

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

Green-Backed Gazette

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ST. CLOUD, MN



NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 45 Summer 2023



President's Letter... by Dan Kneip BIRD ENTHUSIASTS-

We have been called Bird Watchers, which was changed to just Birders and now quite often we are referred to as Bird Enthusiasts. I do like that last term as it really demonstrates how we feel about birds.

This enthusiasm was clearly demonstrated to me recently when in a span of about 10 days I was able to observe enthusiasm in three different situations and groups of people spanning all ages.

I received an invitation to talk about birds with a visit to the local Grafton school, a school dedicated to the treatment of children who have suffered challenging trauma and behavioral disabilities. The teacher Jen Wirz had already been using the web site "Audubon for Kids" and had asked the students to choose a favorite bird they were most interested in. The students had a remarkable enthusiasm for the birds they chose and had so much knowledge that I was greatly impressed. The questions were non-stop and most of them I was not able to answer as my knowledge was so limited in comparison to the student's inquisitive nature. Why does a catbird imitate cat?

My second visit was to the Monticello Care Center, an invitation received by and referred to CMAS by our Minnesota State Audubon Engagement Manager. I met with a group of residents who although they had some mobility issues had no lack of enthusiasm in their love and enjoyment of birds. We had a long conversation and exchanged many stories of birds and observations of the most memorable moments of bird watching both in the past and in the present. Again, the questions were non-stop and regrettably I was unprepared to answer many of them. I needed to resort to the internet to find out that the loon, unlike a duck, only lays 1-2 eggs per clutch. The favorite birds of this group of residents were the Cardinal and the Robin.

The third group of bird enthusiasts was encountered when we accepted an invitation from the Brainerd area MN Master Naturalists Chapter to participate in a Grebe viewing conducted by the Alexandria MN based non-profit "Let's Go Fishing". We met at the Lake Osakis South boat launch and boarded a comfortable 12-seat pontoon boat with an able and well-informed crew of two. We proceeded to spend a good two hours observing the Western Grebe in all their aspects of courtship ceremonies and nesting. We did see the full rushing ceremony starting with the head bobbing and culminating in the rushing or dancing on water. We also witnessed the weed ceremony starting with the neck stretching, diving, and ending with a spiraling dance around each other while holding a piece of aquatic vegetation between them.

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
E-mail Address: centralmnaudubon@gmail.com



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



Calendar



Saturday, July 29: St. John's Outdoor U Summer Pollinators Program

pre-registration preferred, but not required
Using the pollinator garden near the Abbey Guesthouse as a guide, learn about the process of pollination in its many forms, different types of pollinators, and how we can support the pollinators around us.

- 10:00-11:30 a.m.
 - Meet in front of the Peter Engel Science Center (the pollinator garden is to the south, between the science building and the Abbey Guesthouse)
 - FREE - Outdoor U Members & CSB/SJU Students
 - \$5 - Nonmembers (\$10 max per family)
- see also UofM - Master Naturalists program looking for volunteer birders to teach students about birds:
<https://minnesotamasternaturalist.wordpress.com/2023/06/08/bird-by-bird-volunteers-needed/>



Wednesday, September 20, 2023 CMAS Meeting

7 p.m.
Location: Unitarian Universalist Church
Speaker: Mikhail "Misha" Blinikov, SCSU
Topic: Birding in the Russian and Mongolian Altai



NO MOW MAY UPDATE



Holdingford, Foley, Clearwater, Waite Park, and Sauk Rapids adopted No Mow May in April of 2023, effective in 2023. St Cloud adopted No Mow May in May of 2023, effective in May of 2024. Sauk Centre, Melrose, Albany and Big Lake did not officially adopt No Mow May, but will allow and encourage city residents to participate in May of 2023.

Thank you to the many city staff and council members who took the time to learn about No Mow May and take action to allow residents to participate.
Thank you to Hank and Lisa Schreifels for all their hard work putting together information and making contacts with the city staff and officials! You've made a lasting difference for pollinators, Hank and Lisa! Kudos!!



President's Letter (Continued from page 1)

We saw many other birds on the lake, including Forster Terns, Cormorants, numerous ducks, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Black terns, and an elusive Sora Rail. This group of bird enthusiasts came from different areas and has varying other interests, some had expensive cameras, others just a cell phone camera, but all had considered it worthwhile to devote a Thursday morning to observing a rare and impressive bird in its natural habitat. I strongly suggest we promote this type of outing at CMAs for next Spring.

The three groups clearly have shown that bird enthusiasts are a healthy group that is not limited by age or life situation.

