

Central Minnesota Audubon
212 17th Ave. S
ColdSpring, MN 56320-4700

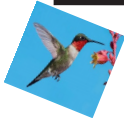
Green-Backed Gazette

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 46 Mailing address: 212 17th Avenue South, Cold Spring, MN 56320 October 2023



President's Letter... by Dan Kneip Birding is Beneficial



My last hummingbird sighting this year was on Friday 22 September. The bird looked like it had slept on the feeder, as it was sitting there when I opened the blinds in the morning. I had been tempted to take down the feeder several days earlier but every time I checked, there would be a hummingbird or two still feeding. This sighting is two days later than last year.

This is also an example of phenology, the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena. Our natural tendency as birders to make lists and annotations of what, when and where we are seeing birds is important in many ways.

A recent on-line Q&A session on migration by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology revealed that it is the female and juvenile Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds that are the last to leave on their Fall migration. Males tend to leave our area by late August. Studies have also shown that the fall migration route is more leisurely for the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird as it follows the overland route around the Gulf of Mexico through Texas to its overwintering areas in Mexico and Central America. There are several hummingbird festivals held in different Texas towns that celebrate the arrival of the migrating hummingbirds in September.

The Spring Migration is a much more hurried affair, and the birds often travel non-stop across open water of the Gulf to reach the North American mainland. This is quite a feat for such a small bird.

How do we know about the routes and migration of hummingbirds? It is through the citizen science platforms such as eBird and Breeding Bird Survey, that much of the data is gathered for these studies of migration patterns. One more reason to go birding and record your findings on eBird or participate in BBS. Isn't it good to know that doing something you like can be so beneficial to science and our knowledge of the natural world?

CMAS is invested in providing interesting speakers for our monthly programs and has invested in a Zoom subscription so that both members and speakers can participate from on-line settings as well as maintaining the in-person option. Join us in October either through Zoom or in person for our program. To receive the access link to participate via Zoom, send an e-mail by the 17th of October to centralmnaudubon@gmail.com

Our newsletter, the Green-backed Gazette, is published eight times per year. Seven editions are sent by mail and by e-mail. The Summer edition is only sent by e-mail to those who have provided an e-mail address. Additionally, we are promoting a paperless option for those who are willing to receive the newsletter in electronic format only. Approximately 40% of our members have provided an e-mail and just over 10% have chosen the paperless option. Help us by providing your e-mail to centralmnaudubon@gmail.com and signing up for a paperless newsletter. This not only reduces our costs but also greatly helps the environment by reducing paper usage.

Thank you's go out to the following people for donations to CMAS: Dick & Annette Schoenberger ; Tess King; and Frank Roehl

Your donations truly make a difference!



Calendar Oct 8 - St. John's University's Conservation Field Day (\$40 registration)



Oct 12,14,19,21 and 25 - Sherburne National Wildlife
Refuge Crane tours



October 18, 2023
CMAS Meeting
7 p.m.



Location: ZOOM and Unitarian Universalist Church

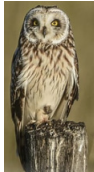
Subject: Birds of Sax Zim Bog
Presenter: Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus



October 21, 2023
Buckthorn Busting at Avon Hills SNA (see page 2)



October 23-27, 2023
World Owl Conference
LaCrosse, WI



This is the first time that there has been a World Owl Conference in the USA, and these conferences only happen every 3 - 10 years. The event will include research presentations from around the world with heavy emphasis on North America and Europe and quite a few presentations on Short-eared Owls, Snowy Owls, and Burrowing Owls. Anyone can register to attend and there are single-day and virtual registration options. Check out the conference website.

Did you know... that birds do not have a diaphragm?

Instead, birds have 7 or 9 air sacs inside their bodies besides their lungs, both above (anterior) and below (posterior) the lungs. The anterior air sacs extend into the humerus (wing bones). The air sacs function as bellows that keep the air moving. The sternum must be able to move for the bird to breathe (so holding a bird too tightly could actually suffocate them).

