



Minnesota BIRDING

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Conservation Column Birds and Storms

by *Andy Forbes*

The landfall of hurricane Ian in late September caused many people to wonder what happens to birds during weather events such as this. Are they able to sense storms coming? Are they able to evade them? Or do they take cover and re-emerge after the storm passes?

During migration, foul weather in the form of strong winds, heavy rain, and more hazardous events like hurricanes can prove fatal to birds, especially for those species that fly over large bodies of water. Severe weather systems from the ocean often catch seabirds in their wake, pushing them inland and producing rare sightings that bring delight to birders, if not to the birds themselves! Similarly, strong winds from the west can drive western birds further east from their "normal" flight path, if they occur at the right times. Last fall and winter, Minnesota birders were treated to several Black-legged Kittiwake observations, likely at least partly a result of a storm system that pushed through from the northwest.

As you might guess, young and perhaps more naïve birds are more likely than more experienced individuals to be swept up in these events. Birds have endured these sorts of events for millennia, and species have

managed to maintain their migratory survival strategies despite these ever-present weather hazards. Some recent research has highlighted remarkable examples of the way that birds are able to sense, avoid, or even take advantage of severe weather in their migratory paths.

In 2020, researchers in the Pacific tracked six Black-naped Terns using light-level geolocators over four years, as they undertook their annual journeys between their breeding territories on the island of Okinawa, Japan and the coastal regions of Indonesia. They found some very interesting patterns. They noticed that not only did the birds somehow navigate around storm systems, they also seemed to adjust their paths at just the right time toward areas where storms had recently been, possibly to take advantage of favorable conditions in the water column. Additionally, in the year where there were no strong storm systems, the birds left their breeding grounds later than during more stormy years, and they didn't spend much time stopping along the way. Across all four years of the study, their arrival time on the wintering grounds remained the same no matter the storm frequency.

A little closer to home, research-

ers from the University of Minnesota and University of Tennessee analyzed the movements of tagged Golden-winged Warblers as they returned to their breeding grounds in the Appalachians from their wintering grounds in eastern Colombia, passing through the central and southern United States. During the 2014 season, a massive storm system ripped through the region just after the birds arrived on their breeding territories. Amazingly, the birds somehow knew that the storms were coming and left their breeding territories less than a day before the system hit, thus circumventing the system. They moved well over several hundred miles over five days in the process, and then returned to their breeding territories after the system passed.

Several theories exist as to how birds are able to this. They may be reacting to low-pitched “infrasound” from

systems well below our ability to sense, or they may be interpreting and adjusting to changes in cloud cover, wind, or barometric pressure. Or perhaps both. In any case, these studies offer fascinating look into the abilities of birds that we still do not fully understand. As severe systems increase in frequency and magnitude due to climate change, these abilities will be tested even more than they have been in recent history. Efforts by conservationists to provide quality stopover habitat during migration thus become ever more important to help them continue their lives on the wing for the millennia yet to come.

Andy Forbes is Acting Assistant Regional Director for the Midwest Migratory Bird Program with USFWS and is a former member of the MOU Records Committee.

Message from the President

Michelle Terrell

I hope that MOU members have had an enjoyable fall. Whether you participated in events with others or birded on your own, observing and documenting the wonder of the annual cycle of migration is a highlight of the fall season.

This time of year, many birders undertake their own seasonal journey to Duluth to view the migration from the heights of Hawk Ridge. This year Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO) celebrated the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. The MOU was a sponsor to the anniversary event held September 22-25, and I enjoyed representing our organization throughout the weekend. It was a great opportunity to meet Hawk Ridge staff, visit with student researchers who had received Savaloja Grants, and introduce visitors to the MOU. While staffing our information table at Hawk Ridge, some of my favorite interactions were with people who just happened to travel down Skyline Parkway to find themselves amid a skyward gazing crowd. It was wonderful to witness their curiosity turn to amazement at learning about tens of thousands of birds migrating over the ridge.

There is no doubt why Hawk Ridge is a celebrated site from which to view the raptor migration, and the MOU played a role in the recognition and preservation of this unique location. In 1973, on the MOU’s 35th anniversary, the Union’s historian, Evelyn Putnam, wrote of how in the mid-1940s her science students at Duluth’s Washington Junior High and members of the Duluth Bird Club became aware that hawks and other birds were being shot as they migrated over the city (*The Loon* 45:91). An educational program was begun to inform the public of a new state law

passed in 1945 that protected some hawk and owl species from hunting. Putnam records that “Some of the men in our club were given police badges and deputized to take away guns from boys and men who were shooting protected birds, especially in the city limits” (ibid., 92).

