



Minnesota BIRDING

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Yellow Warbler, by Allan Meadows

Conservation Column: Shorebirds in Minnesota and their Habitats

by Andy Forbes

Shorebirds are a fascinating, diverse group of birds that occur worldwide and occupy a variety of habitats, mostly but not always associated with water. In Minnesota, we have 32 species that occur regularly in the state. While a handful breed here, such as the bizarre but amazing American Woodcock, most only stop here briefly on their way to and from their breeding grounds. This article will focus on species that chiefly migrate through Minnesota, how they use wetland habitats, and how managers try to provide them with the best possible habitat while they are here.

Small, Tall, and Spring and Fall

Shorebirds regularly found in Minnesota range in size from the diminutive Least Sandpiper, which weighs as little as 19 grams and is the smallest shorebird in the world, to the stately Whimbrel, which weighs up to a “whopping” 493 grams—just over one pound. Generally speaking, shorebird migration lasts from around mid-April through early June in the spring, and early July through early October in the fall, although strag-

glers and failed breeders can also be seen throughout June, and some hardy Dunlins might stay a little later into November.

As with most birds, fall migration is more drawn out, with a lot more individuals passing through, since their ranks are boosted with young birds recently hatched on the tundra. Migrating shorebirds are more abundant and easier to find in the western half of the state, although they can theoretically drop in just about anywhere, including flooded parking lots, and of course, sewage ponds! Their migration paths are also different between the two periods. Buff-breasted Sandpipers are regular in the fall but rarely seen in the spring, and Hudsonian Godwits are regular in the spring but tough to find in the fall. These pathways have evolved over the millennia to best take advantage of consistently reliable food resources to maximize survival. Each species feeds and uses habitat in a slightly different way.

Different Bills, Different Foods

Invertebrates, especially soft-bodied invertebrates such as a fly larvae,

are the primary food source for most all shorebird species in Minnesota, although each species has a different niche that it exploits in wetland systems. You can tell a lot about what a shorebird eats, and where it feeds, by its bill length and body structure. Stubby-billed plovers run along wetland edges and pick insects and worms off of dry mudflats. As their name implies, Ruddy Turnstones walk along rocky shorelines and beaches, flipping rocks, shells, and vegetation washed up along the shoreline to uncover prey hiding underneath.

Sandpipers probe the mud in shallow water where they feel for prey under the surface and grasp invertebrates with their bills. Larger, longer-billed sandpipers, like dowitchers, feed deeper in the water column, while Least Sandpipers usually stay near the water's edge, probing as well as gleaning insects that they visually detect on the surface of the water or on the mud, rocks, or grass on land. The especially long bills of godwits allow them to pursue things even deeper in the water and mud. In fall migration Hudsonian Godwits actually feed quite heavily on tubers of sago pondweed.

The recurved bill of American Avocets are used to sweep the surface of the water to glean aquatic insects, shrimp, and sometimes small fish stirred up by their feet underneath in a side to side motion known as "scything." Their long legs allow them to forage in deeper water than many other shorebirds, and they will sometimes float on the water while feeding. However, the only truly aquatic shorebirds are the phalaropes (also my favorites). While they will occasionally wade on mudflats, these species primarily capture prey while swimming in the water. When necessary, the birds will rapidly swim in a spinning motion, which draws food items to the surface where they can be consumed. During the winter months, Red-necked and Red Phalaropes are pelagic birds of the deep ocean, where they

Red-necked Phalarope, by Gerald Hoekstra



Pectoral Sandpipers, by Gerald Hoekstra

feed at upwellings and alongside feeding whales, occasionally picking parasitic lice off of the backs of the giants.

Managing Habitat for Shorebirds

Wetland systems in Minnesota and throughout the Midwest have been heavily altered by changes in hydrology, land management, and conversion to agriculture. Because of this, managing habitat for shorebirds can be particularly challenging, especially given extreme precipitation events that have and are continuing to increase over time. Managers must maintain a delicate balance of keeping water available long enough and at the right depths and times to allow aquatic invertebrates to lay eggs and allow larvae to survive harsh Minnesota winters. Flooding and/or drawing down wetland units must be done gradually and at just the right time before shorebirds arrive to provide the variety of food items, water depths, and vegetation densities (most shorebirds avoid thick emergent vegetation, although some like yellowlegs will feed and rest within it. This is not an easy task, and the best laid plans can be wiped out by floods or drought. Managers must also minimize disturbance for shorebirds. Migrating shorebirds are living on a razor's edge, which requires them to be in peak physical condition. Frequent disturbance disrupts foraging and rest periods, and depletes critical fat reserves. Shorebirds are constantly harassed by falcons and other avian predators, and beach shorebirds are disturbed by human traffic, which is difficult to manage in many situations.

Away from managed habitats, shorebirds actually often have an easier time finding suitable foraging habitats during floods or drought. Wet years provide lots of puddles in agricultural areas (although as tile draining increases, these temporary habitats are getting harder to find) where shore-

birds can find food and shelter, and dry years may reveal lots of mudflats along lakes, rivers, and other larger water bodies. It is during “normal” years that managed wetlands may be most important for migrating shorebirds. Obviously, accurately predicting future conditions during any given year can be difficult, if not impossible.

Then there are sewage lagoons. As many birders know, these can sometimes be the best places to view shorebirds, especially during dry years. While there is some concern about contaminants found in food eaten by birds in these areas, sewage lagoons, when managed properly, can provide great stopover habitat for shorebirds where wetland habitats are otherwise lacking. Sewage ponds are also often fenced, which helps minimize disturbance and allows birds to rest and replenish their energy stores.

A Life on the Wing

Minnesota is but one brief stop in a lifetime of traveling for these incredible little vagabonds. Many species spend as much as ten months on their wintering grounds to the south, undertaking rapid north and south journeys back and forth to the arctic to take advantage of the brief window of superabundance in the great north to breed. Threats to these birds are sadly many. Illegal shooting continues, mostly on the nonbreeding grounds in the Caribbean and Central and South America, but also in the United States, where you would think the practice had long ceased. In Idaho, Long-billed Curlews are still being killed in alarming numbers by poachers, for no apparent reason. Nearly half of the individuals tagged in a recent study there were shot dead by poachers. Loss of wetland habitat is a major threat: as more and more wetlands disappear on the landscape, shorebirds must travel more and more to find suitable areas, where resources may be limited. Poorer body condition results in lower survival and productivity during the breeding sea-

son. More extreme weather events and increasingly less predictable weather patterns are also making it more and more difficult for the birds to navigate, and more difficult for managers who are trying to provide habitat and just the right conditions at the most critical time.

