

Central Minnesota Audubon
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Green-Backed Gazette

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 47

October 2024



President's Note, by Dan Kneip

Birders in Minnesota have much to be thankful for. We are in the path of the Spring and Fall migrations for many bird species. We have many special birding locations nearby, such as the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge for seeing the Sandhill cranes, Hawkridge at Duluth for all sorts of raptors, Lake Osakis for Western Grebes, just to mention a few.

We benefit from 64 State Parks, 9 Recreational areas, 13 National Wildlife Refuges, and numerous County and Municipal parks as well as Nature Centers and other areas, all of which lend themselves to birding. There are over 1,500 Wildlife Management Areas in Minnesota providing 1.37 million acres of protected habitat across the state.

In the past, Minnesotans have demonstrated the importance of these public places and conservation activities by supporting funding options for implementation and maintenance. The Environmental & Natural Resources Trust Fund was established in 1988. It determines allocation of Minnesota lottery proceeds for project funding to protect and restore natural resources. There will be a ballot question this November asking you to renew this dedicated funding for the next 25 years. Please vote YES!

One of this year's CMAS projects will be to provide birding backpacks for children. Details are still in the planning stage, but we could possibly work with the public library to provide the backpacks for checkout. Please contact a board member if interested in working with us on this project.

We continue to promote Audubon Adventures kits for local elementary schools and homeschoolers. If interested in contacting schools or you know someone who might be interested, contact a board member.

The CMAS board has determined that our Newsletter will be distributed electronically as of January, 2026. We urge all Central Minnesota Audubon members to provide email addresses so that you can continue to receive your newsletter. Once we start issuing the newsletter for email distribution only in 2026, we will change the formatting from the present 14-inch-long trifold option to a more standard 11-inch format, which can easily be printed at your home computer/printer.

We are in the process of re-establishing a webpage for the chapter. This will greatly improve our communication capabilities, providing information and updates as well as links to important organizations that may be of interest to members. We also plan to have copies of several past issues of the newsletter as well as board meeting minutes available on the webpage. If you have any suggestions of what you would like to see on a CMAS webpage, please let us know.

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 e-mail 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 centralmnadubon@gmail.com

Calendar

October 16, 2024

CMAS Meeting 7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church

Speaker: Cody Carlstrom, Sherburne NWR Wildlife Biologist
USFWS

Topic: Sandhill Cranes



November 20, 2024

CMAS Meeting 7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church

Speaker: Tricia Markle, MN Zoo Wildlife Conservation
Specialist

Topic: Minnesota Turtle Conservation



December 21, 2024

Christmas Bird Count

Watch for details to come...

January 15, 2025

CMAS Meeting 7 p.m.

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church

Speaker: Voyageurs NP biologist – Beavers in MN

MAJOR DONATIONS

A HUGE **THANK YOU** goes out to the **St. Cloud Morning Optimist Club** for not one, but two donations to Central MN Audubon Society to help fund our website development AND Birding "backpacks" (which will more likely be fanny packs)!!

The St. Cloud Morning Optimists recognized the opportunity of CMAS to support area youth in schools and through direct participation using the birding packs. While both of the donations will not cover the entire cost of either CMAS venture, the donations go a long way toward making these programs a reality in a much shorter time period.

The St. Cloud Morning Optimists work to support youth, good government, our communities and each other in optimism through charitable gambling and meat raffles. You don't have to live in St. Cloud to be a member. The Optimists would love to have you join them!! Questions regarding the St. Cloud Morning Optimists can be directed to Nicki Blake-Bradley (newsletter editor).

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Pheasants Forever

Sabin Adams, State Coordinator for Pheasants Forever (PF) joined CMAS members for the evening to share information about what conservation efforts PF has worked upon recently in Minnesota.

First, Sabin shared PF's habitat mission: To conserve pheasants, quail, and other wildlife through habitat improvement, public access, and education. He noted that PF doesn't condone releasing pheasants. Sabin then went on to discuss what PF does regarding private lands, management of lands, and public land acquisitions.

PF works with private landowners through Farm Bill Biologists on conservation programs like CRP, EQIP, RIM, and conservation easements. A cooperative agreement with the USDA came about because there was more demand than there were staff to work with private landowners so PF pays for the Farm Bill Biologists who are housed within the NRCS and SWCDs in Minnesota.

Regarding land management, PF has focused upon prairie restoration. Only about 1% of original prairie lands are still in existence, and as you might expect, prairie species have experienced high population declines. With PF's help, more land is being restored. They use prescribed fire and grazing specialists (allowing farmers to graze lands as a management practice). For example, in Clay county at the Korrell Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) they have focused on waterfowl and prairie chickens. PF did tree removal and opened up wetlands - 37 potholes were restored and cattle are currently rotationally grazed there to keep the vegetation at levels that benefit prairie chickens.