After P.B. “Jack” Pershing joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota Duluth in 1949, he and his students began to keep records of the hawk flight over Duluth. The result of the first Hawk Count held in 1951 were published in the MOU journal, and the annual count quickly became a highlight of the fall calendar (*The Flicker* 23:87). Putnam describes the annual gathering that in time would become the Hawk Weekend Festival: “The third week in September has been the traditional weekend chosen by the M.O.U. for the annual Hawk Count. This was first started in 1951 and has grown to be the largest event of the M.O.U. year” (*The Loon* 45:92). As funds were being raised for the preservation of Hawk Ridge, MOU membership and affiliated clubs contributed to the cause. The MOU as an organization donated a gift of \$5,000 from the estate of past president Dessie Lerhke to the creation of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (ibid.). The MOU is pleased to be a part of the legacy Hawk Ridge and congratulates HRBO on 50 years of research, education, and conservation.

Hawk research will be one of the topics to be presented at the annual MOU Paper Session. I look forward to having the opportunity to visit with many of you on December 3. As always, it promises to be an informative and interesting program.

Happy Birding!

My Favorite Home Patch

The Agassiz Valley Project (in Marshall and Polk Counties)

by Heidi Hughes

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

The Agassiz Valley Project, a four-square mile flood control project that spans the border of Marshall and Polk Counties, is one of several such projects in the Tallgrass Aspen Parkland region of northwest Minnesota that have changed the landscape for birds, and birdwatchers who want to see them.

This \$10.7 million project was constructed after the city of Warren had been hit by three historic floods over the span of two years (1996 and 1997). Floodwaters submerged farmland, residential areas, and downtown businesses. The watershed district in Warren responded with plans to construct impoundments to capture and store floodwater off-channel (east of the US Hwy 75 corridor), and later, when the flood danger has passed, release it slowly back into the tributaries of the Red River of the North.

While flood damage reduction was the primary goal of these impoundments, the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District also saw new opportunities for outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat enhancement.

I moved to rural Warren in the summer of 2011, just after the watershed district completed the Agassiz Valley construction.

Initially, public access was limited. By "limited," I mean driving the project perimeter on township and county roads. But I wanted to get closer to the birds. That required getting permission to drive the only "road" *inside* the project: a grassy two-track path behind locked gates at 200th and 210th Streets NW.

In the spring of 2012, I contacted the watershed district administrator, Nick Drees, and asked if I could "go along for the ride" the next time he checked water levels in the ditches and pools at the impoundments. I told him I was a bird-watcher and that I wanted to survey the species attracted to the project, which offers a mosaic of constructed habitats, ranging from shallow and deep pools to ditches and mudflats, dry grasslands, and hayfields to wet meadows and ephemeral ponds, along with a handful of no-longer-active farmsteads with evergreens, fruiting trees, and other ornaments.

Nick said yes, and took me on a tour of four nearby projects: Radium, Angus-Oslo 4, Brandt-Angus, and Agassiz Valley. Water levels were relatively high that spring,



Agassiz Valley augmentation pool from the south looking north in early May, by Heidi Hughes

and birds were literally everywhere. At Agassiz Valley, we saw and heard cormorants and pelicans, grebes and waders, ducks and geese, Bald Eagles and Short-eared Owls.

Nick wasn't a "birdwatcher," but he was happy to stop (several times) so I could pull out my spotting scope and take a closer look. Both of us were amazed by the species diversity and relative abundance, and by how quickly birds had moved into the newly constructed habitats. It was hard to believe that just a few years earlier, this had been farmland.

At the end of the tour, Nick handed me a key to the gates and asked me to send him reports of the birds I would see.

A couple of months (and dozens of birds) later, I was surprised to see construction equipment on the grass two-track path. I asked the workers what they were doing. Their answer: putting down gravel for the watershed district's new 1.5 mile "wildlife drive."

Over the past decade, that gravel road has provided me and other visitors with breathtaking close-to-the-road views of more than 200 species of birds. It has also made Agassiz Valley an irresistible, and now regular, "alternate route" for me whenever I travel to and from my home.

