

Central Minnesota Audubon
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ColdSpring, MN 56320-4700

Green-Backed Gazette

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 45

January 2023



President's Letter... by Dan Kneip

Hearth and Home

As I sit at our cozy kitchen table with a cup of coffee and watch the birds at the feeders in the back yard, I think of two words that are wonderfully comfortable at this time of year: Hearth and Home.

Dr. Google and Merriam-Webster tell me that the word, hearth, comes from Indo-European roots and refers to the base of the fireplace or firepit which in previous times was the center of the home. They go on to say that the word, hearth, can now be used to signify the original geographic location of civilizations, religions, and cultural centers. I wonder if this can be applied to our backyard birds.

Are the birds that come to my feeder the ones that have made my backyard their home? Are the four Chickadees that always come together the same four that fledged from the nest box near the lilacs this past summer? I do know that the flock of Turkeys are the ones that nested on the wooded hillside near our neighborhood. The Cardinals were probably fledged in the nearby woods, as I can see them as they make their way along the neighbors' shrubs and trees until they reach my backyard feeders. The Blue Jays and the Piliated Woodpecker are easily seen as they fly from the woods to the feeder. The Juncos obviously do not nest in this area, but the fact that the daily flock size is almost identical every day does suggest that they have adopted my neighborhood for their winter home for at least a few weeks. There are certainly more House Sparrows and Finches than were around all summer. I am grateful that all these birds have chosen my neighborhood for their winter hearth and home.

Our Central MN Audubon Chapter board has decided to endorse several programs this year. We will be writing letters to local authorities and organizations to adopt the Lights Out program during migration periods for our area. Businesses are encouraged to sign up on-line with Minnesota Audubon. In addition, we will be promoting the No Mow May program with letters to City Councils and publications. Our third program is to re-introduce Audubon Adventures Program for local elementary schools, grades three through five.

We strongly encourage your comments, suggestions, and support for these programs. Donations for Audubon Adventures sponsorships are welcomed. Each subscription kit (including physical magazines and on-line programs) cost \$45.95 (but any amount is helpful. More information for each program can be found on-line. *(more information at right)*



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



March 15, 2023
CMAS Meeting
7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church
Speaker: To Be Determined



April 19, 2023
CMAS Meeting
7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church
Speaker: To Be Determined



(President's letter continued)
<https://mn.audubon.org/conservation/lights-out-program>
<https://beelab.umn.edu/no-mow-may>
<https://audubonadventures.org/WhatIs.htm>

We continue with our efforts to bring you our Chapter Newsletter both by USPS and by e-mail. Only about 30% of our chapter members receive electronic copies of the newsletter. Please provide your e-mail address to us at centralmnadubon@gmail.com or dakneip@yahoo.com. *Note: we distribute the newsletter utilizing MailChimp, so check your spam folder if you have not received your e-mailed newsletter.

Central MN Audubon Society Officers

Dan Kneip, President (H) 320-761-8202
Hank Schreifels, Vice President (H) 320-250-3390
Open Position: Programs/Publicity
Linda Peck, Conservation (H) 320-685-3365
Nicki Blake-Bradley, Newsletter (H) 320-259-5524



Jonathan Fribley
Kathy Doyle, Treasurer
John Peck, Member At Large
Brian Jungels, Member At Large
Audubon MN Office

(H) 320-309-9446
(H) 320-470-0942
(H) 320-685-3365
(H) 320-469-0876
1-651-739-9332



Christmas Bird Count - 2022

This year, 15 individuals located birds of 42 separate species. Unusual sightings included a totally lost Great Blue Heron and a Green-Winged Teal. Thanks to all who participated! Here are the counts:

Canada Goose 1444

Wood Duck 2

Green-winged Teal 1

Ring-necked Pheasant 2

Rock Pigeon 127

Great Blue Heron 1

Sharp-shinned Hawk 1

Rough Legged Hawk 6

Red Bellied Woodpecker 25

Hairy Woodpecker 16

Pileated Woodpecker 11

Peregrine Falcon 1

Blue Jay 148

Common Raven 2

Red Breasted Nuthatch 9

Brown Creeper 6

American Robin 31

House Finch 94

American Goldfinch 25

American Tree Sparrow 8

Song Sparrow 1

Trumpeter Swan 118

Mallard 820

Common Merganser 14

Wild Turkey 127

Mourning Dove 22

Bald Eagle 24

Red-tailed Hawk 4

Great Horned Owl 1

Downy Woodpecker 56

Northern Flicker 4

Merlin 1

Northern Shrike 5

American Crow 233

Black-Capped Chickadee 211

White Breasted Nuthatch 88

European Starling 286

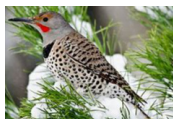
House Sparrow 109

Common Redpoll 16

Snow Bunting 10

Dark eyed Junco 134

Northern Cardinal 35



Attention: Blue Snow Alert...