We have finished our first post pandemic season of CMAS in-person meetings and speaker programs. During this past year we have learned from our local Stearns County authorities about hazardous waste disposal, and about the importance and support for pollinator habitat. We have had presentations from SCSU educators on their on-going research projects. We have heard from the Land Stewardship Project on their work to promote sustainable agriculture and from the DNR biologist from Camp Ripley on their on-going research.

We hope to provide a similar program of speakers for the 2023-2024 season, starting in September when our own CMAS member Mikhail "Misha" Blinnikov, Professor of Geography, SCSU will present on his recent trips with the topic "Birding in the Russian and Mongolian Altai". The meetings are open to the public as well as CMAS members and we invite all to attend.

Note that this summer's Newsletter is being distributed only to members who have provided an e-mail for electronic delivery. Our September Newsletter will again be distributed both by USPS and by e-mail using MailChimp. If you know of any CMAS members who are not yet receiving their newsletters by e-mail, urge them to sign up by sending their e-mail address to centralmnaudubon@gmail.com.

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 Ellen H. for winning the book *The Original Watercolor Paintings for the Birds of America* by John James Audubon and to Steve D. for winning the Central MN Audubon Society t-shirt!

Did you know... the European House Sparrow (a.k.a. English Sparrow) are not sparrows at all? They are a weaver bird! These pesky birds were introduced to the United States in 1850 from England in order to eat the caterpillars that were infesting the trees. Like many invasive species, these birds flourished and began crowding out native species in just a few years. While "English Sparrows" tend to nest in urban areas or at least near people, native sparrows nest in woodland areas (although chipping sparrows have been known to nest in heavily treed developments).



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



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!!



2023 Drought Conditions...

Summer heat has been and continues to be oppressive. Lack of precipitation has put parts of Minnesota into severe drought conditions. The Sauk River and Mississippi River St. Cloud Watersheds have reached critical low levels already this summer. As a result, many surface water appropriation permits have been suspended. They cannot be reinstated until the water levels are above the threshold for five consecutive days. Suspensions happen to preserve ecosystem services.

Please help birds survive the heat and lack of water by supplying basins of water or filling bird baths frequently. If a sprinkling ban is on, there is still a way to supply water for the birds. Hang a hose over a shallow basin or bird bath and turn it on to drip water into the basin... birds will hear the dripping sound and find the water. Consider installing a fountain or a mini pond. You could be saving lives!

ELECTIONS Update

April is the time that we hold our election for Board officers. The currently elected board members are:

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



MDA Set Over 20,000 Traps to Survey for Spongy Moth

Traps were set by survey staff in July throughout the eastern half of the state and in far northwestern Minnesota as part of a "western rotation" looking for spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar*), formally known as gypsy moth.

Spongy moth caterpillars are a problem because they eat the leaves of over 300 types of trees and shrubs, favoring oak, poplar, birch, and willow. Severe, repeated infestations can kill trees, especially when the trees are already stressed by drought or disease. Multiple life stages of spongy moth are also a human nuisance.

This work is part of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's annual trapping survey program and is designed to protect Minnesota's forests and urban areas from new infestations of spongy moth by detecting potential problem areas for future treatments. While the goal of the program is not to trap every spongy moth, trapping is vital to early detection and slowing the spread. In 2022, a record number of spongy moths (over 100,000) were trapped, making it even more important that efficient trapping efforts continue.

Traps will remain in the field through August in the southern region of the state and through October in the northern region. The "delta" traps are small, triangle-shaped and made of cardboard. Bigger "milk carton" shaped traps will be set in select areas of Lake, Cook, and St. Louis counties to accommodate potentially higher numbers of moths. All the traps contain a pheromone to lure in male spongy moths if they are present.

The traps are placed mainly on trees in a grid pattern at a specific distance from each other. The grid allows for the traps to efficiently trap as many male moths as possible. To be successful, it is important to maintain the trapping grid. Citizens are asked not to disturb the traps and to call MDA's Report a Pest line at 888-545-MOTH (6684) or email spongy.moth@state.mn.us if they would like traps moved or removed from their property.

Community member cooperation in the trapping survey program is vital to its success. In addition, this year the MDA is asking the public to be extra vigilant on spotting potential infestations and reporting potential spongy moth sightings via the Report a Pest online service or by emailing reportapest@state.mn.us. "With the public's help, this work protects industries like tourism and forestry from economic harm and saves Minnesota's urban and forested areas from environmental damage," said Plant Protection Director Mark Abrahamson.

For more details about the trapping survey program and spongy moth, visit the MDA website.

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!