Central Minnesota Audubon
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NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 45 **April/May 2023**

President's Letter... by Dan Kneip

Spring Migration

We live in a region where the signs of Spring are often a result of migration. We all wait for the first Robin to be assured that Spring is on its way. This year may seem different, but we must admit that seeing Robins and Red-Winged Blackbirds, even in a snowstorm, does seem to signal that this long winter will eventually end.

Understanding migration has intrigued us for a long time and recent technical developments have greatly improved the accessibility of data collection. From the first recognition in the 1950's of radar as a tool for studying bird migration to today's BirdCast programs, we have accumulated a wealth of knowledge. A significant development has been our understanding of the perils faced by birds in their seasonal travel.

BirdCast started in 1999 and initially had a four-point objective.

1. Maintain a web site with educational information about migration and dangers ot birds.

2. Predicting and monitoring bird migration on a daily basis using weather radar.

3. Collecting reports of bird sighting from volunteers, this eventually led to our present day ebird.

4. To raise public awareness and sensitivity of migratory bird populations.

Since 2010, BirdCast has evolved greatly to its present form of predictive mapping and tools for the study of migration. We now even have a new emerging scientific discipline called "aeroecology", the study of ecological activity in the air. This scientific data is instrumental in many aspects of bird conservation from impacts of light pollution to siting and operation of wind turbines and mitigating bird collisions with aircraft. For more information on this and to use the migration tools, go to the BirdCast website: https://birdcast.info/

April is when we have our annual chapter meeting for all members. Not only do we choose Board members for the following year, but we also discuss the direction and activities for the coming year. We are setting the start time for the meeting at 6:30 p.m. so that members have additional time to express their views prior to the presentation from the evening speaker. Please join us!

In a press release dated March 16, the National Audubon Society (NAS) announced that it had decided to retain the name of the organization. The release reads in part:

"The decision was made taking into consideration many factors, including the complexity of John James Audubon's legacy and how the decision would impact NAS's mission to protect birds and the places they need long into the future. The organization will continue its non-partisan commitment to habitat conservation and climate action, its agenda-setting policy work, and community-building efforts to advance its mission."

You can read the full press release and additional information at the following link: https://www.audubon.org/news/national-audubon-society-announces-decision-retain-current-name

Calendar

Wednesday, April 19, 2023
CMAS Meeting
7 p.m.
Location: Unitarian Universalist Church
Speaker: Brian Dirks, DNR Wildlife Biologist
Topic: Golden Eagle Project & Camp Ripley Wildlife Research

Friday, April 21, 2023
Woodcock Outing, Sand Prairie Wildlife Management Area
6:30 p.m.
(see below)

Saturday, April 22, 2023
Bluebird Recovery Program Expo
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Registration required
Little Falls High School, 1001 5th Ave SE

Sunday, May 28, 2023
CMAS Picnic
*Noon - 'whenever'
Pecks' Homestead, 12299 Sauk River Road, Rockville
(one mile west of the bridge by Eagle Park)

*** We will eat at noon but please come a little earlier. As in the past, we'll share the picnic with members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Please bring something to share and your own plates, cups and utensils. Lawn chairs may be helpful, or a blanket if you prefer to sit on the ground.**

It's great fun and fellowship for all!

Woodcock Outing, Friday, April 21, 2023

Join fellow nature lovers in an outing to Sand Prairie Wildlife Management Area on the evening of Friday, April 21st. Plan on meeting at 6:30 at the kiosk near the highway. We will walk to the observation deck overlooking the marsh. On the way to the marsh, we can look for early spring migrants like meadowlarks and fox sparrows on the extensive prairie area. At the marsh, we should expect to see the full gamut of waterfowl (teal, widgeon, mallards, ring-necked ducks, mergansers and wod ducks) and other marsh dwellers like sandhill cranes and northern harriers. If you wish to stay until dark, we will hopefully see the courtship display of the American Woodcock.

The walk to the marsh is about 1.5 miles round trip. Even if it seems warm, consider bringing a heavy jacket. The observation deck can be surprisingly cold in mid-April Bring binoculars and a bird guide.

