

Minnesota Birding

MN Breeding Bird Atlas, 4th (Season) Down - and 1 to Go

Bonita Sample

A Lark Bunting sighting – Wow! Buffleheads breeding in Cottonwood County - Amazing! 2012 was a great year for the MN Breeding Bird Atlas, but no more amazing than the dataset we have assembled over the last four years thanks to the dedication and commitment of our volunteers and partners. By February 19, 2013, statistics show:

- A quarter-million observations submitted (Well, close. 224,759 observations)
- 900+ registered participants
- 245 species reported, 226 of them with confirmed breeding evidence

Equally impressive is the block

coverage for this extensive survey of nesting species. Minnesota defined priority survey areas as the northeast



quadrant of every Minnesota township, identifying 2,352 priority blocks throughout the state. To date:

- 2,323 priority blocks have observations reported. Only 29 priority blocks with no data.

- One third of those blocks are completed

And we still have one more season to go so it can only get better.

Of course, we also monitor species results and there is still plenty of room for additional observations to give us the best possible picture of species distribution.

- Seen any Upland Sandpipers? Better yet, did you see them with chicks?
- Were there interesting species on your latest trip to the BWCAW?

Check out the online species distribution maps (mnbbba.org/AtlasResults/AtlasSpeciesMaps) to see where we are. After this final season, we will again upload records from the MOU database. All observations are welcome, from anywhere in the state. To be included in the Atlas we need to know location, either lat/long coordinates or an Atlas Block ID, but

that's easy to do when entering MOU sightings. Just select the county when the sighting is entered, then click Location to identify the place where the sighting was made.

Changes to species distributions are

beginning to emerge: Examples include:

Eurasian Collared-Dove. Confirmed breeding has been documented as far north as Pope County for this species relatively new to the state. First released in the mid-'70s in the

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The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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Welcome to the New MOU Members

Eric Hall, Pittsburgh PA
Judith Filner, Bethesda MD
Ken Marble, West Saint Paul MN
Gregory Jahner III, Eden Prairie MN
Ken & Marcia Nelson, Duluth MN
Nate Popkin, Duluth MN
Thomas Vold, Lamberton MN
Vanessa Lane, Grand Forks ND
John Arnold, Farmington MN
Joseph Stevens, Saint Paul MN
Patricia Alagna, Plymouth MN
Amanda Burcar, Duluth MN
Dawn Hulmer, Duluth MN

Thursday, May 16

- ★ Carrol Henderson
Author, photographer, biologist
"Effects of the Gulf Oil Spill on Migratory Birds"
- ★ Raptor I.D. ★ Beginning Birding
- ★ Are Conservation Lands helping Grassland Birds?
- ★ Optics ★ Area Fieldtrips, plus Manitoba!
- ★ Online program and registration

Friday, May 17

- ★ Robert R. Taylor
Professional photographer, naturalist, author from Winnipeg
"Photographing Birds Over Half A Century"

Saturday, May 18

- ★ John W. Fitzpatrick
Director of Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY
Keynote: "Discovering How Birds Can Save the World"



Bahamas, distribution of this species has expanded quickly. As described by a Colorado Atlaser, Get ready; here they come.

Red-bellied Woodpecker. Dramatic changes as this species continues to move north and west. T. S. Roberts described their range in southeast Minnesota: west to Olmsted and north to Hennepin counties. 30 years before that, they were found only in the extreme southeast corner of the state. By 1975, Green and Janssen reported there were no nesting records north or west of Stearns. Today, there are many sightings as far north as Roseau County, Lake of the Woods and Koochiching counties and confirmed breeding in Beltrami County.

Common Raven. Once thought to be confined to north east and north central MN (Janssen, 1987) nesting is now confirmed as far south as Benton and Washington counties and west to Kittson, Pennington, and Norman counties.

This state-wide snapshot of breeding evidence, collected in just 5 years, will come to a close after this season. Thank you, and congratulations to all

project contributors for four successful years. The best part is that there is still one more season to report observations, creating Minnesota's first breeding bird Atlas.

Bonita Sample is the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator.

Will We have the Sax-Zim Bog Forever?

Sparky Stensaas

Slamming on the brakes is never a good idea on a backwoods road. But when a Pine Marten crosses your path, you really have no choice. I jump out of the Subaru and start wading through the thigh-deep snow, pushing like crazy. It works! The marten goes straight up the nearest aspen to check out this odd sounding animal. Fantastic looks at a rare mammal from feet away. Not far down the road a cow moose browses willows in a roadside clearing. A winter-white ermine hunts the cold crevices nearby, making a beeline for me when I give a short squeak on my knuckles. Then on Nichols Lake Road

(or Lake Nichols Road depending on which sign you believe) two Timber Wolves dart across the snowy road missing the stone-still Snowshoe Hare hunkered down in the powder, only her dark eyes and black ear tips betraying her existence in the white landscape. I crawl through the snow on my belly and watch her. Convinced of the effectiveness of her camouflage, she remained motionless.

