



Minnesota BIRDING

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Conservation Column: Insect Declines and Bird Populations

by Jessica Peterson

As a non-birder, I'm always amazed at the enthusiasm of ornithologists and birders for documenting and sharing their sightings of birds. In the insect world we have a few platforms, such as bugguide.net and iNaturalist, where citizen-scientists can engage and share information, but in general places to document insect populations pale in comparison with organizations and web sites to record birds, such as the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), eBird, and the MOU. When a rare bird shows up in Minnesota, it is quickly documented, and birders flock to see it.

A focus on vertebrates, especially birds, is seen not only in citizen-science platforms but also in educational materials and scientific research. Although insects make up 60-70% of animal species, a recent review of college textbooks revealed that only 23% of the images depicted insects. Most of the coverage was of vertebrates, despite the fact that they account for only 3-5% of all animal species. This taxonomic bias has far-reaching consequences for how much people notice or study insects, and consequently for our collective breadth of knowledge about insects as well.

Insects are major regulators of ecosystem services, including pollination of native plants and agricultural crops, soil decomposition, and



Grasshopper Sparrow with namesake insect, by Gerald Hoekstra

biological control of pests. They also constitute integral components of ecosystem food webs. A loss of insect abundance will result in cascading declines up the food chain among species that depend heavily on insects as food resources. E.O. Wilson has been predicting this decline, and the resulting impact, ever since he published his book *The Diversity of Life* in 1992. Wilson describes what he and others refer to as the sixth major extinction, one that is caused primarily by humans. Because our current state of insect knowledge is largely incomplete, though, we are likely to be losing insect diversity even before they



Crane Fly of the genus Tipula, by Jessica Petersen



Crane Flies of the genus Neophylidorea in copula on a fern, by Jessica Petersen

can be fully described and with it important knowledge of insect-environment dynamics.

Wilson's book was particularly important to me personally, because in part it led me down the path of becoming an entomologist. I was intrigued by the immense diversity of insects that Wilson described and the overwhelming amount we still don't know about them. My dissertation work focused on exploring some of that diversity in a group of flies that most people think of as large and scary mosquitos: crane flies. The variety of crane flies is enormous, with well over 15,000 species worldwide, the great majority of which were described by a single person, Charles P. Alexander. During his long career, Alexander painstakingly worked to document the many species of crane flies, but he barely scraped the surface. A next generation of entomologists is needed to revise the taxonomy by spending time in the field collecting specimens and peering under a microscope in the lab, using modern methods. Crane flies are not the only insect family needing a taxonomic revision in order for us to have even a basic level of our understanding of its diversity. Taxonomic keys, photographs, DNA sequences, and even basic species descriptions detailed enough to be usable for species-level determinations are lacking for many insect groups.

The lack of resources for identification of insect species has hindered our ability to document broad-sweeping changes. Recent media attention has highlighted several papers published over the last year that have reported dramatic declines: studies from Germany, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere document losses in insect abundance—usually measured as biomass—of as much as 40-75% over the past several decades. Declining insect abundance is alarming in its own right, but the Puerto Rico study not surprisingly links the losses to concurrent losses in insect-feeding liz-

ards, frogs, and birds. A review of BBS data in 2010 by Silke Nebel and others in *Avian Conservation and Ecology* reported a steep decline in insect-feeding birds in North America, which the authors attributed to a decline in insect abundance. Unfortunately, because of the lack of data on insect populations to complement the BBS, it's challenging to make these connections more definitively.

We do have some anecdotal knowledge of insect declines more locally. Perhaps you recall a time when you saw a mass emergence of mayflies along the Mississippi River or remember seeing great numbers of Monarch butterflies in the summer as a kid, but now notice fewer and fewer of these once common and noticeable insects. For many species, though, we may not notice a decline, especially if the losses don't happen on a timescale that matches our own lifespan. My son is growing up in a world where it isn't so easy to catch fireflies in the back yard, so his anecdotal



Wasp larva, by Jessica Peterson

baseline for firefly abundance is far lower than mine. Unless we can document the declines, we cannot be sure how reliable our impressions are. We need data to support our impressions. To get there we need people to start noticing insects and contributing to our knowledge of insect diversity. Submitting photos to iNaturalist or bugguide.net is a great way to start.

When I hike through Minnesota's prairies with a group of eager naturalists and biologists, my goal is to spark an interest in insect diversity. Most of these individuals seem drawn to the prairies primarily through an interest in plants or birds. Rarely is insect identification an initial interest, either for nature enthusiasts or biologists. Once I begin to show folks how and what to notice, though, they start bringing me insects, snapping photos of butterflies, and collecting beetles in vials. Encouraging people to begin to notice flies on flowers, or stem galls on goldenrods, is an important step toward creating a better collective understanding of insects in our world. So the next time you are looking for a particular bird or on your route to a point count, I hope you will take notice of the insects, caterpillars, and other invertebrates around you. Ultimately, many of the birds you are looking for depend on these creatures for survival.