Helping Shorebirds

One of the easiest things that birders concerned about shorebirds can do is to minimize disturbance to shorebird flocks. We are all tempted to get that close look at flocks to try to pick out that rarity, but remember that these birds are hard at work feeding or, yes, resting, trying to maintain critical energy reserves. Every escape flight uses energy. Use good judgment in keeping a respectful distance. If you have a dog and like to walk along beaches (who doesn't?) keep your pet on a leash during peak migration, for the same reason. This is especially important in areas where beach nesting shorebirds and their young are present. Young birds and eggs can be trampled or killed by dogs.

Finally, support efforts that maintain and manage habitat for shorebirds. Purchasing a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (the “Duck Stamp”) is perhaps the easiest way to do this: 98% of the purchase price of every stamp goes directly to wetland protection and conservation. These are easily available for purchase online through multiple avenues and can also be purchased at many post offices. There are also a variety of organizations working on wetland and shorebird conservation that all rely on support from donors. To learn more about shorebird ecology and conservation efforts, visit the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network website at whsrn.org.

Andy Forbes is the coordinator for the Upper Mississippi River/Great Lakes Region Joint Venture. He is currently a member of the MOU Records Committee.



Shorebirds in a flooded field, by Gerald Hoekstra

Message from the President

Earlier this year the National Audubon Society highlighted several articles written by women about their experiences in birding and how their contributions are changing a pastime dominated by male culture. I'm sure many of you have read these articles; if you haven't, here's the link: www.audubon.org/news/when-women-run-bird-world.

With the advent of the #MeToo movement in the fall of 2017, one might surmise that the hurdles women face in the birding world have only very recently come into the spotlight. While the movement has undoubtedly encouraged increased dialogue on the issue, a quick google search of "birding women" reveals articles stretching back to 2002 on the first results page. These articles cover topics such as unequal representation in leadership positions, physical safety afield, and discrimination within a macho listing culture.

The problem is much larger than the MOU, of course, and even predates the organization back to a time when birding was a consumptive hobby in the form of naturalists armed with shotguns. However, that doesn't mean the MOU is any less responsible for addressing it. Indeed, mirroring national statistics, women comprise at least half and probably a majority of MOU membership. Yet, as is all too obvious to me, having served on various MOU committees over the past 15 years and now as President, the majority of our board and committees comprises men. In fact, out of the 52 presidential terms, including this one, served since the organization was founded in 1938, women have served just eight. Two of these women served two separate terms, meaning that we have had only six different women serve as MOU President. That is not a statistic I am proud of.

Obviously, as a man I am not an expert on the hurdles faced by women in the birding world. The best I can do is use my privilege to relate the experiences of female birders in Minnesota—some shared with me personally and many more taking place in the increasingly public realm of social media. Often it's a male birder, lacking any substantive reasoning, explaining to a female birder that there's no way she could have seen the birds she claimed to see. Other times it's a story about a woman deciding not to hike the mile-long trail through the woods to see a rare bird in a place where men don't have to consider their personal safety. I've even been privy to discussions about the lack of female eBird reviewers in Minnesota and elsewhere.

For me, birding has served as a necessary escape throughout most of my life, allowing time for personal growth, reflection, and intimacy with the natural world; I find clarity in birding. I am certain that the birds themselves do not care about my nationality, my ethnicity, my sexual orientation, and indeed my gender. I simply cannot fathom the difficulty in trying to make these personal connections

in the face of persistent discrimination and sexism, in a world where, as a woman, you are constantly reminded that you don't belong or that you matter less.

It's 2019. We need to destroy that world and ensure that equal opportunities are available to all birders, male and female alike. We must ensure that sexist barriers to experiencing the natural world are removed, so that women are able to attain the same privileges in birding that men have enjoyed throughout the hobby's history. And finally, to my fellow male birders: we must understand that our actions have consequences, regardless of whether or not we realize that we are the ones creating the barriers.

– Bob Dunlap



Eastern Phoebe, by Dana Sterner

Receive *The Loon* Digitally

MOU members now have the option of receiving the MOU journal, *The Loon*, as a digital publication. You will still receive the complete issue, including wonderful photography from our members, but you will lessen your impact on the planet and save our organization printing and mailing costs. You can get *The Loon* digitally by emailing the Membership Secretary at membership@moumn.org.

New Bogwalk in Koochiching County

Story and photos by Allan & Myrna Meadows

Birding at the Bogwalk is a new pastime for residents and visitors to Koochiching County since a one-half mile boardwalk on the Tilson Creek Ski Trail opened this spring.

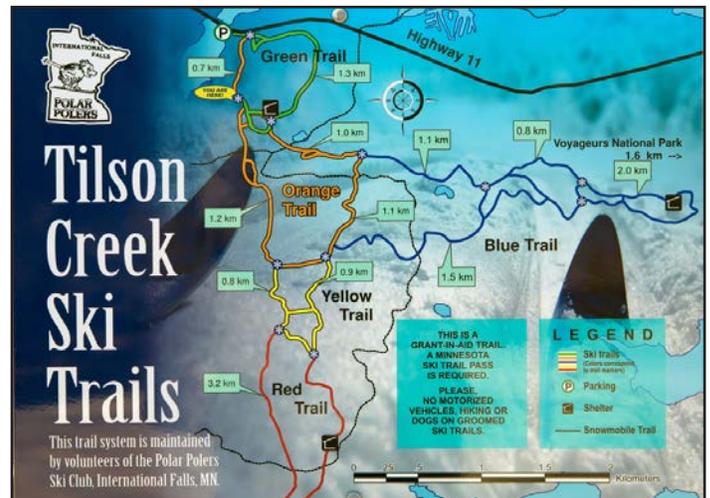
The 16-foot stringers and 8-foot decking and sills were installed by Conservation Corps members in thirty days this April. The other “heavy lifting”—raising \$200,000—was led by the Polar Polers Ski Club. The matching share came from over sixty local groups and individuals. Trail Manager Burgess Eberhardt explained that grant seeking, over two years, was eventually successful utilizing the Federal Recreational Trail Program: “The impetus for the project was the difficulty in maintaining the trail because of the bog terrain. Getting our mowing equipment in for fall maintenance led to, at first, joking that what we needed was a wooden walkway.”

