



# Minnesota BIRDING

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## New MN eBird Portal: An Introduction

*by Michelle M. Terrell, MOU Vice President*

Readers of Bob Dunlap's summary of the 2019 MOU members survey in the last issue of *Minnesota Birding* (57[6]:2) may have noted a teaser for a Minnesota eBird portal coming in the spring of 2021. The creation of an MOU-sponsored eBird portal was approved by the MOU Board of Directors at a meeting in August 2020. Stay tuned for the launch of Minnesota eBird, but in the meanwhile here is an overview of what to expect.

### What is a regional eBird portal?

A regional eBird portal is a single-page website landing page that provides localized eBird content as opposed to the globally oriented main eBird page. Regional portals

are managed by local birding organizations that partner with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in their maintenance. Currently there are 13 states or regions in the United States, and over twenty international sites, that have portals. Wisconsin (<https://ebird.org/wi/home>) and New Hampshire (<https://ebird.org/nh/home>) both maintain particularly active regional portals. To peruse the portals of other states and countries visit: <https://ebird.org/about/portals>

### Why Minnesota eBird?

eBird is the world's largest birding platform. In the past year, over 5,000 birders have used eBird to submit Minnesota birding data. The MOU management of Minnesota eBird provides the opportunity for the MOU to directly reach this broad audience of birders. Portals are intended for use both by local birders as well as by birders interested in visiting a region. The development of Minnesota eBird not only provides Minnesota birders with an eBird dashboard that features local content, but it allows the MOU to showcase information specific to Minnesota birds and birding to those interested in visiting our state.

The creation of Minnesota eBird also provides another outlet by which



*Horned Lark, by Kevin Manley*

the MOU can publish and share information with a broad birding audience via the portal's "Recent News" section. Further, the portal agreement strengthens the MOU's collaboration with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in the management of Minnesota eBird data, including input on eBird hotspots; cooperation with local eBird reviewers; and review of Minnesota eBird data requests. It also formalizes, but does not change, the process by which the MOU receives eBird data for incorporation into the MOU sightings database.

### How does Minnesota eBird relate to the MOU website?

The Minnesota eBird portal does not infringe on, or in any way alter, the operation and use of the MOU website. Rather, the portal complements the website by providing the opportunity to direct eBird users to it. For example, other ornithological societies use their state's eBird portal to provide website links to their organization's reporting

forms, checklists, workshops, and field trip pages, etc. Records will continue to be entered into the MOU website as they are now. Because the portal does not directly interface with the MOU website, eBird datasets will continue to be reviewed by the MOU website managers before integration into the MOU records database.

### What do I need to know as an eBird user?

If you are an eBird user, whether you enter your data via the mobile app, the Minnesota eBird portal, or the core eBird site, your Minnesota records will appear in Minnesota eBird. Setting your website bookmark to Minnesota eBird will provide you with tailored Minnesota content featuring your state eBird stats; showcasing recent Minnesota checklists and species by county; as well as highlighting statewide photos, audio, and rarities—all coupled with the same exploration tools and links that are available on the core eBird site.

# Message from the President

This message goes to press as we complete 2020, a year that most of us are glad to put behind us and forget. We started out well but were quickly sidelined with the developing pandemic, followed by the social unrest and increasingly apparent racial injustice, all of which continue to be part of our daily life. The need to isolate, wear a mask, and maintain physical distancing, while experiencing a disquieting election, has added to the tension. Fortunately, we have a passion for birds that has helped keep our spirits up. Through all of this, the birds at our feeders, marshes, forests, and fields go on with their usual activities of eating, caching food, and cheering us up with their beauty and song.

*Purple Finch, by Jean Brisance*



We are now at several conjunctions that offers hope, using the broad definition of two or more events occurring at the same point of time. Saturn and Jupiter appeared to merge on December 21 to form the Winter Solstice star, something that last occurred 800 years ago. Think of all of the things (plagues, floods, earthquakes, wars, Mozart, Beethoven, among others) that have happened in those 800 years, yet here we are enjoying our birds. Science and industry have come together in another broadly defined conjunction to produce vaccines for this dreaded Covid-19 virus, and this will help get us through this pandemic. We have much to be grateful for and we need to keep reminding ourselves of this.

We can also think of the 2020 MOU Paper Session in December as another broadly defined conjunction of technology and science, as we successfully presented outstanding research during the pandemic using a virtual format. The general theme for 2020 was *the changing habitat*, with Lee Frelich (University of Minnesota Center for Forest Ecology) giving the keynote presentation of potential changes in the Minnesota grasslands, deciduous forest, and boreal forest areas, depending on our response to climate change. Keith Barker (UMN Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior and Curator of Genetic Resources at the Bell Museum) presented his studies of the impact of wetland loss on avian diversity using museum collections and genetic data for the Slender-billed Grackle, a Mexican relative of the Boat-tailed Grackle. Tyler Imfeld (recent UMN doctoral graduate now at Regis University) described the molecular approaches he used to understand the Australasian and African origins of Minnesota songbirds. Another approach to changing habitat studies was presented by Scott Mehus

(Education Director, National Eagle Center) with his work with Golden Eagles in southeast Minnesota and adjacent areas. Michael Wells (Fish & Wildlife Naturalist, USFWS) used bird movement detected by radar to identify habitat conservation opportunities around the Great Lakes. Initial studies of the American Kestrel nesting box program in Sax Zim Bog were described by Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus (Head Naturalist, FOSZB), showing the power of citizen scientists to study a bird under stress.

We are fortunate to have strong graduate programs in Minnesota, as further demonstrated by a series of exciting presentations on different aspects of avian biology and ecology. Shanta Hejmadi (UMN Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior doctoral candidate) used phylogenetic biometric data to analyze global communities of raptors. Annie Bracey (UMD Conservation Sciences doctoral candidate) studies the Common Tern populations to address conservation issues in the Great Lakes region. Three early studies demonstrated exciting new approaches to understanding raptors took advantage of the ongoing work at Hawk Ridge: Emily Pavlovic (UMD Integrated Biology graduate student) used hydrogen isotopes in feathers to study origin and migration of banded raptors; Lisa Brouellette (UMD Integrated Biology graduate student) described how to use DNA from the intestinal track of raptors (clonal swabs) to analyze diet; and

Alexandra Pesano (UMD graduate student) described how she is using morphological measurements, plumage photos, DNA, and satellite transmitters to determine to origin of the dark morph Red-tailed Hawk migrating through Minnesota.

All of the speakers had recorded their presentations, which were available for viewing by MOU members on the MOU YouTube channel after Thanksgiving. A Zoom-based general panel discussion of all speakers, moderated by Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus, was held on Saturday, December 5, where MOU members could ask questions about each presentation. It is not possible to determine how many MOU members watched the panel discussion, but it was estimated at more that 120. All in all, the virtual 2020 Paper Session was a success and the membership adapted well to the format. This on-line technology worked well, and MOU members across that state were able to participate in the annual meeting activities. We should all be congratulated for readily adapting so that we can stay connected. Very impressive group!

I have enjoyed this first year as President, and I look forward to further growth and change in 2021. I hope that all of us can stay safe and well, and that we can gather in person in the new year.