Blue-metallic larvae in the genus Trirhabda, a leaf beetle feeding on goldenrod, by Jessica Petersen

In addition to merely noticing insects, you can do things around your home to help increase insect diversity, and in turn to help birds. One important way is by using native flowers, shrubs, and trees in plantings around your home. Doug Tallamy and others published a study in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in 2018 demonstrating an increase in population growth of Carolina Chickadees in the D.C. metro area in response to an increase in invertebrate abundance when homeowners planted more than 70% of their landscaping with native plants. In particular, Tallamy recommends native oaks, cherries, and willows as important to many insect species.

There are plenty of resources to guide you in purchasing native plants. Minnesota has a number of native plant suppliers that can help you make good choices for your specific location. Also, the National Wildlife Foundation has a Native Plant Finder website that you can use to identify plants that support a diversity of insects in your area (www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/). [Editor's note: Many MOU members will also be familiar with Carrol Henderson's book *Landscaping for Wildlife*.]

My hope is that more folks will start pay attention to insects and engage with citizen-science efforts to help better our collective understanding. I can guarantee that a life list of insects will be longer than a life list of birds.

Jessica Petersen is an invertebrate ecologist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Minnesota Biological Survey. She has studied various insect groups, such as butterflies, bees, and crane flies. Jess lives in St. Paul with her husband (also an entomologist) and son, who didn't seem to catch the insect bug.



Species of Tiger Moth in the genus Haploa feeding on leadplant, by Jessica Petersen

Message from the President

Recently, on a day in late January, I woke up at 3:15 a.m. with the intent of seeing my lifer Brambling that had been frequenting feeders at a residence north of Detroit Lakes for several days. Meeting two others en route and leaving our meeting spot in Maple Grove at 4:00 a.m., we arrived at the residence a little after 7:30, having driven just under 200 miles one-way, the majority of those miles in the dark. Around 7:45 a.m., our target bird flew in to join the many Purple Finches, redpolls, siskins, and goldfinches picking at seeds underneath the feeders. Success! Oh, and one more thing...did I mention that the air temperature was somewhere around 36 degrees below zero at the time?

As someone who has played the game of listing for over 20 years now, I will be the first to attest that birders, and especially those that keeps lists, are crazy. While a more reasonable human being might stay in bed until an appropriate waking hour and probably not choose to venture outside in brutally cold, near-historic low temperatures, we birders seem to have few problems eschewing cultural norms and general safety and sanity measures when it comes to adding a bird to our lists.

Then again, the last time that a Brambling spent longer than a day in one spot in Minnesota was in December 2001. Prior to that, you have to go back to the winter of 1988-1989. Needless to say, a bird that breeds in Siberia and northern Europe isn't expected to be a frequent visitor to the middle of North America. Hence, to anyone who keeps a list of the birds he or she observes in Minnesota, a reliable spot to see a Brambling in the state, even for a short period of time, is a very big deal.

Listing is very much a game like any other, and the fun is in playing it. There is always another bird to see, whether you're looking to add to your state list, year list, county list, or (dare I say) February 29th list. To me, the game is between me and the bird; if this were a board game, I would be on one side of the table and the bird would be sitting on the other. Should I make the right move and check the bird off whatever list I'm working on, the bird would get replaced by another, different species. Each bird added is a personal achievement, and our lists are proof of these achievements. If the competition, then, is between me and the bird, I find other birders on my side of the table. We're all trying to check the bird off our lists and move on to the next bird. In this light, I refuse to make the competition solely between myself and other birders, because that implies we're more interested in the number than the bird. I certainly like it when my numbers get bigger, because that means I'm continuing to play the game successfully—at least the way I play it—and seeing new birds. But when the number becomes the goal and is used as a metric to compare one



Black-backed Woodpecker, by Allan Meadows

birder to another, I find it makes the game less entertaining and more stressful, which is not something I am looking for in the way I spend my free time. I should note that I have indeed participated in, and continue to participate in, various Big Days with the goal of attaining a certain number of bird species. While fun, I do find them a bit more stressful, both physically and mentally, than “regular” birding (and therefore I try to limit myself to one Big Day per year).

Would I have been disappointed had the Brambling not been there during our visit in late January? Absolutely. And it wouldn't have been the first time that I chased a bird and came up empty. Would I have been jealous of other birders that got to see it? Maybe. But in the end it's a game, and just as in any game, no matter who you are, you're not going to win 100% of the time. As long as you play it, and however you play it, there is always going to be another bird on the other side of the table (or three-and-a-half hours away).

Bob Dunlap, MOU President

New MOU Members

Deborah Allen, *Bronx, NY*
Robert Kirchberg, *Northfield, MN*
Jill Krueger, *North Branch, MN*
Kristofor Moulton, *Pine City, MN*
Jeffrey Ranta, *Stillwater, MN*
Viola & John Riggle, *Alexandria, MN*
Rhonda Schwartz, *Brainerd, MN*
Thomas Spence, *Tofte, MN*
Larry Tubes, *Duluth, MN*
JoAnn Will, *Minnetonka, MN*

My Favorite Home Patch: Allemansrätt Park

by Erik Collins

It was January 1, a day of new birding possibilities, and my son Ethan and I stopped at Allemansrätt Park in Lindstrom. It is a new park with old trees, and we hoped to find an Eastern Screech-Owl poking its head out of a cavity, catching some rays of sunshine. I had never found a screech-owl there or anywhere in Chisago County, but one of my favorite aspects of birding is investigating a hunch. And my favorite birding spot over the past year had become Allemansrätt.