Now walkers, bikers, birders, and busloads of students have a new venue for enjoying the outdoors and the unique and generally inaccessible habitat of a bog.

The Bogwalk is located eight miles east of International Falls on Highway 11, adjacent to the Tilson Bay boat launch parking lot. It provides access to 13 miles of trails through upland boreal forest just west of Voyageurs National Park.

A bird’s-eye, drone-view of the new Bogwalk can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJKWpTxaUh4. Its location is shown on the Tilson Creek Ski Trails map in the upper left between the *Parking Area* and the *You Are Here!* location.

The boardwalk, by Allan Meadows



New MOU Members

Cooper Ludwig, *Melrose, MN*
Stephanie MacPhail, *Eden Prairie, MN*



Grasshopper Sparrow, by Jean Brislanice

Save the date! MOU Paper Session

Saturday, December 7, 2019
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
North Star Ballroom
Student Center
University of Minnesota
St. Paul campus
2017 Buford Avenue, St. Paul, MN
Additional details and program
to follow on our website,
MOU-net, and Facebook page

Call for MOU Award Nominations

Now is the time to honor your birding hero, mentor, or inspiration by nominating that person for an MOU Award. Below is a description of the four awards given by the MOU. Yes, *four* awards. MOU is excited to announce a new award: The *Volunteer of the Year Award!*

- The **MOU Volunteer of the Year Award** will honor a person who through volunteer work has made a significant contribution to the MOU and/or the birding community at large. Nominees should be involved with activities such as bird conservation, nurturing other birders, the work of the MOU, or other activities benefiting the birding community. Nominees need not be members of the MOU. Current MOU officers and board members are not eligible for this award. We look forward to honoring the first recipient of the Volunteer of the Year Award in December!
- The **Thomas S. Roberts Award** is the MOU's lifetime achievement award. It recognizes outstanding contributions to Minnesota ornithology and birding. Past recipients have included an individual who served as president of not only the MOU but also the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology—though not at the same time! (Fred Leshner, 2013); another who taught ornithology courses for 32 years and thereby ignited interest in birding and bird conservation in countless students (Dr. Merrill Frydendall, 2015); and a third for his contributions as a “mentor, motivator, educator, instigator, traveler, adventurer, story-teller, legislative liaison, and bird bander” (Tom Bell, 2018).
- The **Brother Theodore Voelker Award** recognizes special achievement in field ornithology during the past year (November 2018 – October 2019) in one of three categories: significant bird sighting(s), something written (e.g., journal article, book, or technical paper), or a field research project; or for involvement in special events, conservation, mentoring, and education. Sparky Stensaas, Friends of Sax-Zim Bog's primary organizer, was presented with the award in 2014 for facilitating the ornithological pursuits of many other people and thereby taking action to conserve land critical to boreal species in Minnesota. Kathleen McCaulay was recognized in 2016 for patiently sorting through large flocks of Mallards to discover a first state-record Mottled Duck. She shared the award that year with Pete Hoeger, who picked a first state-record Sharp-tailed Sandpiper out of a huge flock of look-alike Pectoral Sandpipers.

- The **Young Birder Award** is presented to a person under 25 years old who has contributed to the knowledge of Minnesota birds or to the MOU. In 2014, Clinton Nienhaus was chosen for, among other things, his work as a naturalist intern at Tettegouche State Park and for leading weekly educational bird programs there, working as a count interpreter at Hawk Ridge, and leading bird walks for the Duluth Audubon Society. In 2015 Noah Kuck was recognized for his passion and devotion to birding: in making the award presentation Carrol Henderson remarked, regarding his experience when birding with Noah at the *Detroit Lakes Festival of Birds*: “It did not take long to realize that I was in the presence of a youthful birding all-star. [Noah's] ability to spot birds and identify them by their songs was uncanny.”

Presentation of the MOU awards takes place at the Paper Session in December. Descriptions of the awards and names of past recipients can be found at <http://moumn.org/awards.html> (presentation speeches for awards from 2010 and later can be found there also). Please send nominations to the Awards Committee by October 15. Specify the name of the award for which you are nominating the person and a description of the qualifications and contributions that make your nominee a worthy recipient. Your written description is important to the committee and typically forms the basis for the award presentation. We encourage you to present the award, should your nominee be chosen. However, we know that not everyone is comfortable writing speeches or speaking publicly, so please contact us if you would like assistance in either regard.

Please send nominations to Awards Committee Chair Susan Elliott at awards@moumn.org by October 15. If you prefer to send your nomination by mail, contact Susan via email and she will provide her address. The MOU, the Awards Committee, and your birding heroes, mentors, and role models all thank you in advance for your assistance, input, and interest in these awards.

Call for Email and Mail Addresses

Just a reminder to our members we need current mailing addresses and an email for our records. We use these for sending out our publications, the *Minnesota Birding* newsletter and *The Loon*. You can send this info to our Membership Secretary at membership@moumn.org. Thanks!

Summary of MOU Board Meeting Minutes, July 21, 2019

by Susan Elliot, Recording Secretary

The July 21, 2019 MOU Board Meeting was held at the Roseville Library. Present: Bob Dunlap; Bob Bossert, Richard King, Ann Kessen, Mark Lystig, Susan Barnes Elliott, Cindy Smith, Jen Vieth, Josh Wallestad, and Gerald Hoekstra. Note: These minutes are subject to approval by the Board at the next Board meeting. *This summary highlights in italics opportunities for members to volunteer for the MOU.*

Reports and Continuing Business:

Membership report: Cindy Thury Smith, Membership Secretary, reported that the MOU has 36 new members since January 1, 2019. As always, the Board seeks input and ideas from everyone on ways to increase MOU membership. Some of the ideas discussed at the meeting: 1) periodically give out memberships to birders submitting interesting or unusual bird reports to the MOU and/or the Minnesota Birding Facebook page; 2) charge \$25 (the cost of an MOU membership) to non-MOU members participating in popular field trips, with the funds going toward a membership fee; and 3) promote MOU membership during Christmas Bird Counts.