– *Richard King*

## New MOU Members

Kristine Burton, *St. Paul, MN*  
Jeff Dinsmore, *Shorewood, MN*  
John Heintz, *Minneapolis, MN*  
William Jepsen, *Stillwater, MN*  
David & Deborah Johnson, *Le Sueur, MN*  
Steven Katovich, *Mounds View, MN*  
Debby Kerschner, *North Branch, MN*  
Mark Kraske, *Marine on St. Croix, MN*  
Howard Marcus, *Woodbury, MN*  
Ann Merritt, *Roseville, MN*  
MN Backyard Birds, *Brainerd, MN*  
Timothy Monko, *Minneapolis, MN*  
Yasushi Nakagawa, *Shoreview, MN*  
Emily Pavlovic, *Duluth, MN*  
Sally Reynolds, *St. Paul, MN*  
Dave Sather, *Spicer, MN*

## Minnesota Birding Weeks & Weekends

by *Kim Eckert*

The Minnesota Birding Weeks and Weekends schedule for the upcoming season will *not* be published at this time, as it was last year in the January/February issue of the MOU newsletter. I certainly hope there will be a 2021-22 season, but until we have a better idea of how the pandemic looks and the outlook for the distribution of a vaccine, there seems little point in publishing a schedule of MBWs if it's uncertain that they can take place.

During the 2020-21 season, the first MBWeekend did not take place until July, and the few since then were restricted as to the number of participants. All of the MBWeeks scheduled during this season had to be canceled.

Please don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions, and I hope the upcoming season—our 36<sup>th</sup>—can happen with little or no disruption. Thanks for your interest!

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[www.mbwbirds.com](http://www.mbwbirds.com)

# Conservation Column

## Clearcuts, Tree Retention, and Minnesota's Birds

*by Alexis Grinde*

Minnesota is home to more than 17 million acres of forest lands. Our forests provide habitat for hundreds of wildlife species, including one of the most diverse breeding bird communities in North America. Public agencies including state, federal, county, and local governments manage almost 10 million acres of the state's forests. The primary goals and approaches to forest management vary across these ownerships, but historically forestry practices have primarily emphasized timber production that maximizes long-term revenue from the land. Over the past 20 years, though, there has been an increasing focus on maintaining biodiversity in Minnesota's forests as well.

In 1995 the Sustainable Forest Resources Act established the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) to promote the long-term sustainable management of Minnesota's forests. In the late 1990s the MFRC developed a comprehensive set of voluntary forest management guidelines

that serve as best practices designed to mitigate impacts of timber harvest activities. Specifically, the guidelines focus on reducing negative impacts to soil and water quality, wetland and riparian areas, historic and cultural sites, aesthetics, and wildlife habitat when timber harvests occur.

Tree retention during a harvest is a key component of the MRFC guidelines; it is intended to mitigate impacts on wildlife. The recommendation is either to leave five percent of trees on the site in clumps, retain 6-12 individual trees per acre scattered across the site, or use a combination of clumps and scattered trees (see photographs below). Despite the widespread implementation of the guidelines over the past 20 years, there had been no formal studies assessing the effectiveness of tree retention on wildlife communities in the state.

Researchers at the Avian Ecology Lab at the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI), University of Minne-



*Example of scattered tree retention, by Alexis Grinde*



*Example of clumped tree retention, by Alexis Grinde*

sota Duluth, along with collaborators from MFRC, University of Vermont, and the USDA Forest Service's Northern Research Station conducted a study to examine how various logging practices affected bird and small mammal communities in Minnesota's managed forests. The study was funded by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources.

The study was conducted in 2016-2107 in four experimental aspen plots located across St. Louis County in northeastern Minnesota. The plots had been harvested about eight years earlier and were growing back into forest. One of our key questions was to measure the differences in wildlife communities between clearcut plots and those with retained trees. We were also interested in looking at the two primary ways by which loggers leave standing trees in their harvest areas—clumped or scattered—and we wanted to determine if one method was more beneficial for wildlife than the other in maintaining biodiversity. We focused on both breeding bird communities and small mammal responses to tree retention.

The most common bird species we observed in the study were Chestnut-sided Warbler, Veery, Golden-winged Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, and White-throated Sparrow. The most common small mammal species were red-backed vole and mice. The results showed that bird communities had a clear and consistent positive response to tree retention

*Veery, by Gerald Hoekstra*



treatments compared to clearcuts. Specifically, tree retention treatments resulted in higher total abundance, increased diversity, and higher species richness compared to stands with no tree retention. However, there was not a significant difference in bird communities between the two retention methods, clumps or individuals. Bird species that breed in young forests were found in all treatments, whereas species that breed in mature forests were found primarily in stands with clumped tree retention. Like the breeding bird communities, small mammal communities responded positively to tree retention compared to clearcuts. Many of the mammal species, such as mice, voles, and chipmunks, were found in higher abundance in stands with clumped tree retention.

While there were differences between individual species responses, the results clearly show that leaving live trees in a logged area is far better than a clearcut for wildlife. Monitoring results from the Department of Natural Resources indicate that most (~80%) timber harvests retain trees according to the MFRC guidelines, providing important benefits to wildlife across the state.

Wildlife responses to tree retention likely change over time as the stands continue to grow. At least in the short term, our study showed that tree retention recommendations outlined in the MFRC guidelines will help mitigate impacts to birds and small mammals directly following harvest activity. However, retention levels and configurations needed to sufficiently maintain Minnesota's forest wildlife biodiversity over time is an area needing continued research.

Bird populations have been rapidly declining across North America since the 1960s, including in Minnesota. Although mitigating impacts of timber harvest on forest-dwelling breeding birds in Minnesota is necessary, this alone will not adequately sustain these populations into the future. Many opportunities exist for conserving and improving forest habitat in Minnesota, particularly on public and private lands where economic return is not the top priority (e.g., WMAs and privately owned forests). Minnesota was a leader in developing sustainable forest management guidelines in the 1990s. It is now necessary to build on these efforts where possible, shifting focus from mitigation to optimization of forest management in order to create and improve forest habitat and ensure the long-term conservation of Minnesota's biodiversity.

For more information, see Grinde, A. R., Slesak, R. A., D'Amato, A. W., & Palik, B. P. (2020). Effects of tree retention and woody biomass removal on bird and small mammal communities. *Forest Ecology and Management*, 465, 119090.

*Alexis Grinde is a wildlife ecologist and research program manager of the Avian Ecology Lab at the Natural Resources Research Institute, University of Minnesota Duluth. [z.umn.edu/nrribirdlab](http://z.umn.edu/nrribirdlab)*

# Birding 2020

by Bob Janssen

What an unusual year 2020 has been! For many of us, it's been a lousy year, in a multitude of ways, because of the arrival of the coronavirus early in the year. Some have lost jobs, or maybe seen their hours reduced. Others have struggled to keep their businesses afloat. Some of us have had their lives impacted more directly by the virus—as my wife and I have (about which more later). But it's also been a great year, at least in one way, for those of us Minnesotans who are birders: a number of good birds have shown up around the state during the past 12 months. In that regard, at least, 2020 might even have been a banner year, especially for those of us who are listers. These birds helped salvage what was otherwise a terrible year.

The amazing environmental poet Mary Oliver said that the best thing that we humans can do is “stay awake and pay attention.” Ever since I was in my early teens, and even before that (about 80 years ago!), I have been paying attention to birds, and it has been a great experience—in fact, a fantastic experience. I kept my first year-list in 1947, from January to December. It totaled 162 species. I have been a compulsive lister ever since.

Listing is a great pastime. Listers form a community of friendly—and, yes, competitive—birders who share their observations with one another. I have compared and competed with many, if not hundreds, of Minnesota listers who have kept lists of state, county, seasonal, year, month, and yard birds, and even of birds seen while sitting in one location. And now the latest compulsive list—a calendar day list (how many species seen on each of the 366 days)! Some birders complain that listing spoils the fun of birding, because it is competitive. I find just the opposite. For me, it adds a lot of fun to the sport.