We bundled up and stepped out of the car. After a December of mild weather, the temperature had apparently taken a note from the calendar and reset itself to 1°F. We set out at a quick pace, glancing up at each owl-sized hole we passed under. The trail followed ridges and shorelines, past fens and stands of old cedars. We said hello to two dog walkers, but otherwise had the place to ourselves. An hour later, we arrived back at the car. I wish I could say that we saw an owl that day, but we didn't. Over the past year, however, I had found three other owl species there, including a Northern Saw-whet Owl, so it is still quite possible Eastern Screech-Owls are around too.

It had taken me long enough to discover that Allemansrätt Park even existed. One night last winter I was arm-chair scouting on Google Maps when I came upon it. I visited the park's website, which said it was 125 acres in size and had over 10,000 feet of shoreline. It had been a park for a few years. I could not believe I had never heard of it. From my computer screen, it looked like a good place to tick some birds that were still missing from my Chisago County list, and I was excited to check it out in the springtime.

My first visit was in early May. I scanned part of North Center Lake from the small parking lot by the entrance sign and saw two Red-breasted Mergansers. Along with a few Bufflehead and Horned Grebes, they would add some unexpected variety to my day's eBird checklist of mainly woodland birds. My main target was a Gray-cheeked Thrush, and farther back in the park one popped up and cooperated nicely, at least by thrush standards.

On another visit, I found 48 species in a little over an hour. Warblers and other migrants had poured in, with the largest group just north of where the trail splits from the parking lot. At one point I heard a zee-zee-zee-zee that sounded a bit like a Black-throated Blue Warbler. I raced over to where it was singing. It was one of the top birds I wanted to see in Chisago County. When I finally tracked it down, though, I saw that it was actually a Northern Parula

Selfie with son Ethan in the park, by Erik Collins



singing a broken-up version of its rising trill. Good thing they're so cute and easily forgivable.

Olinda Trail divides the park into two large sections. To the west are the eskers, vernal pools, and wide variety of trees where I had spent my time in the spring and later searched for owls. To the east of Olinda Trail is the Anderson Peninsula section of the park, the site of an old farmstead that reaches out into North Center Lake. It's mostly an open space, but it has small stands of trees on the peninsula's perimeter and mixed foliage along the trail leading back to it. This past fall, it was warbler heaven. They were all there. Cape May. Bay-breasted. Blue-winged. And there were plenty of other migrants on the scene, too, including two of my county nemeses, Philadelphia Vireo and Olive-sided Flycatcher.

I started birding the Anderson Peninsula as often as possible. In mid-September I stopped to check some warblers near the old windmill when a flash of blue flew in low and teed up atop some brush. I got it in my binoculars and saw that it was a male Black-throated Blue Warbler, dapper as could be. I fumbled for my camera, and in that moment it flew off for good. Those few seconds were one of my favorite birding memories of the year.

The Black-throated Blue was my 24th warbler species for the year in Allemansrätt Park. As a new eBird hotspot, it stands at 112 total species and counting.

In Swedish, the word "Allemansrätt" refers to the public's right to roam. It is the perfect name for park. There is a lot to explore. An hour there goes by quickly. I hope you are able to visit sometime.