MOU Booth at the Minnesota State Fair: Jen Vieth reported that people are already signing up for shifts at the MOU's booth at the State Fair. *Jen encourages all members to sign up (a free ticket to the fair is included).*

MOU Paper Session: Dick King told the Board that work has already begun to line up presentations for this year's Paper Session. The Paper Session will once again be held at the University of Minnesota St. Paul Student Center. Doors will open at 7:00 a.m. instead of 8:00. eBird's Chris Wood will be this year's featured speaker. The Board discussed whether or not to increase the \$5 admission fee, and whether there should be different classes of fees (student vs. adult, for example). Following discussion, the Board voted to increase admission to the Paper Session to \$10 (discounts will be available for students and those who cannot afford \$10).

Bell Museum partnership update: Bob Dunlap reported that the feeding station is now up and running at the Bell Museum. A big Thank-you to Manley Olson, who has agreed to become a sponsor to pay for bird seed! The MOU's member-led bird walks for the Bell Museum have been a big hit. Thank-you to Linda Whyte and Adam Herman for leading walks on behalf of the MOU, and to Sid Stivland, Kara Snow, and Susan Barnes Elliott who will be

leading future walks. The walks have been so successful that the Bell would like to increase the number of walks to twice a month for peak migration months. *Please let Bob Dunlap know if you are willing to lead a bird walk.*

Budget Committee Report:

The Budget Committee (Ann Kessen, Treasurer, Dick King, Mark Lystig, Jen Vieth, and Bob Dunlap) updated the Board on their conclusions regarding the MOU's budget and savings. First, the budget should be cleaned up, and all Committee Chairs still be asked to submit budget requests, which will be reflected in next year's budget. Second, at its previous meeting, the Board agreed that the MOU should work towards having income cover expenditures. Through June 2019, income has slightly exceeded expenses. The MOU currently has approximately \$280,000 in investments: \$40,000 represents designated funds, \$100,000 is reserved to meet future obligations, and an additional \$100,000 is reserved for website/database purposes (pending review of the cost of maintaining the website under various scenarios including having eBird manage the database). Discussions are ongoing regarding use of investments.

New Business:

New MOU Volunteer of the Year Award: The Board discussed and approved this new award to recognize an individual whose unselfish and dedicated service to Minnesota's birding community has made a significant difference to bird-related conservation and/or to the MOU. It will be presented at the annual Paper Session. Current Board members and officers are not eligible for the Award. It may be given to a non-MOU member. *Please be thinking of people who deserve to be recognized as the first MOU Volunteer of the Year.*

Announcements:

- *The MOU is seeking a dedicated person to be Vice President. If you know of a qualified person, or if you would like to be considered for the position, please contact Dick King.*
- *The MOU is seeking one or two people to chair the Young Birders Committee. Please consider volunteering to chair this important committee.*

Next board meeting: December 6 at the Roseville Public Library, time to be determined.

My Favorite Home Patch: Two Stretches in Faribault County

by Wayne Feder

Note from the editor: Do you have a favorite local spot for birding? I'd like to hear about it, and I'm sure other birders would too. Please send me a note at newsletter@moumn.org if you would like to write about your favorite local patch for this column. GH

My favorite home patch is a 30 by 24 mile rectangle. Before you think it strange to claim such a large area as being special, you should know that most of my county, Faribault, is covered with corn and soybean fields and that it is in this matrix of agricultural desert that I have been forced to search out the last few remnants of accessible birding habitat. Most of these sites are found in two areas: one is a stretch along the Blue Earth River Valley, which extends north and south through the western part of the county, and the other is a series of lakes and wetlands that, fifteen miles to the east of Blue Earth, stretch to the northern edge of the county. Because I have trouble with neuropathy, most of my birding these days takes place from or near my car, so, in light of a this problem, I invite you to join me on a short road trip around my county.

The Blue Earth River Valley is, in places, more than a mile wide and at one time contained the largest riparian hardwood forest in Minnesota. Although most of the trees have been cleared from its wide meanders, it still holds areas of floodplain forest at each of the many bridges that cross the river.

For today's first stop we descend into the floodplain along Seventh Street in the town of Blue Earth and travel west along a short stretch of gravel locally known as the Catholic Bridge Road. The first quarter mile of this road is flanked by shrubby overgrown field land. That is followed by a floodplain forest with several small oxbow lakes and then open pasture and restored prairie. Because this road is only a few miles from my farm, it is often the first place I check out when I go birding. The shrubby fields can be good for sparrows and the forest near the bridge faithfully holds a pair of Barred Owls. The habitats west of the bridge change with the whims of the rising and falling of the river. Here I have discovered Western Kingbirds and

Northern Mockingbirds, and among the tall ironweed stalks that dot level floodplain pasture, one can expect to find one or more pairs of ubiquitous Eastern Kingbirds.

After this we retrace our path and drive 15 miles east of Blue Earth along County Road 16 until we come to a white 1860s church. Here, at the northwest corner of Rice Lake, a friend of mine lives in the church parsonage and maintains perhaps the most bird-friendly backyard in the county. After checking out her always-filled feeders and remarkable landscaping, we drive east along the small gravel road that flanks the north side of the lake, keeping under the canopy of trees until we reach the small bridge. This quiet glen, with its bubbling little stream, can almost make one forget they are surrounded by corn and soybean fields. One of my favorite places in the county, this is an excellent place to search for warblers, vireos, and tanagers.

Pihl's County Park, farther around the lake, is also a good place to find woodland birds and it provides an excellent view of the water. Strangely, in some early springs Rice Lake swarms with waterfowl, in others it is nearly empty.



McDonald's Pond, by Wayne Feder

We now retrace our route for three miles along County Road 16, turn north at the stop sign, and cross over Interstate 90. Here the paved road gives way to gravel and passes through swamps, wetlands, restored prairie, and scrubby forests as it traverses between North and South Walnut Lakes. These are some of Minnesota's first lakes to open in the spring and often collect large numbers of migrating waterfowl. During cold springs, when the ice still persists farther north, Common Loons are forced to gather on these ice-free lakes.

