

Central Minnesota Audubon
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Green-Backed Gazette

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 46

March 2024



President's Note, by Dan Kneip

Nature Walks

Our non-winter has resulted in a different set of activities this year. I do miss cross-country skiing and other snow related activities. On the other hand, it has been great to be able to go for daily walks with very little danger of slipping on ice. It is nice not to require heavy snow boots every time we leave the house.

Dogs are notorious in recognizing the benefits of taking a daily walk and their enthusiasm is infectious! Any dog owner will tell you that the daily walk is a highlight of the day for both dog and owner. The benefits of walking are well known. Your doctor will tell you to walk daily to stimulate your heart. Your smart phone/watch health app will alert you if you haven't walked enough in an hour or start a celebration if you reach the magical number of 10,000 steps in a day! There are, however, greater benefits than just physical exercise.

Medical studies have shown that walking in a natural landscape can lower the level of cortisol, known as the stress hormone. Going for a walk is one of the best ways to de-escalate an argument or take your mind off pressing issues. Taking children for a nature walk is a good way to calm them down and stimulate them with new adventures at the same time. A walk with children may involve more than walking; it can consist of intermittent running, jumping, and squatting, but will certainly involve a lot of observations and questions.

If it suits you, you can take up one of the many fitness trends or mindfulness practices that now and then become the rage. "Forest bathing," "Nature grounding," and just recently "Ornithotherapy" are just some of the practices that come to mind. I am certain you can find self-help books and classes that will teach you how to get the most help from any of these activities.

A good thing about taking a walk is that it doesn't really require much investment at all. Weather permitting, you can go for a walk barefoot or in flipflops. Most of us will benefit, however, from having good footwear, and walking sticks can be very helpful on long walks or in rough terrain. As a birder, having our binoculars along on our walks is always beneficial.

A good walk is also an excellent way to see what is happening around you. You will notice the birds in the neighborhood, the buds on the shrubs and trees that are starting to change, as well as the trash at the roadside. Herein lies one of the most beneficial aspects of going for a walk, it can calm you and make you healthier, but it can also remind you of all that needs to be done and instill your resolve to get back to work.

Our newsletter is published eight times a year. Seven editions are sent by USPS and by email. The summer edition is only sent by email to those who have provided their address either to CMAS directly or to the National Audubon Society. Providing your email address helps us to have a backup form of communication for the newsletter and allows us to communicate schedules or changes in activities in a prompt and efficient manner. Please help us by providing your email to centralmnaudubon@gmail.com

Calendar

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

Friday, April 12, 2024

6:30 p.m.

Woodcock Field Trip

Location: Sand Prairie WMA

(see page 2 for details)

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 and several other area groups in supporting this presentation.

Saturday, April 20, 2024

2024 Bluebird Expo 9 am - 4 pm

Location: Redwood Falls Community Center

901 E. Cook Street, Redwood Falls, MN

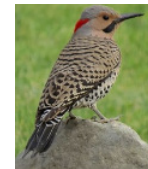
To register and find more information go to: bbrp.org

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

7pm - CMAS Annual Meeting

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church

CMAS annual meeting with election of officers, presentation of accounts, and discussion of bylaws revisions.



Central MN Audubon Society Officers

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

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Ecuadorian Andes Birding Tour by Mike and Ellen Heneghan

Mike and Ellen came to present pictures and stories from their Road Scholar trip to the Ecuadorian Andes from March 4-14, 2023. They began by noting that they started their trip in Quito, then going west before traveling back through Quito to go to eastern locations. Because the sites they were going to visit were all at high elevations (over 9,000 feet above sea level), Ellen and Mike went a day early to begin to acclimate to the higher elevations. They noted that the continental divide runs down the east side of the Andes.

Mike described the ISO settings he used for the fantastic photos that they shared, while noting that they saw 226 species (of the 1600+ bird species in Ecuador) during their trip. Ellen identified the birds and described the areas they visited, and Mike gave little vignettes as he ran the slideshow.

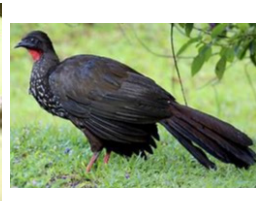
Their first photographed bird was the Eared Dove (looks somewhat like a Mourning Dove). They saw 45 species of hummingbirds and over 50 species of tanagers among many other birds! While photos of birds dominated the presentation, Ellen also shared photos of a few plants, such as tropical pitcher plants and a white angel trumpet plant, animals (agouti and Andean fox) and landscape or cultural photos with a fun photo of them standing on the equator (one in the northern hemisphere and one in the southern).