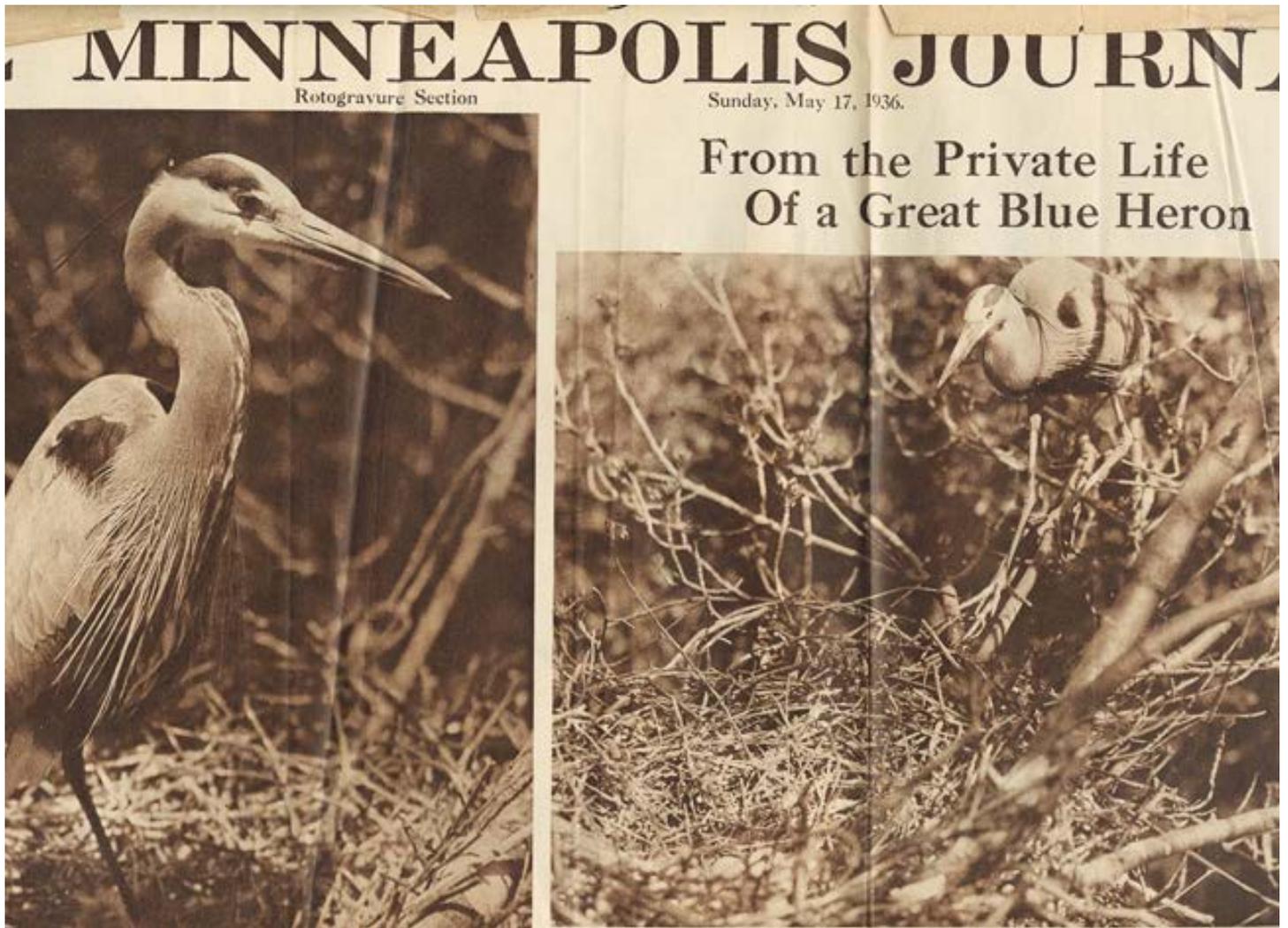
Directions to Allemansrätt Park: Go approximately one mile north on Olinda Trail from Highway 8 in Lindstrom.

Private Life of a Great Blue Heron — Minneapolis Journal, May 17, 1936

Note from the Editor:

For birders today with superzoom cameras or long lenses, taking photographs of birds is fairly simple. This clipping from the May 17, 1936 issue of the Minneapolis Journal reminds us that this was not always the case. Especially interesting is the description of the lengths Mr. Purdie went through to get these impressive photos. Thanks to Allan Meadows for scanning the article, a clipping of which he found tucked in a copy of T.S. Roberts' *Birds of Minnesota*, and for bringing it to our attention. The volumes had been lent to him by Lee Grim, who taught ornithology at Rainy River Community College and whose late father-in-law had studied ornithology with T.S. Roberts himself. Anthony Hertzfel informed us that Mr. Purdie's first name was Clarence. This heron rookery is still active today. Most Rice County birders know the lake simply as Wells Lake, so it is interesting to see it referred to as Bully Wells Lake here.

G. Hoekstra, ed.





Patently in the hot sun the mother bird sits on the nest, keeping a sharp lookout for enemies.

It took two months of patience and hard work to get these pictures from a colony of Great Blue Herons on an island in Bully Wells lake near Faribault, Minn. The photographer, C. E. Purdie of Faribault, fitted a doorbell magnet to his camera, placed the instrument on a small platform near the nest 60 feet from the ground and ran wires to a battery in his hiding place 100 yards away. With powerful binoculars he watched the nest, and pressed a switch when he wanted a picture. Between each exposure he had to climb the tree, change the plate and focus the camera. It took from two hours to half a day to get single pictures.



"Say, when do we e
tion, c

Birding by the Numbers: An Adventure Begins

by Ben Douglas

It would have been so easy just to let the clock run out on 2018 and start 2019 with a few personal goals. I could have resolved to bolster my efforts at underbirded local parks, or get a trip to Salt Lake in during spring migration, maybe even spend a couple days up at Hawk Ridge in the fall.

For better or worse, I'm just not built that way, and after spending the first half of 2018 hiking in every Minnesota State Park and Recreational Area (73 locations, minus two requiring a boat), my mind started searching for the next great challenge, something that would require next-level dedication.

As I browsed through the MOU Listing Supplement late in 2018, I paused on the lifetime county ticks page marveling at the pioneers of our hobby like Bob Janssen and his now 21,257 county ticks: A grand total from 87 county lists worked on over a lifetime of effort. I then started counting down the list and found 31 other members of the 10,000+ club. They also demonstrate decades of experience and exploration in every corner of the state, by birders from all walks of life.

I then asked myself one fateful question: How many county ticks could a person get in one year? Do we even have a record for such a thing? My mind began to race, thinking about what a properly motivated person would have to do in order to maximize efficiency, what relationships they might draw on to gain more intimate county knowledge, and what kind of toll it might take on them as they ground out day after day of birding around Minnesota. The thought of such an endeavor began to consume my every waking moment as I tried to parse through the depth of knowledge needed.

