

Central Minnesota Audubon  
212 17th Ave. S  
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# Green-Backed Gazette

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## NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 46

Nov/Dec 2023

### President's Note, by Dan Kneip



Several years ago, I had the privilege of seeing an exhibition of part of the National Geographic sponsored "Photo Ark Project" by Photographer Joel Sartore. This is a multi-year project that started in 2006 with the objective of photographing all species of animals. So far approximately 14,000 species have been photographed. The project aims to use photography to inspire people to help protect at-risk species before it is too late. The exhibit was beautiful, impressive, and piqued an interest in how art can be used to promote animal conservation. You can learn more about this project at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/society/our-programs/photo-ark/>

This past summer in a visit to the St. Paul Science Museum with the grandkids, we had the pleasure of enjoying the "Exquisite Creatures" exhibit by the artist and naturalist Christopher Marley featuring animal specimens arranged in geometric patterns. The artist uses preserved specimens of insects, seashells, crystals, lizards, and bird skins. The varieties and bright colors are impressive and quite striking. A tribute by the Smithsonian states: "Christopher Marley has used his skills as a designer, conservator, taxidermist, and environmentally responsible collector to make images and mosaics that produce strong, positive emotional responses in viewers... While his work is motivated by aesthetics, many of the artist's mosaics tell scientific stories, particularly those that include organisms that are genetically related but live in different parts of the world... He painstakingly arranges according to color to highlight their striking visual relationships."

This month we are joining with St John's Outdoor University, CSB/SJU Art Club, and local artist Laura Ruprecht who has created an exhibit of mosaics promoting bird conservation. CMAS is hosting speaker Jaqueline Fallon of the Midwest Peregrine Society to speak at SJU Art Center on November 15th. The recovery of a viable wild population of Peregrine Falcons is a welcome positive story that should make all bird enthusiasts happy. Come and see the exhibit which runs from November 6th -20th. See an on-line sample of Laura's work at: [www.lauralizmosaic.biz.com](http://www.lauralizmosaic.biz.com)

All three of these exhibits demonstrate how art can promote awareness and the need for conservation.

(President's Note continued on page 2)

**Special Announcement:** Linda Peck no longer needs trapped or road-kill rodents, rabbits, and squirrels to feed her educational raptors. She has re-homed the birds and stated that they will be taken to the Garrison Animal Hospital. Thanks go out to all those who have provided critters to help offset the cost of feeding the raptors over the years!

Special thanks go out to Leona Wieland, Merle Sykora, and Dr. Nathan Winkelman for donations to CMAS in October! You are truly making a difference!

### Central MN Audubon Society Officers

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### Calendar

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

7 p.m. **CMAS Meeting**

Location: St. John's University Art Building  
(see page 2 for more details)

Subject: Peregrine Falcon Recovery

Presenter: Jacqueline Fallon, Midwest Peregrine Society



Saturday, December 2, 2023

9 am - noon **FREE Backyard Bird Feeder building event**

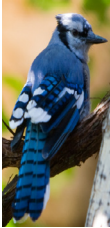
Location: Crane Meadows NWR

Sedge Meadow Classroom (19502 Iris Rd, Little Falls, MN 56345)

Saturday, December 16, 2023

**Christmas Bird Count**

(see page 2 for details)



Wednesday, January 17, 2024

7 p.m. **CMAS Meeting**

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church

Subject: Current land stewardship projects at the Abbey Arboretum and Outdoor University programming

Speakers: John Geissler, Director - Saint John's Outdoor U



Wednesday, February 21, 2024

7 p.m. **CMAS Meeting**

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church

Subject: Birding Adventures

Speaker: Ellen and Mike Heneghan



Wednesday, March 20, 2024

7 p.m. **CMAS Meeting**

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church & ZOOM

Subject: Carnegie Nature Center

Speaker: To Be Confirmed

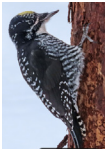


Wednesday, April 17, 2024

7 p.m. **CMAS Meeting**

Location: St. Cloud Library

Speaker: Stan Tekeila



## Birds of the Sax-Zim Bog

Clinton Dexter-Nienhaus, head naturalist for the Friends of Sax-Zim Bog (FOSZB) joined CMAS virtually via ZOOM to present information about the Sax- Zim Bog. First, he answered the question “What is the Sax-Zim (S-Z) Bog?”