Expanding the sternum creates negative pressure in the air sacs, allowing air in. The posterior air sacs fill on inhalation first, with air also filling the lungs and anterior air sacs. Parabronchii (air tubes) in the lungs allow for one way air movement. As exhalation occurs (by contracting muscles), the air leaves the anterior air sacs through the trachea because the air cannot re-enter the lungs.

Due to this complex cycle, the respiratory system of birds is more efficient at moving oxygen, which is likely necessary for flight.

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Birding in the Russian and Mongolian Altai



SCSU Professor Mikhail “Misha” Blinikov delivered a presentation regarding the birds of the Russian and Mongolian Altai. He began by informing those present that the Altai mountains are in an area of central Asia where four countries converge (China, Russia, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan).

Misha did not go to the Russian and Mongolian altai for birding, but rather on an expedition to gather lake sediment cores for research. Birds are a hobby (dare we say passion?) of Misha’s, so he enjoyed birding on his trip and shared what species he could have seen and did actually see while there. It was a whirlwind tour of the birds! Through his photos and maps, we were able to get an idea of the terrain and remote areas that he explored on his trip. He challenged those present to identify a small tent-like structure on the shore of the lake where they camped... it was the restroom/toilet (there were no trees)! The Altai has very little in the way of trees or even roads in most areas but many, many species of birds if you just know where to look. More information regarding Misha’s presentation will be forthcoming once the newsletter editor finds her notes from the meeting. For now, enjoy the one bird (besides eagles) she remembered Misha discussing... the Demoiselle Crane.



Door Prize...

Congratulations to Mike Heneghan for winning the September door prize, a bird feeder donated by our esteemed President, Dan Kneip!



Bird Profile: Wood Duck

Wood Ducks are very shy and flush easily when people are nearby. Wood Ducks nest in holes in trees. Removal of dead (or dying... hollow) trees has resulted in a shortage of nesting spots. Because of this (and competition for what natural holes are left), they readily use properly positioned and prepared artificial wood duck houses.



Wood ducks come back to Minnesota early to mid-March. Most Wood Ducks are at their preferred breeding grounds by late April. These sites have dense vegetation, whether it is in a pond with cattail fringe or a stream with brush and trees overhanging the banks. Areas with oak trees are favored for the acorns that may be available yet.

Constructing and putting up Wood Duck houses is a good way to help provide nesting spots, but you should be careful to follow a good design to prevent making an easy meal for predators (either the eggs or the female... or both).

Possibly the most important design detail is the entrance. The opening for the Wood Duck house should be elliptical in shape and 3"x4" in size. Any larger and a raccoon or opossum may be able to get in. Squirrels are also predatory (on the eggs at least), so consideration for placement becomes a concern, as they will readily be able to get inside the hole.



The box itself should be deep and roomy. If you supply at least 100 square inches of space and have at least 18" from the hole to the base, Wood Ducks will be happy (squirrels like them, too). Attach a strip of galvanized hardware cloth (wire mesh) to the inside of the box from near the floor to the hole opening for the ducklings to be able to climb out. Last, but not least is to add a base material for nesting... wood shavings, sawdust, or wood chips. Three to five inches of material will suffice.

The best location to place a Wood Duck house appears to be a tree with open, spreading branches near water. Wood Duck boxes on oak or cottonwood trees are frequently successful. Mount the box at least 8' above ground so that the entrance is visible without an obstruction to block the hen's view as she approaches the house. Height is not an issue for the ducklings. They bounce! Make sure it does not tip backwards or the ducklings will be unable to climb out. Having a slight forward tip may make it harder for predators to help themselves to a free dinner.

Because of the lack of suitable nesting spots, multiple female Wood Ducks may use the same nest box with the most dominant being the incubator.

"Dump nests" can contain as many as 50 eggs from multiple females (12 - 15 eggs is a normal clutch).



Incubation starts about 12 days after the first egg is laid and takes around 23-25 days for the ducklings to hatch. Within 24 hours of hatching, the mother will call her brood down and lead them away to the dense vegetation.



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 President, Dan Kneip. THANK YOU SO MUCH!!