Days later, questions lingered: Was I up for something this big? Did I have the endurance to handle such a load? Would my marriage survive? I finally asked the central question on a Facebook group, and one response from Milt Blomberg noted that Herb Dingmann was setting the pace in 2018 while doing something very similar. Herb himself responded that he thought it was a great idea and that 10K was very possible, even as he noted that he expected to come in at around 9500 by year's end.

Responses across the spectrum continued to flow in as the idea captured the imagination of others walking through the mental exercise of how to do something that big in one year. Conversations sprang up about when to visit a county and when to avoid that county in favor of another. I set out



White-winged Crossbill, Koochiching County, by Ben Douglas

to inform myself the best I could by scheduling discussions with birders I trusted and knew had put in a lot of road time over the last few years. I drove up to Hawk Ridge and had dinner with Alex Sundvall, and we talked about the amount of road time needed for such an endeavor and the counties that would present the greatest challenge to reach high species counts. Back home I sat in a coffee shop with Liz Harper discussing the questions that had formed in my mind around big day efforts, such as knowing when to leave a county for the day in favor of an adjacent one. I drove to Peter Nichols house, and we talked at length about ways to run up the totals in the metro counties during the weekdays when I would be working. Then I sat down and built schedules for rotating my efforts in the metro counties on weekdays and larger more distant county loops on the weekends. I combed the MOU listing supplement for big day totals and placed them on a blank Minnesota county map with dates to garner ideas for when to take vacation days during migratory windows.

During this time many other birders reached out to say they would help in any way they could, and a plan started forming as I compiled a list of those who pledged support. I began to feel like I was being given the opportunity to do

something unique with this goal. I would be in position to get a first-hand account from many other birders of what birding is like for them, what drives them, and what their home counties have to offer. I felt a responsibility growing in me to become the mouthpiece for an entire group of birders and counties.

It's January 29 as I write this, and I'm already in the first stages of the most amazing series of adventures. In the first 29 days I've already seen Wilkin County Greater Prairie-Chickens for the first time with Liz Harper, photographed Koochiching county White-winged Crossbills, and even saw a Brambling with Kevin Smith and Gerry Hoekstra, thanks to Beau Shroyer, in Becker County.

In an early January effort, Kevin Smith drove Andrew Nyhus and me to Kandiyohi County. We met up with local experts Josh Wallestad and Randy Frederickson, who got up on Sunday well before sunrise to meet our group.

Josh and Randy came out on a day they both had family obligations in order to help us have a great time in their county. They shared their deep knowledge of the area, including where there was open water and which feeder stations were producing the best diversity of species. Randy even welcomed us into his home while entertaining family

guests so we could stand in his living room and kitchen for feeder-watching. We notched Pine Siskin, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and even Brown Creeper from the confines of a warm home, thanks to his generosity. A littler earlier Josh took us by a feed store that lays out a number of bird feeders, and we picked up overwintering Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and even an Oregon-type Dark-eyed Junco. (The trip also helped Andy net his 200th lifetime bird in Kandiyohi County—a Northern Shrike—and he soon found number 201 with a Purple Finch.)

This year feels like I'm putting together a 10,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, and my hope is that many other birders can make that effort easier by providing some of those pieces. Their willingness to share and lend support will make for a much richer and fulfilling effort, producing a lifetime of stories and experiences.

My venture is just beginning: 774 ticks in 40 counties so far as of January 29. I'll post updates on my progress toward reaching my goal here throughout the year, but most of all I want to share stories of birders who jumped in to be a part of this year-long odyssey and what I've learned about them and the counties we visit. Until then, good luck with your own birding and adventures in Minnesota and beyond.



Greater Prairie-Chickens, Wilkin County, by Ben Douglas

Savaloja Grant Reports: Urban Bird and Outdoor Collective

In April 2018 the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union awarded a Savaloja Grant to Monica Bryand and Joanna Eckles to develop a "Train the Trainer" style program to help existing community members develop the skills they need to be confident leading beginning birding walks in their own neighborhoods. This cohort was quickly identified as The Collective.

Our vision is to empower those individuals who are already immersed in their neighborhoods, who have a strong connection to the people and the place, and who have an interest in the natural world, to lead others in exploring birds and nature close to home. Through this shared experience they would build community connections, increase awareness and stewardship of birds and nature, and facilitate ongoing multi-generational participation in outdoor recre-

ation—for the health of people and birds.

Our goal is to support minority birders of all skill levels in leading birding and nature walks in their communities. These minority communities include Native Americans, people of Color, immigrants, LGBT communities, and more.

Ultimately, we want all communities to experience the benefits of nature exploration and birding. And we recognize the unique challenges that minority birders face in finding a welcoming place in the existing (predominantly straight, white) demographic that comprises the birding community in many places, including Minnesota.

We brought together two mentors and eight emerging leaders from minority communities to share our passion for birds and nature, discuss issues of diversity and inclusion,



and create a safe and welcoming space to build leadership skills and deepen this conversation. By working with passionate leaders from within these underrepresented communities, we will increase the accessibility of birding and nature for all.

Our approach was to stay intentionally informal and be outdoors as much as possible, exploring the question: “What do you need to feel comfortable leading birding outings in your community?”