PF has acquired over 500 properties for public lands, protecting over 71,000 acres in Minnesota! Sabin noted that species take time to expand and find new areas, so they focus on corridors (natural areas adjacent to one another) as much as possible. For example, they helped establish the Lake Lillian WPA adjacent to the Big Kandiyohi Lake WPA, and relatively close to the Yarmon and Lake Charlotte WPAs.

In Norman County, at the Cupido Wildlife Management Area (WMA), 960 acres has been preserved for prairie chicken habitat. Sabin noted 960 acres is the equivalent of three state fairgrounds. PF has just closed on the Haggman WPA, in Mahanomen County, where 931 acres have been preserved. That property alone has 155 drained wetlands that can now be restored.

The Kroschel WMA, at 1,270 acres in Kanabec County, (where sharp-tailed grouse are the target conservation species) was the single largest land acquisition PF had ever brokered. That record fell when the Carp WMA, in Lake of the Woods County, was acquired with 1,288 acres preserved. There, too, sharp-tailed grouse are being managed, with three known leks existing. By removing 600 acres of woody material removal planned, it is hoped that many more leks will be established there.

Sabin noted that sharp-tailed grouse have been locally extinct (extirpated) in the lower southwest 2/3 of Minnesota. PF is building habitat in Robinhood WPA in Traverse County (near South Dakota). In 2019, they installed a grazing system. In 2021, tree and shrub removal occurred. In 2022, 460 acres were acquired for the WPA through the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC). In October, 2023 two sharp-tailed grouse were seen on the land, and in March, 2024 there were two greater prairie chickens!

PF was able to protect 296 acres in Meeker County at the Litchfield WPA, where western meadowlarks can now be heard calling once again.

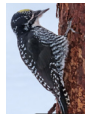


Sabin proudly noted that PF helped establish the Chain of Lakes County Park this year in Stearns County near Cold Spring. The 250 acre site will be restored. He concluded by noting that lots of people want to donate or sell land to PF, but they cannot afford to own them all. From July, 2023 to June 30, 2024, PF acquired 6,400 acres...their largest year ever. Many acres are donated to become either WPAs or WMAs (with state oversight).

All PF purchased lands are open to birding and can be found on the DNR Recreation Compass as public lands. On X Hunt is an application for phones that shows who owns lands as well (but you may have to pay for that service).

Did you know... Currently 40% of net proceeds from the Minnesota State Lottery are dedicated to growing the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to ensure benefits for our environment and natural resources? **Please vote "YES" on your ballot in November** to continue to fund this beneficial source of funding for research, conservation, and preservation of our natural resources! Not voting counts as a "NO" vote.

Permitted Wildlife Rehabbers in Minnesota



A person has to be licensed to be a Wildlife Rehabilitation Specialist in Minnesota. There are three levels of Rehabilitation Specialist (known locally as rehabbers), Master, General, and Novice. Each level has restrictions on what animals they can work to rehabilitate. The rehabber can also limit what animals they work with, so it is a good idea to contact one in advance before bringing an injured or orphaned animal to them. They are not required to accept animals from the public but they can help determine if an animal actually needs to be rescued and if so, how to achieve a safe rescue.

For Central Minnesota, there are three licensed wildlife rehabbers in Stearns County, but only one of them allows migratory birds and none of them can accept threatened or endangered species. A full list of the licensed wildlife rehabbers in the state can be viewed on the DNR web page for sick, injured or orphaned wildlife at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/nongame/rehabilitation/injured-or-orphaned-wildlife.html>

Stearns County Parks Seeks Partnership with CMAS

Tom Poser, the Natural Resources Technician for Restoration and Programming with Stearns County Parks, addressed the CMAS members at the September meeting following Sabin Adams' presentation. He is looking to coordinate with CMAS for programming and possibly assistance with restoration efforts in Stearns County parks. His appeal was very general in nature... he is open to whatever programming we may want to engage in (for any park) and can advertise with as little as a few weeks notice. Any programming should be approved by the CMAS Board before commencing under the CMAS title, but ideas for birding hikes are most welcome!



Door Prizes

Door prizes at the meetings may be books, puzzles, bird feeders, food items, or "other". Participation is voluntary, but winners must be present to win! Congratulations to Lone Schmitt for winning the Birds on a Wire (jigsaw puzzle) and to Gordon Schmitt for winning A Warbler's Journey and Audubon water bottle!



Looking for ways to make a difference?

Donations are welcome for our fund to assist with continuing to print the newsletter and bring 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!!

CMAS is now registered to receive donations via GiveMN: <https://www.givemn.org/>



GiveMN

<https://imagecdn.mightycause.com/f621d9d7-9e87-452c-b561-a13fbd7cbd53/-/crop/2048x1070/0,148/-/resize/1200x627/www.givemn.org>

To find us, type in - Central Minnesota Audubon Society
Thank you for your support!!

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.