Sand Prairie WMA is located south of St. Cloud on Hwy 10 across from the reformatory. Look for the brown signs on Hwy 10.

Central MN Audubon Society Officers

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Hank Schreifels, Vice President	(H) 320-250-3390
Open Position: Programs/Publicity	
Linda Peck, Conservation	(H) 320-685-3365
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Kathy Doyle, Treasurer	(H) 320-470-0942
John Peck, Member At Large	(H) 320-685-3365
Brian Jungels, Member At Large	(H) 320-469-0876
Audubon MN Office	1-651-739-9332

Little Rock Lake Research

Dr. Matthew Julius started his presentation by giving those present a brief history of what has been learned about aquatic biology. He noted that two scientists, Naumann and Thenemann coined the phrases eutrophic (a lot of food), mesotrophic (some or good food) and oligotrophic (not so much food) to describe the amount of algae in a lake. Once Dr. Julius discussed the first leaders of ecology, he noted that there are three big groups of algae.

Cyanobacteria are often found in eutrophic lakes. They produce a starch that nothing can digest. Green Algae can be found in mesotrophic lakes and have some nutrition. Golden algae are generally found in oligotrophic lakes. Golden algae make an oil which is *really good* and a dietary essential. Zooplankton (the first animal in the foodchain) can be found eating one kind of golden algae in a lake. Dr. Julius noted that organisms locate the best food.

A 1970 dissertation warned about Little Rock Lake septics and too many people. In 1976, Little Rock Lake shifted to almost exclusively blue-green algae. When Dr. Julius started at SCSU, one of the first calls he received concerned the water quality of Little Rock Lake. He noted the lake has "a sociology problem not a science problem".

An interesting fact that Dr. Julius shared is that all the phosphorus (P) in the world has been mined. All the P resource is in circulation now and must be recycled. Too much P starts a shift in algae groups. A 20:1 ratio of Nitrogen (N) to P will foster golden algae, a 18:1 ratio favors green algae, and a 14:1 ratio will result in blue-green algae. The microcystin toxin created by blue-green algae destroys the liver.

In Canada, the water quality standard for blue-green algae microcystins is two micrograms per liter. Little Rock Lake averaged over 100 micrograms per liter (it should be noted that the scale stopped at 100). The Little Rock Lake Association did a septic survey and was able to determine that not a lot of new P is entering the lake.

DNR Fisheries manager, Eric Altena had the idea to conduct a drawdown of the Sartell Pool of the Mississippi River to attempt to "flush" the lake. A drawdown would increase the littoral zone (shallow water area of a lake where light reaches the bed of the lake and fosters vegetation growth that sucks up P and N). Increasing vegetation in the littoral zone would likely increase water quality. The drawdown was conducted in 2019 for six weeks from August to mid-September. The Lake Association and other volunteers planted aquatic vegetation in the littoral zone during the drawdown.

In the Spring of 2020, Dr. Julius and his students found golden algae in Little Rock Lake for the first time in 15 years! He noted that algal succession is from golden algae in spring shifting to green algae in mid-July. From August to September, there may be a shift to blue-green algae. In 2021, less golden algae were found in Little Rock Lake (a negative slope). Dr. Julius happily reported that 2022 was the best year we've had yet with regard to golden algae. He added that if there are diatoms and golden algae this year, he will be doing a happy dance!

Dr. Julius noted that there was good crappie fishing in 2021 in Little Rock Lake. The drawdown resulted in an amazing success story from single cell organisms to the fish.

ELECTIONS

April is the time that we hold our election for Board officers. Currently our slate is missing several positions, and we'd gladly accept nominations for the open spots from membership. The current nominations are:

President: Dan Kneip **Vice President: Hank Schriefels**
Secretary: Linda Peck **Treasurer: Open**
Newsletter: Nicki Blake-Bradley **Programs/Publicity: Open**
Member at Large: Jonathan Fribley **Member at Large: Brian Jungels**

The Board would like to extend a huge ***THANK YOU*** to Kathy Doyle for her many years as our Treasurer and to John Peck for his service in multiple board positions over the years! Their service has been so appreciated and will be missed, but creates an opportunity for others to serve our membership. It doesn't take a lot of time to serve in a position... please consider serving in whatever capacity you feel you would best fit.

