



Minnesota BIRDING

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Chipping Sparrow
by Jean Brisance

My Favorite Local Patch Mound Spring SNA

by Jason Frank

It recently occurred to me that many of the most memorable wild areas I've visited happen to straddle a border or two. Mound Spring Scientific and Natural Area straddles three. Only one of them is visible.

Here are imaginary lines, one dividing Minnesota from South Dakota, another Lac qui Parle from Yellow Medicine County. It's the third line, the one you can actually see, that makes Mound Spring SNA my favorite local birding patch.

For one who is known as a birder, I spend an awful lot of time looking at the ground. Mound Spring is one place where you might have to crane your neck to do that.

There is a cluster of hills here, dipping and rising like soft green clouds that reach off into the south and then turn a hazy blue on the horizon through twilight. It's the northern nub of a rippling topographic continuum called Buffalo Ridge, *les Coteau des Prairies*, marking the border of the last glaciation.

Imagine the glacier that once covered the Midwest, like the foot of some skyscraping ice giant. This little slice of southwest Minnesota once occupied a fjord-like gap of earth pinched and squished between its toes. It's a big deposit of glacial till — billions of tons of sedimentary muck and slush, furrowed along the cutting edge of a

mile-high ice wall. You'd have to dig 400-500 feet before you'd hit bedrock.

These ancient mounds of Pleistocene compost now brim with saw-toothed sedges and rare prairie wildflowers like Northern green orchid and Western white prairie clover. It's where Steve Weston tipped me off to small white lady-slippers and yellow prairie violets.

Interspersed with minimum maintenance roads, low areas of seepage and wet meadows, hummocks and red dogwood and lichen-crusting slabs of granite, the Mound Spring area (a loosely linked web of SNA and WMA land) sits intercut with private CRP



Upland Sandpiper, by Jason Frank

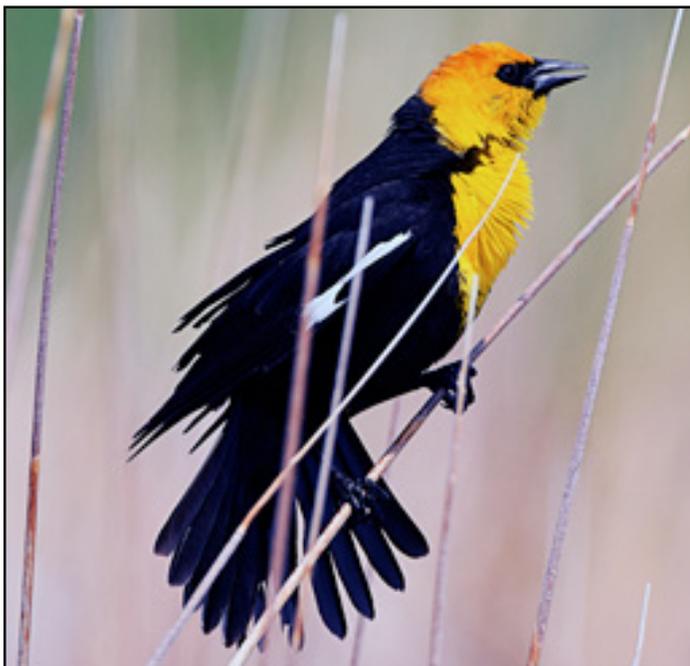


Small White Lady Slipper, by Jason Frank

land and pasture. Much of the SNA was grazed, but never plowed. There have been Blue Grosbeaks showing up alongside the privately grazed areas in recent years.

It is the only spot in southwestern Minnesota where I've seen and heard Sharp-tailed grouse lekking on a hilltop, their eerie rumble-gurgles punctuated by cartoon owl noises and manic chicken-chatter. It's also the only place

Yellow Headed Blackbird, by Jason Frank



where I've seen a Prairie Falcon snatch a grouse off its lek, then skitter and barrel-role through a northwest wind, till it dropped the limp fowl and sauntered off across the skies, alone.

Here is where I found my one and only Minnesota Scissor-tailed Flycatcher — after deciding, on a total whim, to veer off County Road 15 and take the scenic route home. Where Kim Eckert found a Vermilion Flycatcher, and where white-tailed jackrabbits haunt the slopes and dogwood thickets.

Here is where once I crossed paths with a beaver the size of a yearling bear, and saw a badger crouched and sneering from a roadside burrow; where a storm cloud's worth of blackbirds assembled last March, where Northern Harriers dance above bluestem tassels on frosty autumn mornings, and Short-eared Owls come bounding over goldenrod at dusk when the air turns crisp.

Longspurs of all sorts may pop up here during migration, alongside scattershot flocks of Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Dickcissels and Bobolinks still nest here, reliably, alongside Clay-colored Sparrows, Wilson's Snipes, and American Woodcock.

Here, above all else, is my most reliable spot for Upland Sandpipers. In June, I spotted an adult bird dutifully perched atop an old, rounded fence post. In the grass beneath were at least two hatchling chicks, and there, rhythmically striding, bobbing through wispy, young grass came its mate. I was able to snap three shots before they all disappeared, fading in a rush of feathers and bluestem.

Jason Frank serves as Big Stone County Librarian in Ortonville, Minnesota, is coordinator of the annual Salt Lake Birding Weekend.

Bobolink, by Gerald Hoekstra



Message from the President

by Justin Watts

As the cooler days of autumn settle in and migration reaches its September and October peak, I find it a fitting time to reflect on our shared passion for Minnesota's rich birdlife and the collective efforts we've made to conserve it. I am continually inspired by the dedication and passion each of you shows for birds and the habitats they depend on. I'm pleased to share some important updates with you.

One of the most impactful ways our organization supports bird conservation and research is through the Savaloja Grant Program. These grants fund vital projects that contribute to our understanding and preservation of bird species in Minnesota. As we approach the end of the year, I strongly encourage you to consider giving back with a donation to the Savaloja Fund. Every contribution, no matter the size, directly supports research and educational projects that benefit our avian community. Simply click the donate button on our website's banner and specify you are giving to the Savaloja fund, or visit <https://moumn.org/grants.php> to learn more.

Next, for the first time since 2001, the MOU will increase member fees. Starting November 1st 2024, the annual dues will rise by \$5 for domestic memberships, and by \$10 for international memberships. This modest increase will help us continue to provide high-quality publications such as *The Loon* and *Minnesota Birding*. This change will help us keep up with rising costs associated with printing, mailing, website maintenance, the annual paper session, and fund important conservation and education outreach. Not to mention printing the new state checklists, which will be available to everyone this fall!

We understand the impact that rising costs may have, and want to assure you that this decision was made with careful consideration and a commitment to sustaining our organization's future. There remain opportunities for member sponsorship and youth discounts, so please contact me at president@moumn.org if you would like to discuss. Members can help the MOU improve its efficiency and stretch your dollar to greater impact by opting in to the electronic-only version of *The Loon*. To do so, use the link attached to the Loon notification email, or send a brief request to membership@moumn.org.