DNR Has Paused Logging On Federally Aided Hunting Lands



Environmental concerns from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and complaints from DNR Forestry and Wildlife have been heard. The concern is that the sale of timber must be for wildlife purposes. The timber in question is primarily on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs), an area in total of approximately 1.4 million acres.

In 2018, the DNR launched an expanded logging program due to a request from the forest products industry that would allow the sale of 870,000 cords of wood from all DNR managed lands (including WMAs and AMAs). The FWS approves of logging on those lands when the logging is for the benefit of wildlife.

On September 8th, DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen requested the leadership of the Wildlife, Forestry, and Ecological and Water Resources Divisions work together to develop a continuous improvement plan to address the issues that have been identified.

The DNR's mission is to work with Minnesotans to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

It is a balancing act that can be challenging to meet the needs of the public. Not every person is going to be completely content with the decisions that are made. Efforts for continuous improvement are a central focus at the DNR.



Buckthorn Bustin' Event Near YOU!

Need to get some aggression out? Want a great workout? Just plain bored? Come help bust some buckthorn at Avon Hills SNA on October 21st from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.! For more info or to sign up, contact Kelly Randall at 651-259-5070 or via e-mail at kelly.randall@state.mn.us

New Committees to Join

At the September Board Meeting, committees for membership, programs, conservation, field trips, publicity, education, and social media were formed with Board members who have already been working in these areas as leaders. Any member is welcome to join a committee! We believe it is best to have a team approach to the various tasks of the club, so please know that if you have an interest in any of the following committees, you are welcome! Just contact a member of the Board that is listed for the committee and you're in! How easy is that?



Membership: Dan Kneip, Nicki Blake-Bradley

Programs: Hank Schreifels

Conservation: Linda Peck, Hank Schreifels

Field Trips/Outings: Team (all Board members)

Publicity/Newsletter: Nicki Blake-Bradley

Education: Dan Kneip

Webpage/Facebook: Jonathan Fribley, Dan Kneip



2023 Drought Continues

Recent rains across the state make people want to think that the drought of 2023 is over. Unfortunately, some of our rivers have not yet recovered from the drought despite the rainfall we've received. When water levels drop below a certain flow (referred to as the Q90), surface water appropriation permits have to be suspended. This is intended to allow enough water to remain in the rivers for ecosystem services (such as keeping fish and invertebrates alive).

The Sauk River has been particularly hit hard, with flows dropping as low as 1.35 cubic feet per second (cfs). The Q90 for the Sauk River is 42 cfs. On October 3rd, the Sauk River's flow was up to 4.2 cfs. The Mississippi River at Sauk Rapids was so low, people were walking across it (similar to 2021). The Mississippi's flow dropped as low as 970 cfs; its Q90 is 2,450 cfs. On October 3rd, the Mississippi River's flow was 2,030 cfs (it has a much larger watershed contributing flow).

Lawn watering is considered a non-essential use of water. It's nice to have a green lawn, but it is not necessary for people's health. The University of Minnesota Extension Service recommends that people adjust lawn watering to reflect what is actually happening with regard to rainfall... don't just "set it and forget it". Some citations have occurred due to that.

If grass has not gone dormant but actually has died as a result of drought, consider planting drought resistant grasses, such as fescues. Set your lawn mower's height upward (3" or greater) rather than lower so that grass is not cut (injured) as often (which makes it need more water). Taller grass lengths reduce the potential for weed infestation by shading the soil. Also, "train" your grass to be more drought tolerant by watering LESS, not more often. This will promote root growth to reach groundwater. Finally, water in the early hours of the day to maximize water absorption for the plants. If you are on a city water supply system, you're paying for every gallon (and more if you use higher volumes)!

Local Membership: Some CMAS members may wish to only belong and support our local Chapter, without belonging to National Audubon and receiving the Audubon magazine. Local members do receive our Green-Backed Gazette. Membership cost is \$20 annual or \$15 annual if you choose to receive the newsletter electronically only (paperless). Please contact a board member if interested in this option.