It’s an area in northwest MN of 147,000 acres, designated by the Audubon Society and Bird Life International as an Important Birding Area (IBA) based upon habitat, bird life, and conservation needs. Clinton identified that he prefers to consider the greater S-Z Bog ecosystem, which extends beyond the IBA to encompass 250,000 - 500,000 acres. The area is southeast of Hibbing, northwest of Hermantown, and west of Hwy 53, about one hour from Duluth. Glacial Lake Upham was identified as the driver of the habitat that is there.



FOSZB is a 501(c)3 organization that organized in 2010 to preserve and protect land through preservation, education, research, and communication. Regarding preservation, over 4,200 acres have been protected. This includes eight properties, two wilderness properties and the Welcome Center property. People have been birding there since the 1960’s. There are three full-time staff, six board members, and four seasonal staff. Seasons are December - March (winter) and June - August (summer). Volunteers include the Board, Welcome Center Hosts (7-10), Kestrel monitoring (10-12), and Citizen Scientists (5-7). FOSZB is not a true “membership” organization. To be a “bog buddy”, one simply needs to donate \$25 or more per season. FOSZB has roughly 1,500 members. On Volunteer Day, members may help build board walks or work on other projects.

Nearly 3,500 species have been documented in the Sax Zim Bos so far! FOSZB offers an educational program in the spring, summer and winter that include field trips with a master naturalist. Winter is considered late November to April. It is the busiest season. They’ve had as many as 5,500 visitors in the winter, with fewer in the summer (due to biting flies and mosquitoes). Trails are marked with 4 boardwalks scattered through the properties.



Boreal forest specialists are year round residents, with arctic birds wintering there. Boreal Chickadees have a brown cap, black chin, and rusty sides. They are easier to find in the winter because they prefer dense, thick bog areas. Black-backed Woodpeckers have three toes instead of four and prefer black spruce and tamarack areas. Canada Jays are also easier to find in winter because they move around a lot. Great Gray Owls are largest by height (not weight) and what people want to see most when traveling to the S-Z Bog. Northern Shrikes are only seen here in winter. They inhabit an area from boreal forest to the arctic. Clinton noted that they aren’t technically raptors, but they do eat meat. Pine Grosbeaks reliably winter in the S-Z Bog area. They leave the first week in March for Canada and Alaska. Redpolls are much more variable... some years can see as many as 300-400 but others not so much. They are an arctic species that winters here. White-winged Crossbills are also arctic species. They prefer small to medium conifers (spruce), while the Red Crossbills prefer large conifers (white pine). Northern Hawk-Owls have nested in the S-Z Bog, but have variable numbers. They’re difficult to find on their breeding grounds. They vocalize during the day. Snowy Owls don’t stick around in the winter. The S-Z Bog area sees most during migration. 10 of the 12 species of owl in MN have been seen in the S-Z Bog (there are lots of voles). FOSZB runs a fund-raiser in early January called the Brrrdathon.

Spring is mid-April to June. 120 species have been found nesting in the S-Z Bog area. Regarding insects, some reach their southern (or northern) range limits here. It is very diverse! Migration is difficult to bird. Early wildflowers can be seen the second week in May. LOTS of waterfowl can be seen, particularly the dabblers like Cinnamon Teal. Horned Lark are scarce in spring, they don’t breed there. Ruffed Grouse are commonly heard drumming in the Spring. Sharp-tailed Grouse are becoming rare and Spruce Grouse are beginning to show up. Warblers, such as Pine, Palm, Black and White, and Yellow-Rumped begin to show up in late April. 20-22 species nest there. Five species of owls will be present - Long Eared, Northern Saw-whet, Great Horned, Great Gray, and Barred. Kestrels start in April. They have 52 boxes and so far 88 chicks have been banded this year (over 400 total so far).