Starting in August, I am thrilled to welcome Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus to the MOU Board as our new Conservation Committee chair. Clinton brings a wealth of experience and a deep passion for conservation and advocacy. I am confident that his leadership will be instrumental in advancing our conservation initiatives. Please join me in welcoming Clinton to the Board and the committee and stay tuned for updates on the exciting projects they will be leading.

There are new and exciting opportunities to join the MOU at a committee level as well as at a leadership level. In particular, we are focused on a new initiative to build participation from across the state for Field Trip Leaders! Birders of all backgrounds and capability are welcome to join by leading or co-leading a walk near you. This is an exciting chance to introduce birders to your favorite patch, meet with friends both new and familiar, and to contribute to the community by providing opportunities to share great birding moments together. The walks can be small and casual or target-focused trips. This initiative is a great way to give back and foster the outdoor-focused mentorship that makes birding so unique. Please reach out to Trey Weaver to join: fieldtrips@moumn.org. In addition, I want to highlight the open chair position for the Social Media Committee. If you think this is a good fit for you, please reach out to me directly. See here for more details on this position: <https://moumn.org/descriptions.html>.

Looking forward, I'm excited to announce that the Board is committed to executing a significant upgrade of the MOU website. This project aims to improve usability, security, and longevity, ensuring that our online presence serves the needs of our members for years to come. We will be raising funds to support this work and plan to work with external design contractors to bring our vision to life. Your support and feedback will be crucial, and we will keep you informed as plans progress in the coming months.

Thank you for your continued support of the MOU. Together, we are making a lasting impact on bird conservation, education, and the naturalist community in the state of Minnesota. I look forward to the exciting work we will accomplish in the remainder of the year. See you on the trail, and watch out for that "warbler neck"!

Blackburnian Warbler, by Jerry Pruett



Conservation Column

The Life of our State Bird, within Minnesota and Beyond

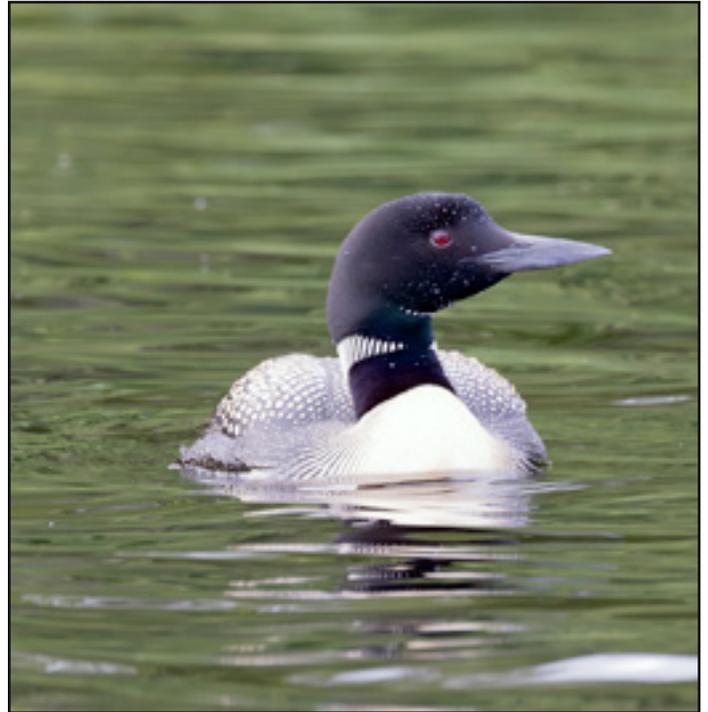
by *Andy Forbes*

Minnesota is the only state with the Common Loon as our state icon – and fittingly so! No other state in the Lower 48 boasts the strong breeding population of loons that we do here, and even Alaska doesn't have all that many more birds than we do in an "average" summer. The haunting calls that many of us cherish make us think of an evening on a remote, northern lake surrounded by conifers and dark skies – and perhaps a few thousand mosquitoes to keep us company around a campfire during our all-too-brief summer. While this association is accurate, the Common Loon has a complex life history that sees it in a variety of different habitats in different parts of the world beyond just our 10,000+ lakes.

Breeding Season

The Common Loon breeds across Canada, Alaska, and a handful of states along the Canadian border. Outside of the U.S. and Canada, it breeds on Greenland and Iceland, and rarely on some remote islands in Norway and Scotland, where it is known as the "Great Northern Diver." In Minnesota, breeding is mostly limited to the deep, clear, forested lakes of the northern half of the state. Some birds can also be found breeding in other parts of the state, including a few lakes around the Twin Cities metro area. Clear water is especially critical for catching fish and successful nesting, and lakes that become impaired usually lose their breeding loons. In fact, loons used to breed across the state and even into northern Iowa more frequently; however, their range has contracted due to decreased water quality and increased disruptive human activity during the breeding season, among other factors.

Common Loons, by Laura Erickson



Common Loon, by Laura Erickson

Loons usually return to the same place year after year and are highly territorial during the breeding season. They do not tolerate the presence of other breeding pairs in "their" area, and intruders are quickly dealt with. Brutal fights sometimes occur and can even result in the death of combatants by bill spearing or even intentional drowning (although it doesn't usually escalate to that point). Many loons bear scars of past battles: over 50% of birds found dead by other causes showed signs of previous bill stabs. Life in the natural world is sometimes harsh.

Migration

In late summer, birds begin to leave their breeding territories and start to move around, flocking up on larger lakes or lakes unoccupied by other birds. Pairs and young do not necessarily stay together and may or not be in the same flock. They become much more social, and large flocks that sometimes get into the thousands can be found on big lakes such as Mille Lacs as birds gather together. Migration starts in earnest through October, and most birds are gone from Minnesota by mid-November. Many loons stage on the Great Lakes before taking off and truly heading south (usually individually or in small flocks) across the eastern United States to their eventual destination in nearshore waters

of the Gulf of Mexico. Interestingly, an increasing number seem to be overwintering on large reservoirs further inland. On December 28, 2014, observers counted 135 birds on Stockton Lake in southwestern Missouri. I can personally attest that winter loon watching in the lower Midwest can be quite rewarding during some years, with multi-species days possible!

As spring approaches, birds begin to move again, and overall migration routes are somewhat similar to those during the fall months, with some differences. Birds stage in large numbers along the coastlines before departure, as well as along the Great Lakes *en route* to breeding territories. Loons are well known for arriving early on the breeding grounds as soon as ice retreats, and sometimes when it has only partially melted. In early spring 2023, I had an early loon that I enjoyed watching on a local lake that was feeding in a relatively small area being kept open by an aerator. It seemed to be doing just fine and stayed there for several days.

