

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

Green-Backed Gazette

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 906
ST. CLOUD, MN



NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 46

February 2024



President's Note, by Dan Kneip

According to a recent publication by the National Audubon Society, lawns are the single largest irrigated crop in the US, with a surface area of approximately 49,420 square miles. This is three times more than irrigated corn.

A quick Google search provides more statistics: The average homeowner will spend 150 hours a year maintaining their lawn. Homeowners spend \$29.1 billion on lawns each year. Ninety million pounds of fertilizer and seventy-eight million pounds of pesticides are used annually on lawns. Ten times more herbicides per acre are spread on lawns than on agricultural fields. According to the EPA, a gas-powered lawnmower emits as much pollution in one hour as driving a car for forty-five miles. Lawns require about one inch of water per week during the growing season. This is a good reason for communities to restrict lawn watering whenever we experience a drought.

There are alternatives! Following up on last year's successful campaign to have "No Mow May" adopted in Central Minnesota communities, CMAS is promoting additional practices that make our yards more inviting to birds and contribute to healthy landscapes. No Mow May was started because not mowing part or all your lawn during the month of May allows plants to flower providing critical food for emerging bees and other pollinators.

Another approach we can take with our lawns is to use native plants. Native plants are better adapted to our area, use less water, and support native insects and birds. Planting even just a small area as a pollinator garden or a prairie plot can greatly increase diversity. Planting native shrubs and trees helps birds and beneficial insects all year round.

There are many resources and programs available that can help you choose what is best for you. Bee Lawns have flowers mixed in with turf grasses such as fescues, thus providing sources of nutrition to bees and other insects, as well as deeper rooted plants that utilize less water. Pollinator gardens use flowering plants to provide nectar or pollen for a range of pollinating insects. Using native plants improves the chances of attracting beneficial insects that will in turn help feed the birds.

Lastly, the Lawns to Legumes program started in 2019. See a separate article in this issue on how to learn about and apply for the Lawns to Legumes program.

CMAS will be offering the option for chapter members to attend the February monthly meetings in person at the UUF - Universal Unitarian Fellowship Hall, or via Zoom. If you wish to attend via Zoom, please send your request to receive a link by e-mail to centralmnaudubon@gmail.com by 10 a.m. the day of the meeting.

Central MN Audubon Society Officers

Dan Kneip, President
Brian Jungels, Treasurer
Linda Peck, Secretary
Nicki Blake-Bradley, Newsletter

(H) 320-761-8202
(H) 320-469-0876
(H) 320-685-3365
(H) 320-259-5524

Hank Schreifels, Vice President
Jonathan Fribley, Member At Large
Jeanne Dirksen, Member At Large
Audubon MN Office

(H)320-250-3390
(H) 320-309-9446
(H) 320-558-2485
1-651-739-9332

Calendar

St. John's Outdoor U Events:

Luminary Walks Feb 8 and 10th/ 6:30 pm - no registration or fees



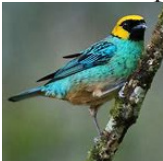
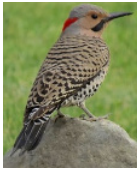
Wednesday, February 21, 2024

7 p.m. **CMAS Meeting**

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church

Speaker: Ellen and Mike Heneghan

Topic: Ecuador Birding Trip



Wednesday, March 20, 2024

7 p.m. **CMAS Meeting**

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church & ZOOM

Luke DeGroote - Avian Conservation Scientist
Powdermill Nature Reserve - Carnegie Museum of Natural History

Subject Title: Powdermill Avian Research Center: A Bird Observatory for the 21st Century



Tuesday, April 16, 2024

6:30 p.m. Speaker: Stan Tekeila

Topic: Wildflowers

Location: **Sartell Community Center**
850 19th ST S, Sartell MN 56377

CMAS will be joining the St Cloud Flower & Garden Club

*several other area groups
porting this presentation.*



in

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

7pm - CMAS Meeting

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church & ZOOM
CMAS annual meeting with election of officers and presentation of accounts.

Thanks to all those who helped at or visited the CMAS table at the "Celebrating the Avon Hills" event at St John's on Jan 27th. We were able to show what our local Audubon chapter is doing in the community and received quite a few requests for more information.