When the "wildlife drive" is snow-covered, I stick to county and township roads to look for Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagles, owls (Snowy, Short-eared, Boreal,



Short-eared Owl, by Heidi Hughes

Saw-whet and Northern Hawk Owl) and other winter birds: Bohemian Waxwing, Northern Shrike, Gray Partridge, crossbills, and finches. Townsend's Solitaires and Varied Thrushes, though not common, have also been spotted feeding on crab apples and mountain ash near Agassiz Valley and in other communities along the US 75 Hwy corridor.

Toward the end of March, when snow-melt starts to flow overland into a maze of ditches, the Agassiz Valley wetlands start to fill with water and waterfowl. On one very cold, spring morning, I remember watching a trio of Common Goldeneyes. When I opened my car window to take a photo of the ducks doing their synchronized head bobbing display, I was immediately distracted by what sounded like "cackling" way off in the distance. It didn't sound like a duck or goose. I debated: Shall I stay with the goldeneye or go look for the cacklers? I decided to go after the mystery sound. As I followed it to a grassy spot not far away, the sound abruptly stopped. I stopped and looked around. All I saw was grass. Nothing was moving. Then all of a sudden, a dozen Sharp-tailed Grouse exploded into the air. Was this a lek?

The next morning, I got up way before dawn. I drove over to Agassiz Valley, parked my car near where I'd seen the grouse, and waited for the sharp-tails to arrive. I sat in the dark with my car window open and listened to a chorus of nearby ducks, geese and swans. One by one, the grouse appeared. It wasn't long before I was literally surrounded by a dozen foot-stomping, dancing, hooting, and cackling males, and by a few females who appeared unmoved by their efforts. Over the years, I've found several Sharp-tailed Grouse leks at Agassiz Valley. It's always a thrill.

Later that spring, on my way to Agassiz Valley, I spotted a different kind of courtship display. I'd see it only once before — at Amherst Island in Lake Ontario (west of Kingston, Ontario). I knew right away what the birds were doing. I pulled to the side of the road to get a better view of the incredible courtship display of Short-eared Owls: aerial wing-clapping. That marked the beginning of the summer

of Short-eared Owl sightings at Agassiz Valley. I saw them perched on the ground, on sign posts, on power lines and on power poles.

I didn't realize how lucky I was until I read the "Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas" report about the relative abundance of breeding Short-eared Owls. In June 2012, Bill Blackburn reported five pairs of Short-eared Owls breeding in the survey block that included Agassiz Valley, and at least four more in areas immediately adjacent to that block; that was the first and only time I've seen Short-eared Owls during breeding season in Minnesota. But I have seen at least one Short-eared Owl every year since - during migration, and in winter.

Regardless of the season, I always check the eBird reports before I visit Agassiz Valley. I visualize what I might see and plan where to look. I constantly remind myself to stop and take a look at common and familiar birds along the way. They often "show" me something unexpected. A few months ago, I stopped to watch a Wilson's Snipe, a relatively common bird during fall migration. It was foraging at the edge of a shallow pool in the early afternoon. While I was watching, I noticed movement in the cattails about 50 yards away. I switched my focus from the snipe to the cattails, and waited for whatever it was to show itself. I watched and waited, and then waited some more. I was about to give up, when my patience was rewarded with a close look at a creature that literally took my breath away: a wild gray wolf, eating a deer! The wolf looked up and stared at me. I stared right back and continued to watch for half an hour, until the wolf finished its meal, turned, and loped away.

Knowing that experiences like these are possible just down the road has made the Agassiz Valley Project my favorite home patch.



Sharp-tailed Grouse, by Heidi Hughes

Savaloja Grant Report

The Northern Shrike Project

by *Abbie Valine*

Northern Shrikes (*Lanius borealis*) occur in two distinct populations — possibly separate subspecies — that breed either east or west of Hudson Bay, Canada. These populations are believed to mix on the wintering grounds, particularly in the western Great Lakes region, though this is difficult to prove, since they are morphologically similar. Despite having a wide wintering range across much of the continental US and Canada, very little is known about Northern Shrike movement, population distinctiveness, and general ecology.

The aim of this project is to better understand the breeding range of the Northern Shrikes that winter in the western Great Lakes region, map out their migratory routes, and confirm that the two distinct eastern and western populations overlap in their wintering range.