Divers in the Surf

Upon arrival in their wintering area, loons will stay one for three to four months, and they often return to the same general area year after year, much as with their breeding territory. Also similarly, they generally prefer more clear water in somewhat sheltered areas closer to shore in bays or even up into larger rivers. Their distribution often mirrors areas with larger numbers of fish, although the presence of other

Common Loon on the Gulf of Mexico, by Gerald Hoekstra



fish-eating birds may also have an impact on where they spend their time. They feed mostly on smaller, easier-to-catch fish such as croakers, flounder, and menhaden, which can be particularly important and sought after during migration along the coastlines. This greasy, high-calorie fish is super important to a variety of fish-eating species and plays a unique and important role in marine ecosystems (a fascinating, and somewhat depressing, topic to explore should you be interested).

As a native New Englander, I spent a lot of time along the beach in the winter during my youth watching Common and Red-throated Loons dive for fish in the breakers during sometimes rotten weather and storms, amongst harbor seals, rafts of Common Eiders, and plunge-diving Northern Gannets. In times when you are fortunate enough to find yourself along the Gulf Coast beaches during the colder months, make sure to bring your binoculars (or scopes) and look for drab winter-plumaged loons floating between the waves. It's possible they could be the same loons that visit us here in the summertime! I find it really enjoyable to watch them living their lives in a habitat that is so different from that which we typically associate them with.

The future

While populations of Common Loons in Minnesota do seem to be fairly stable overall, there are several causes for concern. Increased shoreline development and increased recreational boat traffic can be problematic. Some loons do not acclimate to increased activity and will simply leave breeding territories. Those that do not are subject to a variety of negative direct and indirect impacts from increased human activity, which can include increased nest disturbance/predation/abandonment, swamping of nests by wave action, vegetation removal, and even direct collisions with watercraft which kills a surprising number of birds. Additionally, loons are vulnerable to contaminants across their breeding and nonbreeding ranges, the most notable of which are mercury and lead poisoning as well as oil spills. Stressors due to a rapidly changing climate are also not helpful to put it mildly.

Despite these threats, there is reason for optimism with loons. Awareness around the impacts of lead poisoning has greatly increased and some tackle companies have pledged to go lead-free over the next several years. Loon reintroduction efforts and nest protection efforts (which can include artificial platforms more resistant to wave action) are often successful. Loons are a beloved species by many and do not face the same uphill battles around public support for their conservation that some other species unfortunately do. I think we can all agree that losing our state bird is totally unacceptable.

Andy Forbes is Supervisory Wildlife Biologist for the Midwest Migratory Bird Program with USFWS.

Seeking Nominations For the 2024 MOU Awards

by Liz Harper, Chair Nominating Committee

It is that time of year again! We are asking for your nominations for the [awards](#) that we give out annually.

If you added a rare bird to your life or state list this year or learned something from a new journal article or research project, consider writing a nomination for the **Brother Theodore Voelker Award**. If you know someone who has devoted many volunteer hours to help birds or birders this year, consider nominating that person for the **Volunteer of the Year Award**. Do you know a young birder whose involvement in birding and bird-related organizations stands out? Consider nominating that person for the **Young Birder Award**. How about the birder who you've admired for years, who perhaps mentored you, who has made a name for themselves in bird-related endeavors? Consider nominating that person for the **Thomas S. Roberts Award**. Now is the time to recognize your birding hero/mentor/inspiration by nominating them for an MOU Award, to be presented at this year's MOU Paper Session in December.

You will find descriptions of the MOU awards and the names of all previous award recipients on the MOU website at <http://moumn.org/awards.html> (presentation speeches for the awards are also available online from 2010 forward).

Making a nomination is simple. Just provide the MOU Awards Committee with a description of the qualifications and contributions that you believe makes your nominee a worthy recipient of an award. Your written description typically forms the basis for the award presentation, and we encourage you to present the award, should your nominee win. We know that not all folks like to write a presentation or speak publicly, so please contact us if you would like assistance in either regard.

Nominations are due by October 21 and should be sent to Awards Committee Chair Liz Harper at awards@moumn.org.

Nominees do not have to be members of the MOU. Current MOU officers and/or Board members are not eligible for awards.

The MOU and the Awards Committee thank you in advance for your interest and input in these awards. Without your nominations, we are not able to give recognition to the great achievements of our fellow birders.

We accept nominations for Certificates of Appreciation year-round, so please send them to the committee if you have someone who meets the criteria for this certificate.

SAVE THE DATE!

MOU Paper Session

Saturday, December 7, 2024

North Star Ballroom
University of Minnesota
St. Paul Student Center

Watch for additional information and announcements on the MOU website via social media, and in the next issue of *Minnesota Birding*.

New MOU Members

Note to members: Please notify the Membership Chair (membership@moumn.org) of any email or address changes so you can continue receiving the MOU's two publications. We would also appreciate notification when a MOU member dies.

Carol Bohumil, *Brooklyn Park, MN*
Bonnie Heineke, *Prior Lake, MN*
Dale Heldberg, *Kasota, MN*
Larry Hollar, *Inver Grove Heights, MN*
William Hutchison, *Shoreview, MN*
Amy Kolan, *Northfield, MN*
Amy Marga, *St. Paul, MN*
Peter Mundale, *Blaine, MN*
Paula Perdoni, *Herman, MN*
Hannah Sims, *Duluth, MN*
Lynne Sparks, *Minneapolis, MN*

Savaloja Grant Report

Birding with Kids

by Amy Simso Dean

Each year, the MOU awards grants funded by the Savaloja Memorial Fund for bird-related projects. Projects that increase our understanding of birds, promote preservation of birds and their natural habitats, or increase public interest in birds may be considered for grants. Proposals that include or benefit marginalized people within our birding community (BIPOC, LG-BTQIA+ folks, people with disabilities, etc.) are especially encouraged, as we hope to support opportunities that diversify this community in order to better serve Minnesota's birds and birders. The following article details a project made possible by a Savaloja Grant.

For ten years, MYBirdClub, a nonprofit headquartered in Minneapolis, has been introducing kids and their grown-ups to the excitement and fun of birding. We've birded with people who have never birded; with those who have hearing, gross-motor, and mobility challenges; as well as numerous kids who are neurodivergent. That is the joy of birding... everyone can do it!

Two guides lead each outing, all experienced birders who also excel at environmental education. To erase as many barriers to access as possible, we offer all outings for free, most of which are convenient to city bus lines, and we provide quality binoculars. For the first ten years, those were binoculars provided by the MOU Youth Mentor Program, so we literally could not have done it without MOU's wonderful support.

BirdClub kids exploring Wood Lake Park, by Jana Velo

If you were to see MYBirdClub on the trail, we wouldn't look like your typical birding group, quietly ambling down the path, stopping to scan the trees and bushes. We scatter along the path and just as often stop to look at holes, poop, plants (we love Touch-me-Nots, aka Jewelweed), nests, feathers, rocks, insects, toads and turtles. The kids chatter constantly. On our last outing, a first grader and a first-time BirdClub kid swapped facts about Peregrine Falcons. A pre-teen debated whether he wanted to see a Peregrine Falcon or an American Kestrel more. The same first grader found a Spotted Sandpiper for us to ID while we helped other kids and grownups ID their lifer Green Herons.

Usually about a half hour in, kids begin to walk ahead together, chattering non-stop while the grownups mosey behind. We like it that way. The kids get to experience nature at their own pace with their peers. Because we always have two guides on an outing, both groups have a guide to help.