Summer is June - August when most of the 3400+ species can be viewed. LeConte’s Sparrows can be seen in hay fields (grasslands) as well as Dickcissel, Bobolink, and Sedge Wrens. Magpies have been viewed as well. Sand hill Cranes are normally larger flocks of non-breeding birds. Scarlet Tanagers and Wood Thrushes can be found along rivers. Bog breeders are warblers, Hermit Thrushes, and flycatchers (Yellow-Breasted, Least, and Alder) all using different habitats. S-Z Bog has the most Golden-winged Warblers nesting in the world!

Fall is mid-August to mid-November. Birding is hard. It’s a great time to see beautiful fall colors though, with maples in September and Tamaracks (the only deciduous conifer) in October. Rough-legged Hawks like black spruce forests and can be seen during the Fall migration. Rusty Blackbirds are bog breeders that have lost 90% of their population. October is a good time to see them at lake edges or at puddles in pastures. Snow Buntings begin to come in mid-October as well.



### 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!!**

### President’s Note (continued from page 1)

I want to thank all the CMAS members who have taken the time to forward suggestions and interesting articles and projects to the board. Our chapter can only grow better and serve its members more aptly with contributions like those mentioned below.

- Pam Pietz forwarded information on an article in the Fall issue of Bird Conservation citing studies showing that changing lights on tall communication towers from steady-burning to flashing is a “win-win” for all concerned. It “improves visibility and therefore airline safety and saves operators energy and maintenance costs --- all while cutting migratory bird collisions by as much as 70%.” The article provides a link to a website tool [songbirdsaver.org](http://songbirdsaver.org) that allows users to identify owners of towers and instructs on ways to write letters and request lighting changes.
- Jerry Dirks commented on an article on Natural Buckthorn Control by the Minnesota Horticultural Society as well as Doug Tallamy’s Homegrown Natural Park project which encourages all to convert their lawn to native plants: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>
- Thank you to Amy Bergman for sending us a speaker suggestion which we will take into consideration.

**CMAS is planning to re-establish a web page for the chapter and is looking for comments, suggestions, and guidance on what our members will expect and want from our own web page. Together we can build this!**

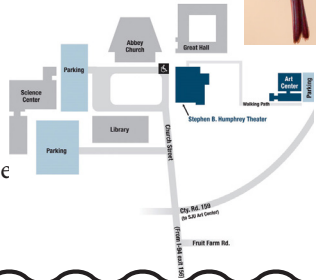
### November 15 Meeting (continued from page 1 - calendar)

There will be quite a bit of walking for some and limited parking and handicapped parking adjacent to the art building. The art gallery will be open at 6 p.m. for viewing Laura’s beautiful mosaics. The program will start at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.

**Please park at: 2850 Abbey Plaza, Collegeville, MN 56321**  
The Art building’s address: West Art Lot, St. John’s Rd, Collegeville, MN 56321



In the map at the right, the building furthest to the right is the Art building. Limited parking is there; other parking is near the building that is furthest to the left (the Science Center).



### Door Prizes

Lyle Bradley was a former science teacher at Anoka High School and an avid birder from an early age. He loved learning and collected many books for his personal library. Two of his books were offered as door prizes at the October meeting. Congratulations to Noah Ellefson for receiving Prairie, Lake, Forest Minnesota State Parks by Doug Ohman and Chris Niskanen. Congratulations to Hank Schreifels for receiving MN Birds Photos by Marcia Johnson.

Door prizes at the meetings may be books, puzzles, feeders, food items, or “other”. Participation is voluntary, but winners must be present to win!

### Christmas Bird Count with Brian Jungels

**Join our Christmas Bird Count team on December 16th 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](mailto: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.**

**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.