Birding as a hobby has changed dramatically since my early days of birding. Then I reported Minnesota bird records each Thursday by telephone to anyone interested. Look what we have now in 2020: the MOU.net, eBird, smart phones, GPS locaters, and many other digital programs, all with instantaneous information of rare and unusual birds discovered by the Minnesota birding community. At age 88, I stick mostly to information about sightings in the counties within a 100-mile radius of the Twin Cities. But this is the beauty of all the new ways we have of watching and enjoying birds: you can pick what fits you best.

What affect has the strange year of 2020 had on birding? For one thing, I, like most of you, have been doing all my birding alone, no longer the company of other birders in a car sharing “bird talk.” I find out about new county or unusual birds via the internet and from friends who are real

competitive “geeks” and who understand the digital working systems much better than I do.

The year started out very slowly, at least from a county lister's perspective. It wasn't until March 15 that I got my first new county bird of the year, a Glaucous Gull in Scott County. Of course, that was also when covid restrictions hit. Nevertheless, as I look back over the year, I realize that I was able to see a lot of good birds in spite of the restrictions brought on by the coronavirus. If you were willing to drive a bit, birds were there to be found.

Things picked up in April, with a Lesser Black-backed Gull, also in Scott County, a beautiful Say's Phoebe in Dakota County, a Red-throated Loon in Rice County, and a White-faced Ibis in McLeod County. May produced five county birds. The best, for me at least, was a Eurasian Collared-Dove in Hennepin County (Hennepin County birds are always special). There was also a Blue-winged Warbler in Freeborn County. June produced another Hennepin County bird, a Least Tern at Mother's Lake—a nostalgic record, because I first birded Mother's Lake in my teens! I finally got a Pine Warbler in Dodge County at Evergreen Cemetery in Mantorville after years of looking for one at this location. July was great month too, with five new county birds on the 3rd, the best being two Black-bellied Whistling Ducks in Pipestone County, which is probably the last place in the state one would expect to find this species. On that trip I was birding with five other people; we were in three cars, though, since the pandemic was really spreading wildly all over the state.



*Black-bellied Whistling Duck, by Lon Baumgardt*

In late August my wife was struck with several serious digestive tract diseases and had to be taken in an ambulance to the hospital. The doctors told me she was not expected to survive. Fortunately, she did survive, but when she was transferred to a rehab unit, she contracted Covid-19 there. She was in the hospital and rehab units for almost 30 days. During this time, she was very ill and once again was not expected to survive. But she did. My only contact with her was by phone, so I was left alone and could do nothing but hope that the doctors could help her live through this ordeal. Birding was a life saver. During that time, a Mississippi Kite showed up in Blue Earth and Nicollet counties and a Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Nicollet County, and I was able to get down to see both birds.

In September a Black-throated Gray Warbler was reported in Ramsey County. I was fortunate to see it on the 4th. That wasn't just a county bird for me—it was a Minnesota Lifer! A Long-tailed Jaeger in Lyon County and a Sabine's Gull in Watonwan County later that month were great additions to my lists for those counties.

October has always been my favorite birding month, and in 2020 it produced the best bird of the year and the best bird in a long time—a Painted Redstart. It appeared in a residential area of St. Paul along Fairview Avenue, and thus in Ramsey County, a most unlikely place for this species, and another Minnesota lifer—#415. Since that was right here in the Twin Cities, many birders were able to see it during the two days or so that it hung around.

November is usually a slow birding month, but this year it also produced some good birds: a Glaucous Gull and a Lesser Black-backed Gull in Blue Earth County, and a Eurasian Tree Sparrow in Cottonwood County. Most interesting, though, was the Mountain Bluebird at a golf course right across from the Bell Museum in St. Paul. What a coincidence! It was a great bird for Ramsey County.



*Mountain Bluebird, by Thomas Burns*

With all the problems and the disconcerting disruptions to our lives during the past year, 2020 will be remembered by many of us as the worst year in our lifetime. I found myself thinking often during the year of Mary Oliver's admonition to stay awake and pay attention to the world around us. For me, that helped salvage what was otherwise a very bad year and make it one that I will also recall with very special memories of birds and life.

*Bob Janssen is a dean of the Minnesota birding community and is the author of several books, including Birds in Minnesota (now in a second, revised edition), Birds of Minnesota and Wisconsin, and Birds of Minnesota State Parks.*

# 2020 MOU Certificates of Appreciation

*by Susan Barnes Elliot*

The MOU gives Certificates of Appreciation to people with a "rare" bird on their property who provide access for visiting birders. Any MOU member may nominate a bird host/hostess at any time of the year by simply emailing the Awards Committee ([honeywarbler@gmail.com](mailto:honeywarbler@gmail.com)) and including the name(s), address, shared bird, and a general description of the circumstances. A complimentary MOU membership is included with each Certificate for non-MOU members. Given this year's special challenges, we offer heartfelt thanks to the following people who shared their birds with MOU members and others:

- Lynda and John McMahon:  
Cromwell, Varied Thrush, 2019-2020
- Mary Lou Freyholtz, Sax Zim Bog:  
Evening Grosbeaks, 2020
- Koni and Paul Fank, Dassel:  
Summer Tanager, 2020
- James Hovey, Minneapolis:  
White-winged Dove, 2020
- Sally Reynolds, St. Paul:  
Painted Redstart, 2020

# New Pine City WTP Viewing Platform

*by Susan Barnes Elliot*

With funding assistance from the MOU, the Snake River Valley Conservation Club (SRVCC) has completed construction on a beautiful viewing platform overlooking the three main ponds that comprise the Pine City Wastewater Treatment Plant. The platform is located at the end of a well-defined trail leading from the cul-de-sac next to the Pine City water tower at 545 16th Avenue NE. (Please note that the eBird hotspot coordinates are incorrect. Use the address above). The ponds are full of waterfowl during migration and have turned up some interesting birds, including just this year Hoary Redpoll (Craig Mandel, 10/30/20); Cackling Goose and American Golden-Plover (Kevin Johnson, 10/3/20); American White Pelican (Jager Johnson, 9/23/20); and Ruddy Turnstone and Black Tern (Laurie Evans, 5/15/20). In the right season, the path to the platform is often loaded with warblers. The platform and path will be maintained by the Pine City Parks and Recreation Department.

A big thanks to the SRVCC, especially to Kris Moulton, for working to obtain city approval, for seeking funding from the MOU, and for building the platform. Check it out next time you are birding in Pine County!



# Savaloja Grant Applications Due and Donations Sought

*by Steve Wilson, Chair, MOU Savaloja Committee*

MOU seeks applications for grants for bird-related projects to be funded from the Savaloja Memorial Fund in 2021. Grants are awarded for projects that increase our understanding of birds, promote preservation of birds and their natural habitats, or increase public interest in birds. Proposals that include those currently underrepresented in Minnesota's birding community are welcome as a means of broadening public support for birds and their habitat.

Awards typically range from a few hundred dollars up to as much as \$4000. In 2020 eight grants, totaling \$14,575, were awarded for education, public appreciation, research and community outreach. Further details on these and past projects can be found at <https://moumn.org/grants.php>. For 2021, we anticipate that approximately \$12,000 will be available for grants. If your organization has an idea for a great project, please consider applying!

Application information may be obtained at the link given above. The deadline for receipt of grant applications is **January 20, 2021**. Grant recipients will be notified by April 1, 2021.

Thanks to you, our members, MOU was able to support a diverse array of worthy projects last year. Unfortunately, only half of the projects that we supported received full funding; the others received only partial funding, because there wasn't enough money to go around. You can help MOU make sure fewer worthy projects are left short next year by upgrading your membership when you next renew, or right now by donating to the Savaloja Memorial Fund. Just go to the Donate link at <https://moumn.org/signup.html>. Follow the instructions, and be sure to enter "Savaloja Donation" after "Add special instructions to the seller." Or mail a donation with "Savaloja Fund" on your check's memo line. Minnesota's birds will appreciate it!