If you can bear with me a short while longer, I will show you two more excellent birding sites. A few miles north of the Walnut Lakes we reach County Road 109 and the waste treatment pools located a short distance west of the village of Wells. These four cells, two north and two south of CR 109, often provide excellent birding. Here, in the last few years, I have seen two scoters, five grebes, three phalaropes and, on those fortunate times when one of the pools is lowered, countless shorebirds, including Marbled and Hudsonian Godwits, Willets, dowitchers, and Ruddy Turnstones.

Perhaps the most (and only) famous birding site in Faribault County is Minnesota Lake. This large, shallow mud lake, six miles northwest of Wells, important for its American White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant rookery, has attracted birders to my county for many years. Unfortunately, much of the lake is surrounded by private land and encroaching cattails. It is best viewed from the small county park in the city of Minnesota Lake. Here I regularly find Black-crowned Night-Herons and White-



Oxbow Lake, by Wayne Feder

faced Ibis. The lake is one of the state's great fall gathering places for Western Grebes. I once counted over 500 just from the park alone.

This short field trip has taken much longer than I expected, so as I hurry across the county to get you back to your car I expect that at least one of us will again be in trouble for arriving home late for lunch.

Wayne Feder taught high school biology and ecology for 25 years before retiring and starting a native prairie seed company with his wife, Lynda, in the mid-90s. He has birded Faribault County for more than 30 years. He recently wrote a book, Birding a Cornfield County, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



North Walnut Lake, by Wayne Feder

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
SEPTEMBER 1 Peregrine Falcons, Whitewater SP, DNR	2	3	4	5	6	7 MN Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter NC Red-headed Woodpeckers, Cedar Creek ESR Rapids Lake Bird Walk, MRVAC Bird Banding, Eastman Ntr Ctr, 3RPD Bird Walk, ZVAS
8 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	9	10	11	12 Southern MN Birding, MRVAC Days (Sep 12-13)	13 Southern MN Birding, MRVAC Days (Sep 12-13)	14 WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter NC Peregrine Falcons, Gooseberry Falls SP, DNR Bird Hike, Coon Rapids Dam Reg. Pk, 3RPD Bird Walk, Crystal Spring SNA, Wild River Audubon
15	16 Rapids Lake Bird Walk, MRVAC	17	18 Bird Walk, Roberts Bird Sanctuary	19	20 Hawk Ridge Festival (Sep 20- 22)	21 Hawk Ridge Festival Bird Banding, Lowry Ntr Ctr, 3RPD
22 Hawk Ridge Festival	23 "Brazil's Pantanal," MN Global Birders	24	25	26 Chisago County Birding Day, MRVAC	27 Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	28
29 Raptor Count & Hawk Watch, Carpenter Nat. Ctr Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	30	OCTOBER 1	2	3 Central MN Birding Days, MRVAC (Oct. 12-13)	4 Central MN Birding Days, MRVAC (Oct. 12-13)	5 MN Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter Nat. Ctr Bird Walk, ZVAS
6 Rapids Lake Bird Walk, MRVAC Bird Language, MVNWR	7 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	8	9 Wild River Birds & Beers, Wild River Audubon	10 Peregrine Falcons, Gooseberry Falls SP, DNR	11 Saw-whet Owl Banding, Lowry Ntr Ctr, 3RPD	12 WI Campus Bird Hike, Carpenter NC Peregrine Falcons, Gooseberry Falls SP, DNR Owl Prowl, Int'l Owl Ctr Saw-whet Owl Banding, Lowry Ntr Ctr, 3RPD
13 Waterfowl Banding, Lowry Ntr Ctr, 3RPD	14	15	16 Wednesday on the Wing, Roberts Bird Sanctuary "Ghana," MN Global Birders	17 WI Campus Owl Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	18 Mysterious Owl, Wild River SP, DNR	19 Rapids Lake Bird Walk, MRVAC Bird Banding, Lowry Ntr Ctr, 3RPD
20 Bass Ponds Bird Walk, MRVAC	21	22	23 MN Campus Owl Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	24	25 MN Campus Bird Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	26 Rapids Lake Bird Walk, MRVAC
27	28	29	30 WI Campus Owl Banding, Carpenter Nat. Ctr	31		



MOU Calendar

September / October 2019



CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

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

Sept 7: MN Campus Bird Hike

Details: 8–10 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 or free for “Friends of CNC,” Hastings Environmental Protectors and St. Croix Valley Bird Club members. RSVP at 651-437-4359 and let us know you are coming.

Sept 14: WI Campus Bird Hike

Details: 8–10 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 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.

Sept 27: 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: Raptor Count and Hawk Watch

Details: 8:30 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 U.S. and beyond. Our team of spotters and greeters will set up behind the Administration Building to count migrants including raptors, 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. Program Fee: FREE. For more information, please call 651-437-4359. Location: Minnesota Campus

Oct 5: MN Bird Hike

Details: 8–10 am. See description above.

Oct 12: WI Campus Bird Hike

Details: 8–10 am. See description above.

Oct 17: WI Campus Owl Banding

Details: 8–10 pm. Learn about the migration patterns of Saw-whet Owls. Join our naturalists as they venture out to band some of our native owls on the WI Campus. Space is limited for this FREE program, so please call 651-437-4359 early to reserve your spot. Program is weather dependent.

Oct 23: MN Campus Owl Banding

Details: 8–10 pm. See description above.

Oct 25: MN Campus Bird Banding

Details: 8:30 am–12 pm. See description above.

Oct 30: WI Campus Owl Banding

Details: 8–10 pm. See description above.

CEDAR CREEK ECOSYSTEM SCIENCE RESERVE

Sept 7: 1st Saturday Red-headed Woodpecker

Details: 8–10 am. Join volunteers from the Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery Project to go birding in off-limits areas of our oak savannas! Meet your guide at the Fish Lake Nature Trail parking lot, located at the end of Durant St. on the southeast side of Cedar Creek in East Bethel. Wear closed-toed shoes and layers, and bring your own binoculars and camera if you desire. Free, though donations to the project are recommended and always gladly accepted.