Since shrikes are relatively small songbirds (weighing around 65 grams), the most feasible technology to accomplish this goal is light-level geolocation. Geolocators collect and store ambient light data that can be used to calculate latitude and longitude based on day length and solar noon, respectively. While geolocators are small enough to have very little impact on a bird the size of a shrike and cheap enough to be relatively cost-effective in larger numbers, the downside to this technology is that the geocator must be removed from the bird to access the data. Geolocators are typically used on small migratory passerines with

high breeding site fidelity in order to assess their wintering range; however, the high wintering site fidelity of Northern Shrikes means that geolocators can be effectively used in “reverse” to map out the species’ breeding range.

This project (a partnership between Friends of Sax-Zim Bog and Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory) started in January of 2021, when ten geolocators were deployed on wintering shrikes in the Sax-Zim Bog area of St. Louis County. Thanks to a 2021 Savaloja Grant, 15 more geolocators were purchased to be deployed across St. Louis, Carlton, and Aitkin Counties in the winter of 2021-2022. A total of 31 geolocators were deployed across the two winter seasons. Of these 31 shrikes outfitted, 10 were first-year birds and 21 were adults. Of the adults, 10 were males and 11 were females. These birds were also color-banded with a unique combination of two, colored plastic leg bands that will allow for identification of individuals at a distance. The winter of 2022-2023 will be spent re-trapping the birds to remove the geolocators and access the stored data from the last one-to-two years. We hope it will shed light into the mysteries of Northern Shrike breeding origins, migratory routes, and migratory timing.

Abbie Valine is a seasonal avian field biologist and researcher currently based in Carlton.



Northern Shrike, by Hannah Toutonghi



Abbie releasing a Northern Shrike, by Hannah Toutonghi

Savaloja Grant Applications and Donations Sought

by Steve Wilson, Chair, MOU Savaloja Committee

MOU will award grants for bird-related projects to be funded from the Savaloja Memorial Fund in 2023. Grants can be 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 2022 only three proposals were received, the fewest in 20 years, doubtless due to difficulties in conducting projects during the pandemic. All three received grants, totaling \$8,000. Further details on past projects and application information can be found at <https://moumn.org/grants.php>. For 2023, we anticipate that at least \$12,000 will be available for grants. The deadline for receipt of grant applications is **January 20, 2023**. Grant recipients will be notified by April 1, 2023. If your organization has an idea for a great project, please consider applying!

Thanks to you, MOU members, we have supported a diverse array of worthy projects over the years. The pan-

demically-related downturn in proposals received is unlikely to be replicated next year, and MOU will again be faced with difficult decisions over which important projects won't be supported because there isn't enough money to go around. You can help MOU make sure fewer worthy projects go unfunded by upgrading your membership next time you renew, or donating now by following the Donate button at the top of MOU's homepage, being sure to note "Savaloja Fund" in the instructions to the seller. Minnesota's birds will appreciate it!

New MOU Members

Welcome to the MOU! (To all members: please remember to notify the MOU Membership Secretary (membership@moumn.org) when you change your address or email. If you are renewing for more than one year, please indicate that on your check.)

Kele Cable, *St. Paul*
Mary Collier, *Stacy MN*
Laura Hemlock, *Minneapolis*
Heather Klopotek, *Minneapolis*
Sonia, Isabel, and Yoselin Martinez, *Cottage Grove*
Joel Mielke, *Preston*
Gunnar and Samantha Nelson, *Burnsville*
Beverly Norris, *Blaine*
Lance and Lisa Novak, *Plymouth*
Katie Wrich, *Oakdale*
Donna Young, *Newport*

MOU Book Sale

If you have bird books that you no longer use, please consider donating them to the MOU for the annual MOU Book Sale. The sale will be held at the Paper Session on December 3. All proceeds from the Book Sale go toward the MOU's Savaloja Grants Program, which provides funding to bird research, conservation, and education in Minnesota.

To donate, you may either bring your books directly to the Paper Session or email Alex Sundvall (asgreenplanet4077@gmail.com) to schedule a pickup prior to the event.

NB: Due to quantity, we are only accepting books about birds. We cannot accept journals or magazines.