Leaders said they want:

- to become better birders
- to learn where to go and how to access and use existing resources
- to develop skills in leading others exploring birds and birding
- to create a safe and welcoming community to learn and grow with, to inspire and be inspired

From the beginning we knew we were on the right path

gaining new birding skills is a life-long process and that each person could be comfortable wherever they are along their learning path. They provided many tips and resources during our outings as we focused not only on birding skills but also on the skills and considerations required to lead birding walks. This type of mentorship will continue to be a part of this group’s work going forward.

Even in the initial pilot phase, the establishment of this group had a major positive and supportive impact. The group first came together in April and quickly started to get to know each other and build relationships. One thing we identified at our fall debrief dinner was how important it was to get to know each other in a deeper way beyond birding in order to build trust. For leaders to feel comfortable inviting others to our various walks and outings, they needed to trust that their friends would be treated with respect and have a great experience.

Future Plans:

One leader suggested that people often don’t want to join the walks because, while they may love being outside, they weren’t particularly interested in birds. We believe that expanding this community of diverse individuals is important and requires doing things differently.

We discussed the possibility of hosting hikes, bike rides, or kayaking outings in the future, and using them to also share our passion for birds in a more informal way, since wherever we go there will be birds to discover and enjoy together. They just don’t realize yet how amazing birds are.



Northern Flicker, by Richard Gotz

because of the community leaders that came together and the level of honesty, commitment, and passion they were willing to share. They were proud to be part of this new group and wanted to make sure others knew about it and could somehow connect. It was important that we remained focused on the number one goal of making sure that “community” felt safe and welcoming during all our walks and gatherings. The mentors (Joanna and Monica) stressed that



Eastern Screech-Owl, by Dana Sterner

March

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri 1	Sat 2
					Int'l Festival of Owls, Int'l Owl Ctr (Mar. 1-3)	Monthly Bird Walk, ZVAS
3 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	4	5	6	7	8	9 WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr Education & Raptor Lab Workshop, Audubon Ctr of the North Woods
10	11	12	13	14	15	16 Bird Banding, Lowry Nat. Ctr, 3RPD Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC
17	18 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	19	20	21	22 Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	23 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC
24	25 "Birding Uganda," MN Global Birders	26	27	28	29	30
31 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC						

April

Sun	Mon 1	Tues 2	Wed 3	Thur 4	Fri 5	Sat 6
	Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC		"Adding Birding to Your Winter Vacations," MN Global Birders			Monthly Bird Walk, ZVAS
7	8	9 Waterfowl Workshop, MRVAC	10 Woodcocks: Dusk Sky Dancers, Eastman Nat. Ctr, 3RPD	11 Woodcock Walk, ZVAS	12 Timberdoodle Walk, Afton SP, DNR	13 WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr Bird Watching Walk, Brown's Creek St. Tr., DNR Bird Banding, Lowry Nat. Ctr., 3RPD Bird Walk, North of the River, MRVAC
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22 "Birding New Zealand," MN Global Birders	23 "Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas," ZVAS	24	25	26 Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr "Prairie and Trout Stream Restoration," ZVAS	27 Hastings Area Birding Festival, Carpenter Nat. Ctr. Rochester Reservoir Field Trip, ZVAS
28 Rapids Lake Unit Walk, MRVAC Root River Co. Pk. Bird Walk, ZVAS	29 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	30				



MOU Calendar

March / April 2019



AUDUBON CENTER OF THE NORTH WOODS

Mar 9: Education & Raptor Lab Workshop

Details: 9 am – 4:30 pm. This is a free workshop facilitated by Wolf Ridge and made possible by collaboration with The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota, UMN Extension, and Eagle Bluff ELC. Raptor Lab is an interactive online learning environment that models the process of scientific investigation in real-world settings through the active role-play of different scientific careers involved in veterinary care and wildlife rehabilitation, then provides a platform for students to team, investigate outside, and share their own inquiry-based investigations online. While Raptor Lab is intended for students in 6th-12th grade, any and all educators are welcome to join! Register here to join us: <https://goo.gl/forms/F11tgTB0txSCcUqm1>.

Learn more about the workshop on the Wolf Ridge website: <http://wolf-ridge.org/camp/raptor-lab-workshops/>

CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

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

Mar 1: WI Campus Owl Prowl

Details: 7 pm – 9 pm. At 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: Wisconsin campus

Mar 9: WI Campus Bird Hike

Details: 8 am – 10 am. Join the St. Croix Valley Bird Club on a morning hike on our beautiful Wisconsin campus. Learn to identify birds by sight and sound. Fee is \$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

Mar 22: 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

Apr 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

Apr 13: WI Campus Bird Hike

Details: 8 am – 10 am. Join the St. Croix Valley Bird Club on a morning hike on our beautiful Wisconsin 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. RSVP at 651-437-4359 and let us know you are coming. Location: Wisconsin campus

Apr 26: Bird Banding

Details: 8:00 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 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: Minnesota Campus

April 27: Hastings Area Birding Festival

Details: 8 am – 4 pm. Celebrate birds and conservation at the Hastings Area Earth Day Birding Festival. This is the sixth year the Hastings Environmental Protectors have teamed up with CNC for this Festival. Participate in the Youth Birding Competition, attend classes and demonstrations about raptors, birding, and bird banding, or take guided bird trips in the area. To learn more, visit the festival website. Event fee is \$5 or \$15 with a box lunch. RSVP required. Call 651-437-4359 to reserve your spot.