DNR

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

Sept 1: Live Peregrine Falcon, Whitewater State Park

Details: 7–8 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 14: Fast Flyers: Peregrine Falcons, Gooseberry Falls State Park

Details: 2–3:30 pm. Nesting along the North Shore, Peregrine Falcons have returned. Listen to its story of recovery and the people who helped. Join Jackie Fallon of the Midwest Peregrine Society to learn about these remarkable birds and meet LIVE birds. Drop by the Visitor Center Auditorium.

Oct 12: Fast Flyers: Peregrine Falcons, Gooseberry Falls State Park

Details: 2–3:30 pm. See description above.

Oct 18: The Mysterious Owl, Wild River State Park

Details: 6:30–7:30 pm. Most owls are active in the evening, which often makes them mysterious and unknown to us. They are especially adapted to hunting and being silent at night. Learn how to recognize their calls as well as make them yourselves. This program will be a hoot! Meet at the amphitheater.

HAWK RIDGE

Cooper's Hawk, by Kevin Manley



Sept 20, 21, 22 Hawk Ridge Festival

Hawk Weekend is the annual festival held by Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth. It is a wonderful opportunity to showcase one of North America's best places to experience the fall bird migration at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. There will be a variety of field trips, hikes, programs, and activities for all ages! We're also excited to announce our Saturday evening guest speaker will be John W. Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. He will present "How Birds (including hawks!) Can Save the World." See all the details and events for Hawk Weekend at <https://www.hawkridge.org/hawk-weekend-festival>.

INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER

Oct 12: Expert-led Owl Prowl

Details: 6 pm. Owls live all around us but are very good at evading detection. Come learn how to identify our local owls by size, shape, silhouette and sound with the Owl Center's human and owl staff. Following the indoor portion of the program participants will carpool to known owl territories in and around Houston to call and listen for Eastern Screech-Owls, Barred Owls, and Great Horned Owls. Dress for the weather, and try to wear clothes that don't make noise when you move. Calling will be done from the side of the road, so very little walking is required. Children are welcome, but must be able to stand quietly for at least 10 minutes at a time.

Meet at the International Owl Center at 6:00 p.m. and expect to return roughly 2.5–3 hours later. Plan to spend the first 45 minutes indoors learning to identify owls by sound before going outdoors. Cost: \$10 non-members; \$7 members. Pre-registration required. Email: karla@internationalowlcenter.org. Location: International Owl Center, 126 E Cedar St., Houston.

MINNESOTA GLOBAL BIRDERS

September 23: "Brazil's pantanal"

– Lee Ann Landstrom

Details: 6–8 pm. Lee Ann Landstrom, former director of the Eastman Nature Center, will give a presentation based on her two visits to Brazil's *pantanal*, the world's largest tropical wetland, with spectacular birds and mammals. Cost: Free. For details and to register, go to tinyurl.com/globalbirding22. Location: Walker Library, 2880 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis.

October 16: "Ghana 50 Years Later, Plus Some Birds"

– Roy Zimmerman

Details: 6–8 pm. Former MOU President Roy Zimmerman will present his birding experiences in Ghana and abroad. Free. For details and to register go to tinyurl.com/globalbirding23 (this will be available in October). Location: Walker Library, 2880 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis.

MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER

MRVAC Bird Watching Treks

Join us for a bird walk on one of the Refuge's many units. We will search for and learn about the species of birds that visit the refuge during their migration south. Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist, 952-240-7647. See additional field trips and updates at MRVAC.org.

Refuge Bird Watching Treks

Saturday, Sept. 7, 8:00–10:30 am, Rapids Lake
Sunday, Sept. 8, 8:00–10:30 am, Bass Ponds
Monday, Sept. 16, 8:00–10:30 am, Rapids Lake
Sunday, Sept. 29, 8:00–10:30 am, Bass Ponds
Sunday, October 6, 8:00–10:30 am, Rapids Lake
Monday, October 7, 8:00–10:30 am, Bass Ponds
Saturday, October 19, 8:00–10:30 am, Rapids Lake
Sunday, October 20, 8:00–10:30 am, Bass Ponds
Saturday, October 26, 8:00–10:30 am, Rapids Lake

Locations:

Bass Ponds Trailhead, 2501 86th St. E., Bloomington
Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center, 15865 Rapids Lake Rd, Carver.
Bloomington Visitor Center, 3815 American Blvd. E., Bloomington.

MRVAC Field Trips

September 12–13: Southern Minnesota Birding Days

Details: This trip will be based out of Rochester and will cover birding locations in Olmsted and Fillmore counties. Here are some of the locations that we may have time to visit: Izaak Walton Wetlands, Quarry Hill Nature Center, Oxbow Park, Geothetic WMA, Forestville-Mystery Cave SP, Kappers Ponds and the Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center. This should be a good time of year to search for migrants in these areas. \$25 per MRVAC member; \$35 per non-member. Please contact Craig Mandel to register: (952) 240 7647.

September 26: Chisago County Birding Day

Details: 8:00 am. Wild River and Interstate State Parks, Carlos Avery WMA and Allemansratt Wilderness Park are a few of the locations we will spend time at on the single day trip to Chisago County. With luck, there will be some late migrant song birds and some early waterfowl. With the variety of habitats we will cover there should be a diverse mix of birds to observe. \$25 per MRVAC member; \$35 per non-member. Please contact Craig Mandel to register: (952) 240 7647. Location: Meet at AmericInn, 38675 14th Ave., North Branch.

October 3–4: Central Minnesota Birding Days

Details: This trip will be based out of Walker and will cover birding locations in Hubbard and Cass counties. Some of the locations we may explore include Deep Portage Learning Center, Walker WTP, Federal Dam, Cass and Leech Lakes, Paul Bunyan State Forest and the Lake Alice Bog. In early October there are a lot of possibilities for sparrows, waterfowl, and some later shorebirds. \$25 per MRVAC member; \$35 per non-member. Please contact Craig Mandel to register: (952) 240 7647.

MINNESOTA VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Oct 6: Bird Language

Details: 9 am–1 pm. Join us 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.