# Savaloja Grant Report

## The New Motus Tower at Carpenter Nature Center

by Jennifer Vieth, Executive Director of Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center

### The Journey

In 2017 a researcher from Nova Scotia, Canada shared his efforts to place Motus towers around the province's perimeter in order to better understand the migration routes of Northern Saw-whet Owls. Carpenter Nature Center's (CNC) owl research team immediately began dreaming of how we could use Motus to help answer bird migration and conservation questions in the Midwest, especially in the St. Croix River Valley. A generous Savaloja Grant from MOU arrived in spring 2019, and we put the project into action. Anders Santelman, a Natural Resources intern, researched and purchased the materials. Then we discovered that the roof of the building on which the tower was to be installed needed urgent replacing. Finally, in March 2020, the roof contractor used a lift to help install the Motus tower.

One of the challenges of Motus is that the system is being adopted rapidly around the globe. The amount of hands-on support for new stations is minimal, and the technology is complex. There's a *very* steep learning curve for early adopters. Without CNC volunteer Ben Douglas' technical assistance at this point, CNC would have had an expensive roof ornament.

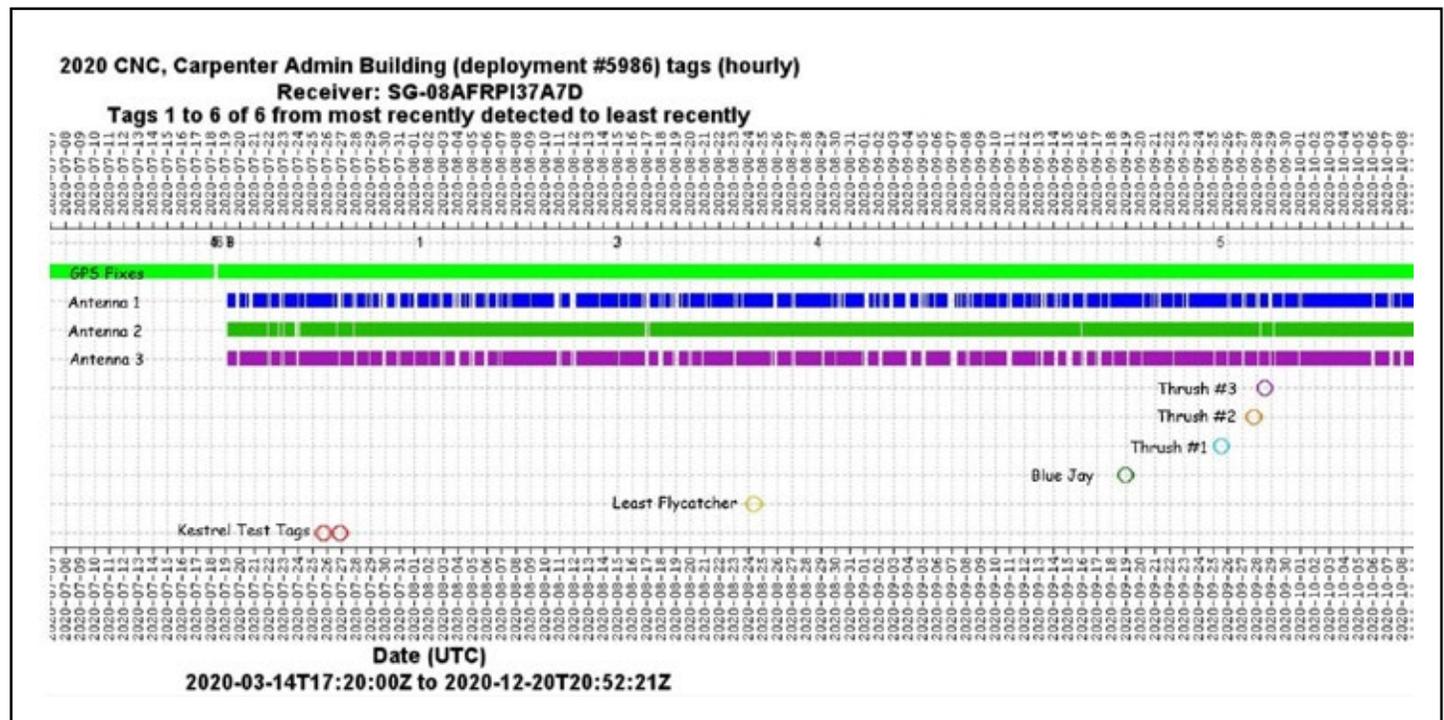
### The Technology

CNC's tower consists of a vertical mast with three 10-foot antennae extending horizontally. The system requires a GPS dongle with a clear view of the sky to provide continuous location information. Each arm of the antenna requires exact measurements of the height from the ground and the antenna's geographic cardinal direction. Each also has its own FUNCube Dongle that detects the radio signals from any passing nano-transmitters. Each transmitter has a unique identifying signature created by the combination of the signal pulse pattern and rate of repetition. The data received by the FUNCube dongles is fed to a Raspberry Pi, a tiny computer that records the information onto a micro-SD card. The data is recorded in a computer language called "R." The data must be downloaded, cleaned up, and then uploaded to Bird Studies Canada's Motus database.

### The Results...sort of

When the pandemic hit, the system was just going online for the first time. Once the initial Covid-19 restrictions lifted, Ben downloaded the data, cleaned up the interference, and interpreted the findings. He didn't need to up-

Figure 1



100 results per page

Detection date ▲	Tag deployment ▲	Species ▲	Date deployed ▲	Latitude ▲	Longitude ▲
2020-08-24	ESPM#173:8.9 M.46083	Least Flycatcher	2020-06-29	47.1992	93.2366
2020-09-18	LakeSuperiorMig#39:5.1 M.38798	Blue Jay	2020-09-04	47.7437	90.3678
2020-09-25	thrushes#5:25.1 M.48406	Swainson's Thrush	2020-09-05	50.220346	-122.884819
2020-09-27	thrushes#38:11.3 M.48295	Swainson's Thrush	2020-09-02	50.298821	-122.760547
2020-09-28	thrushes#12:25.1 M.48415	Swainson's Thrush	2020-09-04	50.220346	-122.884819

100 results per page

Show detections in: [a table](#) | [a timeline](#)

**Figure 2**

load it to Bird Studies Canada, since, unfortunately, we had weeks of static GPS readings, but no data, from the antennas. After many more hours, Ben was able to install fixes on July 19. We waited and listened in anticipation. To ensure that we had at least one true detection, Kristin Hall from the Minnesota DNR, drove around CNC with an activated nanotransmitter. On August 8 we received confirmation from Bird Studies Canada that the system was working and the test transmitter was accurately detected and identified. Just in time for fall migration and some key ornithological conferences! It was a rush to see CNC's dot on maps in presentations about the Motus network at the North American Ornithologists Conference!

**The REAL results**

Ben's personal 2020 birding challenges included doing migration point counts on the bluffs of CNC's Minnesota Campus throughout the 2020 fall migration. After his point count on Sept. 25, he pulled the data and found CNC had recorded *three* nanotagged birds, which can be seen as the blue, red and purple dots in Figure 1.\*

A Least Flycatcher and a Blue Jay were from Natural Resources Research Institute in Northern Minnesota, whose team members had helped CNC throughout the tower-planning process. One of the best moments of the season was when Ben realized that the Blue Jay that "pinged" the tower had passed over on a day on which he counted over 1,100 jays migrating over CNC. This wasn't the first Motus encounter for that Blue Jay. It was originally tagged in 2019 when it had "pinged" a tower March 1-29, 2020 in Indiana.