MYBirdClub offers more than birdwatching. Among other adventures, our young birders have attended naturalist-led programs about winter adaptations, crafted their own birds and feathered dinosaurs, and discovered how many M&Ms and Oreos they'd have to eat if they ate like a chickadee in winter.

They've thrilled at a live falconry demonstration. We also enjoyed a Raptor Center program where they experienced a Red-Tailed Hawk being trained to fly between perches. During our migration game, the kids get banded, eaten by a cat, stalled by weather, and helped along by rehabilitators and birdfeeders.

From the beginning of MYBirdClub, we have striven to inspire the next generation of naturalists and conservationists. Along the way, we've discovered these kids continuously inspire us and make every day birding an exciting adventure.

You can learn more about MYBirdClub at www.my-birdclub.org or by emailing Amy at MYBirdClubInfo@gmail.com.

Amy Simso Dean is the Executive Director and Founder of MYBirdClub birdwatching club for kids and co-founded The Kestrels, an inclusive birding group for women. She also is a Master Naturalist and has been birding for over 25 years.



MYBirdClub kids checking out the treetops

Successfully finding a Great Horned Owl



MOU Calendar

September / October 2024

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

SEPTEMBER 1 IOC: Comparative Owl Anatomy Dissection	2	3	4	5	6	7 MOU: Schaar's Bluff RBNC: Bagels & Birds SPAC: Battle Creek ZVAS: Quarry Hill NC CNC: MN Campus Bird Hike
8 MOU: Rice Creek	9 MRVAC: Bass Ponds	10 ACP: Coon Rapids Regional Park	11	12	13	14 MOU: E. Mississippi River Flats ZVAS: Assisi Heights CNC: WI Campus Bird Hike
15 LNC: Raptors up close MRVAC: Old Cedar Ave. Bridge MOU: Rum River RP SPAC: Phalen & Round Lake	16	17 ACP: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes MGB: Birding Northern Colombia	18	19	20 MOU: Louisville Swamp	21 Bell Mus: MOU Bird Walk LNC: Bird Banding IOC: Owl Prowl SPAS: Swede Hollow
22 ACM: Birding for people with Mobility Challenges	23 MRVAC: Rapids Lake	24	25	26	27	28 CNC: MN Campus Raptor Release FOSZB: Fall Migration Field Trip MOU: Crow Hassan
29	30	OCTOBER 1	2	3	4	5 MOU: U of M Ag. Fields RBNC: Bagels & Birds RBNC: Migration Bird Hike ZVAS: Quarry Hill NC CNC: MN Campus Bird Hike
6 MOU: Fish Lake Nature Trails	7	8	9	10 MGB: Birding Brazil	11	12 MRVAC: Rapids Lake CNC: WI Campus Bird Hike
13 MRVAC: Bass Ponds	14	15	16	17	18	19 IOC: Owl Prowl LNC: Bird Banding
20 LNC: Raptors up close	21	22 SPAC: Crex Meadows	23	24	25	26 MRVAC: Old Cedar Ave. Bridge
27 ACM: Birding for people with Mobility Challenges	28	29 MOU: Sherburne NWR – Sandhill Cranes	30	31	NOVEMBER 1	2 MOU: Mille Lacs Sea Ducks

MOU Calendar

September / October 2024

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

ANOKA COUNTY PARKS

<https://www.anokacountyparks.com/classes-camps>

Sept. 10: Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park

9–11 am. Bird watching is a great way to get outdoors, explore new areas, and learn nature skills. Participants of all birding abilities are welcome. An experienced birding staff will be along to help identify birds. Pre-registration required. Visit the [website](#) for more information or to register.

Sept. 17: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park

9–11 am. Bird watching is a great way to get outdoors, explore new areas, and learn nature skills. Participants of all birding abilities are welcome. An experienced birding staff will be along to help identify birds. Pre-registration required at: [website](#)

AUDUBON CHAPTER OF MINNEAPOLIS

<https://www.minneapolisaudubon.org/events-list>

Note: For full information on the following events, please go to the ACM website above.

Sept. 22 & Oct. 27:

Birding for people with Mobility Challenges

11 am–12:30 pm. Co-sponsored by Birdability®. This outing is appropriate for birders with a range of mobility challenges including birders who use wheelchairs, walkers, or canes, as well as those with difficulty walking, but all birders are welcome. We will meet at the bird feeder just behind the MVNWR Visitor Center. Join us as we enjoy fall birdwatching at the feeder, adjacent fields, and nearby overlook. Limited to 15 participants. Advanced registration required [here](#). Questions? Contact Mark Paller (palle001@umn.edu). More information about Birdability® [here](#).

BELL MUSEUM

<https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/events/>

Sept. 21: Guided Birding Walk with MOU

9 am. Join the [Minnesota Ornithologists' Union](#) on a guided bird walk. Meet at the main entrance of the Bell Museum. Dress for the weather and be prepared for challenging terrain. Bring a water bottle and snack if desired. Binoculars are available for those who do not have them, but participants are encouraged to bring their own. Walks are capped at 15 participants. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis [here](#). Note: Bell Museum admission is not included

CARPENTER NATURE CENTER

<https://carpenternaturecenter.org/events/>

Sept. & Oct.: Big Year Birding Challenge

Join us in 2024 for a brand-new program series and citizen science opportunity. Hosted in partnership with renowned bird expert Ben Douglas, the Big Year Birding Challenge is designed to encourage everyone to learn more about birds and see how many different species they can identify at Carpenter Nature Center in a single year. This is a great opportunity for newcomers to get into birding, for experienced birders to work on their life list and for Carpenter NC to identify the different species that come through the Nature Center. For further information go [here](#). Questions? Contact Jennifer Vieth at (651)-437-4359 ext. 108 or jennifer@carpenternaturecenter.org.

Sept. 7 & Oct. 5: MN Campus Bird Hike

8–10 am. 12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings. Learn to identify birds with local experts. Field guides and binoculars are available to use or bring your own. Pre-registration required – Call 651-437-4359. Program Fee: \$5 per person or FREE for 'Friends of CNC,' SCVBC and students. Learn to identify birds with local experts. Binoculars and field guides available or bring your own.

Sept. 14 & Oct. 12: WI Campus Bird Hike

8–10 am. 279 South Cove Road, Hudson, WI. Learn to identify birds with local experts. Field guides and binoculars are available to use or bring your own. Pre-registration required – Call 651-437-4359. Program Fee: \$5 per person or FREE for 'Friends of CNC,' SCVBC and students.



Pileated Woodpecker, by Laura Erickson

Sept 28: MN Campus Raptor Release

11 am–2 pm. 12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings. Join Carpenter Nature Center and The Raptor Center of the U. of M. as they release rehabilitated raptors. Event includes hay wagon tours, kids' activities, raptors on display, and a variety of education booths from area environmental organizations. More information can be found on the event webpage [here](#). Free entry, select activities have a fee.