ROBERTS BIRD SANCTUARY

Sept 18: Wednesday on the Wing

Details: 6 pm. Join a naturalist from the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board on a walk through the Sanctuary to look for and learn about the birds. Bring binoculars and a field guide or borrow from the naturalist. Location: 4124 Roseway Road, Minneapolis. The walks start at the wooden visitors shelter adjacent to the Peace Garden parking lot off Roseway Road, across the street from the Rose Garden.

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

Sept 7: Bird Banding

Details: 9 am–12 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and tagged with numbered rings as part of international avian research. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Eastman Nature Center, 13351 Elm Creek Rd, Maple Grove.

Sept 14: Fall Bird Hike

Details: 9–11 am. While some birds have left for their southern wintering grounds, many are just starting the trek. Look for birds using the Mississippi flyway during a hike with a naturalist. Bring binoculars (or borrow ours). Location: Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park.

Sept 21: Bird Banding

Details: 9 am–12 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and tagged with numbered rings as part of international avian research. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Lowry Nature Center, Carver Park Reserve, 7025 Victoria Dr, Victoria.

Oct 11 and 12: Saw-Whet Owl Banding

Details: 8–11 pm. Learn about Minnesota's owls, their adaptations, and research. Drive within Carver Park to observe master banders safely trapping and banding saw-whet owls. Reservations required by two days prior. Cost: \$5. Location: Lowry Nature Center, Carver Park Reserve, 7025 Victoria Dr, Victoria.

Oct 13: Fall Waterfowl Birding

Details: 3–4 pm. Learn about migratory waterfowl traveling through Carver Park and the best locations to spot them. Look for wigeon, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, scaup, Buffleheads, and more. Scopes and binoculars provided or bring your own.. Location: Lowry Nature Center, Carver Park Reserve, 7025 Victoria Dr, Victoria.

Oct 19: Bird Banding

Details: 9 am–12 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and tagged with numbered rings as part of international avian research. Drop in anytime. Free. Location: Lowry Nature Center, Carver Park Reserve, 7025 Victoria Dr, Victoria.

WILD RIVER AUDUBON

September 14: Crystal Spring SNA Bird Walk

Details: 8 am. Join Liz Harper and Wild River Audubon on a visit to Crystal Spring Scientific and Natural Area. Located along the St. Croix River, this unique SNA is part of Audubon's St. Croix Bluffs Important Bird Area. Location: South end of Quarry Avenue N in Scandia. Park only on

east road shoulder. See www.dnr.state.mn.us/snas/detail.html?id=sna02068.

October 9: Wild River Birds & Beers

Details: 7 pm. Wild River Audubon member Joe Sausen will provide helpful advice about best types of feeders and food for your backyard birds in the winter. Gather at 6:30 to socialize and grab a beer. Program starts at 7 pm. Uncommon Loon Brewing, 10825 Lake Blvd, Chisago City.

ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON

Sept 7: 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: West entrance of Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester.

Oct 5: 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.

American Avocets, by Richard Gotz



Savaloja Grant Report: Gilda's Club Twin Cities

by Lisa Keitel, Gilda's Club Twin Cities Volunteer

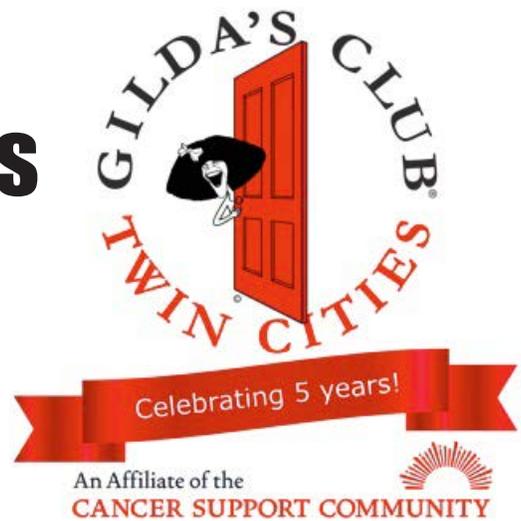
The MOU awarded Savaloja Grant funds to Gilda's Club Twin Cities, a cancer support organization whose mission is to ensure that all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action, and sustained by community. Gilda's Club wanted to use a small wetland at their location, near I-394 and Hopkins Crossroad, to foster appreciation and awareness of the natural world as a way of enhancing the experience of healing and recovery for club members. The Savaloja Grant purchased a bird feeding platform (located adjacent to their Healing and Serenity Gardens), binoculars, and a field guide. A crew of Gilda's volunteers has been trained to assist with weekly cleaning and maintenance of the feeder.

With the installation of the feeder platform at the end of May, Gilda's Red Bird Club (the name derives from the welcoming red door on the Gilda's Club logo) was ready for programming. On the second Tuesday of each month, members may come and spend time in the Healing and Serenity Gardens, observe and listen to birds, and talk with the

volunteer about birds, birding, bird feeders, and binoculars. Guided walks along the garden pathway and to the pond in the office park may be offered to members to participate in as their mobility and energy allows.

Time spent outdoors offers well-documented benefits for those impacted by cancer. Introducing Gilda's members to birds and birding will contribute to the club's Healthy Lifestyle programming. It will also offer a new family activity for members during their cancer experience.

Thank you to the MOU for allowing us to expand the love of birding to this special group of people and their families.



Libby Utter, Executive Director of Gilda's Club (left), and Lisa Keitel

Birding by the Numbers: On Hearing

by Ben Douglas

“More ears means more species.” In my experience, this statement is usually true. I have taken it to heart in 2019 and have tried to bird with others as often as possible. In the past few months I’ve been on the road with Herb Dingmann, Liz Harper, Alex Sundvall, Sparky Stensaas, Ezra Hosch, Aaron Ludwig, Bob Dunlap, Josh Wallestad, and Peter Nichols. Birding with these people, plus all of the others with whom I’ve birded during this year, has given me an opportunity to observe many skilled birders in action. I had always assumed that I was hearing everything around me, making IDs when I could and relying on others when I just couldn’t make a determination on my own.