Equally exciting was that the third tagged bird was a Swainson's Thrush from a research project in British Columbia. Cross-continent migration had already been documented at CNC via band returns over the decades: a Dark-eyed Junco banded at CNC was reencountered in Alaska; a Northern Saw-whet Owl banded at CNC was re-encoun-

tered in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; and a Northern Saw-whet owl banded in Prince Albert was re-encountered at CNC.

On October 31 Ben did another data pull and recorded *two* more nanotagged birds passing through the confluence of the St Croix and Mississippi Rivers! These birds were both thrushes from the same project in British Columbia (Figure 2).

**What is the future of this project?**

This winter CNC is purchasing components for a second tower, which will be installed on the our 300-acre Wisconsin Campus. The hope is to have the tower operational in

*CNC's Motus aerial, by Jennifer Vieth*



time for spring migration. Already most of the funding has been secured through a grant from Tropical Wings, plus a gift from the St Croix Valley Bird Club and some additional gifts from local bird enthusiasts. Once that tower is operational, we will turn our efforts to securing funding for nano-tags. Throughout the Midwest, private and government conservation entities are working to install a network of towers that will act as auditory fences detecting birds on their migrations. The Midwest Migration Network is one example of these interstate collaborative efforts. CNC is happy to be contributing to this larger effort, thanks to MOU.

### **Why is Motus and bird migration research important?**

From data acquired through 40 years of weekly song-bird monitoring at CNC, including projects such as a GPS Geo-locator Wood Thrush migration study with the Smithsonian Institute, the message is loud and clear: Our birds connect us to the rest of the world. How we protect birds in Minnesota impacts nesting grounds in Alaska and wintering grounds in South America. Birds banded at CNC have been encountered from Alaska to Nova Scotia to Arkansas to Venezuela. Their long-distance journeys are mind-bog-

gling.

Today we know that many species are declining. Conservation organizations are actively working on plans that include work on both breeding grounds and wintering grounds. A more detailed understanding of a bird's migratory connectivity that includes their migratory routes, the timing of their migration, and their key migratory stopover sites, and other life cycle details will help pinpoint the most effective actions to support their conservation. Our hope is that our generation, and those to come, can use this knowledge and human ingenuity to protect Minnesota's wildlife and their habitats, so that hundreds of years from now the haunting songs of thrush still float through the woods across the Minnesota landscape.

The MOU's Savaloja Grant program has been instrumental in CNC's bird conservation efforts. Thank you to everyone involved in funding the program. It takes a village. You are never too small to make a difference to birds and bird conservation!

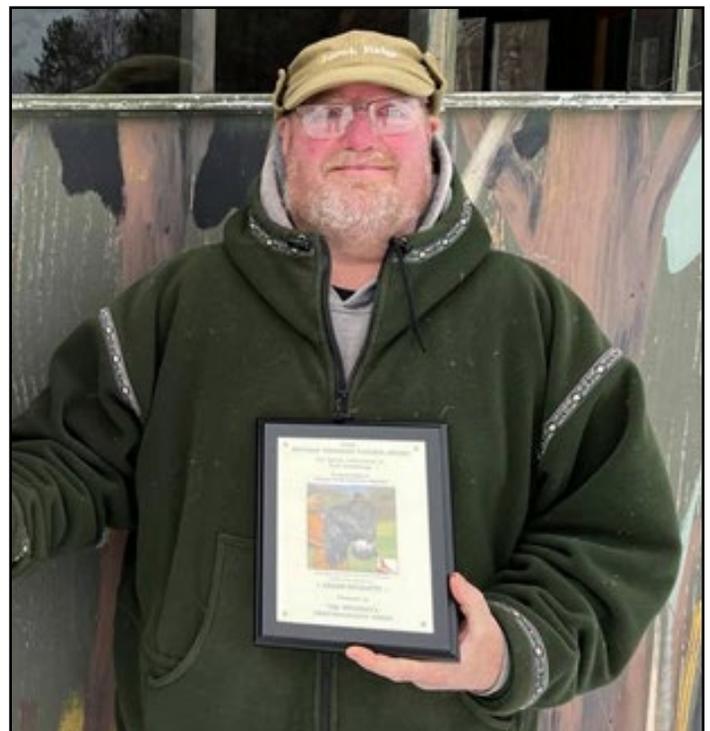
\* The results cited here and in the figures, taken from the Motus.org website, are under review for possible false positives.

# **2020 Brother Theodore Voelker Award: Frank Nicoletti**

*Nominated and presented by John Richardson*

All of us in the birding community know of and highly respect Frank Nicoletti. Frank is widely recognized as one of the premier raptor experts in the United States. He has traveled throughout the country conducting various raptor related projects, including migration studies, nesting surveys, and tracking winter raptors. Frank joined the Hawk Ridge staff in Duluth, MN in 2011 and is the Banding Director/Spring Count Director. He has published a number of papers on birds and has helped many authors working on books and articles about raptors. This year Frank, along with fellow experts Jerry Liguori, Jesse Watson and Dr. Dave Oleyar, published the *In-hand Guide to Diurnal North American Raptors* through HawkWatch International. This photo guidebook features over 450 color photos and accounts of 17 species for raptor researchers, banders, and enthusiasts alike. It also contains information on molt, sexing, and aging for commonly captured North American diurnal raptors, including morph variations and subspecies.

A big congratulations to Frank Nicoletti! I am pleased to be able to present him with the 2020 Minnesota Ornithologists' Union's Brother Theodore Voelker Award.



# 2020 David A. Cahlander Volunteer of the Year Award: Linda Whyte

*Nominated and presented by Gordon Andersson*

Today I get to present the MOU's second annual David Cahlander Volunteer of the Year Award to a most deserving volunteer: Linda Whyte.

Many birders can name a so-called “portal species”—the one that hooked them on birds and birding and changed their life. In Linda's case it was a Red-tailed Hawk that led her to life as a volunteer. After retiring from teaching in 2003, Linda began volunteering at The Raptor Center, which provided, as she said, “an opportunity to ‘give back’ to the birds that made so many of our outdoor experiences memorable.” She was assigned to a morning clinic crew and helped with laundry, floor and mat-cleaning, perch and cage-cleaning, food preparation, feeding, medication, and bird-handling. The latter required a lot of training, but it is her favorite job: she handles the birds slated for medical treatment or surgery, and she gets to “see a variety of raptors closer than you may ever see them elsewhere.” She is also involved with Transport and Rescue. She likens this part of her volunteer work to a “medevac” crew: she helps bring in a raptor that's in trouble, and afterwards gets to participate in a bird's journey from injury or illness to rehabilitation and release. She enjoys her interactions with citizens who help with a rescue, such as meeting a dog walker who had called the Raptor Center about a baby Barred Owl or the bike riders who helped catch a fledgling Peregrine under the High Bridge in St Paul that might have floated downstream.

Through co-workers and contacts made during her seventeen years of unpaid work at the Raptor Center, Linda became involved in even more volunteer activities. These include bird counts and surveys, bird-banding, and leading bird-walks. In addition, and one of the biggest commitments for her, is her volunteer work at Carpenter Nature Center. Concurrent with her schedule at the Raptor Center, she commutes to CNC for weekly raptor care and bird banding. She began this work in 2008 and has since recorded over 2,600 hours (the equivalent of 65 work-weeks!). Most of those hours have related to her passion for birds—she is the lead person in the Mew Crew where she meticulously cleans, and trains others to clean, mews. She is also a part of the bird banding team, where she puts her bird identification skills to work and has learned to handle songbirds and to extract them from mist nets.