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 President, Dan Kneip (until we have another Treasurer) at the Chapter address on the front of the newsletter. 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!!

MEETING DOOR PRIZES

Meeting door prizes are back! Prizes may be books, bird oriented gifts, or food items... you have to attend to find out! Congratulations to Brian Jungels for winning the March prize... a book: Bird Sense... What it is Like to be a Bird by Tim Birkhead.

NO MOW MAY UPDATE

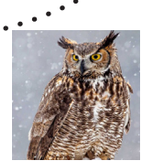
Thank you to the many city staff and council members in Central Minnesota who are taking time to consider No Mow May resolutions.

* Clearwater adopted No Mow May on 2/3/23. Foley adopted on 4/4/23.
*Melrose, St. Joseph, Waite Park, Paynesville, and Holdingford are considering allowing No Mow May at their April meetings.
* Albany and Big Lake have not formally adopted No Mow May, but support the participation by city residents and will not send out mowing citations until after June 1st.
* Elk River considered in on March 20th. They would like to hear more support from residents and will consider it again in 2024.
* St. Augusta does not have a long grass ordinance, so residents can participate.
* Rice and Cold Spring voted not to support No Mow May.
* Our largest cities, St. Cloud, Sartell, and Sauk Rapids don't yet have resolutions on their council agendas.
* Other cities have been contacted for updated information.

Want to do more? Please call your council members and express your support of No Mow May. Also a shout out to a fellow conservation organization! The St. Cloud Wild Ones Chapter shared our No Mow May materials with their members and encouraged participation. Wild Ones promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities. Questions about No Mow May? Contact Hank.schreifels@gmail.com or 320-250-3390.

Did you know... Linda Peck still has educational birds that need to be fed! Please bring trapped or road killed (*not poisoned*) rodents or rabbits, including mice, squirrels, and pocket gophers to a meeting or to their house. Questions? Please call Linda at 320-685-3365

Rehabber Reflections by Linda Peck



Ravens in Winter by Bernd Heinrich details this scientist's study of the behavior and survival skills needed by ravens in winter in the forests of Maine. I read this book the year I received three ravens to rehabilitate.

Ravens are the largest of the Corvidae and cousins of crows and bluejays. They are not common residents of central Minnesota. They prefer hanging out further north where they have an interesting partnership with the timber wolf.

Important things I learned from Heinrich's book: 1) Ravens do not need liquid water to drink. They actually chisel chips of ice with their wedge shaped bills which they simply swallow. 2) Normally solitary birds, they come together in winter to obtain and share food. When together, a social hierarchy is often times established. 3) They make more different vocalizations than any other birds. 4) They are very wary and prefer to keep 1/4 mile away from people. 5) They travel with a timber wolf pack and share kills.

The most amazing observations I was privy to happened when a conservation officer brought me part of a frozen deer carcass. This I placed in the center of the room. The three ravens were together on a perch. Eventually one decided to investigate by flying back and forth over the deer. Was it alive? Could it attack? Once deemed safe, this raven chiseled off pieces of meat and brought them to the two still on the branch. This raven did not eat anything itself until the other two had their fill and had left the carcass. In the hierarchy of things, was this raven the brave one or the sacrificial lamb?

The time came for release - but where? As luck would have it, a presentation on ravens was taking place in the Twin Cities. The presenter was Jim Brandenburg, award winning wildlife photographer who lives in northern Minnesota. Jim is acclaimed for his photos of timber wolves. I attended his talk and was able to talk with him about the ravens. He said ravens were the most difficult animals to photograph due to their wariness. He had been able to photograph them because they traveled with wolves. He agreed to take the ravens and actually visited my home to see them.

Transporting the ravens to Jim's was a challenge. We stupidly placed them in cardboard boxes which they successfully chiseled escape holes in. It took many box changes to reach Jim's house. Luckily, they were released outside at Jim's and had not escaped inside our car.

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!