My experiences as I endeavor to log 10,000 county ticks in 2019, though, have dramatically changed the way I think about and understand the auditory experience in birding. My simplistic view had long been that the skills of accomplished birders offer a standard to strive toward and that once we arrive at that level we are effectively equal in ability. What I’ve learned instead is that each one of us experiences a different auditory landscape when we bird. Our perception of the world of songs and calls is directly affected by our identification skills, of course, but also by our hearing quality, degree of focus, and ability to filter out ambient noise.

My first deeper look into this came from the loveable chest-thumping sound of the Ruffed Grouse. I’ve found over the years that I can actually feel the drumming of a grouse in the back of my head from a fairly long distance. At closer range I can feel the beats in my chest while also physically hearing the sound made by its wings striking its chest in rapid succession. Earlier this year, on a trip with my good friend Dana Sterner, I found that I would regularly beat her to the punch by hearing and feeling a Ruffed Grouse drumming from many feet further away than she could. It was in Mahnomen County where Dana first beat me to it hearing a grouse. When she heard the drumming, she said she thought for a second that she might be having a heart attack! The experience left her a bit shaken, since she had rarely felt a drum to that extent. I estimated that bird to be roughly 50 feet or less away from us at the moment.

It’s important to note that in four days of birding 12 to 15 hours a day I rarely found my own hearing to be more sensitive than Dana’s. We later had an opportunity to gauge the difference in our ability to hear this particular sound at one of my favorite birding spots, Big Bog SRA. (With



Black-billed Cuckoo, by Ben Douglas

a one-mile boardwalk into the massive Red Lake Peatland Bog in Beltrami County, Big Bog is a jewel of a birding location and one I highly recommend for any birder.) As we approached the entrance to the boardwalk, I detected a drumming grouse just ahead. We decided to compare our ability to hear this bird. As we moved out into the bog itself and away from the drumming, we found Dana’s distance to be about 75 feet—give or take 25 feet—with some variation depending on whether she was actively listening for the sound or not. My range extended 400 feet or more.

This comparison may not have seemed very significant were it not for the fact that I’d experienced something similar several times with other birders. During a Warbler Wednesday in Sax-Zim Bog led by Clinton Nienhaus and Sparky Stensaas I recall hearing a grouse drumming and then waiting for others to acknowledge the sound. Clinton was the first in the group of 12 or so birders to call it out. No one else noted hearing the drum the first time it went off, though once alerted to it several others then did hear it.

We know that everyone’s hearing capacity decreases with age, particularly when it comes to the higher frequencies,



*Birding with Sparky Stensaas
along Ditchbank Road in Carlton County*

but I started to realize while spending so much time with other birders this year that it can also fluctuate simply depending on what we are trying to accomplish at any given moment.

A while back I spent some time with Josh Wallestad in McGregor Marsh in Aitkin County, where I locked down my first ever experience with Yellow Rail. While we were enjoying the clicking noises of many birds that evening, I noted a LeConte's Sparrow a good distance out in a wet grassy area. Josh did not hear this LeConte's the majority of the times that I did and he was surprised that about this, since he was not aware of any hearing loss. We ultimately chalked it up as an aberration, likely exacerbated by the ambient noise of Highway 65, which runs the length of the marsh. Could it be, though, that the situation was unique for Josh in that he had just finished teaching his last day of the school year, had driven several hours to get to our meeting point, and was likely exhausted physically and mentally? I myself may have been tired too, but I was at the tail end of birding for three straight weeks and was deeply tuned in to bird song and I had almost forgotten that work existed.

Fast forward a couple months: At the end of July I travelled to Kandiyohi County for a day of birding with Josh in his home county. In a few short weeks Josh would be starting another year of teaching, but nevertheless he was relaxed, focused, and ready for a full day of birding. At one point we stopped at Mount Tom in Sibley State Park, hoping to find a Blue-winged Warbler. After about 20 minutes of birding, Josh called out a Black-billed Cuckoo, which was barely audible in the distance. I didn't hear the bird at all when he called it, so I immediately froze in place, cupped

my ear in the direction he was pointing, and closed my eyes. Off in the distance, as I focused my hearing for the lowest volumes, I picked up a Yellow-billed Cuckoo from farther left of our position and I noted this to Josh. He heard what I was hearing, but insisted that he had also heard a Black-billed Cuckoo. Several seconds later the Black-billed Cuckoo sounded off a second time. I just barely heard it, even though I was intently focused on such low noises. How can one square the fact that in McGregor Marsh I heard LeConte's Sparrows with relative ease, but in Kandiyohi Josh easily picked up the most faint cuckoo call well before I could register it?

After many similar experiences this year I am realizing more and more that there are a lot of variables that go into whether we hear a bird or not. Our physical capabilities matter, of course, but they are not all that determines whether we hear a sound. How many times have you been sitting in a room with a family member only to realize you haven't heard a single word they said for the entire last minute? Being distracted, tired, or just deeply focused on something else can impact whether you can register a bird call or song over all of the other noises in the environment.

In addition, our brains can be really good at filtering out sounds and allowing us to notice only ones believed to be relevant or important at that moment. I work in an open office environment and have to filter out every other phone, desk noise, and casual hallway conversation within my range; otherwise I'd never get any work done. It's reasonable to believe that my brain does the same when I'm out birding, even if I don't want it to. Recall that at Mount Tom I was listening intently for a "beee-buzz" of a Blue-winged Warbler, and in my intense concentration my brain was filtering out the low-volume cuckoo calls—and who knows what else—in the background.

At the time of this writing, I've logged over 9500 ticks on my quest for 10,000 this year and I've birded all of the state's 87 counties, most more than once. I've learned a lot of things, but one of the most important lessons I'll take away is that we all experience the world differently. So my suggestion: Embrace this difference and use it to your advantage. Bird with others as often as you can in order to gain their perspective on what you may be missing. Try to be present in the moment. Pause, calm your thoughts, close your eyes, cup your ears, and listen deeply to the world around you. Focus on the sounds you are hearing and begin to peel away distinct calls one by one. Probe deeper for the softest sounds. A rare bird that you hadn't noticed may just be calling quietly in the background.

Ben Douglas is a member of the MOU's Social Media Committee, volunteer guide, and presenter on technology for birding. His 2019 birding goal is 10,000 Minnesota state ticks. This is the fourth installment in a series that will keep us up to date on his efforts.



Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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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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