FRIENDS OF SAX-ZIM BOG

<https://saxzim.org/>

Sept. 28: Fall Migration Field Trip

8 am–2 pm. Migration season offers some difficult bird watching in northern Minnesota, as many of the breeding species rush out of our area on their way south. The last bird-based field trip of the season aims to experience a little of what migration has to offer in the Sax-Zim Bog. Because of the amount of habitat, it can be quite difficult to find birds and this field trip will hope to show you how to best navigate the Bog during migration. Register for this field trip [here](#).

INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER

126 E Cedar St., Houston

<https://www.internationalowlcenter.org/>

Sept. 21 & Oct. 19: Expert-led Owl Prowls

Sept. 21 at 6 pm. and Oct. 19 at 5 pm. Join Jo Severson, an expert at imitating owl calls, for an excursion through the backroads of the Houston area to try to call in wild owls. The program starts with a 30-minute program indoors to learn how to identify owls by their calls and the ethics of calling wild owls. Registration required and these always sell out in advance, so register early [here](#). Not recommended for children under 12 due to the need to be able to stand very quietly for 10 minutes at a time. Cost: \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members.

Sept. 1: Comparative Owl Anatomy Dissection

10 am–4 pm. *Note: this information is coming too late for registration but is included here to share the work that is being done at the IOC.* You won't find another opportunity like this anywhere else. Explore the intricate details of owl anatomy while dissecting an owl in a small group. Each participant will dissect a different species from at least 4-5 different genera, creating a rare opportunity to see the significant differences between owl species side-by-side. For more information go [here](#).

LOWRY NATURE CENTER

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

Lowry Nature Center, 7025 Victoria Dr., Victoria.

Note: For more information on these events go [here](#).

Sept. 15 & Oct. 20: Raptors Up Close

2:30–4 pm. Meet captive raptors, learn about these amazing birds of prey and how they help teach. Drop in any-time. All ages. Free.

Sept. 21 & Oct. 19: Bird Banding

9 am–noon. 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.

MINNESOTA GLOBAL BIRDERS

Note: This informal group of people interested in birding throughout the world has monthly online gatherings now online. Details on the events, and on how to register for the Zoom sessions, will be provided via MOU-Net and also on the Minnesota Global Birders and Minnesota Birding pages in Facebook a few weeks before each session.

Sept. 17: Birding in northern Colombia

7–9 pm. Paul Budde and Howard Towle will discuss and show photos from their recent birding trip to the north of Colombia. Colombia has more bird species than any other country, and the mountain ranges in the north have a number of species found nowhere else.

Oct. 10: Birding Brazil:

Atlantic Forest & The Pantanal

7–9 pm. Gerry Hoekstra will report and show photos from a recent birding trip to Brazil.

MINNESOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

<https://moumn.org/>

For questions, please contact Trey Weaver, MOU Field Trip Chair: fieldtrips@moumn.org

Sept. 7: Schaar's Bluff – Fall Warblers

8 am. Join Trey Weaver for a warbler walk at Schaar's Bluff. We will be focused on fall warbler identification, but other migrants are to be expected in the river valley along with resident species. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Sept. 8: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes – Fall Warblers

7 am Join Matt Hoberg for a warbler walk at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes, town of Centerville, Anoka County. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Sept. 14: East Mississippi River Flats

8 am. Join Ivan Munkres for a bird walk focused on migrating warblers and passerines. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Sept. 15: Rum River Regional Park

8 am. Join Trey Weaver for a warbler walk at Rum River Regional Park, town of Ramsey, Anoka County. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Sept. 20: Louisville Swamp

8 am. Andy Forbes leads the group on a walk through a mix of deciduous woods, grasslands, and the savannas that adjoin them, making it an ideal spot to look for migrating sparrows and raptors, as well as later warblers among resident species. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Sept. 28: Crow Hassan Park Reserve

9 am. Join William Marengo for a hike through grasslands, deciduous woods, and the savannah that adjoins them. Migrating sparrows are to be expected, and the field trip will be particularly focused on finding LeConte's and Nelson's Sparrows. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Oct. 5: U of M Ag Fields

9 am. Join Ivan Munkres for a field trip in search of migrating raptors, sparrows, and longspurs. This type of habitat is uncommon for Ramsey County, making this an opportunity to encounter specialists of open habitats. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Oct. 6: Fish Lake Nature Trails

8 am. Join Trey Weaver for a field trip to find and identify migrating sparrows. The Oak Savanna will make for good habitat to be looking for the expected migrants and with some luck, we may encounter LeConte's Sparrow in the open tracts of grasslands. Nelson's Sparrow could be encountered. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Oct. 29: Sherburne NWR – Sandhill Cranes

6:30 am. Led by Andy Forbes. The post breeding season migratory movements of Sandhill Cranes are known for being impressive mass gatherings at this time. Sherburne and nearby harvested agricultural fields can provide birders a chance to witness such an event. Participant limit of 10 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

Nov. 2: Mille Lacs Sea Ducks

8 am. Join Kim and Cindy Risen for a field trip in search of Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Mergansers, and other big lake ducks. We will meet at the Big Walleye Concourse in Garrison, then caravan to different locations to scan the lake in Aitkin, Crow Wing, and Mille Lacs counties. Participant limit of 7 people, registration via Signup Genius event page is required. Information and registration: [see the event page](#)

MN RIVER VALLEY AUDUBON CHAPTER

www.mrvac.org

Note: Registration process for MVNWR Field Trips is available on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge website. Registration for some dates will remain locked for about a month prior to the date of the walk. Please indicate in your registration if you would like to receive a birding summary and species list from the walk. Registration is required online [here](#). For information about MRVAC birding events contact Craig Mandel at 952-240-7647 or EgretCMan@msn.com

Sept. 9 & Oct. 13: Bass Ponds

8–10:30 am. Meet at 2501 E 86th., Bloomington. On these walks we will search for and learn about the birds that visit the Refuge during their fall migration. Over the fall season we should observe some species of warblers, sparrows and waterfowl. Bring binoculars and a field guide. Registration is required online [here](#).

Sept. 15 & Oct. 26: Old Cedar Ave. Bridge

8–10:30 am. Meet at 9551 Old Cedar Ave. S., Bloomington. On these walks we will search for and learn about the birds that visit the Refuge during their Fall migration. Over the fall season we should observe some species of warblers, sparrows and waterfowl. Bring binoculars and a field guide. Registration is required online [here](#).



Ovenbird, by Jerry Pruett

Sept. 23 & Oct 12: Rapids Lake Unit Visitor Center
8–10:30 am. Meet at 15865 Rapids Lake Road, Carver. On these walks we will search for and learn about the birds that visit the Refuge during their Fall migration. Over the fall season we should observe some species of warblers, sparrows and waterfowl. Bring binoculars and a field guide. Registration is required online [here](#).

RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER

1000 Rustad Rd., Faribault. www.rbnc.org

Sept. 7 & Oct. 5: Bagels & Birds

10–11 am. Join us for bagels while watching birds through the windows on the wild viewing area. Free program for all ages on the first Saturday of the month. Bagels provided by The Inn at Shattuck.