2022 MOU Certificates of Appreciation

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 and including the name(s), address, shared rare bird, and a general description of the circumstances. A complimentary MOU membership is included with each Certificate for non-MOU members. We give heartfelt thanks to the following people who shared their birds with MOU members and others in 2022:

Maria Bircher, Waite Park, Bullock’s Oriole
Mike Osmond, Marshall, Black-throated Sparrow
Russell Stewart, Duluth, Acorn Woodpecker



Acorn Woodpecker
Photo by Larry Sirvio



Black-throated Sparrow
Photo by Kimberly A. Emerson

MOU Calendar

November / December 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		NOVEMBER 1	2	3	4	5 CNC: MN Campus Bird Hike IOC: Owl Prowl RBNC: Bagels & Birds RBNC: Bird Hike ZVAS: Bird Walk
6 DAS: Superior Entry Gull Watch	7	8	9	10 CNC: Owls & Ales MRVAC: Carver County Birding Day TRPD-ENC: Bird Hike	11	12 CNC: WI Campus Bird Hike MRVAC: Old Cedar Ave. Birding ZVAS: Tundra Swan Field Trip
13 DAS: Superior Entry Gull Watch	14	15	16	17 TRPD-LNC: Christmas Bird Count	18	19 MRVAC: Bass Ponds Birding SPAS: Brownsville Waterfowl Birding TRPD-LNC: Bird Banding
20 DAS: Superior Entry Gull Watch	21	22	23	24	25 CNC: Public Bird Banding	26 FOSZB: Winter Birding Field Trip
27 MRVAC: Wilkie Unit Birding DAS: Superior Entry Gull Watch	28	29	30	DECEMBER 1	2	3 CNC: MN Campus Bird Hike IOC: Owl Prowl RBNC: Bagels & Birds ZVAS: Bird Walk
4 MRVAC: Old Cedar Ave. Birding	5	6	7	8 CNC: Owls & Ales MRVAC: Washington County Birding Day TRPD-ENC: Bird Hike	9 FOSZB: Visitor Talks: Migrate or Hibernate	10 CNC: WI Campus Bird Hike MRVAC: Bass Ponds Birding FOSZB: Winter Raptors Field Trip TRPD-MGRP: Bird Walk
11 MRVAC: Wilkie Unit Birding	12	13	14	15	16	17 ZVAS: Christmas Bird Count TRPD-LNC: Christmas Bird Count RBNC: Citizen Science Bird ID
18	19	20	21	22	23 CNC: Public Bird Banding	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 FOSZB: Winter Birding Field Trip
JANUARY 1 FOSZB: Winter Birding Field Trip						



— MOU Calendar

November / December 2022

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

CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

www.carpenternaturecenter.org/events

Minnesota Campus:

12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings, MN

Wisconsin Campus:

300 East Cove Road, Hudson, WI

Nov. 5 & Dec. 3: Minnesota Campus Bird Hike

9–11:00 am. Join an expert birder on a morning hike around the Nature Center. Learn to identify birds by sight and sound. Field guides and binoculars are available to use or bring your own. Meet at Carpenter Nature Center. Program fee: \$5.00 or free for “Friends of CNC,” Hastings Environmental Protectors, Hastings High School students, and St. Croix Valley Bird Club members. Space is limited and reservations are required. Please call CNC at 651-437-4359.

Nov. 10 & Dec. 8: Owls & Ales: MN Campus

6–8:00 pm. Enjoy an after-hours hike in the scenic St. Croix River valley at Carpenter Nature Center to watch and listen for some of Minnesota’s native owl species. This portion of the event is outdoors; please dress for the weather. After our Owl Prowl adventure, we will join the staff at Spiral Brewery for a guided tour of the flagship flavors and styles of their beers on tap at the moment in the taproom. This experience will take approximately 45 minutes, with the option to stay for another beer you can purchase on your own. Program fee: \$30 per person. Must be 21 or older to participate. Space is limited, and registrations are required. RSVP by calling 651-437-4359.



Blackpoll Warbler, by Allan Meadows

Nov. 12 & Dec. 10: WI Campus Bird Hike

9–11:00 am. Hike various trails on our Wisconsin campus and learn to identify birds with local experts from the St. Croix Valley Bird Club. Program fee: \$5 per participant or free for SCVBC members and “Friends of CNC.” Space is limited and reservations are required. Please call CNC at 651-437-4359.

Nov. 25 & Dec. 23: Public Bird Banding: MN Campus

8:30 am–noon. Join CNC’s expert bird banders as they catch, band, and release songbirds on our Minnesota campus. Banding runs continuously and visitors may come and go at any time. Free. For more information, please call 651-437-4359.