CNC plays a very big role in nature education for about 40 schools from all around the greater Twin Cities area, providing hands-on education to 7,000 to 10,000 K-12 students.



Linda has helped with all levels of education programs, including programs at Anoka-Ramsey Community College. In addition, she leads students on bird identification hikes, has helped with the Apple Blossom Races, Adopt-a-Highway cleanup, Apple Fest, and special events. CNC's volunteer coordinator says, “Linda is an outstanding CNC volunteer. Her friendly demeanor and willingness to pitch in are great assets that make her an important part of the CNC Volunteer Corps.” I want to add a personal note here. When Linda is not volunteering, she walks a LOT and birds as she can, and she freely shares her sightings with others. Linda is the person I call to find out where the birds are (including Winter Wrens in April). I told her once I should have her on retainer for her generous and detailed bird information.

Is there more? Yes. Linda also works in Carver Park doing monthly passerine banding and in fall for several weeks of nightly Saw-whet Owl banding. During summers she does weekly overnights for more bird banding at Sugar Loaf Cove Nature Center on the North Shore. Linda says this about her countless hours spent volunteering: “Obviously, time for personal birding has become scarce, but I have no real regrets. Although I'll need to retire from volunteering sooner or later, it has definitely been engaging and fulfilling to live life for the birds.” Wow!

I am honored to present the Second Annual David A. Cahlander Volunteer of the Year Award to volunteer extraordinaire Linda Whyte.

# 2020 T. S. Roberts Award: Laura Erickson

*Nominated and presented by Erik Bruhnke*

I am thrilled to present the 2020 Thomas S. Roberts Memorial Award for lifetime achievement to an amazing woman in Duluth, Minnesota. Within the birding world, this woman's accomplishments have influenced the world of birding and conservation in remarkable ways.

Over the years, her publications and actions have been widely recognized as leading the field. For 34 years she has volunteered her time broadcasting her "For the Birds" radio show in Duluth. Her first "For the Birds" program aired on May 12, 1986. Between the researching, writing, recording, and fine-tuning of the audio, she spends about 15 hours a week creating her immersive radio shows. "For the Birds" is the longest-running radio program about birds in the United States, and is also available as a podcast on iTunes. It bears repeating: she does all of this on a *volunteer* basis.

In addition to her work on "For the Birds," our Award Winner is a gifted and prolific writer. She has written THIRTEEN books about birds and conservation. Her book *101 Ways to Help Birds* is perhaps her most important and influential publication. In it she describes the myriad problems facing birds today and suggests practical things that we can all do to help protect them. This year she published *The Love Lives of Birds*. Earlier books include the best-selling *Into the Nest: Intimate Views of the Courting, Parenting, and Family Lives of Familiar Birds* (co-authored with photographer Marie Read), and *Sharing the Wonder of Birds with Kids*, for which she won the National Outdoor Book Award. *The Bird Watching Answer Book* was published through the prestigious Cornell Lab of Ornithology. In 2016 Laura was selected by the American Birding Association to author its *ABA Field Guide to Birds of Minnesota*, and she was selected by National Geographic to author "Pocket Guide to Birds of North America." She has also authored books for Hawk Ridge, including *Hawk Ridge: Minnesota's Birds of Prey* and "Identifying Birds of Prey: *Quick Reference Guide for Eastern North America*. Her vast array of topics and accessible writing style make her an outstanding author.

In addition to her radio show and books, our winner is a columnist and contributing editor for *BirdWatching* magazine, for the American Birding Association blog, and for her own blog on her own website.

She has been a keynote speaker at numerous birding venues in states that include Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Massachusetts, Arizona, Indiana, Rhode Island, Colorado, Ohio, Kansas Oklahoma, Missouri, Georgia, Florida, New Mexico, and Florida. Our Award Winner has also been a scientist, teacher, licensed wildlife rehabilitator, and a science editor at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. WHEW!



The Roberts Award is certainly not the first Award that our Winner has received. Far from it. In 2014 she was presented with the American Birding Association's highest honor, the Roger Tory Peterson Award. To give you an appreciation for the prestige of this award, other Roger Tory Peterson Award Winners have included David Allen Sibley, Kenn Kaufman, and Victor Emanuel. In 2012 she won the Hawk Migration Association of North America's Conservation Education Award AND the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory's Lifetime Achievement Award AND the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award for *Hawk Ridge: Minnesota's Birds of Prey*. In 2011 she won a Northeastern Minnesota Book Award Honorable Mention for her book *Twelve Owls*. In 2007 she won the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology's Bronze Passenger Pigeon Award for significant contributions to Wisconsin ornithology. In 1997 she won the National Outdoor Book Award for *Sharing the Wonder of Birds with Kids*. In 1994 she won the Northeastern Minnesota Book Award Honorable Mention for *For the Birds: An Uncommon Guide*. And in 1988 she won The Raptor Center Conservation Award.

We in MOU are well past due in awarding Laura Erickson the MOU's Thomas S. Roberts Memorial Award for lifetime achievement. Thank you, Laura, for your powerful and insightful presence in birding, for both experienced and novice birders alike. Congratulations, Laura!

# 2020 Brother Theodore Voelker Award: Ezra Hosch

*Nominated and presented by Isaac Hosch*

The Brother Theodore Voelker Award is given to those who have made a special achievement in field ornithology within the past year. Our recipient this year has made multiple notable achievements in the past year. In late December, 2019 he found a second county record California Gull in Washington County. In spring of 2020 he found multiple pairs of Yellow-throated Warbler and confirmed the state's fourth breeding record when he documented the fledged young. While conducting daily counts of the passerine fall migration at Sucker Lake, he found his most notable rarity—the state's tenth Black-throated Gray Warbler, which he found and identified by call note before seeing the bird. It should not come as a surprise that he has put a significant amount of effort into learning the vocalizations of birds to be able to identify rarities by call note. In fact, one can hear our recipient religiously studying recordings of songs and call notes on Macaulay Library and eBird at all hours of the day and night. It is my honor to present the MOU's Brother Theodore Voelker Award to Ezra Hosch.



## 2020 Young Birder Award: Ezra Hosch

*Nominated and presented by Alyssa DeRubeis*

I first met Ezra in January 2018. He had just found a Boreal Owl in Ramsey County, and even though he and I had a recent dispute, he was still willing to share his finding with me and many others. The diligence and patience that it takes to comb through spruce trees in the Minnesota cold hunting for a needle in a haystack is truly remarkable. And by a 19-year-old no less! I deeply appreciate him for alerting others to this stellar Minnesota specialty.

That would not be the last time Ezra would wow me. In the following years he would go on to find a Black-throated Gray Warbler, a Yellow-throated Warbler, and a probable California Gull, among others. I am likely forgetting some, but I believe these are his main highlights. With each of these observations came thorough documentation, which is an absolutely essential trait for phenomenal birders. We have engaged in countless discussions regarding the finer points of field marks, and more than once, I have learned something new. I'm sure others have had similar experiences with Ezra and his ornithological knowledge.

Ezra puts his extensive knowledge to good use: Ezra is an eBird reviewer for Minnesota, a highly sought-after title that is held by only three people in Minnesota (the other two

reviewers are quite a bit older than Ezra). One does not simply become a reviewer; rather, you must be recognized for your talent and selected by expert birders. Per eBird's website, "eBird reviewers are often some of the most skilled and knowledgeable birders in the world—and they're there to talk to you! Consider a note from an eBird reviewer as an opportunity to learn new birding skills from an expert source." Again, let me remind you that Ezra is now only 21 years old!