Oct. 5: Storytime with a Naturalist: Migration and Bird Hike

11 am–noon. Join a naturalist for storytime on Saturdays. Today's topic is about bird migration. We'll read a story and then get out on the trails for a bird hike. Attendance is free.

ST. PAUL AUDUBON SOCIETY

<https://www.saintpaulaudubon.org/upcoming-events/>

Note: For full information on these birding events go the SPAS website.

Sept. 7: Battle Creek Park

9–11 am. Leader: John Zakelj jzakelj@yahoo.com. The Battle Creek Grassland is a critical nesting area which we have been working to preserve. It is next to Battle Creek Park, managed by Corrections, with restricted public access. We will hike on park trails along the western and northern edges of the grassland, where we hope to hear and see migrating fall warblers, sparrows, and hawks, along with the early fall colors of the grassland. Venue [website](#). No registration needed.

Sept. 15: Beginning Birding at Phalen & Round Lakes

8–10 am. Come and learn about birding, including how to use binoculars and a field guide. St. Paul Audubon is collaborating with the St. Paul Library and the Urban Birding Collective to offer this beginning birding field trip. Leader Monica Bryand 651-246-5522 mjbryand@gmail.com. Meet at 1980 E. Shore Drive, Maplewood. Limited to 15 participants. Registration required [here](#).

Sept. 21: Swede Hollow Park

9–11 am. Paul Audubon Society joins with [Friends of Swede Hollow](#) and [Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County](#) to offer a fall migration birding experience in the heart of St. Paul. Leader: Kathy Sidles 651-233-6804 Come learn about the history of the site and see what fall migrants might be passing through the Hollow. Those who do not want to walk the route can bring a folding chair and join Kiki Sonnen for a “bird sit” opportunity at the meeting spot. Registration not needed. Meet at the entrance to Drewry Tunnel at Swede Hollow Park across from 622 Beaumont St. East, St. Paul.

Oct. 22: Sandhill Cranes at Crex Meadows SWA

4–8:15 pm. Since historic times, Greater Sandhill Cranes have congregated by the thousands every autumn evening in the marshes and ponds now called Crex Meadows SWA. Introductory remarks and instructions will begin at 4 pm in the parking lot of the Visitor Center at Crex Meadow State Wildlife Area located on the north side of Grantsburg, WI. Registration required with leaders Louise Eidsmoe 651-231-0453 louise.eidsmoe@gmail.com and Chase Davies 651-246-9754 RockyBirder@gmail.com

ZUMBRO VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Note: For full information on these events, go to the ZVAS website.

Sept. 7: Quarry Hill Nature Center

9–10:30. Leaders Terry & Joyce Grier will lead an exploration of the oak savannah and hope to find birds not commonly seen elsewhere. Park in the lot at the base of the hill. This trail is steep in places and can be slippery if wet. Bring binoculars if you have them. Dress for the weather. Stay for any length of time. Free and open to the public – no registration required. Meet at the west entrance of [Quarry Hill Park](#) located at 2100 9th St NE, Rochester.

Sept. 14: Birding Assisi Heights

9–10:30 am. Leader: Sue Hayes. Join us for a birding adventure in the back yard as we search for late migrating birds and local residents. Wear good hiking shoes, bring a bird guide and binoculars if you have them. Fee: \$5.00. Registration required. Meet at [Assisi Heights](#) (park in Canticle Park) 1001 14th St. NW, Rochester. Note: Assisi Heights is private property and not open to the public.

Oct. 5: Quarry Hill Nature Center

9–10:30 am. Leaders: Terry & Joyce Grier. Join us on a casual walk around Quarry Hill Park. Meet by the Nature Center entrance of [Quarry Hill Park](#) located at 2100 9th St. NE, Rochester. Bring binoculars if you have them. Dress for the weather. Stay for any length of time. Free and open to the public – no registration required.

MOU Youth Mentorship Program

25 Years

by Bill Tefft, MOU Youth Mentorship Program Coordinator



Releasing a Sharpie

Twenty-five years ago, Bob Holtz, a Concordia professor who was an enthusiastic birder and a Minnesota Ornithologists' Union member, had the brilliant idea to connect experienced birders with local educators, so that youth of all ages could learn about birds for free. The concept was simple: a volunteer would come to the school, scout group, etc. to give an indoor presentation about birds, and then the volunteer would take the group on a guided field trip, all at no charge. The program focused on introducing birding to young people, but often the volunteers included sharing birds with adults too. Eventually, as funds were set aside by the MOU Board of Directors and donors, each youth mentor volunteer was provided with a Youth Mentorship Program kit, which included 20-25 sets of binoculars, birding field guides, and a slide deck. This was the humble beginning of the MOU Youth Mentorship Program.

The MOU's Youth Mentorship Program (YMP) grew out of Bob Holtz's vision and inspiration through recruitment of members to volunteer to engage young people. Through the past quarter of a century, MOU volunteers across the state of Minnesota have donated untold hours teaching youth of all ages about birds, bird conservation, and the natural world. Over 40 kits (binoculars, field guides, slide shows, checklists, spotting scopes) are now available for mentors. Thousands of young people of all ages have benefitted from the resources, enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteer mentors, and MOU support, and have developed a lifelong interest in birds.

In the early days the YMP volunteers would meet for a Subway lunch hosted by Bob Holtz during the annual MOU

Paper Session to exchange reports, tips and tricks for engaging youth. There was always something to learn, laughs to share, and inspiration to be gained. Lunch was also a great way to recruit new mentors, as I found out when Tom Bell invited me to a "quick, fun lunch with my friend Bob."

Twenty-five years passed in my life before I found the kind of mentors that exist for youth of all ages provided by the Minnesota Ornithologists Union and existing across Minnesota. My childhood years in a small town in Michigan provided a river corridor with lots of opportunity for solitude and exploring the shorelines and forested wetlands. Books, school studies, scouting, and teachers were my mentors for investigating my interests leading to a math and sports route to college. Then I developed a passion for the natural sciences, with an eye to becoming an interpretive naturalist. That was 50 years ago, when Joan Brigham, Director at the Fenner Nature Center, hired me and became my mentor in teaching school groups, leading bird walks, writing and researching. Outdoor experience and interests became a career that eventually brought me to Vermilion Community College to teach, while living, raising a family, and enjoying life in northeastern Minnesota. Teaching and mentoring were a passion and pursuit.

As I write this, I am preparing to spend some shifts volunteering at the MOU Booth at the Minnesota State Fair. The contacts in the Minnesota DNR Complex are inspired when mentors meet people of all ages and share questions, answers, knowledge, passion and stories. How many people will share their experiences using the Merlin app on their phone? How many people will ask, "What's your favorite bird?" (Answer: "I don't have favorites. They are all special in their own ways.")

Young birders at a YMP event



The YMP will have a table and make a presentation at the annual MOU Paper Session Meeting on the first Saturday in December on the University of MN Campus. There, members can learn more about YMP. We will offer an update and a discussion of plans for 2025.

