls. Reservations required – cost is \$5.00. please call 763-694-7700 and/or register online. Location: Carver Park Reserve – Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria.

Oct 20: 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: Carver Park Reserve – Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria.

ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON

Sept 1: ZVAS Monthly Bird Walk

Details: 9–10 am. Join Terry and Joyce Grier on a casual walk through Quarry Hill Park. Free and open to the public—no registration required. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester.

Sept 25: ZVAS Monthly Program – “The Beauty and Birds of Hawk Ridge”

Details: 7 pm – 8 pm. Every September thousands of migrating raptors pass by Hawk Ridge in Duluth on the way to their wintering grounds in the south. Jenelle Long, General Information & Executive Director of Hawk Ridge, will tell us about this unique area and the research they are doing. Find out more at <https://www.hawkridge.org/>. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester.

Oct 6: ZVAS Monthly Bird Walk

Details: 9–10 am. Join Terry and Joyce Grier on a casual walk through Quarry Hill Park. Free and open to the public—no registration required. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester.

Oct 7: Root River County Park Field Trip

Details: 8:30 am–12 pm. Leader: Sandy Hokanson. We will visit Root River County Park just south of Rochester near Simpson to look for fall migrants and more. The park has nice walking trails and good diverse habitat for a wide variety of birds and the changing fall colors. Location: Meet in the east parking lot at the Heintz Center, 1926 Collegeview Rd E, Rochester at 8:30 am to carpool.

Oct 23: ZVAS Monthly Program – “Remarkable Woodpeckers”

Details: 7 pm–8 pm. Presentation by Stan Tekiela, professional naturalist, wildlife photographer, writer and the originator of the popular state-specific field guides, such as *Birds of Minnesota*, and *Wildflowers of Minnesota*. Woodpeckers are a unique group of birds that we often take for granted. Stan’s presentation is filled with fun facts, and incredible images. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester.

Report for Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Project Grant

by Jim Stengel, for Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Project



Red-headed Woodpecker, by Siah St. Clair

Earlier this year, MOU awarded our Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) Recovery Project a grant of \$1500. Thank you again for your generous support of our research into the needs of this iconic species. In our grant application, we said that through our research we are trying to find answers to the following questions:

1) What factors govern RHWO nest productivity (number of juveniles that leave the nest) and survival of juveniles into the next year?

2) What internal factors (e.g. sex, body condition, immune function) and/or external factors (e.g., food availability, weather, population density) determine whether RHWOs overwinter or migrate from their breeding grounds at Cedar Creek?

3) Where do migrating RHWOs settle during the non-breeding season and are these sites used repeatedly in succeeding years?

Our field research team at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve includes Dr. Elena West and her two field tech-

nicians, Jesse Beck and Megan Massa. In addition, over 40 volunteers have assisted with this work in various capacities. At this mid-point in the RHWO breeding season, we are delighted to report that we are having a great field season! Our lead researcher, Dr. Elena West, reports that so far we've "processed" 45 birds. Fifteen of these were new (had not been captured before), six adults and nine juveniles.

We have been monitoring 44 nest trees and have 54 total nesting attempts (including first and second attempts). Twenty-six nests successfully fledged at least one juvenile from the first brood. Twelve nests failed after the first attempt. We're still monitoring second attempts, so Elena will report the outcomes of those once the season is over.

We have mounted pinpoint GPS units on nine adults to collect migration or non-breeding season movement data (eight GPS units were newly purchased this year, and one was recovered from a bird that wore it since last year).

We have marked 16 adults with radio transmitters to collect breeding season movement data. We have also marked 11 birds hatched this season with radio transmitters to determine post-fledging survival. So far two of the 11 fledglings have been predated and one is missing.

We have collected a large quantity samples of RHWO food sources (invertebrates, berries, and acorns) and we anticipate collecting additional samples over the next month.

We have also conducted three roost surveys on our radio-marked birds. Our aim is to obtain at least two roost locations per bird, and we are well on our way to reaching that goal.

We expect to begin recapturing adults in the coming weeks—ideally to get more GPS pinpoint units back and take additional blood samples for diet analyses. In the words of Dr. West: "We've still got a lot of work to do, including many birds to keep tracking and many we want to recapture."

We look forward to having much more to report to you after the breeding season's field work is done and our researchers have begun crunching data, and we invite you to plan with us how and when we can contribute an article to your publication or make a presentation at your meeting.

For further information, please check out redheadrecovery.org and rhworesearch.org

Your donation will be used to pay for stable isotope *lab analysis* of blood samples.



Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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

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Carpenter Nature Center
12805 Saint Croix Trail South
Hastings, MN 55033
Email: mou@moumn.org
Web: <http://moumn.org>

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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

Northwest: 800-433-1888

MOU Contacts

Minnesota Birding Editor: newsletter@moumn.org
President: president@moumn.org
Vice President: vicepresident@moumn.org
Membership Secretary: membership@moumn.org
Treasurer: treasurer@moumn.org
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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: \$ _____