it's not blue-raspberry flavored! Cottontail rabbits eat bark and small twigs in winter (as well as sunflower seeds on the ground). The color of their urine is usually a shade of yellow to brown, BUT if eating buckthorn (GO bunnies!) their urine will turn blue after about 10 minutes of being exposed to sunlight and oxygen! The blue color results from phytochemicals that buckthorn produces to fight off insects and fungi.



Bird Vernacular: Molting... a process whereby the bird proceeds to lose its flight feathers and grow new ones. As birds fly, their wings get beaten up and, over time, deteriorate. Waterfowl lose all their flight feathers at once and spend the time growing new ones in relative hiding. They will flap their wings and try to swim away from a threat as quickly as possible. Birds of prey lose one flight feather at a time so that they can continue to hunt.



Looking for ways to make a difference?

Donations are welcome for our fund to assist with continuing to print the newsletter, bring quality speakers to the meetings, or contribute to Audubon Adventures. 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. Her address is: 110 17th Ave. SE, St. Joseph, MN, 56374. It would be helpful for us if you identify where you want your donation to go (regarding the budget) or whether it is your local membership. **THANK YOU SO MUCH!!**

Now that we have learned to fly in the air like birds and dive in the sea like fish, only one thing remains: to learn to live on Earth like humans.

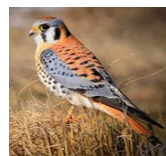
~George Bernard Shaw

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!

Did you know... there are 4 types of bird flight! *Flapping* is just what it sounds like... moving wings up and down to create lift. All birds use this technique at some point, but nearly always on take off. As the wing is lifted forward, the primary feathers separate to allow the air to move through, but then close tightly upon the downstroke. The part of the wing closest to the body acts as a lifting surface. *Static soaring* is when a bird steers and floats on an updraft. *Dynamic soaring* is what a large bird like a pelican uses to have the force of the moving air lift them up. *Gliding* is when a bird doesn't move its wings but moves through downdrafts.

Rehabber Reflections by Linda Peck

A Kestrel Story



It used to be called the Sparrow Hawk, but today birders refer to it as the American Kestrel. It is the smallest falcon in Minnesota. Although reported to be the most common of the falcons, I have noticed their numbers are way down where I live in Rockville. So often in the past, I'd observe them on electric lines looking for small rodents, small birds, and insects (especially grasshoppers). They would then suddenly swoop down to catch their dinner. NO LONGER do I see them. What has caused this, I do not know but it concerns me.

Kestrels have amazing eyesight and the ability to hover in the wind, much like a hummingbird over a blossom. Due to their small size it is one falcon that can use tree cavities for nesting. The sexes are easy to tell apart. The male has a rusty back with blue gray wings and blue gray crown with a rusty cap. The female has a rusty back, wings and breast streaking. Both have two distinct black facial stripes.

One summer, I got two kestrels that required rehabilitation - one male and one female. Both could fly but were not adept at acquiring food. They were housed together in a 12 foot by 12 foot rehab room with appropriate perches. Each day, I used an insect net to collect various insects that I emptied into the room. They also received dead mice on a stump. All seemed to be going as planned. They were flying, catching insects, and consuming the mice.

One morning, I noticed only one kestrel on the perches. Where was the other bird? As I cover the floor of each raptor room with debris - cut up leaves, etc. - I finally saw the female kestrel laying in the leaves. She was alive but with her beak slightly open and her breathing was short and labored. What had happened? Had she hit the wall? Not to add further stress, I let her be, deciding to return later and check on things. I returned several hours later to discover that she was still on the ground but still alive. But wait, it wasn't the female on the ground but the MALE. The female was on one perch looking just fine. What was going on? Eventually the male also recovered and after several days, both were released.

To this day, I do not know why this happened. My best guess is that I gave them a mouse that had been given to me but had been poisoned. It reminded me of how important it is to make sure raptor food is free of chemicals and poisons. Brings to mind the recent report from the Raptor Center trying to save bald eagles that have been poisoned by eating euthanized animals dumped at a landfill.

Hey there... CMAS is now on Facebook! Follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/centralminnaudubonchapter/> (no hyphen). Please also forward your photos of birds and birding to the site. Jonathan Fribley and Dan Kneip are the moderators of the site.