The participant pictures you see here lack the stories. Young people bring their individual stories and interests. If followed forward in time, they may have a lifetime of reflections on those experiences. The hikes, field trips, classroom presentations, journals, checklists, people, etc. all have potentially motivating outcomes. Youth are challenging, encouraging and motivating me. I am excited to follow their lives, get invited to their events, assist in their projects, co-teach with them, and see them as mentors.

From YMP Volunteer Sid Stivland:

For several years leading up to 2009, every time I ran into Bob Holtz at an MOU event, paper session, or bird stakeout, he would “bug” me about joining MOU’s YMP. Mind you, it was not ‘bugging’ as in ‘annoying’ but more as in ‘persistent.’ My reply was always some version of: “Sounds like fun — but — I don’t have any experience, expertise, or training.” Bob was always kind and patient, but firm. His response was always some version of: “No

problem, I will help and support you.” But the prospect of entering a classroom cold was terrifying. It didn’t help that I already knew several of the mentors, and many were either current or retired teachers with years of classroom experience. And so it happened that I was dragged, kicking and screaming, into the MOU Youth Mentorship Program.

The first few forays into the classroom were unremarkable at best, apparent confirmation of my reluctance to call myself a “teacher.” But, true to his word, Bob provided advice, suggestions, and additional materials. There was a good reason he was popular and much acclaimed by his students and colleagues alike. Other MOU mentors stepped up and provided encouragement. The annual sharing get-togethers were useful. My turning point came with an out-of-the-ordinary invitation to visit a pre-school and conduct a bird program. I have spoken about this experience at other MOU events so I will not repeat the story here except to say that I decided to drop all of my brilliant, prepared remarks, left most of my exquisite visual aids at home, and showed up with one panel of bird photos and a bunch of feathers. I sat down on a very small chair (luckily, I was able to stand up again) and simply had a conversation with the kids – no talking *to* them, *at* them, or *down to* them – simply *with* them. They told me their names and their



Sid Stivland with kids on a Youth Mentorship outing

favorite birds, and they were able to ID over half the birds on my board. They sat there for 40 minutes. They loved the touch and feel of feathers. Even the teachers commented on their attention span. There is something magic about animals and children.

Since that day, I have spent countless hours visiting inner-city, suburban, rural, public, charter, parochial, special needs, and rehabilitation schools. I have worked with girl scouts, cub scouts, boy scouts, and on field day events for both district wide and individual schools. Some were all day, some were single-day or two-day programs lasting only a few hours, some were in the classroom, and some were outdoors. Except for school closures in 2020 and 21, I have worked since 2017 with a third-grade class, making weekly visits stretching over the entire school year. That totals nearly 500 hours over the past seven years.

But this program has made for a much more in-depth study of bird life. Probably my proudest moment this past year was when my students developed enough confidence in their ID skills to correct me when I made an incorrect ID. Way to go, kids! It took a while, but I finally understood the genius of Bob Holtz: believe in your students when they do not yet believe in themselves. This is the key to what good teachers already know and do for their students.

Today's Youth Mentorship Program is not your grandfather's — nor is it just a brief two-hour program using a carousel of slide photos, a kit of binoculars, and some printed material. Over the last 25 years, MOU mentors have refined their skills, used their creativity, utilized new tools, leveraged the expertise of other professionals, and built upon the foundation laid down by Bob Holt and others.

From Kevin Smith, former YMP Coordinator:

Even though the pandemic years made it difficult to get into the classroom, the program is still active. In just one series of programs with Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation, a group of Youth Mentors will be reaching 1,000 volunteers this year. The project is a 5th Grade Outdoor Education Event, and it was also hosted in 2023. Last year the total number of people reached by YMP volunteers Steve Weston, Dwight Smith, and Kevin Smith was 400 youth and 40

adults. The weather was good, and the kids all had a great time learning basic birding skills and how to use binoculars.

In 2024 the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District's Annual Outdoor Education Field Days (OED) will be held on September 17, 19, 24, and 26. The days are pretty full, with kids arriving between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. (depending on the day) and leaving around 2:30. If you're interested in becoming a mentor, or just helping for the day, please reach out to Kevin Smith.

After many years at the helm Bob Holtz turned the program over to me, and I coordinated statewide volunteers. Today Bill Tefft of Ely, MN is the program coordinator. YMP volunteers are still listed on the MOU web site. Those with a number in front of their names have a kit with binoculars, field guides, bird slides (most use PowerPoint these days), and a spotting scope. A volunteer without a kit can borrow one from another volunteer.

The Future of the YMP:

Sadly, Bob Holtz passed away in April at the age of 90. The program he founded, though, lives on and will benefit young birders or years to come. Birding may become a hobby or profession for some of these students. For sure, it will make them more aware that protecting natural habitats is important. Volunteers receive a great deal in return for their mentoring. Whether you are currently a mentor or would like to participate, I would like to hear from you or meet you in person as this program explores its vision for the future and works to get stronger.

Sid Stivland with preschoolers



Birding with Bob

Editor's note: **Bob Janssen** touched the lives of many birders around the state, whether they had the privilege of actually birding with him or simply met him out in the field, and I'm sure many of you have stories and memories of birding with him. If you have stories, memories, or other thoughts about Bob's impact on you as a birder or on Minnesota birding, please contact me at newsletter@moumn.org. Individual contributions can be short; a paragraph or two is fine. GRH

It was 5:30 a.m. on Friday, February 4, 2005 and the chill in the air kept the gathered birders hunkered down as they waited for stragglers. The 15th annual R.O.S. (right on schedule) winter birding trip to northern Minnesota was about to depart from south Minneapolis. Originating in 1989, our purpose was to again search for Minnesota winter bird specialties. We stamped the ground to keep our feet warm, anticipating a guest "Big Stick" birder to help lead and identify what we hoped to find. Bob Janssen had agreed to attend the weekend adventure to Duluth, Sax-Zim Bog, and the North Shore, going as far as Grand Marais. Most of the R.O.S. participants knew Bob as a fellow church member and had talked Bob into joining us for a weekend of snow, cold and, hopefully, feathers.

The weekend was a great success, with Snowy Owl in the Duluth Harbor, winter finches at Jay Cooke and Teteouche State Parks, Northern Hawk Owl and several Great Gray Owls. But the real excitement was seeing Bob Janssen acting like a first-time-birder, trotting up the East Duluth residential street pointing at a Townsend's Solitaire in a boulevard tree. We followed Bob as best we could and got great looks as the bird stayed for a half hour. Bob enthusiastically gave a clinical lesson on habits, migration, and previous sightings. After a while, several in our group kind of chuckled and wondered why Bob was so excited, though the bird information was much appreciated. One birder thanked Bob and commented on his exuberance. Bob's explanation: "I didn't have a Townsend's Solitaire on my St. Louis County bird list for February and now I do!"

Bob revealed himself as the consummate Minnesota County lister with a passion for recording birds: where, when, and how many. Fortunately, he shared that passion not only on that cold, snowy day, but also over a lifetime of writing, editing and publishing.