DULUTH AUDUBON SOCIETY

NOTE: For more information and to register for one or more of these field trips visit the Duluth Audubon Website: www.duluthaudubon.org/events

Nov. 6, 13, 20 & 27: Superior Entry Gull Watches

10:00 am–2:00 pm. Meet at the Superior entry breakwall (the end of Wisconsin Point). If you have ever wanted a chance to spend time in the field to learn gulls, this event might be for you! Join obsessive gull watcher Clinton on this field trip, the goal of which is to view and learn about gull identification in the field, less about listing. Gulls can be a difficult group of birds to identify, and this field experience will work to help attendees better understand the more common gulls in Minnesota, as well as give pointers on how to spot the more uncommon species of gull that make their way to the state every fall and winter. Potential species on these field trips include Iceland gull (Thayer’s and Kumlein’s), Glaucous Gull, Great Black Backed Gull, and rarer late fall species like Lesser black-backed Gull. Bring cameras, binoculars, and spotting scopes. If possible, bring one loaf of bread or more (for the gulls!). Dress according to the weather. This is a stationary event that will not have any bathroom breaks or lunch stops, so bring snacks and water as needed.

FRIENDS OF SAX-ZIM BOG

www.saxzim.org

Nov. 26: Winter Birding Preview Field Trip

8:00 am–2:00 pm. Meet at the Lois King Education Center at the Welcome Center. November in the Sax-Zim Bog sees the arrival of our first of our winter visitors. We hope to find some of our winter specialties like Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Shrike, as well as resident species getting ready for the winter, like Canada Jay and Boreal Chickadee. With luck, winter finches should be found, as could the first Northern Hawk Owl(s) of the season. Join us on this field trip to see what other species could be found in the pre-winter season at Sax-Zim Bog!

Dec. 9: Migrate, Hibernate, or Deal With It!

12–1:30 pm. Meet at the Lois King Education Center at the Welcome Center. This winter, we will be hosting a variety of talks for visitors in the newly constructed Lois King Education Center. These talks will cover a wide variety of topics and will be given by FOSZB staff or volunteers. Our first talk of the season will be given by Head Naturalist Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus. The talk, titled “Migrate, Hibernate, or Deal With It!” will explore the many ways creatures adapt to winter in the north. Stop by over your lunch break from birding and check our talks this winter!

Dec. 10: Winter Raptors Field Trip

9:00 am–2:00 pm. Meet at the Lois King Education Center at the Welcome Center. Colorful winter finches often get lots of attention from visitors to the Bog in the winter months, but finches are not the only winter visitors to see! This field trip will search the open ag land and roadsides of the Bog for visitors from the Arctic, such as Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Shrikes, Northern Hawk Owls, and more. This field trip will spend time looking for all manner of birds of prey and other winter visitors to the Sax-Zim Bog.

Dec. 31 & Sunday, Jan. 1: Winter Birding Field Trips

8:00 am–2:00 pm. Meet at the Lois King Education Center at the Welcome Center. Warbler Wednesdays are a fixture for summer birding, but we haven't had a counterpart to winter birding... until now! Join us this winter for a couple of winter birding field trips. The intention of these field trips is to give you an introduction on how to approach birding in the Sax-Zim Bog in the winter months. We will not be targeting owls, but will take a look at any we come across. This is a good field trip to attend, especially if you hope to learn more about how to approach winter birding in the vast Sax-Zim Bog.

INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER

Nov. 5 & Dec. 3: Expert-led Owl Prowl

5:00 pm. Learn to identify owl calls and owl prowl etiquette during a 30-45-minute presentation before going outdoors to call for owls. Drive your vehicle, following the Owlmobile, to about three different locations within ten miles of Houston to call for wild owls from the side of the road. Total program length is 2.5-3 hours. Pre-registration required: www.internationalowlcenter.org/owlprowls. Fee: \$10/member, \$15/non-member.

MN RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Walks

NOTE: Registration for all of these trips required at: signup.com/go/rLmKfrK.

Contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647.

Nov. 10: Carver County Birding Day

7:00 am. Lake Waconia, Goose Lake, Lippert Lake, and Swede Lake are a few of the lakes we will check for waterfowl. We should also have some time to bird at Carver Park Reserve, Baylor County Park, and maybe a stop at the Rapids Lake Unit of the MVNWR. For more information or to register: Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647.