Ezra also tirelessly encourages Facebook users who have found rare birds to submit their observations to eBird. I know for a fact that catching every rare bird post on Facebook is an arduous task (especially during migration), yet Ezra prioritizes Facebook bird records along with his already big job as an eBird reviewer. And this is in addition to his college studies!

Perhaps most importantly, Ezra manages to stay humble. Once you reach a skill level like Ezra's in birding, modesty is hard to come by. But Ezra will readily state if he thinks he was previously wrong on an identification. He recognizes that in order to grow as a birder, one must address past mistakes, learn from them, and move on. All birders should strive to shamelessly admit their errors like Ezra does.

Given his extensive knowledge of birds, attention to detail, accomplishments, kindness, and modesty, I am pleased to present Ezra Hosch with the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union's 2020 Young Birder Award.



# MOU Calendar

## January / February 2021

**Note:** Readers are advised to check the web sites of the respective organizations before going.

### CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

*Due to the current social distancing guidelines in place, there are no scheduled events for January or February.*

### THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

*Due to the current social distancing guidelines in place, there are no scheduled events for January or February.*

### MRVAC Bird Watching Treks

*Due to the current social distancing guidelines in place, there are no scheduled events for January or February.*

### DNR

*(See [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us) for directions to locations)*

#### **January 1: Annual Whitewater River Valley Christmas Bird Count**

*Details:* 8 am – 12 pm. Kick off the New Year at White-water State Park by helping with the Annual Whitewater River Valley Christmas Bird Count! This year we are only allowing experienced bird count volunteers to join us. We will email your route map and tally sheet prior to the event. You can email forms back after the count. Reservations are required. To sign up, email [sara.holger@state.mn.us](mailto:sara.holger@state.mn.us) or call 507-312-2301.

### ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON

#### **January 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. Masks and social distancing required.

Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester

#### **January 26: ZVAS Monthly Program**

##### **Tracking Birds in Guatemala (via Zoom)**

*Details:* 7 – 8 pm. This year ZVAS is considering working with a group monitoring migrating bird populations in northern Guatemala (which is where many of our familiar Minnesota birds go each winter). Roan McNab and his team will talk to us about the work that two MoSI stations in the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) of northern Guatemala do, including their conservation efforts, how monitor-

ing is done, what birds they typically see each season and other information about the region. Log-in details will be posted in mid-January. Program is free and open to everyone but limited to the first 100 participants.

#### **February 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. Masks and social distancing required. Location: Quarry Hill Nature Center, Rochester, MN

#### **February 21: ZVAS Monthly Program**

##### **Virtual Owl Expert Series**

*Details:* 1 – 2 pm. This month ZVAS is sponsoring a program being hosted by the International Owl Center in Houston, MN. Speaker to be announced soon. Note: This program will be on a different day than our usual schedule. Log-in details will be posted in February.

### INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER

#### **Virtual Programs**

Join us from the comfort of your home on Sundays throughout the winter of 2020-2021 to learn more about owls from experts around the world. Once you register to attend you will automatically receive an email with a link to use to join the program via Zoom. Although free, registration is required to attend the webinar. No registration is required to attend the YouTube livestream, but preference is given to webinar questions.

#### **January 3: Tracking Great Gray Owls**

*Details:* 1 pm, via Zoom. Dr. Roar Solheim, Senior Curator of Zoology at Agder University's Natural History Museum, Norway.

Meet the elusive Great Grey Owl, phantom of the northern forests, which emerged to become one of the most common forest owls in SE Norway during the last ten years. Learn about the biology and movements of this magnificent owl.

Roar Solheim started studying owls over 50 years ago when he took an interest in Pygmy Owls caching food in nest boxes. He earned his PhD in 2019 studying molt

stage, wing bar patterns and digital photography as tools for assessing age distribution and recognizing individual Great Grey and Snowy Owls. He has also published papers on Pygmy Owls, Boreal Owls, Ural Owls, and Tawny Owls. He is an excellent photographer, an animated speaker, and has a well-developed talent for imitating the calls of owls and other animals.

### **Upcoming presentations**

*(see [internationalowlcenter.org](http://internationalowlcenter.org) for updates)*

#### **January 10: Dave Oleyar (USA)**

“Following Forest Owls.” Community science-driven studies of small owl communities in western North American forests.

#### **January 31: Milan Ružić (Serbia)**

“Owl We Need is Love: How the largest communal roost of Long-eared Owls in the world changed my life.”

#### **February 7: Motti Charter (Israel)**

“Using Barn Owls in science, pest control, and regional cooperation in Israel.”

#### **February 14: Marjon Savelsberg (The Netherlands)**

“Eurasian Eagle Owls”

## **INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER – Owl Prowl**

#### **January 30: Expert-led Owl Prowl**

*Details:* 4:30 pm, International Owl Center, 126 E Cedar St., Houston, MN

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. Following the indoor portion of the program participants will drive their vehicles following staff to 3-4 known owl territories in and around Houston to call and listen for Eastern Screech-Owls, Barred Owls, and Great Horned Owls.

Meet at the International Owl Center no later than the listed. Plan to spend the first 30-45 minutes learning to identify owls by sound before going outdoors. You will drive your vehicle following our staff to 3-4 different locations within 10 miles of Houston. Calling will be done from the side of the road, so very little walking is required.

Masks are required for the indoor and outdoor portions of the program. Please note that if you want to meet our ambassador owls you should register for a daytime program, as our owls do not live at the Owl Center and will have gone home by the time of the owl prowl program. We only have 20 chairs that can be sanitized so all individuals must register and pay for the program,

regardless of age, and we are not able to accommodate extra people due to COVID spacing needs.

Preregistration required. Programs will be canceled in case of significant wind, rain, severe road conditions, or low enrollment, and refunds will be issued for these reasons. Cancellations will be announced at least 24 hours prior to the program time. If YOU need to cancel your reservation, please contact us at least 48 hours in advance. There will be 15-20 participants per program.

Cost: \$10 for members; \$15 for non-members

Email [karla@internationalowlcenter.org](mailto:karla@internationalowlcenter.org)

## **THE FRIENDS OF SAX-ZIM BOG**

The Friends of Sax-Zim Bog are excited to be offering webinars this winter season! Webinars will be held on Thursdays, starting at 6:30 pm. Registration for these programs is required, but all webinars are free to attend. If you have questions about this series, please contact webinar instructor and Head Naturalist, Clinton Nienhaus, by email at [naturalist@saxzim.org](mailto:naturalist@saxzim.org). Register for the events at [saxzim.org/events](http://saxzim.org/events).

#### **January 14: “Winter Birds and Birding: How to enjoy the ‘Arctic Riviera’”**

*Details:* 6:30 pm, via Zoom. If you take a look at the FAQ’s section of our website, you will see many questions related to winter birding: What clothing is appropriate for birding in the winter? Do I need a 4x4 vehicle to bird in the winter? How do I find winter birds? This list goes on!

This program is perfect for those first time visitors wondering: how do I prepare for winter in northern Minnesota? This program will also consider our winter birds, giving tips on how to find them in the vast Sax-Zim Bog. Whether this is your 1st visit or your 15th visit, you will get a better idea of what to expect when birding the Sax-Zim Bog during the winter.

#### **February 25: Sax-Zim Property Tour**

*Details:* 6:30 pm, via Zoom. There are a number of ways to enjoy the Sax-Zim Bog during all seasons: hiking or snowshoeing, bird watching, finding spiders or wildflowers, or simply just enjoying the majesty of Black Spruce and Tamarack peatlands. Our mission as an organization is to preserve, promote, and protect the Sax-Zim Bog through land preservation, education, research, and communication. Part of the way we address our mission is by buying properties that help preserve this wonderful area.