Earlier, in the dimness of dawn, I spend quality time with five different Great Gray Owls. Quality time meaning silently watching the Phantoms of the North scan for muffled sounds with their radar-dish faces. Flocks of "wink-winking" White-winged Crossbills and zeet-zeeting" redpolls whirl overhead. Suddenly the owl straightens, looks to the sky and backs up to the trunk and makes itself skinny. The threat—a distant Bald Eagle—cruises past, the owl relaxes. It's so quiet that snowflakes settling on spruce needles are the loudest sound. Then detecting an unseen fat vole deep under the snow pack, he jumps off his perch, soars silently, triangulates in flight, finally plunging face first. Got it! I'm excited for the owl. It can't be easy out here.

Other feathered hunters are encountered. A blue-grayish Northern Goshawk sits long enough for a binocular-look. That doesn't happen often. A shrike screams off its tip-top perch scattering a flock of Snow Buntings. My fellow birder excuses himself to run (wade) into the woods for a restroom break. "I've got a little owl in here!" We rush in after him, not caring if his pants are zipped back up or not, and find a tired and too-cute Saw-whet.

Did I mention the flock of 9 magpies, or the pure white Snowy Owl on a fencepost, or the Sharp-tailed Grouse eating birch buds right next to the car?

How about the Boreal Chickadee that landed on my finger hoping for a taste of my peanut butter?

But it is COLD! Time to warm up at the Wilbert Café. After sitting down for lunch, fellow guide Mike Hendrickson pops in. He just found a Boreal Owl down Arkola. "Hold our order!" we shout to the waitress and make a mad dash down the road. The slumbering sweetie is still there. Photos are taken, memories made. We linger, savoring. My Wyoming client will never forget this moment... And I will never forget this day.

****Disclaimer:** The author, me, Sparky, by the words, "this day," means a compilation of memories spanning 30 years of tramping through the Sax-Zim Bog.

Epilogue: If we birders, photographers, nature nuts, are to continue to enjoy the Sax-Zim Bog (and our grandchildren's children), where amazing wildlife encounters can be around any bend on any day, in any season, we need to work towards preserving and protecting this unique place. To learn more, visit www.SaxZim.org.

Sparky Stensaas is executive director of Friends of Sax-Zim Bog.

32nd Annual Bluebird Expo

Jake Langeslag

Our 32nd Annual Bluebird Expo is on April 13, 2013 at the Northfield Middle School, 2200 Division St. S., Northfield, MN. Everyone is excited to see this traveling expo be hosted in Northfield at this wonderful facility. Registration starts when the doors open at 7:45 a.m., with the program



beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Our speakers, Mike Jerešek, and Keith Radel on Bluebird topics, Al Batt with wonderful humor, Jim Gilbert from WCCO Nature Notes, Leif Knecht from Knecht's Nurseries & Landscaping, will cover plants and shrubs for Wildlife and Bluebirds and Kelly Applegate will talk about attracting Purple Martins. The Raptor Center of

Minnesota will be there with their majestic Eagle and a variety of birds. There will be a collection box at the registration table to collect any used printer cartridges you would like to donate to The Raptor Center. This helps with their expenses and is so appreciated. To finish off the day, a Field Trip is planned to visit an established Bluebird Trail in the area.

Jim Gilbert has written a new book called "Minnesota's Outdoor Wonders". It explores all the wonders of Minnesota month by month on the changes of the seasons. Jim will do a book signing for anyone that wants to purchase a book.

Along with many great speakers, there will be bird related vendor booths showcasing items such as bird crafts to mealworms for bird feeding.

Do not miss this wonderful opportunity to rub elbows with the "experts" in their fields and increase your birding IQ!

Pre-registration is appreciated! For more information visit www.bbrp.org or contact the expo-chair Jean Mortenson at jmmclm@localnet.com.

Jake Langeslag is a "Pondologist" and owner of Aqua Eden in Faribault, MN

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The Mission of the M.O.U.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds. We aim to create and increase public interest in birds. And we promote the preservation of bird life and its 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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- Life, single \$500.00
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Send to: Elizabeth Bell, MOU Membership Secretary
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Please make a contribution to the Savaloja Fund

The Savaloja Fund 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 include your contribution on your membership check.

Amount: \$ _____

Upcoming Events

March 23rd, 2013
7:00 AM All Day
MOU Field Trip Rice County

Early Spring waterfowl with Dave Bartkey email Dave for directions. greathorneddave@hotmail.com

April 13th, 2013
7:15 AM All Day
32nd Annual Bluebird Expo

Northfield Middle School,
 Contact Jean Mortenson at jmmclm@localnet.com, or visit www.bbrp.org

April 27th, 2013
38th annual MOU Affiliated Salt Lake Weekend Event name

Look for ducks, geese, shorebirds and passerines in Lac qui Parle and Southern Bigstone Counties <http://moumn.org/sallake/>

May 16th-19th, 2013
Detroit Lakes
16th Annual Festival of Birds

Attend workshops and visit some of the hottest birding sites www.VisitDetroitLakes.com
 1-800-542-3992.