American Golden-Plover, by Richard Gotz

Nov. 12 & Dec. 4: Beginning Bird Walk at Old Cedar Ave.
8–10:30 a.m. Search for birds that nest at the Refuge. Bring binoculars and a field guide. Old Cedar Ave. Trailhead, 9551 Old Cedar Ave. S., Bloomington.

Nov. 19 & Dec. 10: Bird Watching at Bass Ponds
8–10:30 am. Search for birds that nest at the refuge. Bring binoculars and a field guide. Bass Pond Trailhead, 2501 E. 86th, Bloomington.

Nov. 27 & Dec. 11: Bird-Watching at Wilkie Unit
8–10:30 am. Search for birds that nest at the Refuge. Bring binoculars and a field guide. Wilkie Unit Trailhead, 7701 County Road 101 E., Shakopee.

Dec. 8: Washington County Birding Day
7:30 am. Carpenter Nature Center, Grey Cloud Dunes, St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park, and Point Douglas Park are a few of the locations we may have time to check on this trip to Washington County. We will be searching for waterfowl and winter finches, in addition to the regular species of birds that over-winter in the area. For more information or to register: Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647.

EARLY 2023!

Jan. 12 & 13, 2023:

Northern Minnesota: Sax-Zim Bog Birding Days

7:00 am. We will search for any over-wintering owls in the area and spend a day at some of the feeding stations in the Sax-Zim Bog. This will give your 2023 birding checklist a good start with a fair number of northern specialties. \$35/ non-MRVAC members; \$25/MRVAC members. Contact Craig Mandel to register for this field trip.

RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER

1000 Rustad Road, Faribault, MN. rbnc.org

Nov. 5 & Dec. 3: Bagels and Birds

10–11:00 am. Join a River Bend Naturalist for bagels and coffee or tea while watching birds through the “windows on the wild” viewing area inside the interpretive center. All ages. Free program. Preregistration not required.

Nov. 5: Bird Hike

11:30 am–12:30 pm. Join a River Bend Naturalist on a walk as you learn how to identify birds. Meet in the building to start. All Ages. **Cost:** \$5 member/\$10 nonmember. Pre-registration is required for programs at rbnc.org/upcoming-programs Questions? 507-332-7151 or email us at education@rbnc.org.



Lapland Longspur, by Tom Gilde

Dec. 17: Citizen Science Bird ID

11:30 am–12:30 pm. Learn how to identify birds that visit the feeders and help record them as part of a larger citizen science project. All ages. Cost: \$5 member/\$10 nonmember. Pre-registration is required for programs at rbnc.org/upcoming-programs Questions? 507-332-7151 or email us at education@rbnc.org.

ST PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Nov. 19: Swans and Other Waterfowl of Pool 8 Brownsville, MN

2–5:00 pm. From 2–3:00 pm and again from 4–5:00 pm Chase Davies will be at the Brownsville Overlook to talk about what swans and dabbling ducks are in sight, the life histories of the swans, and management challenges of the constantly changing Mississippi River. From 3–4:00 p.m., Chase will be at the Hwy 26 overlook, a mile south of the Brownsville Overlook. No preregistration. Please sign-in with leader Chase Davies: 651 246-9754. rockybirder@gmail.com. For full information, go to the SPAS website.

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT: EASTMAN NATURE CENTER

13351 Elm Creek Rd, Maple Grove

NOTE: For more information on these events please go to the Eastman Nature Center website.

Nov. 10 & Dec. 10: Early Morning Bird Hike

7:30–9:00 am. Join staff on a casual, early morning hike to look for birds common in the area. Bring binoculars or borrow a pair from the nature center. No fee. This program is outdoors; please dress for the weather.

Dec. 8: Early Morning Bird Hike

7:30–9:00 am. See description above.

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT: LOWRY NATURE CENTER

Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria

NOTE: For more information on these events please go to the [Three Rivers Park District website](#).

Nov. 19: Bird Banding

9–12:00 pm. See wild songbirds safely trapped, studied and banded with numbered rings. Find out what scientists learn from these banded birds. Participants ages 11 years and younger must be accompanied by an adult. No fee.

