

Central Minnesota Audubon
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NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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President's Letter... by Dan Kneip On environmental awareness...

I was first introduced to the discussion of environmental issues by Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring", as were many people my age. It is well known that the book was instrumental in launching an awareness of the dangers posed by the indiscriminate use of pesticides (biocides as she called them). More importantly, the book introduced the public to the concepts of biological solutions and a holistic approach to the ecological problems encountered in our modern living.

Rachel Carson was a pioneer in her sounding of the alarm to ecological degradation caused by human activity. It took great courage to speak up against economic interests and she suffered personal attacks because of her activism.

Only recently did I become aware that Rachel Carson's childhood home was Springdale, PA on the banks of the Allegheny River, where she learned to enjoy plants and wildlife and particularly birdlife of the area. This past summer, Doris and I undertook a 4-day, 150 mile bike ride along the "Great Allegheny Pass Bike Trail" from Pittsburg to Cumberland, MA. We did not pass Springdale as the trail follows three other rivers through the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania, but we did see lots of beautiful countryside and its flora and fauna. It is not hard to understand how someone growing up in this area would come to love all of nature.

There is another book by Rachel Carson which I thoroughly enjoyed, called "The Sense of Wonder", in which she discusses the need for adults to allow children to explore and enjoy nature without too much emphasis on names and teaching. It is a favorite book to page through with the grandchildren.

The Central Minnesota Audubon Society has been asked by our National Audubon representative to support the Lights Out Program for the St. Cloud area. Most birds migrate at night and can be drawn off course by lighted structures in their flight path resulting in collisions or exhaustion from circling the lights. We have decided to endorse this project and will be writing letter to local leaders. We invite your comments, suggestions and support. We will provide more information as it becomes available.

Thank you to all those who have opted for paperless newsletters. The effort continues, so if you have an e-mail address and are satisfied with reading the newsletter on your computer or phone, please choose the paperless (electronic) option. If you are not receiving the newsletter by e-mail and would like to do so, please forward your e-mail address to us at centralmnaudubon@gmail.com or dakneip@yahoo.com or you can add your e-mail address to your profile on the National Audubon website. Note that we distribute the Newsletter utilizing MailChimp so check your spam folder if you do not receive your e-mailed Newsletter.

CMAS is now on Facebook! Please follow us at:
<https://www.facebook.com/centralminnaudubonchapter/>

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Calendar

November 16 2022

CMAS Meeting
7 p.m.



Location: St. Cloud Library, Bremer Room
Speaker: Dr. Jennifer Lamb
Topic: Amphibians and Reptiles of Central MN

December 17, 2022
Christmas Bird Count
(see below)



January 18, 2023
CMAS Meeting
7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church
Speaker: Robin Moore
Topic: Land Stewardship Project



February 15, 2023
CMAS Meeting
7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church
Speaker: Angela McDonnell, SCSU

Christmas Bird Count with Brian Jungels

Join our Christmas Bird Count team on December 17th by meeting at the St. Cloud Unitarian Fellowship (3226 Maine Prairie Road, St. Cloud) at 7:00 a.m. New participants of all birding skills are surely welcome! Our count circle is 15 miles across with a center located between Waite Park and St. Joseph. All participants will be supplied with a map. I do have several sets of good binoculars I can borrow out. Plan to meet at Kay's Kitchen in St. Joseph at 1:00 p.m. to tally results. After lunch, some counters head out to cover territories that may not have been covered.

Contact Brian Jungels at junglesb09@gmail.com or by phone at 320-469-0876 with questions. People wishing to count birds at their feeders need to be within the count circle. Sitings three days prior or after the date can be included.

Importance of Pollinator Habitat - What, Why, and How?



Jason Selvog, Stearns SWCD Wildlife Habitat Specialist, was present to discuss the importance of pollinator habitat. He noted that most people just think of bees but bats, birds, butterflies, and other insects are also pollinators. 75% of flowering plants rely on pollinators. Honey bee pollination value has been estimated at \$14 - 19 billion dollars! With this in mind, colony collapse disorder (CCD) is a serious concern. CCD has been linked to parasites, increased herbicide and pesticide use, disease, and loss of habitat.

The Farm Bill has started talking about pollinators and has created a couple of programs to help. Jason discussed CP42 (CRP for pollinators) and EQiP: HBP (for honey bees). CP42 requires at least 9 different species of native forbs (three for each growing season flowering period... early, mid-summer and late so pollinators have a continuous source of food through the year). More species (35 - 40) are recommended. Jason noted that it doesn't cost a lot to add diversity. In addition, two native bunch grasses must be in the mix. Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem, Side-oats Grama, and Slender Wheat grass are preferable because they are not sod forming grasses (like Switch grass, Blue Grama, Buffalo grass and Western Wheat grass). Jason noted that flower size, color and shape all matter. He recommended planning according to soil type and moisture conditions. He stressed the importance of good site preparation.

CP42 must be at least 0.5 acres, but not more than 10 acres (or not more than 10% of the cropland acres per farm). Strips (when planted in that manner) must be at least 20 feet wide. Jason also discussed the methods for preparing and planting the seeds (broadcast and no-till planting) followed by maintenance during establishment and beyond.

Jason distributed flyers for programs that the Stearns SWCD has created. The Pollinator Habitat Program provides high-quality seed and technical assistance to restore and maintain habitats for free on property that doesn't qualify for the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The minimum size for this program is two acres and the contract length is 10 years.