Two of the Reserves they visited were the Yanacocha Reserve and the Antisanilla Reserve. An eco-lodge they visited was named Sanisidrolodge. Many of the birds in Ecuador are fruit eaters, so restaurants and resorts lure birds in for close up viewing by setting out bananas and other fruits near their seating areas.

Some of the species that Mike and Ellen featured in their presentation had elaborate names such as the Sparkling Violet Ear, Masked Flower Piercer, White-booted Racket Tail Hummingbird and Andean Cock of the Rock. Others had simpler names like Great Thrush, Swordbill (hummingbird), Brown Inca (hummingbird), Green Honey Creeper, Crested Guan, and Torrent Duck.

Ellen noted that several birds that are highly sought after are the Antpittas (rare and challenging to find), as well as the Andean Cock of the Rock. They visited a preserve that a landowner created for a bird sanctuary. The man's name was Paz and he took them on a hike to see the Cock of the Rock's leks and to view the Antpitta he has named Maria. He put out worms and then called to Maria and sure enough, after a bit she came to collect his treats!

One bird that we will soon see in Minnesota was the Blackburnian Warbler. They also saw a Canada Warbler as well. They were able to see the national bird of Ecuador, the Andean Condor (which has a white ring around its neck) and black vultures but not many raptors. Ellen noted that they didn't see any reptiles or lizards.



Lights Out March 15 - May 31

Please consider turning off exterior decorative lighting (or any lighting that brightens your area) between the hours of midnight and dawn during migration to help over 250 bird species that travel through MN each spring and fall. **YES**, in case you're wondering, **it matters!** Many birds migrate at night and can become disoriented or drawn off course by lighted buildings. Studies have found that birds have collisions with buildings or can become so confused they fly around in circles until they drop from exhaustion. One study done regarding shutting off lights in a high-rise building found they reduced bird strike deaths of migrators by 83%!

What can you do to help birds in migration regarding lighting? Do your part in turning out un-necessary lighting as much as possible. They can see in the dark and don't need our help. Encourage companies and friends to do the same. You'll not only be saving birds, but electricity and money as well. Who couldn't use a few more dollars in their pocket, right?

Want to make twice as much of a difference? Put it on your calendar to participate in Lights Out during the fall migration, too (August 15 - October 15) or better yet, make it all year!

Remember there's no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end. ~Scott Adams

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.



Woodcock Outing, 6:30 PM Friday April 12th, 2024

Join fellow nature lovers in an outing to Sand Prairie Wildlife Management Area the evening of Friday, April 12th. Plan on meeting at 6:30 PM at the kiosk near Hwy. 10. 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 and wood line. At the marsh we should expect to see an assortment of waterfowl (teal, widgeons, hooded mergansers, wood ducks, ring necked 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 wearing layered warm clothing. The observation deck can be surprisingly cold in mid-April. Bring binoculars. If you do not own any, we will have several pair which you can borrow.

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

VOTE!

Elections Are Coming!
April is the month when we elect our leadership for the next year. Nominations are open to anyone wishing to hold a position. Please let us know if you would be interested in helping lead our local chapter! Also, please plan to attend the annual meeting to vote on the slate. The annual meeting will only be held in person.



Did you know... that maple trees start running sap when daytime temperatures are at least 50 degrees (F) with nighttime temperatures still below freezing? This year, sap started running as early as the second week in February! What this means for our maple trees going forward remains to be seen, but maple syrup harvesters have been delighted to have a longer season in 2024! Two options for learning more about maple syrup collection and production are available through Avon Hills Folk School (March 27th) and St. John's Outdoor U (Maple Syrup Festival, April 6th). Avon Hills Folk School is located at 31335 Kalla Lake Road, Avon, MN. St. John's Outdoor U calendar event information can be found at csbsju.edu/outdoors.

Thank you, thank you, thank you to Elaine Thrune for your most generous donation to Central MN Audubon Society! We are so very appreciative of your amazing kindness!!

Minnesota Women's Woodland Network

Studies show that women traditionally have had little to do with management of family woodlots and forests. The MN Women's Woodland Network was created to foster a comfortable learning environment and create networking opportunities for women who own and may manage wooded areas. To learn more, visit mnwwn.org. Empower yourselves, ladies!



Door Prizes

Door prizes at the meetings may be books, puzzles, feeders, food items, or "other". Participation is voluntary, but winners must be present to win! This month's door prizes were a cap and nalgene water bottle from the Avon Hills Conference as well as a jigsaw puzzle (sonoran desert) from the Heneghans. Congratulations to Duane G. for winning the hat, Jim M. for winning the jigsaw puzzle and Joe C. for winning the water bottle!



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!!