DNR

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

April 12: Timberdoodle Walk

Details: 8 – 9 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. For more information, contact 651-231-6968 or Linda.Radimecky@state.mn.us. Location: Afton State Park

April 13: Bird Watching Walk

Details: 8 – 9:30 am. Spend your morning with the park naturalist on a two-mile hike through prairie and flood-plain forests. Binoculars and bird guides will be available. 651-231-6968. Location: Brown's Creek State Trail (Neal Ave Trailhead near Manning Ave and McKusick, Stillwater, MN. Meet at the parking area.)

INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER

March 1-3: 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 fieldtrips. 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. Learn about the latest in owl research, see live owl demonstrations that wow the audience, owl pellet dissections, a photo contest, and more. On Sunday at 2 pm enjoy a special screening of "The Secret Life of Owls" by Make Believe Media, which has not aired in the US. It features a segment with our own Alice the Great Horned Owl and Karla Bloem. Find out more at www.festivalofowls.com. Daily admission wristband required. Adults \$10, kids ages 4-17 \$6, ages 3 & under free. Locations: Most of the activities are at the Houston High School or at the International Owl Center, 126 E Cedar St., Houston

MINNESOTA GLOBAL BIRDERS

This local group provides a series of presentations for people interested in international birding. Each session features a particular location, with a speaker presenting photos and other information. There is also time for chatting and it often includes discussion of the planning and logistics of doing a foreign birding trip. Anyone interested is welcome. For more information and register online, go to tinyurl.com/globalbirding16.

March 25: "Birding Uganda"

Details: 6 pm. Sharon Stiteler, author of the "Birdchick" blog and National Park ranger, on birding in Uganda. Sharon's trip went from wildlife-rich plains to swamps and mountain forests and allowed her to see and photograph Mountain Gorillas and chimpanzees along with the birds. Free. Location: Walker Library, 2880 Hennepin Avenue S (at Lagoon), Minneapolis

April 3: "Adding Birding to Your Winter Vacations"

Details: 6 pm. A presentation as part of the library's "Bird Week." Free. Location: Walker Library, 2880 Hennepin Avenue S (at Lagoon), Minneapolis

April 22: "Birding New Zealand"

Details: 6 pm. Michael Hurben shares his experiences while birding in New Zealand, part of his "working Big Year" based in Thailand. This was one of the many countries Michael Visited as part of his "Working Big Year" while he was based Thailand. Free. Location: Walker Library, 2880 Hennepin Avenue S (at Lagoon), Minneapolis

MN RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER

For additional field trips and updates see MRVAC.org.

Bass Ponds Trailhead Bird Walks, led by Craig Mandel

Details: Join us for bird walks. Trumpeter Swans, a mix of ducks, Rough-legged Hawks, Bald Eagles, and Northern Shrikes are a few of the species that have over-wintered on the Refuge. Bring your binoculars and favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather as we search for these and other species of birds on the Refuge.

Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist, 952-240-7647.

Location: 2501 86th St. E., Bloomington

Sunday, March 3 – 8 am

Saturday, March 16 – 8 am

Monday, March 18 – 8 am

Saturday, March 23 – 8 am

Sunday, March 31 – 8 am

Monday, April 1 – 8 am

Monday, April 29 – 8 am

April 13: North of the River

Details: 8 am. Led by Bart Anderson, 612-719-6103. Location: Meet at Caribou Coffee, Old Shakopee & France Ave.

April 28: Rapids Lake Unit Bird Walk

Details: 8 am. Led by Craig Mandel. Location: Meet at North Hunter Lot, 14905 Jonathan Carver Pkwy, Carver

March 9: Waterfowl Workshop - Craig Mandel

Details: 8 am. Location: MRNWR Visitor Center, 3815 American Blvd. E, Bloomington. Call 952-854-5900 for more information.

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

Mar 16: 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

Apr 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. Reservations are required by a week before. Rain dates: April 12. Everyone attending must register and pay \$5. Location: Eastman Nature Center, 13341 Elm Creek Rd, Osseo

Apr 13: 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

Apr 25: Woodcocks: Dusk Sky Dancers

Details: 7 – 9:15 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. Reservations are required by a week before. Rain date: April 30. Everyone attending must register and pay \$5. Location: Eastman Nature Center, 13341 Elm Creek Rd, Osseo

Apr 27: 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 SOCIETY

Mar 2: 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

Mar 26: ZVAS Monthly Program – Prairie and Trout Stream Restoration

Details: 7 – 8 pm. Presented by Dr. Michael Osterholm. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester

Apr 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

Apr 11: Woodcock Walk

Details: 7:45 pm. Led by Jim Peterson. Every spring the American 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. Meet in the horse corral parking lot. (Note: a County Parks sticker is required to enter the park.)