The Backyard Habitat Program serves landowners of smaller parcels that don't qualify for the CP42 or Pollinator Habitat Programs. Habitat areas have to be a minimum of 0.25 acres with a maximum of 2 acres and contract length is (again) 10 years. This project does not allow grazing or haying the pollinator area during the contract period. The landowner is responsible for creating, establishing, and maintaining the area and could be required to pay back the SWCD if they don't maintain the plot(s), but the SWCD will help with technical assistance as needed. People that establish less than an acre can receive \$250 and those who establish 1 - 2 acres of pollinator habitat can receive \$500. Trees and shrubs are reimbursed at \$1/plant.

Jason noted that it will take 3-4 years for the native plants to reach maturity. There are 4,000 native bee species... and 70% nest in the ground (so direct access to bare ground is important). He added that native bees are five times more efficient than honey bees, but only travel between 2 - 300 yards.

Jason noted that prescribed fire is a great tool, but if that is not an option there is an alternative. Mow, mulch and rake at least every 4-5 years (with scarifying the soil to get the thatch off. Jason stressed the 3 rules... lots of diversity (40-60 species); size-shape-color diversity; and bloom time from April - October.



If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would have only four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man. ~Albert Einstein



Looking for ways to make a difference?

Donations are welcome for our fund to assist with continuing to print the newsletter and quality speakers to the meetings. If you choose to help out, please make out a check to Central MN Audubon Society (CMAS) and send it to our Treasurer, Kathy Doyle. THANK YOU SO MUCH!!



Rehabber Reflections by Linda Peck

A Happy Reunion

The Corvidae is a family of birds that includes the ravens, crows, and bluejays. Most mated pairs stay together until one member passes away. Courtship includes bowing and dancing by the male suitor. He also provides food treats for the female. One gift, a twig, is intended to encourage the female to start nest construction. Both parents care for the four to six nestlings. Unfortunately, mortality among the youngsters is high. Thankfully, adults can live up to 20 years.

The corvids are very intelligent birds and have an amazing communication system. Crows use 23 distinct forms of calls amongst themselves. They travel in family groups and have strong family ties. They are also very playful. One game observed by scientists involved a crow picking up an object (pebble, shell). It flies away with the object and is chased and bombarded by the other crows. The chase stops when the object is dropped. Is this their version of rugby? The corvids are also always on the alert and warn other birds when danger is near.

Crows are omnivores and are not appreciated by many farmers raising corn. One often sees flocks of crows in corn fields and, of course, one concludes they are eating corn. This is true, to some extent, but they are also catching the mice eating the corn so are helping the farmer.

One day, midsummer, I got a call from a family in St. Cloud. There was a flock of crows hanging out in the trees by their house, seemingly upset. They noticed one crow on the ground that wasn't able to fly. It was hiding under their car. John and I drove to St. Cloud with a net and a box and caught the crow. We couldn't discern why the bird wasn't flying but housed it for 10 days. We fed it many mice, grapes, meal worms, apple pieces, etc. After three to four days, the crow flew up on a perch and gained strength each day. We called the family in St. Cloud to get permission to release the crow at their place. Once out of the box, the crow flew to one of the nearby trees and started calling. It wasn't even seven minutes later that a flock of crows flew in and all sorts of additional crow "talk" ensued. I imagine some of the queries included:

"Where have you been? We missed you. We have been desperately looking for you. Glad you're back." Eventually they all flew away together. The family was united.

Thank you, thank you, thank you to Patrick McDowall for the most generous donation to CMAS for the newsletter and speaker funds! Your donation is SO appreciated!!

Crane Viewing - Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge - Saturday, October 22

The sandhill crane viewing trip at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge was excellent and well worth getting up early to attend. We started at the Oak Savanna Learning Center with a short introduction about the cranes, logistics, etc. We then followed the leader, a wildlife biologist at the refuge, in a caravan of vehicles to the crane viewing site. The site is located on a road, not open to the public, on a dike adjacent to several shallow pools where the cranes spend the night and early morning hours. We arrived right around sunrise to see and hear several thousand sandhill cranes awakening and getting ready to fly out and feed for the day. We watched and listened to the cranes as we were treated to a beautiful sunrise. There were also large numbers of coots, many Wilson's snipes, several bald eagles, and a variety of other waterfowl. As the sun rose and moved higher in the sky, the cranes began to fly out in different size groups. After about an hour and a half at the site, the tour was finished and we followed the wildlife biologist out the road to a different exit. Then Mike, Pam Pietz and I took advantage of the beautiful day and the close proximity of the Prairie's Edge Wildlife Drive to enjoy the drive where we saw a variety of other species of birds. It was a wonderful crane viewing trip and we highly recommend it! ~ Ellen Heneghan

Lights Out for Migration!

Migration happens at night as well as during the day. Birds that migrate at night can be thrown off course, disoriented, or collide with buildings due to lights. To help protect migrating birds, please consider turning off all non-essential lights from at least 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. during migration season. Shutting off lights over night also saves energy! Close blinds at night to reduce light emitted from windows and don't use landscape lighting near trees and gardens here birds may be resting. The most critical times to avoid using outdoor lights are March 15 - May 31 and August 15 - October 31.

Local Membership Available: Some CMAS members may wish to only belong to and support our local Audubon Society, without belonging to National Audubon and receiving Audubon magazine. This option is available at only \$20 per year and local members do receive our Green-Backed Gazette. Please let Kathy know if you want this option. Thank you!