We miss our 'Big Stick' birder!

—Tom Sopoci, Minneapolis

I first met Bob as a young birder in Washington County sometime during my early high school years. True to his nature, he was a very welcoming and kind person to the enthusiastic (and obnoxious) teenager. Over the years, as we ran into each other more frequently, we always seemed to end up discussing the history of the MOU or past bird records, or our long running joke about county-listing birders. I'll miss running into Bob and looking at birds together and, of course, getting to tease him about having a Hennepin County Mew Gull on him, to which he would always respond with some story about a ridiculous rarity that I will probably never get!

—Ezra Hosch, Duluth

A couple of years ago Bob asked if I knew of any local Trumpeter Swans. He didn't want a long drive from his Minnetonka apartment. I told him of a pair on a tiny lake east of Ridgedale. Why? I asked. He was collecting swan sightings one day at a time to see how many he could string together. Always numbers, always lists.

—Jim Williams

Birding columnist. Minneapolis StarTribune

Bob with Andy Nyhus, by Andy Nyhus



Summary of MOU Board Minutes

August 3, 2024

by *Darcy Pinotti, Recording Secretary*

Note: The meeting was conducted over Zoom. Minutes pending approval by the Board at the December meeting.

Present: Justin Watts (president), Darcy Pinotti (recording secretary), Ann Kessen (treasurer), Cindy Smith (membership secretary), Tom Tustison (records), Jennifer Vieth (education), Kristina Dexter-Nienhaus (Savaloja grants), Mark Lystig (finance), Liz Harper (awards), Michelle Terrell (past president), Trey Weaver (field trips)

Absent: Rob Daves, Anthony Hertzell, Dave Cahlander, Gerry Hoekstra, Kara Snow, Kate Kelnberger

Approval of minutes from the March 9, 2024 meeting

Treasurer's Report (Ann Kessen, Treasurer)

- Year-to-date, the operating budget income is on track with no unusual expenditures.
- Savaloja Fund donations are low for this point in the year. We will promote donations to the fund for the Paper Session. Many Paper Session registrations include donations.
- MOU was in the red this past fiscal year, so we weren't able to transfer to the Savaloja Fund the usual 50% of any surplus in our budget.
- Other promotions: Discussed writing an article about the Savaloja Fund in the newsletter to remind people how it started, what it's used for and its purpose. May also promote grant recipient news on social media.
- Investment account: Discussion of restricted funds and setting aside money for a specific purpose such as the website redesign and modernization.
- Report was accepted and approved by vote.

Membership Report (Cindy Smith)

- Membership levels remain similar with 46 new memberships. Youth membership is not being used; discussed promoting this discounted membership.
- Report was accepted and approved by vote.

Committee Reports:

Education Committee (Jen Vieth, Chair)

- The State Fair checklists are ready. A dedicated volunteer coordinated and youth member brought forward an idea for a poster. A social media post is promoting volunteering at the State Fair.
- The Youth Mentor Program has made a lot of great progress, and specifics are being collected to share in future communications.

Records Committee (Tom Tustison, Chair)

- The new MOURC checklist, which is updated every five years, is almost done. The last checklist was 30 pages, two-sided; the MOU checklists go above and beyond what most state checklists offer.
- Historic checklist Archive: Historic checklists are being compiled and the next step is to make them available online.
- Record Chair Succession: Tom Tustison will be stepping down as Record Committee Chair, and succession planning is underway with a short list of possible candidates. The position is becoming more complex as the number of reviewed records has increased dramatically, reviewing about 120 accidental and casual species a year. The next chair will preferably be someone with experience serving on the Records Committee and who also has in-depth knowledge of the distribution of birds throughout the state of Minnesota.
- The Board thanks Tom for his decades of service and assistance in ensuring a smooth transition.

New Business:

Membership Fee Increase Proposal

- Expenses are increasing (fees, mailings, printing, etc.), while the MOU annual membership has not changed in 23 years. The cost to produce and mail *The Loon* as a membership benefit has traditionally been about 68% of membership income, and it is now closer to 90%.
- The proposal is to increase membership levels by \$5 a year, except for Youth, International and Life Memberships. International will increase by \$10 to cover the higher cost of international shipping. This was communicated at the last Paper Session and members will be alerted in the newsletter and on the website.
- After discussion, it was recommended that the change take effect on November 1 to coincide with the new fiscal year and allow for time to update the website, PayPal and brochures.
- Amended motion (Justin Watts) to increase membership fees by \$5, and by \$10 for international, to be effective November 1, was seconded and approved by vote.

New Conservation Committee Chair

- Discussion of nomination of Clinton Nienhaus as new chair of the Conservation Committee.
- Motion (Justin Watts) to accept the nomination of Clinton Nienhaus as Conservation Committee Chair was seconded and approved by vote.

Fundraising Plans (Justin Watts)

- Justin met with Rob Daves, who is engaged in merchandising for MRVAC (hats, tshirts, apparel, etc.).
- Discussion of tax implications of selling merchandise. Decision to solicit professional input on tax implications for setting up merchandise for sale.
- Justin will form an ad hoc committee, chaired by Rob, to work on this. Michelle and Ann will also be on the committee.
- Kristina Dexter-Nienhaus suggested a MN Bird of the Year focus to keep things fresh each year; it could tie into merchandise as well as education and conservation. Cindy Smith suggested printed Swedish Dish Cloths.
- Give to the Max Donations: Justin will draft messaging for the campaign toward foundational website changes.

Website Redesign and Updating

- Each year, membership services are disrupted by long downtimes related to server and code updates. The membership management system needs to transition to better support communication and reduce the amount of required manual intervention needed today. Website security and modernization are needed to protect member data, user-submitted photos and records. It will be a large effort to unravel years of add-ons, but when completed the website will take less effort to maintain.
- MOU is looking to restart proposals for modernization, including services, database and user interface. Integrating membership management will be additional goal. There is broad consensus to solidify the cost and design proposal. The quotes will include contract maintenance fees.
- There is a desire for the board to be included as stakeholders and involved in design reviews. Darcy Pinotti has experience in this area and offered to help. Trey Weaver also offered to help.



Greater Yellowlegs, by Allan Meadows



Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

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

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MN Birding is published bi-monthly

Editor: Gerald Hoekstra

Designer: Thomas Benjamin Hertzell

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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

Justin Watts, *President*
Rob Daves, *Vice President*
Darcy Pinotti, *Recording Secretary*
Cindy Smith, *Membership Secretary*
Ann Kessen, *Treasurer*
Michelle Terrell, *Past President*

Editor of *MN Birding*

Gerald Hoekstra
Gene Bauer, *Calendar Editor*

Designer of *MN Birding*

Thomas Benjamin Hertzell

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MOU Records Committee: mourc@moumn.org

Conservation Chair: conservation@moumn.org

Grants: grants@moumn.org

Youth Mentorship: mentorship@moumn.org

Field Trips: fieldtrips@moumn.org

All other MOU functions: 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: \$ _____