Currently, we have protected 524 acres of habitat divided between 8 properties. Have you visited all of our properties? If you have not, this program will talk about each of our properties: how we acquired them, what you might find if you visit them, and how to visit and experience these properties for yourself!

# Summary of MOU Board Minutes

## December 4, 2020

*Conducted via Zoom*

*Kathrynne Baumtrog, Recording Secretary*

*These minutes are provisional, pending approval at March 27 Board meeting*

Present: Dick King, Michelle Terrell, Kate Snow, Bob Jansen, Ann Kessen, Anthony Hertz, Liz Stanley, Steve Wilson, Susan Barnes Elliot, Carol Henderson, Tom Tustison, Peter Nichols, Kathrynne Baumtrog, Mark Lystig, Bob Dunlap, Cindy Smith, Gerry Hoekstra, Jennifer Vieth, Kate Kelnberger, Dave Cahlander. Absent: Paul Budde, Kim Eckert

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by President Dick King.

Minutes from the August 8, 2020 meeting were approved, with minor corrections.

### Reports

Treasurer's Report (Ann Kessen, Treasurer)

#### 1. Operating Budget & New Operating Reserve Policy Draft

Ann had sent out the report dated 11/1/2019–10/31/2020 showing a positive balance.

Steve Wilson asked about the Savaloja Grant funds and how they are recorded. With the change of payment to grant recipients (80% at the time the grant is awarded and 20% upon submission of a report upon completion of the project), two years of budget may be affected. Also, Covid-19 has affected completion of some of the projects. Ann is tracking this.

Bob Jansen asked the balance of the unrestricted funds account. It is about \$150,000.00.

Acceptance of the report moved and approved.

#### 2. 2020-2021 Budget

MOU has \$25,000+ of anticipated expenditures and \$30,000 of earnings. This would leave the MOU in the black for the following year's budget.

Acceptance of the report moved and approved.

#### 3. Operating Reserve Policy

MOU needs to have an operating reserve fund to allow for unanticipated events that negatively affect the budget. An operating reserve policy is commonly used by many 301c3 non-profits. Ann offered a draft template for consideration. The fund would set aside 1-2 years of operating monies to be held in reserve, which for the MOU would amount to \$26,000.

*Northern Saw-whet Owl, by Dennis Randall*



It was suggested that the amount be the average of the last three years of the budget rather than a fixed amount. Ann stated that yearly review should take care of that concern. A set amount was favored by the members. The amount was set at \$30,000. Operating reserve fund of \$30,000 moved and approved.

Membership Report (Cindy Smith, Membership Secretary)

Cindy had sent the report via email prior to the meeting. She noted that membership had increased. She noted some fluctuations due to Covid-19 and gift memberships as normally awarded by the MOU. We need to continue to work at increasing diversity youth memberships.

Acceptance of the report moved and approved.

Savaloja Grants Committee (Steve Wilson, chair)

Steve had sent out the report via email. All 2018 grant reports and most of the 2019 reports have been received. The 80%/20% policy has improved the timely submission of final reports.

Of the eight 2020 awards, seven of the projects were able to progress despite Covid-19.

Social Media Committee (Peter Nichols, Chair)

Peter had sent two documents via email illustrating the social media presence of MOU and its use by members and other birders.

Development and use of online presence have been going great. Facebook continues to gain followers and likes since the 2016 inception. Instagram is favored to by some younger birders.

Ben Douglas has worked hard to create YouTube videos as another media presence. Helping him in this effort and also deserving recognition are Becca Engdahl, Michelle Terrell, Dana Sterner, and Shaymus McLaughlin.

MOU Awards Committee (Susan Barnes Elliott, Chair)

Susan had sent her report via email to all members. She named the recipients of the MOU awards and reported that she had sent out congratulations. She noted that Ben Douglas had put together a YouTube video of the award presentations. She also raised the question of finding a home for the plaques with the names of award recipients, particularly for the Roberts and Volker Award plaques. Due to time constraints this was not resolved at the meeting.

MOU Program Committee (Kara Snow, Chair)

The 2020 MOU Paper Session took place virtually. Eleven presenters delivered their papers via YouTube, and Clinton Dexter Nienhaus will serve as moderator for the Q&A session via Zoom on Saturday, Dec. 5. The annual business meeting will follow.

## New Business

Minnesota eBird Portal (Michelle Terrell, Vice President)

Michelle submitted two documents outlining the agreement with eBird via email. Acceptance of this arrangement was moved and approved by the Board.

Education/State Fair/Spring Primer (Jennifer Vieth, Education/Public Relations Committee Chair)

The Spring Primer is scheduled for the latter part of March or early April. She hopes to have a series of 25-minute talks, with the focus on bird identification. She welcomes suggestions for topics, speakers, etc.

The MOU website (Liz Stanley, Chair, Information Technology Committee)

The IT Committee is in the “analysis and documentation” phase of the website project. Liz is working to assemble a technological team and is creating a schedule for the process.

Bob Janssen noted that it is critical that the current database not be affected. Liz assured him that it will not be.

Members were then given a virtual tour of Liz’s desk-

top to see the potential time frame with and without paid help. An all-volunteer effort is possible but would take longer.

Bell Museum and the MOU collaboration (Kevin Curran, Associate Development Officer, Bell Museum)

Kevin is the planner of the Seeing Birds 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at the Bell. He addressed the Board to request support for this event. He noted that a corporate sponsorship is typically \$25,000–\$50,000. He recognized that the MOU could not make such a commitment and asked for \$10,000. This would still give the MOU visibility as a sponsor of the event. The anniversary is set for June 2022; the Bell needs an answer by June 2021. A decision on the matter was tabled till the next meeting.

Carol Henderson has a PowerPoint presentation, “How Birds Fly,” that he offered to give at the event as a donation in kind from the MOU.

Revision of the MOU by-laws (Ann Kessen, Chair, Ad Hoc By-Laws Committee)

The process will formally begin in January 2021. Ann solicited input from the Board.

MOU Field Trips

Dick King announced that Josh Wallestad has resigned from this position.

Discussion of MOU Diversity and Inclusion plans

Dick King tabled this till the next meeting for lack of time.

Other items discussed briefly during the meeting:

- The process for opting out of printed copies of *The Loon*.
- Formation of a small ad hoc committee for increasing membership.

The next MOU Board meeting will be March 27, 2021, 10:00 a.m. to noon.



*Common Redpoll, by Heidi Hughes*



# Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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

**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.

### MOU Officers

Richard King, *President*  
Michelle Terrell, *Vice President*  
Kathrynne Baumtrog, *Recording Secretary*  
Cindy Smith, *Membership Secretary*  
Ann Kessen, *Treasurer*  
Bob Dunlap, *Past President*

### Editor of *MN Birding*

Gerald Hoekstra  
Julie Winter Zempel, *Calendar*

### Designer of *MN Birding*

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**Youth Mentorship:** [mentorship@moumn.org](mailto:mentorship@moumn.org)  
**Field Trips:** [fieldtrips@moumn.org](mailto:fieldtrips@moumn.org)  
**All other MOU functions:** [mou@moumn.org](mailto:mou@moumn.org)  
**MOU web site:** <http://moumn.org>  
**MOU Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/MNornithU/>

## MOU Membership: New/Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Categories

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth (under 18)           | \$15.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual                 | \$25.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign (including Canada) | U.S. \$35.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family                     | \$35.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting                 | \$75.00      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate                  | \$100.00     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life, single               | \$500.00     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life, joint                | \$750.00     |

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

### Please make a contribution to the Savaloja Grants

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

Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_