Abbey Arboretum and St. John's Outdoor U

Con Brady and Ellie Backus attended our January meeting to discuss the Abbey Arboretum, which is about 3,000 acres owned by the monastery and the St. John's Outdoor U, which is the actual programming. They tag-teamed the presentation, each sharing in the details of the evening. Con shared that the monastery was established in the 1850's and the Quad was built in the 1860's. In the 1980's, one of the fathers had a vision to restore native habitats, wanting snippets of all the ecosystem biomes. They began planting oaks and conifer plantations. St. John's Abbey Arboretum boasts one of the oldest documented pine plantings in Minnesota. Wetlands were restored by constructing a dam. They discussed Phase 2 as a 123 acre habitat restoration project of prairie and oak savanna. They use fire as a management tool in this area. Phase 3 is focused upon Oak Savanna as only 1% of this biome is left, making it one of the most endangered ecosystems.

Logging is conducted in a sustainable harvest manner, creating Forest Service Certified (FSC) wood. Bud capping is done to protect plantings from deer browse. Because they have approximately 1205 acres of northern hardwood and oak forests, they can leave dead oaks for habitat. For their oak forest renewal project, they cut out five acre areas and replant or protect small oaks in strips.

The monastery bought an old farm that is adjacent to their property for converting it back to native habitat - oaks. They started a nursery where they begin oak trees. At 7 months, the seedlings are planted into a hayfield. Ellie noted that they use a large auger to plant the trees and have already put in approximately 2,000 trees. Planting in pots promotes lateral root growth.

Regarding the Outdoor U, it is handled through the University. They focus on educating the community, K-12 grade students, and college students. Over 742 closed field trips and 3-4 summer camps are offered.

They also discussed the maple syruping that the University teaches the process in February to early April. Maples are very shade tolerant, so they noted they aren't worried about them. Drip lines are established with buckets for gathering the sap. Approximately 1500 - 1600 taps are installed annually. Volunteers who help with the process are given syrup. April 6th is the Maple Syrup Festival date.

Pollinator plants are being grown in the greenhouse and Conservation Corps classes/meetings are held on Wednesdays. In 2024, they are offering festivals, camps and trainings, a naturalist series, Make and Take classes, and conservation and stewardship opportunities. Classes, details and changes or additions can be viewed at their website: csbsju.edu/outdooru

When one plants a tree, they plant themselves. Every-root is an anchor over which one rests with grateful interests and becomes sufficiently calm to feel the joy

Lawns to Legumes

Starting February 1, 2024, Lawns to Legumes will taking applications for cost-share grants of up to \$400 to create pollinator habitat for the Fall 2024 recipients. Apply for a grant through Blue Thumb at <https://bluethumb.org/lawns-to-legumes/about/> The program is is funded by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and administered through the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

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.

December 16th Christmas Bird Count

The St. Cloud Christmas Bird Count held on December 16th was a great success! 15 participants enjoyed temperature in the mid 30's in foggy conditions to find 41 species of birds and a total of 3,437 birds. Three species of birds were also added during count week We also added a new species to our count's composite list (Eurasian collared dove).



Here was our itemized list:

Canada Goose-1247	Trumpeter Swan-2
Wood duck-1	Mallard-500
Wild Turkey-27	Ring-necked Pheasant-4
Rock Pigeon-154	Ruffed Grouse-1
Eurasian Collared-Dove-10	Mourning Dove-55
Bald Eagle-8	Northern Harrier-1
Sharp-shinned Hawk-1	Red-tailed Hawk-6
Eastern Screech Owl-1	Greater Horned Owl-1
Red-bellied Woodpecker-14	Downy Woodpecker 43
Hairy Woodpecker-20	Northern Flicker-1
Pileated Woodpecker-8	Northern Shrike-1
Blue Jay-118	American Crow-13
Black-capped Chickadee-204	Cedar Waxwing-163
Red-breasted Nuthatch-5	Brown Creeper-1
White-breasted Nuthatch-58	Golden-crowned Kinglet-1
European Starling-299	Eastern Bluebird-2
American Robin-13	House Sparrow-91
House Finch-91	Purple Finch-29
Pine Siskin-34	American Goldfinch-34
American Tree Sparrow-5	Dark-eyed Junco-142
Northern Cardinal-30	

In addition a Turkey Vulture, Red Crossbill, and White-throated Sparrow were observed in our count circle during Count Week.

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. Several of his books were offered as door prizes at the January meeting. Congratulations to Noah for receiving How to Attract Birds by Ortho Books. Congratulations to Allysa for receiving Backyard Composting by Harmonius Technologies.

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



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!!