Apr 23: “Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas”

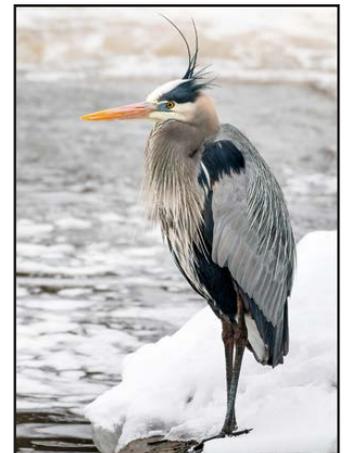
Details: 7 – 8 pm. Presented by Gerald J. Niemi, Ph.D. Professor of Biology and a Senior Program Manager at the Natural Resources Research Institute, U of M Duluth. The creation of the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas was a historic achievement and a model for how citizen science can contribute to advancements in our ecology. Dr. Niemi will review the Atlas results and explain how it links the past, present, and future of Minnesota ornithology with special reference to southeastern Minnesota. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester

Apr 27: Rochester Reservoir Field Trip

Details: 8 am – 12 pm. Led by Lance Vrieze. The flood control reservoirs around Rochester have some of the best bird habitat in Olmsted County and are very often where local rarities are found. We will visit several to see what we can turn up during migration. There will only be a few short walks totaling less than a mile. Bring a scope and binoculars if you have them, otherwise some will be available to share. Location: Heintz Center, 1936 Collegeview Road East, Rochester. Meet in the east parking lot.

Apr 28: Root River County Park Walk

Details: 8:30 am – 12 pm. Led by Sandy Hokanson. We will visit Root River County Park just south of Rochester near Simpson to look for returning migrants and spring wildflowers. The park has nice walking trails and good diverse habitat. Location: Heintz Center, 1926 Collegeview Road East, Rochester. Meet in the parking lot to carpool at 8:30 an or meet at Root River County Park at 8:50 am.



*Great Blue Heron
by Richard Gotz*

Birder Bio: Dana Sterner

Tell us about yourself.

I've lived in Minnesota my entire life and love it. I'm a Minnesota girl forever. I currently live in Maplewood but I've also lived in Hennepin, Washington, and Scott Counties. Most of my life, though, has been in Ramsey County. We birders talk in terms of counties, right? I work as a Commercial Real Estate Analyst at a community bank in downtown St. Paul. As soon as my workday is over, I like to spend as much time as I can outside until I have no more daylight.

When did you start birding?

I remember seeing Trumpeter Swans at Vadnais Lake in 2008 and being fascinated by them. I've always paid attention to birds but just didn't care enough to know what species they were. In May 2014, I saw a Facebook post of a friend who had a Baltimore Oriole in her yard. I had no idea that a bird like that even existed in Minnesota! I bought an oriole feeder and within two days I had my first Baltimore Oriole. I couldn't believe it! From there, I started buying different kinds of feeders and logging the birds I attracted to the yard in the one bird book I had, Stan Tekiela's *Birds of Minnesota*.

How did your interest expand after those experiences?

I got a superzoom camera for Christmas in 2015 and I started taking nature walks. I realized that there were more birds to take pictures of than anything else I encountered. I ended up taking some pictures of waterfowl and not being able to identify all the species. In assisting me with my research, Michael Sack discovered the Facebook group Minnesota Birding and told me about it. I joined, and my interest in birds took off exponentially from there.

It wasn't until I joined the group that I realized that people went outside of their yards and looked for birds and chased birds. It sounds so funny to say that now. My first experiences venturing out to see birds were to the Great Blue Heron rookery in northeast Minneapolis in March of 2016 and skipping the Twins' home opener in April 2016 to go see a Horned Grebe at Lake Harriet in Minneapolis. Again, I couldn't believe that there could be a bird with a red eye in Minnesota. I haven't looked back since and I consider myself a "real birder" since that day.

What is the main attraction of birding for you?

There's so much I love about it. I love being outside and surrounding myself in nature first and foremost and the



Dana Sterner, by Michael Sack

peace and tranquility that it provides me. I didn't always consider myself an outdoorsy person but I can't imagine not being one now. I also enjoy the challenge of birding in all the shapes and forms and I enjoy all the friends I've made along the way.

How did you become acquainted with the MOU?

I wanted to go to the MOU's 1st annual Spring Primer of March 2017 and realized I needed to be a member to attend, so I joined. Bob Janssen and Kim Eckert were

speakers that day. I didn't know who they were at the time but I was told by several that I needed to come hear these legends speak!

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

I mostly prefer to bird with one other person but enjoy birding by myself almost as much.

Favorite bird or bird family?

Too many favorite birds of all different bird families to mention but any bird that has bright orange on it (Blackburnian Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Varied Thrush) captures my heart.

What is one of your favorite personally found birds?

I have two. The first would be finding a Ferruginous Hawk in Lac qui Parle County (along with Michael Sack) in August 2017, and the second would be finding the first Ramsey County record of a Blue Grosbeak in August 2018.

Any advice on how to be a better birder?

Surround yourself with people that are more experienced than you. I have learned *a ton* from my birder friends and acquaintances. Continually study birds and their songs. Birds are predictable! Learn their habitats and timing and you'll be successful.

Ever had an unusual experience while birding?

I was birding in Oregon when I saw a woman walk out of the woods all dressed up carrying a suitcase and talking to a turtle she held in her hand. I'm assuming it was a one-way conversation.



Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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Hastings, MN 55033

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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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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.

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