Dec. 17: Christmas Bird Count

9:00 am–5:00 pm. Become a citizen scientist and help survey for winter birds! Compiled observations help provide a snapshot of what birds are present here in winter. For 123 years, the Audubon Society has been doing the Christmas Bird Count and the information gathered has provided a better idea of how bird populations change over time. Counting starts at 9 am and most sections take two hours to complete. Solo or groups of birders can sign up for one or more sections to survey for winter birds. This is not a guided hike. Contact kirk.mona@threeriversparks.org or call 763-694-7650 for more information or to be assigned a section of the park.



Brown Creeper, by Betsy Beneke

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT: MISSISSIPPI GATEWAY REGIONAL PARK

10360 W. River Road, Brooklyn Park.

NOTE: For more information on these events please go to the [Three Rivers Park District website](#).

Dec. 10: Early Morning Bird Walk

8–9:30 am. Join us for a regular bird hike during the Park District's Big Year of Birds. We will enjoy a gentle walk and seek out the birds that visit the river, forests, and marshes along the Mississippi. All levels of interest are welcome. Binoculars provided. Reservations required by two days prior. No fee. This program is outdoors; please dress for the weather.

ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

<https://zumbrovalleyaudubon.org/calendar.html>

Nov. 5 & Dec. 3: Monthly Bird Walk

[Quarry Hill Nature Center](#)

9–10:00 am. Leaders: Terry and Joyce Grier. Join us on a casual walk through Quarry Hill Park. Meet by the Nature Center entrance. Bring binoculars if you have them. Dress for the weather. Stay for any length of time. Walks usually last about 60 - 90 minutes. Free and open to the public - no registration required.

Nov. 12: Tundra Swan Field Trip

8:00 am–mid-afternoon. Meet on the east side of the RCTC [Heintz Center](#) parking lot, 1926 Collegeview Rd. E., Rochester, to car pool. We'll travel through La Crescent and down the Mississippi to Brownsville to see early migrating Tundra Swans and other waterfowl. Return early afternoon. Dress for the weather. Bring your own lunch or opt to eat at a Subway or other restaurant before returning to Rochester.

Dec. 17: Annual Rochester Christmas Bird Count

To participate you must register in advance and be assigned a section. Contact Clifford Hansen at 507-281-0249 or clhroch@yahoo.com to register. On the day of the count, starting around 7:30 am, each team will gather at their designated location to search for birds. Morning counts usually last until noon with a break for lunch. Some groups will also do an afternoon count from 1 pm to approximately 4 pm. Counting is done from the warmth of cars or on short hikes. Participants should be prepared for the weather, and provide their own binoculars, snacks and beverages. More at <https://www.zumbrovalleyaudubon.org/christmas-bird-count.html>

Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Paper Session Schedule December 3, 2022

- 8:00-9:00 AM **Registration and Social Hour**
- 9:00-9:15 AM **Welcome**
Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus, MEEEd, Head Naturalist, Friends of Sax-Zim Bog
- 9:15-9:45 AM **Connecticut Warbler Breeding Ecology and Habitat Use in Lowland Conifer forests**
Steve Kolbe, Avian Ecologist, NRRI
- 9:45-10:15 AM **How Long Does it Take Aspen to Attain Sizes Suitable for Use by Woodpeckers and Other Cavity Dependent Wildlife?**
Michael R. North, Minnesota DNR.
- 10:15-10:45 AM **Nesting Amidst Forever Chemicals: Using Respirometry to Measure the Effects of PFAS on Developing Tree Swallows**
Mike Thiel, Master's Graduate Student, University of Minnesota–Duluth
- 10:45-11:15 AM **Marsh Tern Surveys in Minnesota**
Annie Bracey PhD, Avian Ecologist, NRRI
- 11:15-11:45 AM **Update on HPAI in Minnesota**
Victoria Hall, Veterinary Epidemiologist and Executive Director at the University of Minnesota's Raptor Center
- 11:45- 12:45 PM **Lunch**
- 12:45- 1:15 PM **Business Meeting and Awards**
- 1:15-1:45 PM **50 Years of Hawk Ridge Research**
TBD
- 1:45- 2:15 PM **The Winter Ecology and Movement of Northern Hawk Owls,**
Hannah Toutonghi, Master's Graduate Student, University of Minnesota–Duluth
- 2:15-2:45 PM **Expanding the MOTUS Network in the Midwest: Kestrels as a Case Study**
Kristin Hall, Minnesota DNR
- 2:45-3:15 PM **Northern Goshawks**
Gaea Crozier, Minnesota DNR
- 3:15-3:30 PM **Closing Remarks**



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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